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**Northumbria
University**
NEWCASTLE

**Between exclusion and inclusion:
The information experience of people
going through the UK asylum system**

Kahina Le Louvier

PhD

2019

**Between exclusion and inclusion:
The information experience of people
going through the UK asylum system**

Kahina Le Louvier

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of the requirements of the University of
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degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Engineering & Environment

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the everyday life information experience of people who have been through the asylum system in the North East of England. For people who have been uprooted from their homes by conflict and persecution, asylum involves a difficult process of identity reconstruction, that is further complicated by having to navigate complex administrative procedures, a new language, and different cultural codes, while facing the antagonistic behaviours of the different actors of the host society.

To better understand how people seeking asylum experience this process and how host societies can improve it, this study uses a constructivist grounded theory and ethnographic approach. This multi-method framework facilitates the exploration of explicit and implicit elements of the participants' information experience, including information framed by the host society and heritage information, defined as the expression of meaningful ways of knowing related to the home culture.

Findings reveal that participants in this research are confronted with two main information environments: the asylum system and the local third sector. The grounded theory of information exclusion and inclusion is put forward to characterise how their respective practices influence the participants' sense of agency, belonging and identity. Within the asylum system, information exclusion is experienced as feeling deprived from important information, having limited information sharing agency, and a fractured information literacy. In contrast, within the local third sector, information inclusion is experienced as access to multiple information affordances, information sharing agency, and the enactment of both local and heritage information literacies.

This study advances the field of forced migration in Library and Information Science by providing new conceptual tools to investigate the complexity of asylum, namely the dual experience of a specific politico-legal system and of making home in a new environment. It also provides new evidence towards the debate over the hostility of the UK asylum system and the role of the third sector in the inclusion of people seeking asylum.

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List of acronyms

APPGR	All Party Parliamentary Group on Refugees
ARC	Asylum Registration Card
CLG	Communities and Local Governments
COMPASS	Commercial and Operating Managers Procuring Asylum Support
ECRE	European Council on Refugees and Exiles
ESOL	English to Speakers of Other Languages
EU	European Union
ELIS	Everyday Life Information Seeking
ID	Identity Document
IDT	Information Deprivation Trauma
LIS	Library and Information Science
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	Non-Governmental organisation
NHS	National Health Services
NERS	North of England Refugee Service
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PAR	Participatory Action Research
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WERS	West End Refugee Service

Glossary and overview of the asylum process

The following glossary presents the key terms I use in this thesis to refer to the experience of people who have gone through the asylum process in the United Kingdom (UK) between 2016 and 2019. Information is taken from the Home Office documentation (UK Government, n.d.a, n.d.b., 2014) and the Right to Remain toolkit (2016).

Accommodation provider	Private company contracted by the Home Office to manage housing support for asylum seekers under the Commercial and Operating Managers Procuring Asylum Support contracts (COMPASS). In February 2019, the accommodation providers for the North East England are G4S and its subcontractor Jomast.
Appeal	Request for a review of a negative asylum decision by the Home Office. Appeal can be made at the First-tier Tribunal. If that appeal is refused, permission to appeal at other courts can be sought, or an application for a judicial review can be made. The Home Office may also appeal a court decision.
Appeal rights exhausted	Person whose claim has been refused and who has made all of the appeals that they are allowed to make. At this point, one is likely to be detained and issued removal directions.
Asylum	Right to seek protection against persecution in a country other than the country origin/residence, under the 1951 Refugee Convention.
Asylum interview/ Substantive interview	The asylum interview (or substantive interview) takes place after the asylum claim is submitted and the screening interview conducted. Asylum claimants are asked to explain why they seek protection. Evidence provided during the asylum interview is used to determine an asylum decision.
Asylum seeker/Asylum claimant	Person who has submitted an asylum claim in the UK and is awaiting for an initial asylum decision or the result of an appeal.
Asylum support	Healthcare, housing and financial support provided to people seeking asylum who are destitute. Unless they have specific care needs, people seeking asylum who are over 18 years old are not entitled to mainstream benefits.
Asylum system	Administrative framework that determines the rights of asylum claimants and the procedures they go through. In the UK, the asylum system is managed by the Home Office.
Destitute	Person without an income and without adequate housing.

	Destitute people seeking asylum can access asylum support. People may become destitute as a result of an asylum claim refusal. They may also become destitute after being granted refugee status, when transitioning between asylum support and mainstream benefits (see move on period).
Detention	<p>People seeking asylum can be detained:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When they first enter the UK • When they claim asylum, if the Home Office categorise their case as a Dublin safe third country case, or as a non-suspensive appeals case • if their asylum claim has been refused and they are considered “appeal rights exhausted” <p>People detained under immigration powers may be detained in an immigration removal centre (IRC) or short-term holding facility.</p>
Dispersal	System introduced in the 1999 Asylum and Immigration Act that consists in sending people seeking asylum who are entitled to asylum support to zones of accommodation across the UK on a no choice basis.
Family reunion	Process that allows people who have been granted refugee status or humanitarian protection in the UK to sponsor pre-flight, immediate family members to join them here.
Forced migrant	Umbrella term referring to people who have been forced to flee their country, regardless of their legal status.
Fresh claim	Additional evidence submitted after an asylum claim is refused and all appeals are lost. People who submit a fresh claim may be entitled to asylum support under section 4.
Home Office	National department for policies on immigration, passports, counter-terrorism, policing, drugs and crime. The Home Office manages the asylum system.
Hostile environment	Set of administrative and legislative policies implemented since 2012 by the Home Office, which aims at making life in the UK as difficult as possible for those without a leave to remain.
Humanitarian protection	Term used in the UK to refer to the EU law concept of ‘subsidiary protection’. Humanitarian protection is granted when a person seeking asylum faces risk of serious harm in their country of origin for reasons other than those specified in the Refugee Convention (e.g. conflict; death penalty; unlawful killing; torture). In this thesis, people granted humanitarian protection are also referred to as refugees.
Leave to remain	Legal permission to stay in the UK.

Mainstream benefits	Support, such as the universal credit or council housing, provided to underprivileged citizens. Mainstream benefits are not accessible to people seeking asylum until they receive the refugee status, humanitarian protection, or another form of leave to remain.
Move on period	28 days period during which people whose asylum claim has been successful continue to receive asylum support. At the end of this period, people who could not access mainstream benefits, housing, or employment, may become destitute.
Non-refoulement	Fundamental principle of international law that forbids countries to expel or return people seeking asylum to countries where they are at risk of persecution.
Refugee	In the UK, a refugee is someone whose asylum claim has been approved and has been granted refugee status (leave to remain) under the Refugee Convention. In this thesis, the term refugee is used to refer to: 1) a person whose asylum claim was successful and was granted refugee status, humanitarian protection or another form of leave to remain; 2) a person who was granted refugee status or humanitarian protection before entering the UK and did not go through the asylum system here.
Refugee Convention	United Nations convention that defines who a refugee is, what the rights of persons who are granted asylum are, what the responsibilities of nations granting asylum are.
Refused asylum seeker	Person whose asylum claim has been refused and is “appeal right exhausted”. Refused asylum seeker may not be able to return to their country of origin and remain in the UK without status.
Removal	Forced removal occurs when the Home Office enforces one’s removal from the UK because their asylum claim has been rejected, they are “appeal right exhausted”, and have no form of leave to remain.
Resettlement	In asylum policies, this term refers to state programs that help people to relocate to a different country as a refugee (e.g. Syrian Vulnerable Person’s Resettlement Scheme). In common language, this term refers to the process of settling in a different country.
Screening interview	Initial interview happening after claiming asylum in the UK. In this interview, the Home Office collects one’s personal details and information about their journey to the UK, and checks if they have claimed asylum in the UK or Europe

	before.
Section 95 support	Support provided to destitute persons seeking asylum in the UK. This support stops when a person is granted leave to remain or is refused asylum and is “appeal rights exhausted”. In February 2019, Section 95 support covers free healthcare, housing provided on a no choice basis, and a £37.75 weekly allowance loaded onto a debit card (ASPEN card) that can be used to withdraw cash.
Section 4 support	Support provided to a person whose asylum claim has been refused, is “appeal rights exhausted”, is destitute, and takes all reasonable steps to leave the UK but is unable to do so due to physical impediment, or because there is no viable route of return. In February 2019, Section 4 support includes housing provided on a no choice basis, a £35.39 weekly allowance loaded onto a payment card for food, clothing and toiletries (no cash withdrawal), and restricted access to healthcare.
Third sector organisations	Voluntary and community organisations such as charities and community groups.

Figure 1 provides a visualisation of the different stages of the asylum process in the UK.

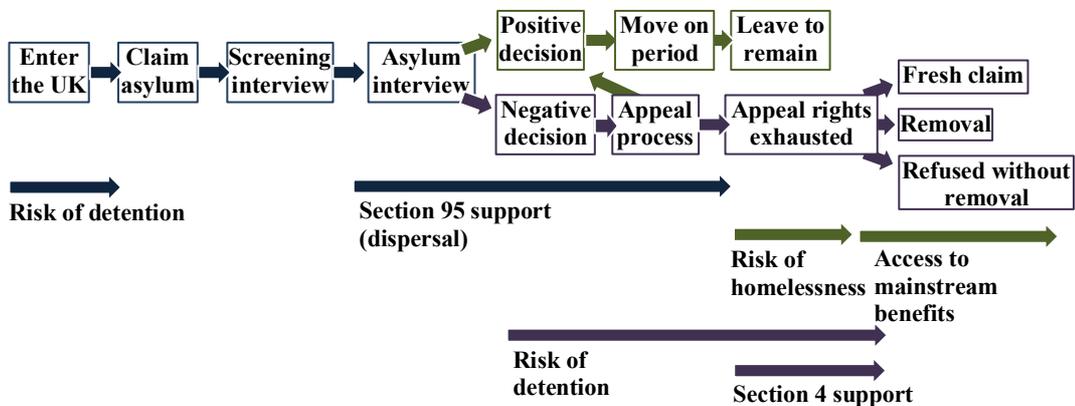


Figure 1 - Overview of the asylum process (Le Louvier)

Editorial Conventions

- The first person is used throughout this thesis to reflect my belief that, in line with the interpretivist paradigm, research is not neutral, but situated and subjective.
- Interview and field note excerpts are presented as indented freestanding blocks of text.
- Italics represent the voice of the participants in the interview answers. Roman font is used to represent my voice in the field notes and interview questions.
- In field notes excerpts, the pronoun “they” is used as a gender-neutral identifier that aims at preserving the anonymity of participants.
- To ensure confidentiality, a pseudonym is used to refer to interviewees who have experienced the asylum system. Employees and volunteers of third sector organisations are referred to by their position within their organisations.
- In the body of the text, excerpts from interviews conducted in French are translated into English. The original French version is provided in appendix 6. The translation is mine.

Preface

When I submitted the research proposal for this doctoral programme, I was a French citizen living in Scotland; being French mainly meant having an easily identifiable accent and suffering from chronic food nostalgia. Over three years later, as I prepare my application for the European Union settlement scheme, being French means that I have a different passport and restricted rights to exercise my citizenship in the country where I have spent half of my adulthood. The more I became part of this country, negotiated the subtleties of the language and culture, and grew more familiar with its geography, institutions, and political landscape, the more my status became precarious. What does it mean to be included in that context? To what extent can someone adapt to a new society when that society does not adapt in return?

The referendum on the United Kingdom's withdrawal of the European Union is only one manifestation of a more global rise of nationalism that questions the concept of social inclusion, and particularly impacts people who came to Europe after being forced to flee countries where they cannot return. This is the case of the incredibly resilient individuals I have met during this research, who struggle every day to adapt to a country that simultaneously welcomes and rejects them.

I hope this thesis allows their experiences to be better understood, and provides clues as to how to rethink the necessity to join forces to provide true sanctuary to those who need it.

Kahina Le Louvier, Newcastle upon Tyne, October 2019

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Finally, I am indebted to all the fantastic people who contributed to this research and shared their experiences with me. Although I cannot name them here, a lot of this thesis is theirs.

Author's declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the Faculty Ethics Committee on February 27th 2017.

I declare that the Word Count of this Thesis is 78,851 words.

Name: Kahina Le Louvier

Signature:

Date: 24/10/2019

Author's declaration

Chapter 1 – Introduction

“Hospitalität, a word of Latin origin, of a troubled and troubling origin, a word which carries its own contradiction incorporated into it, a Latin word which allows itself to be parasitized by its opposite, ‘hostility’, the undesirable guest [hôte] which it harbors as the self-contradiction in its own body”
Derrida, 2000, p.3

1.1. People seeking asylum in the UK

On the 19th of September 2019, the Guardian reported the death of Kelemua Mulat, “an Ethiopian woman who was denied potentially life-saving cancer treatment for six weeks amid confusion about whether she should be charged by the NHS [National Health Services]” (Halliday, 2019). She had claimed asylum in Britain in 2015, but her case had been rejected. Her appeal rights were exhausted, and in February 2019, she stopped receiving the section 4 support that allowed her to receive £35.39 a week and entitled her to free healthcare. In April 2019, her lawyers submitted evidence for a fresh claim, which should have ensured her access to immediate chemotherapy. However, the Home Office did not classify this new evidence as a fresh application but as “further submissions”. As a result, she was refused treatment for six weeks, a delay that her friends and lawyers suspect to have been fatal.

This account provides an extreme but symptomatic example of the situation faced by people seeking asylum in the United Kingdom (UK). First, it demonstrates the impact of the “hostile environment” (Kirkup and Winnett, 2012) policies on the most vulnerable population, as the NHS is forced to conduct immigration checks and impose upfront charges to patients ineligible to free health care (Webber, 2019). Secondly, it evidences the dramatic impact that an error in the Home Office management of asylum claims can have.

This is not an exceptional case as a number of academic studies, journalistic inquiries and reports have highlighted the “large degree of dysfunction” (Desmond, 2019, p.505) that characterises the Home Office treatment of asylum. These dysfunctions include wrongful detention (House of Commons Home

Affairs Committee, 2019), “inefficiencies and a culture of non-compliance” that lead to a high rate of refusal contradicted by subsequent successful appeals (Justice, 2018, p.6; Anderson, Hollaus, Lindsay, & Williamson, 2014; Schuster, 2018), as well as “substandard and unfit” housing conditions (Home Affairs Committee, 2017, p.22; Taylor, 2019). The harm induced by these systemic flaws questions what it means to provide protection to those seeking asylum in the UK.

Asylum is an ancient practice that consists in providing sanctuary to people fleeing persecution. It is inscribed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations [UN], 1948), which stipulates “everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution” (Article 14). This right is further consolidated in the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (hereafter Convention; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 1951). For the UNHCR (n.d.a), “the ultimate goal of refugee protection is to find durable solutions which will enable refugees to live in safety and rebuild their lives”. Thus, admission and inclusion into a community are at the core of asylum (Durieux, 2014).

Yet, by defining refugeehood, the Convention incidentally makes asylum seekers a distinct legal category, and does not grant them specific rights beyond the principle of non-refoulement (Mayblin, 2017; Persaud, 2006). This pushes people who are not yet recognised as refugees in an in-between state: they are admitted in the country where they have submitted their claim, but not yet included; they are almost protected, but not quite. Thus, although the UK has signed the Convention and provides the right to seek asylum, it has implemented, since the 1990s, a series of Asylum and Immigration Acts that have sought to limit the number of asylum applications and granted refugee statuses, and to make the life of undocumented migrants as difficult as possible (Canning, 2017; Mayblin, 2017; Webber, 2019). This paradox illustrates the tension between hospitality and hostility that is at the heart of the principle of asylum (Derrida & Dufourmantelle, 2000): while it is a human right and a duty to protect those in need, this hospitality is never unconditional.

Regardless of the degree of hospitality of host countries, people fleeing conflict and persecution continue to seek protection and, as they cannot return, have to rebuild their lives in the midst of these contradictory laws and changing political agendas. This process is often supported by the local civil society who take on the role of fostering integration, though with limited power and resources (Dwyer, 2005; Griffiths, Sigona & Zetter, 2005; Mayblin & James, 2018). This leads to fragmented and conflicting approaches:

- The state recognises the right for asylum but is hostile towards its claimants;
- The local civil society supports inclusion but is constrained by national policies and austerity;
- People seeking asylum face a challenging legal process, and yet have to rebuild their life in this hostile environment.

To address this tension, this thesis investigates the intricate and varied experiences of asylum seekers living in the UK. It uses an information lens to advance knowledge on how best to enhance communication between the Home Office, local actors and asylum claimants. This provides a springboard for the development of an integrated approach to the management of asylum based on inclusive practices.

1.2. Research approach

Many current accounts of asylum within the UK lack an appreciation of it as an information experience. Yet, this lens can provide insights into the social, spatial, cultural and political aspects of inclusion by examining how people “seek, use and share information” (Savolainen, 2008, p.2). This allows for highlighting what they need to function and settle in an unfamiliar environment, and what enables or constrains this process.

The study of the information experience of forced migrants constitutes a growing area of research in Library and Information Science (LIS), for social inclusion can be understood as an information problem (Caidi & Allard, 2005). The capacity to access, use and make sense of information is necessary for people to

take an active part in society. Yet, people seeking asylum are confronted to complex information needs (Oduntan, 2018) and sociocultural differences that hamper their capacity to effectively seek, use and share information, and fractures their information landscapes (Lloyd, 2017b). Understanding how people going through the asylum process interact with information can therefore enable host societies to facilitate this process, and consequently, to facilitate their inclusion.

A growing number of studies have investigated the information practices of forced migrants in various host countries and highlighted the different information needs, barriers and coping strategies that allow them to, or prevent them from, making an independent and appropriate use of information. In this thesis, I build on this approach to generate an account of a distinctly informational experience of asylum in the UK context. I do not consider information as limited to documents, but understand it as any “difference which makes a difference” (Bateson, 1973, p.453), that is, any external or internal stimuli that appears significant to the mind. This broad scope allows me to build a comprehensive overview of the inclusion experience of people seeking asylum by integrating heritage, that is the expression of meaningful ways of knowing related to the home culture, as part of their information practices. I therefore investigate everyday life encounters with information shaped through the interaction between people seeking asylum, the local civil society, and the national political system, and their influence on the sense of belonging, agency and identity that is at the core of social inclusion.

1.3. Research context

To conduct this research, I focus on the conurbation of Newcastle upon Tyne and Gateshead (hereafter Newcastle-Gateshead). Research has increasingly highlighted the role of cities in the integration of forced migrants, for they are at the forefront of settlement services and are relied on to fill the gaps left by the state (Doomernik & Ardon, 2018; Dwyer, 2005; Griffiths et al., 2005; Mayblin & James, 2018; Tonkiss, 2018). The city can be seen as a foundational site of citizenship, which encompasses the tension between the hostility and hospitality

of asylum (Derrida, 2000). It is therefore the scale I chose to conduct the research.

North East England is the least wealthy region in the UK (Office for National Statistics [ONS], 2018). It also receives limited international migration in comparison to others areas in England (ONS, 2017). However, Newcastle-Gateshead has been receiving people seeking asylum since the introduction of the dispersal policy in 1999 (Gateshead's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment [JSNA], 2018; Vickers, 2012), and was conjointly hosting a total of 1844 asylum seekers in receipt of section 95 support at the end of the year 2018 (UK Government, 2018).

Newcastle was recognised City of Sanctuary in 2013, thus joining a network of cities committed to provide sanctuary to people fleeing conflict and persecution (<https://cityofsanctuary.org>). While intending to make Newcastle “a city where everyone feels welcome and has opportunities to reach their full potential in life” (Newcastle City Council, n.d.a), the local authorities also highlight the limited power they have over asylum and immigration, especially since the privatisation of asylum dispersal accommodation and reception services (Research interview; National Audit Office, 2013). To balance these limitations, Newcastle-Gateshead has a rich civil society: it is one of the cities with the highest number of charities supporting asylum seekers and refugees in the UK (Mayblin & James, 2018). Therefore, Newcastle-Gateshead is an optimal area to investigate the tensions between the behaviours toward asylum exhibited by local civil society actors and by the state.

1.4. Research aim, questions and process

The aim of this research project is to generate a comprehensive account of the everyday life information experience of people who have been through the asylum process in Newcastle-Gateshead, by investigating the multiple factors that facilitate or hinder that experience.

To this end, I explore the following questions:

Q1. What information environments and practices do people experience when they settle in Newcastle-Gateshead after claiming asylum?

Q2. How do people seeking asylum reconstruct their information landscapes within these new environments?

Q3. What impact does this have on the sense of identity, belonging and agency of people seeking asylum?

These questions emerged from an ethnographic constructivist grounded theory study conducted between September 2016 and February 2019 in Newcastle-Gateshead. The elaboration of a rich picture of the everyday life experiences of people seeking asylum was made possible through a deep immersion in the field, which developed across three phases (Fig. 2).

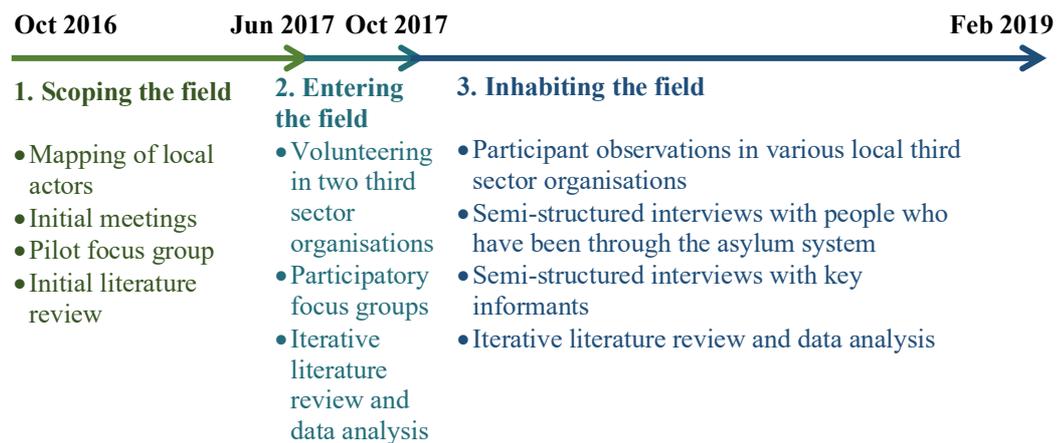


Figure 2 - Timeline of the research process (Le Louvier)

Each phase used different sensitising concepts and data collection techniques, which I reconfigured as I iteratively analysed the data (see Chapter 2). This prolonged engagement in the field, and the triangulation of these different types of data, facilitated the identification and examination of the participants' diverse information experiences.

The present thesis reports on these findings and discusses the grounded theory of information exclusion and inclusion that emerged from it.

1.5. Significance of the study

This research advances the field of forced migration research in LIS by expanding the scope to a new sample group and geographical coverage. It focuses on a particular category of forced migrants that lacks specific empirical examination: people going through the asylum system. The influence of the politico-legal structure on people's everyday life information experience is therefore highlighted. The complexity of this experience is further explored by bringing the study to England. This is an under-researched area in LIS where the conflicting agenda between actors of society defending a hostile environment and those promoting a culture of welcome further complicates the information experience of people seeking asylum.

From an information practice perspective, this study broadens understandings of the concept of inclusion. It builds on a practice theory approach to information (Lloyd, 2017a) to construct a novel framework of the situation of individuals in relation to their information environments. This framework allows for highlighting the power dynamics between the different actors that shape the practice and the different degrees of agency that individuals have within them, which is particularly useful for the study of vulnerable communities. Secondly, this study brings together two different perspectives: information literacy and cultural heritage. This combined view allows for considering the practical and cultural aspects of life, as well as the dual need to adapt to new environments while maintaining a sense of identity and continuity. This allows for a comprehensive approach to the process of inclusion from an information lens.

This study sheds a new light on asylum in the UK context, and in the North East England in particular, by providing qualitative evidence of the communication and information experiences shaped by the Home Office and the third sector, and analysing their effect on the everyday life and wellbeing of people seeking sanctuary. The theory of information exclusion emerges from the analysis of how people seeking asylum experience the information environment shaped by the asylum system. It demonstrates how this environment prevents people from receiving and sharing the information they need, and how it shatters their way of knowing about their surroundings and about themselves. Conversely, the theory

of information inclusion shows how the information environment shaped by the local third sector intends to facilitate access and expression of information that is functional, practical, but also pleasurable and culturally meaningful. These theories can provide civil society actors and policy makers with original guidance on how to foster inclusive information practices and document exclusionary ones.

1.6. Thesis Outline

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 provides a critical account of my research journey. I discuss my methodological approach, how the research design evolved as I stepped deeper into the field, the techniques I used to collect and analyse data, as well as the ethical dilemmas I encountered.

Chapter 3 presents my analysis of relevant literature as it emerged from the research process. It starts with a discussion of the key concepts related to forced migration and inclusion, and considers how these issues have been investigated in the UK context. Theoretical and empirical studies on forced migration in LIS are then reviewed, and important theories and research gaps highlighted. The third part turns to the field of heritage to explore how this concept can shed a different light on the process of inclusion in the context of forced migration.

Building on these key principles and research gaps, Chapter 4 introduces my conceptual approach. It presents a situational diagram of the participants in relation to their information environment, and conceptualises heritage as a type of information literacy practice.

With this approach in mind, Chapter 5 outlines the findings of the research. It maps the two main information environments that participants encounter as they settle in the city: the one framed by the asylum system and the one created by the local third sector. It discusses the grounded theory of information exclusion and inclusion that emerge from the analysis of their respective practices, and examines their effect on the participants' sense of agency, belonging and identity.

Finally, chapter 6 offers some reflections on method, draws out the key implications of the research, outlines practical recommendations, and discusses limitations and further area of study.

Chapter 2 – Methodology

“Fieldwork produces sensibilities and dispositions,
it alters researchers and those they encounter in
often unpredictable ways.”

Darling, 2014, p.101

Before delving into the theoretical and empirical analysis of the everyday life experience of people seeking asylum in the UK, I explain how I conducted this study. This allows me to describe the path that led me to focus on that topic, and to establish the methodological standpoint from which I approached the research.

My study followed a constructivist grounded theory approach. No hypothesis was a priori established based on the literature that determined a fixed research design. Instead, I followed an inductive process, which took shape as I concomitantly encountered the field, collected and analysed data, and examined previous research. I discuss the research process before analysing the state-of-the-art, for it provides an understanding of how I established the scope of the literature review and developed my interpretation of it through a constant dialogue with the fieldwork.

This chapter presents a reflexive account of my research journey, and details how it evolved through three different phases to become the final research approach presented in Figure 3. It also provides some ethical considerations regarding consent and positionality, and a discussion of the strengths and limitations of the methodology.

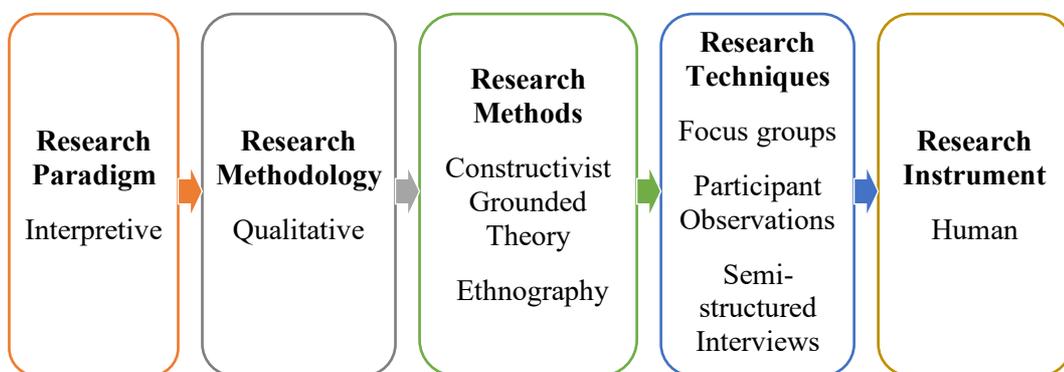


Figure 3 - Research approach used in this study (Le Louvier, based on Pickard, 2013)

2.1. Research approach

Before detailing the specific steps and techniques used to conduct this research, it is important to understand how my own worldview influenced the way I approached the research process. In this section, I explain how my affinity with the interpretivist paradigm led me to adopt a qualitative approach and to use constructivist grounded theory and ethnography.

2.1.1. Interpretivist paradigm

My research approach is interpretivist: I believe that there is no single, universal and objective reality, but “only the complex, multiple realities of the individual” (Pickard, 2013, p.12), which are embedded in context. This means that as a researcher, I can only access some of these realities through my own subjectivity, and by interacting with other people in a specific context. I consider that this interaction is not neutral, but that the known and the knower always influence each other (Pickard, 2013). Consequently, I do not consider that the result of this research uncovers an objective reality, but rather delivers an interpretation of the meanings created by the individuals involved in the research, which was shaped through my situated interaction with them. I write this thesis in the first person to reflect this belief.

This worldview led me to adopt a qualitative approach, whereby I considered that people who have gone through the asylum process are experts of their own experience. I therefore opted for the in-depth and contextual investigation of a small sample of individual experiences.

2.1.2. Constructivist grounded theory

Within the qualitative methodology, I chose to adopt a constructivist grounded theory approach. This research method, developed by Glaser & Strauss (1967), consists of “systematic inductive guidelines for collecting and analyzing data” (Charmaz, 2000, p.509), which aim at constructing a theory that is grounded in data.

In its original conception (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), grounded theory implied the existence of an objective reality that researchers could unveil in the data. This led scholars to criticise its positivist underpinnings, and to reconfigure it in a way that accounts for the multiplicity of realities and the mutual influence of the knower and the known. In line with my interpretivist worldview, I therefore chose to follow Charmaz's (2000) constructivist grounded theory, investigating "individual processes, interpersonal relations and the reciprocal effects between individuals and larger social processes" (Charmaz, 1995, p.28).

Constructivist grounded theory particularly fitted this research project for two reasons. First, migrants, and forced migrants in particular, are minorities whose voices are often silenced and therefore lack the means to represent themselves. By using constructivist grounded theory, I could avoid imposing pre-conceived meaning on their realities, and instead, develop the research design and analysis around aspects of their experiences that they shared with me and that they found meaningful. Secondly, this approach allowed me to investigate the dynamics between their individual experiences and the context in which these occur. This aspect appeared even more important as I stepped deeper into the field and specified the social unit under study, for it helped me to understand what factors influenced the specificity of the shared experience of the research participants as people going through the asylum process in the North East of England.

In order to develop a theory that is grounded in the participants' experience, constructivist grounded theory requires researchers to view their world from the inside (Charmaz, 2006). Therefore, I combined this approach with a complementary research method: ethnography.

2.1.3. Ethnography

Ethnography is a research method that originated from anthropology, before becoming increasingly popular in a variety of disciplines, including LIS (Carlsson, Hanell, & Lindh, 2013; Dent Goodman, 2011; Griffin, 2017; Khoo, Rozaklis, & Hall, 2012). The aim of the ethnographic method is to "discover the cultural knowledge people are using to organize their behavior and interpret their experience" (Spradley, 1980, pp.30-31).

Ethnographic research is based on the following characteristics (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p.3):

- The approach is qualitative, using an in-depth study of a small-scale setting or group of people;
- Data collection is unstructured, as the research design is emergent and the categories used to analyse the data emerge from the data;
- People are studied in their natural setting, not in a controlled environment designed by the researcher;
- Various data collection techniques are employed, the main ones being participant observations and informal conversations;
- Data analysis requires interpreting the interactions of people in their everyday life context, their meanings, functions and consequences.

As grounded theory emerged from ethnographic research, the two approaches work symbiotically (Timmermans & Tavory, 2007). However, unlike other types of ethnographies, the focus of ethnographic constructivist grounded theory is not to describe a setting but to analyse the processes at stake within it (Charmaz, 2006). The combination of these two approaches provided me with complementary methodological tools to explore the field and to develop a theory that described the experiences and interactions of people within it.

Ethnographic research starts with the identification of the social unit under study, the definition of the research sites, and the negotiation of access to these sites and communities (Spradley, 1980). As this is a non-linear process, both constructivist grounded theory and ethnography use an emergent research design.

2.2. Emergent research design

Being relatively new to the geographical area and the subject area enabled me to view the research field with fresh eyes. Following on from the ethnographic and constructivist grounded theory approach, I started with a broad idea of my disciplinary positioning, of the research topic, setting and questions, and of the methodological approach I wanted to adopt. As I started to explore the field and

the literature, met informants and experienced some practical difficulties, I reconsidered and adapted aspects to best suit the data I gathered.

My research design emerged across three consecutive phases of field research, which at times naturally overlapped (Fig.4).



Figure 4 - Timeline of the three phases of field research (Le Louvier)

Ethnographic research involves engagement with both macro and micro environments (Fife, 2005). Researchers engage with the macro environment by investigating the background and context of the field. This facilitates engagement with the micro environment, where the researcher is immersed in the field. Based on this approach, Phase 1, which lasted for eight months, corresponded to my macro engagement in the field. It aimed at specifying the research topic, questions and design, by exploring the local area where the study was set, together with analysis of relevant literature. This scoping stage played a key role in reformulating the initial questions and methods, which I then experimented with during Phase 2. During that second phase, lasting four months, I actively stepped into the field on the micro level by engaging in voluntary work and conducting a series of three focus groups. These sensitising activities led me to reshape my research approach and set the ground for the study I conducted over Phase 3. This final phase, lasting seventeen months, involved fully immersing myself in the field by conducting participant observations and semi-structured interviews.

Each of these phases involved the application of different research techniques, enabling me to find different ways of immersing myself in the field, and using tools that best captured the changing processes that emerged from my simultaneous engagement with the field and the literature. For Pickard (2013), “a balanced ethnography should combine emic and etic perspectives” (p.137), that is, the perspective of insiders from within the social group under study, and that of outsiders. Combining different research techniques allowed me to gather both perspectives.

Figure 5 provides an overview of how the sensitising activities I conducted over the three phases of fieldwork allowed me to reshape the social unit, social site, conceptual focus, techniques, and questions that frame the research.



Figure 5 - Overview of the research design across the three phases of field research (Le Louvier)

In order to establish the trustworthiness of my study, the following sections will provide a detailed and reflexive account of how I conducted the research across these three phases, what factors led me to reformulate aspects of the research design, and what were the benefits and limitations of the different techniques I used.

2.3. Phase 1 - Scoping the field

Phase 1 aimed at scoping the field in order to refine the research design and negotiate access.

I entered Phase 1 with a tentative interest in the role of local cultural institutions in the social inclusion of migrants. To start to explore this issue, the first eight months of the research were dedicated to the following activities:

1. I reviewed the literature on social inclusion and migration in the fields of LIS and heritage;
2. I mapped the cultural institutions and third sector organisations working with migrants in the North East England;
3. I contacted some of these organisations and met with three of them:
 - Newcastle City Library (<https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/leisure-libraries-and-tourism/libraries>);
 - Action Foundation (<https://actionfoundation.org.uk/>), a charity providing support to disadvantaged refugees and asylum via housing and language projects;
 - Investing in People and Culture (<https://i-p-c.org/>), a charity promoting the social inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers in the North East;
4. I piloted a group activity aimed at identifying and discussing information needs related to feelings of home with a group of five international students.

These sensitising activities allowed me to reshape my initial research interests, from the social inclusion of migrants in cultural institutions to the everyday life practices of people seeking asylum.

This specification of the social unit, from migrants to asylum seekers and refugees, was motivated by two reasons. First, throughout Phase 1, I realised that the term “migrant” was problematic, for it encompassed people with overly diverse backgrounds, from international students coming for a fixed period of time, to people who have been refused asylum and have no recourse to public fund. This high heterogeneity could not allow me to look at individual experiences within a specific sociocultural context. At the same time, my initial review of the LIS literature related to migration allowed me to identify refugees as a research population that was growing to form a clearly separate field of study. Their information behaviours were seen to be different to that of other migrants (Lloyd et al., 2013). Yet, recent information studies of refugees in the UK were scarce and focused on Scotland (Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018; Oduntan & Ruthven, 2017). Furthermore, no such study had yet solely focused on people who had been through the asylum system. Secondly, mapping the local area for organisations and actions involving migrants allowed me to identify a number of third sector organisations that were specifically working with refugees and asylum seekers, and which could potentially facilitate access to that particular population. Focusing on this social unit was not only convenient and scholarly relevant, but also more coherent with my ethnographic and constructivist grounded theory approach. It allowed me to analyse the interplay between the specific context of the UK asylum system and individual responses to it.

Specifying the social unit led me to reformulate Q1, from “How are migrants’ information practices negotiated within their new cultural environment?” to “What and who contributes to the rebuilding of refugees and asylum seekers’ information landscape in Newcastle-Gateshead?”. The initial question had guided me through the literature and allowed me to highlight the key concepts of social capital and information literacy in the social inclusion of migrants (Caidi & Allard, 2005; Lloyd, 2017b). The reformulation of Q1 at the end of Phase 1 focused on the specific context of people seeking asylum and refugees, and therefore centred the research on their perspective. This is further reflected in the use of the concept of information landscape, which relates to how individuals engage with their surroundings (Lloyd, 2006).

While the scoping phase led me to reduce the social unit, it also led me to extend the social site, from cultural institutions to the everyday life. My attempt to establish a research collaboration with local cultural institutions had been unfruitful, as they lacked the means and resources for such project. My review of the literature on the social inclusion of migrants in heritage studies highlighted the difficulty for cultural institutions of establishing horizontal relationships with migrant communities, due to a lack of resources and an institutional approach (see Lynch, 2014). At the same time, this review allowed me to reconsider my understanding of heritage, from a materialisation of the past preserved in museums, to a cultural practice that takes place in the everyday life (Smith, 2006). This conception of heritage appeared to more closely correspond to the feelings of home and belonging discussed during the pilot focus group I conducted with international students.

This reconfiguration of the social site led me to reformulate two of my research questions:

Q2. “What are the potential barriers and gate-openers to migrants’ use of cultural institutions’ services?” became “How do people who have been resettled here negotiate their information and heritage practices within their new cultural environment?”.

Q3. “How can a cultural heritage action project break these barriers and provide services that foster their cultural literacy?” became “Can participation in a heritage action foster both information literacy and a sense of belonging?”.

This reformulation aimed at avoiding the use of a top-down perspective that assumed the positive role of cultural institutions. Instead, my intention was to adopt a more exploratory approach that would investigate what heritage meant for the participants in their everyday life and what positive effects it may have.

This focus on the lived experiences of people seeking asylum and refugees required an immersion in the field. After piloting a focus group with international students, I attempted to replicate the study with non-student migrants, including people seeking asylum and refugees, by circulating a call for participants at an ESOL class. However, this recruitment method was inadequate

at this stage of the research, as I was an outsider in relation to that community. People seeking asylum are often considered as hard-to-reach population, because of their precarious situations and because of the mistrust towards institutions and researchers that may emerge from past traumatic experiences (Hynes, 2003). In order to engage them in the research and to draw a rich picture of their experience, it was first necessary to negotiate trust (Madziva, 2013). In my situation, this required a change of positionality, from external outsider to external insider (Banks, 1998). This led me to the next research phase: settling in the field.

2.4. Phase 2 – Settling in the field

After scoping the field by defining the social unit and the social site, the second step of the research consisted of walking into that field. The aim of Phase 2 was to get an initial overview of the everyday life of refugee and people seeking asylum living in Newcastle and to build rapport with them in order to fine-tune my research approach.

To this end, I conducted two types of sensitising activities:

1. I volunteered in two different local third sector organisations
2. I conducted a series of three participatory focus groups

2.4.1. Volunteering

I first volunteered weekly as a language tutor at MALENC (now LET <https://www.mysu.co.uk/organisation/let/>), a student-led language group based at Newcastle University that provided a space for local refugees and asylum seekers to practice speaking English on a weekly basis. The limited size and informality of the group allowed me to quickly get to know and build a relationship with its members. It is through our informal conversations that I first learned about the asylum system, and obtained an initial insight into the everyday life of some of the people who were experiencing it, particularly young males who had recently arrived in Newcastle. They shared their knowledge of some of the places and services that they accessed in their everyday life.

I then volunteered weekly at the Comfrey Project (<http://thecomfreyproject.org.uk/>), a charity providing therapeutic horticultural and creative activities for refugees and people seeking asylum. There was much more diversity in this organisation than in the language group, in terms of gender and age, as well as time spent in the UK and within the asylum system. I therefore had a different type of relationship with the members, and our conversations allowed me to get an insight into a different experience of the city and of the asylum process.

After a couple of months of volunteering for these two organisations, and attending events organised by other charities and community groups, I started to feel part of an informal network that included people who had gone through the asylum system, as well as the professionals, volunteers and activists working with them. I was not merely using participants and then disappearing, but had a personal relationship with some of them and was actively involved in the community. This allowed me to establish the reciprocity that is necessary to conduct ethical research with vulnerable individuals, although the relationship can never be fully equal (Madziva, 2013). Thus, I felt more comfortable and legitimate when I set up the focus groups for the second time.

2.4.2. Sensitising focus groups

Aims and questions

I conducted these focus groups in July-August 2017 with two main purposes:

1. To draw a first overview of the information needs, sources and barriers experienced by people who had been resettled in Newcastle-Gateshead as part of the asylum dispersal programme.
2. To experiment on participatory techniques.

Research approach

During these focus groups, I used techniques that were influenced by participatory action research and grounded theory principles (Cornwal & Jewkes, 1995; Kindon et al., 2007):

➤ **Participants agency**

The focus group setting allowed me to carry out group activities during which participants could take part in the analysis of their own situation and design their own solutions.

➤ **Mutual benefit**

The study was designed as a language space, where participants could practice English in a small, friendly and non-judgmental environment. This allowed the sessions to directly benefit the participants.

➤ **Non-coercive setting**

The study took place in a venue that was familiar to the participants for it hosts a weekly Conversation Group that many people attend. At the beginning of the study, participants were briefed about the research, and explained that they were free to leave at any time.

➤ **Researchers as facilitator**

The first two sessions were designed as games. The intention was for the participants to be actively involved and for me to act as a facilitator rather than as a leader.

➤ **Inductive process**

The first two sessions were guided by open-ended questions that aimed to engage participants in a collective discussion about their interactions with information and enabled them to discuss aspects that were important to them.

➤ **Simultaneous data collection and analysis**

Participatory activities allowed for data to be automatically discussed with the group. Activities were designed to allow participants to conduct a first process of categorisation while providing new data. I then conducted a second round of analysis between each session to feed into the following one, with a final analysis at the end of the focus groups and interviews.

➤ **Emergent design**

Simultaneous data collection and analysis allowed for the design of the study to adapt to the emerging results and to the group dynamic. For instance, I originally considered using a photovoice technique for Session 2, which consists in asking participants to take pictures of relevant

aspects of their everyday experiences that are then discussed during the group sessions (Wang & Burris, 1997). However, interactions with the participants allowed me to understand that it would be too much of a time commitment for them. This led me to design the information mapping board game as an alternative technique.

Participants’ demographics and recruitment

Four participants took part in the focus groups. Two of them attended the whole three sessions, one person attended only the first one, and another only the second one.

Participants formed a demographically heterogeneous group (Table 1):

Status	2 asylum seekers, 2 refugees
Gender	1 female, 3 males
Country of origin	Eritrea, Congo, Sudan
English level	From hesitant to proficient
Time in England	From 18 months to 13 years

Table 1 Pilot study participants

I recruited participants in two local language groups. A flyer presenting the essential information about the study was distributed at these events and sent by email to their participants (Appendix 1).

Ethics

The pilot study received ethical approval from the Faculty of Engineering and Environment at Northumbria University. Consent forms and information sheets were read and signed at the beginning of the first session (Appendix 2). Obtaining informed consent can be challenging when working in a multicultural context where participants have various linguistic backgrounds (Elköf, Hupli, & Leino-Kilpi, 2017). Therefore, part of the first session was dedicated to discussing the information sheet. As part of the language practice, each participant read one paragraph aloud and was then asked to reformulate it with their own words. Questions were then asked and clarifications provided in order to make sure that everybody had understood before proceeding onto the next paragraph. One person faced strong difficulties with their English communication, and therefore preferred not to take part in the study. As a new

participant joined in the second session, the same process was carried out individually before the group activity started. Two participants did not consent to be photographed and one did not consent to be audio-recorded. As a result, data was only collected through the material created by the participants and the notes I took during the sessions.

Activities

This sensitising study developed across three sessions:

1. Card Activity

Session 1 used a card activity (Fig. 6). The aim was to draw an initial overview of the participants' information needs and to discuss how they related to feelings of home.

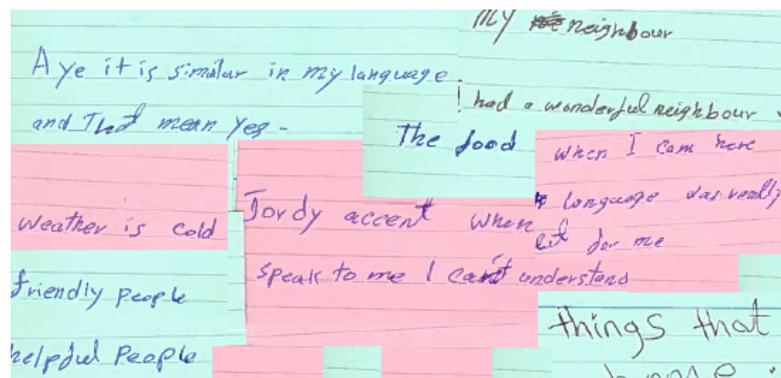


Figure 6 - Pilot study session 1: card activity (Le Louvier)

The session was divided into three parts:

1. Participants answered the question “What makes you feel at home here” on blue cards and “What prevents you from feeling at home here” on pink cards.
2. Participants read out their cards, which were then discussed collectively and placed on a board. Participants with a similar card could add it next to the previous one and discuss their choice. The process was repeated until all cards were placed on the board within different clusters.
3. Participants were invited to draw conclusions of the activity and debrief the session.

2. Information Mapping Board Game

Session 2 used a board game. The aim was to identify the participants' information needs, sources and barriers, and to mapped them onto a city map (Le Louvier & Innocenti, 2019). The game comprised five elements: a detailed street map of the urban area, a progression board, an eight-sided dice, green, yellow



Figure 7 – Pilot study session 2: information mapping board game (Le Louvier)

and pink flags, and coloured pieces (Fig. 7). The session lasted about two hours; participants had to leave before anybody won.

To allow participants to use the game autonomously, I started the session by explaining its rules:

- At the beginning of the game, each player placed their piece on the progression board.
- As the participants' pieces progressed on the board, the colour of the square on which their piece stood determined their possible actions:
 - **Yellow** – Players indicate on a yellow flag a type of information that they need in their everyday life and the source of information used to seek it, and place it on the map.
 - **Green** – Players indicate on a green flag a type of information they share in their everyday life and the medium they used to share it, and place it on the map.
 - **White** – Players throw a die showing different information media (radio, official sources, printed media, TV, computer, phone,

people and observation). They indicate information they either seek or share using the medium visible on the appropriate flag and place it on the map.

- **Pink** – After each turn, players can put a pink obstacle flag next to the flag just placed to indicate a barrier to that information activity.
- Each action was explained and discussed with the participants. Players moved two squares forward for each green and yellow flag they placed, one square forward for a pink flag, and one square backward when being stopped.

3. Diagramming and brainstorming

The aim of session 3 was to discuss the preliminary findings with the participants. I presented them a categorisation of the elements discussed during the previous sessions, which they rearranged and completed (Fig. 8). At the end of the session, they brainstormed ideas for an action based on these results.

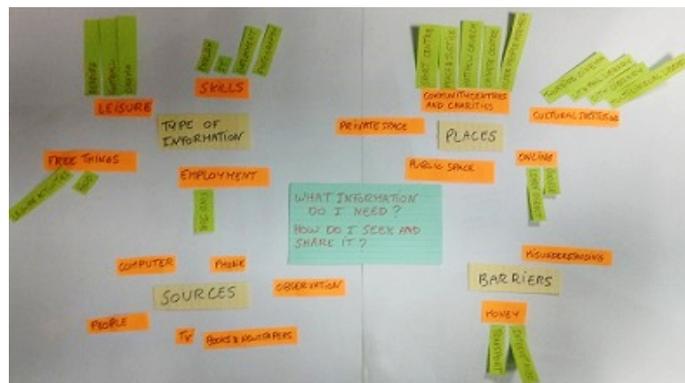


Figure 8 – Pilot study session 3: diagramming (Le Louvier)

Data analysis

After discussing and categorising the results with the participants, I finalised the analysis using situational mapping (Clarke, 2005), a technique that allowed me to account for the complexities of their situation, highlighting both the structure in which they were immersed and the way they experienced it (Fig. 9).

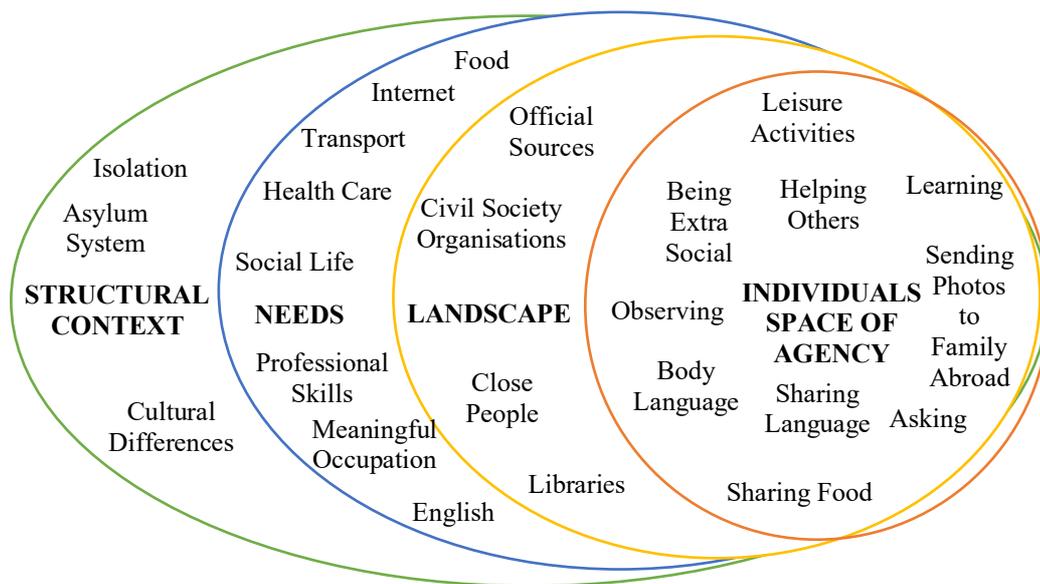


Figure 9 – Pilot study analysis: situational map of participants' information practices (Le Louvier)

2.4.3. Lessons from Phase 2

Volunteering and engaging in participatory focus groups allowed me to get to know the participants better and to learn about some aspects of their everyday life by sharing the same context and taking part in the same activities. The initial insights I got from these sensitising activities allowed me to refine the scope of social unit, research questions, and data collection techniques (see Fig. 5).

Through these activities, I drew a first overview of the participants' information landscapes, and of the different actors that shaped it. The asylum system, in particular, appeared as a major constrain to their everyday life information activities and to their sense of belonging. It seemed to have more impact on their experience than cultural differences, and to strongly influence the way they inhabited the city. This appeared clearly during the board game session, when the participants changed the rules of the game and started to give each other tips about where to find places that could help them cope with their situation. The map was soon covered with flags indicating charities, community groups and food banks where they could get free food, bus tickets, language practices, leisure activities, volunteering, and social opportunities. Participants seemed to be pushed to these places by the necessities caused by their situation as asylum

seekers. These initial insights also showed that participants related to these third sector organisations in a very distinct, and much more positive way, compared to their relationship with the formal asylum system. The former appeared as an enabler while the latter seemed to act as a barrier.

This observation led me to further specify the social unit, as the commonality between the participants seemed to not merely come from their experience of exile, but from that of going through the specific UK asylum system. From refugees and asylum seekers, the focus thus came down to people who had claimed asylum in the UK and had been through that process in Newcastle-Gateshead. This includes people considered as asylum seekers, refused asylum seekers and refugees, but excludes those who came to the UK having already obtained refugee status or humanitarian protection.

These initial insights helped me to reformulate my research questions (Fig. 10) around three main aspects.

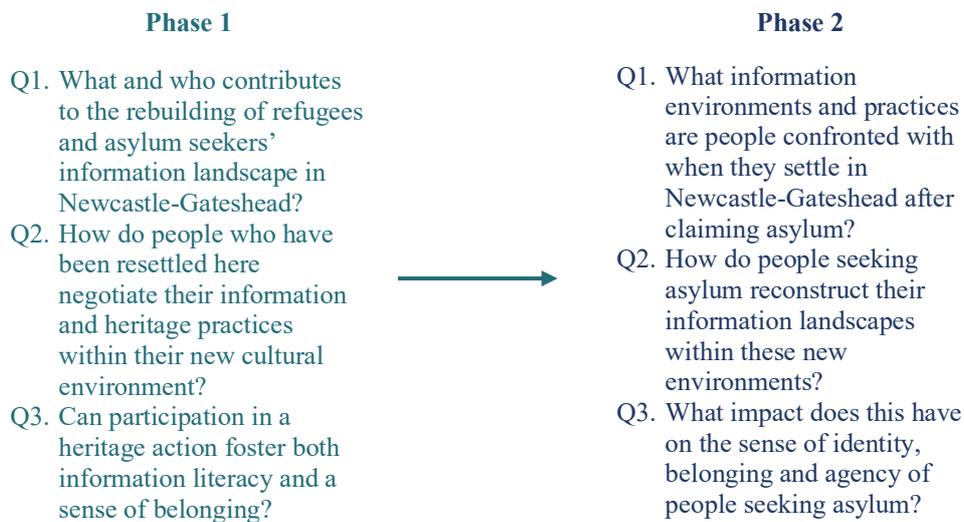


Figure 10 - Evolution of the research questions from Phase 2 to Phase 3 (Le Louvier)

First, rather than looking at the participants' information landscape as one entity, it seemed important to investigate the different information environments that they inhabited, and how these influenced the process of rebuilding their information landscapes.

Second, the initial data collected about the participants' information needs and practices appeared similar to what had been highlighted in previous research

involving forced migrant communities (see Literature Review chapter). Instead of focusing on these individual practices, it therefore seemed more interesting to investigate how the participants experienced the information practices shaped by their external information environments.

Third, talking about heritage appeared challenging, for it is an abstract concept that has specific connotations in the English language, UK context and academic terminology, but may not make sense to people who do not share this particular way of knowing. While during the focus groups, I intended to mitigate that limitation by talking about feelings of home, that concept also appeared to have similar limitations. Although it was not easy to talk about it, instances of heritage were at times observable in the participants' behaviour, especially in relation to values, habits, food, and language. These instances seemed to be related to having a sense of identity, belonging and agency, which were indirectly observable in the participants' speeches and behaviours. Instead of framing Q3 around the co-creation of a heritage action, which would have required a shared understanding of the concept, I therefore decided to focus my attention on the effects of heritage as I could observe them in people's everyday life.

This also led me to review my research techniques. On the one hand, the use of participatory techniques during the focus groups had proved beneficial to:

- Provide a space for participants to practice English in a friendly and non-judgmental environment.
- Allow participants to change the rules of the activity, thus directing the research towards what was actually relevant to them.
- Foster a positive group dynamic that increased the participants' engagement in the study.
- Collaboratively discuss ideas for a research-informed action.
- Build an initial picture of people's information needs and barriers on a city scale, which could inform local community-based actions and policies.

On the other hand, a number of challenges and limitations also emerged that led me not to continue with that technique.

First, attendance was quite low, with only two of the participants attending all three sessions. Recruitment had been difficult, and it was difficult to convey the importance of taking part in all three sessions of the study. The group dynamic was at its best at the end of the study, which did not allow us to fully benefit from it during the early stages of the research. Engagement over a longer period of time seemed necessary both for the benefits of the group and for the research. However, it also appeared complicated to organise as the participants had busy lives, learning English and other skills whilst also working for those allowed to, or struggling with the system. Moreover, I realised that this method would be difficult to replicate with a larger group, thereby limiting the number of participants and consequently, the variety of experiences represented. As it seemed that people interested to take part in such study would mainly be young males already involved in many activities and community groups around the city, the research insights predominantly benefited those who had less difficulties navigating their new environment.

As my research interest evolved towards the everyday experiences of people seeking asylum, it appeared that participatory focus groups were useful for obtaining an overview of the information environment experienced, but did not allow me to get a more nuanced and detailed view of individual experiences. What I was observing when volunteering or taking part in different social activities was much more insightful than what I could get during focus groups, for I could observe what were the effects of information and heritage in the context in which they emerged. Further observations and informal engagement with the participants appeared necessary before I could start a more formal conversation. This led me to the last phase of the research fieldwork: inhabiting the field.

2.5. Phase 3 - Inhabiting the field

The aim of Phase 3 was to further immerse myself in the field in order to build a rich and nuanced picture of the participants' everyday life experiences.

To this end, I used two different techniques and gathered three types of data:

1. Participants observations at different sites;
2. Semi-structured interviews with insiders;
3. Semi-structured interviews with key informants.

This multi-method approach allowed me to generate a richer picture of the field by including both explicit and implicit aspects of the participants' experiences, and gather both emic and etic perspectives. From Phase 1 and Phase 2, it was evident that people seeking asylum and refugees sometimes acted differently from what they said they did. Therefore, these different techniques thus complemented each other and allowed me to gather insights from a larger sample of participants.

2.5.1. Participant observations

Observations constitute a popular research method in ethnography as they allow the researcher to “discover how people behave and interact in particular situations” (Pickard, 2013, p.225). I therefore used this technique to observe how people who have settled in Newcastle-Gateshead after seeking asylum experienced and interacted with information in various settings. Focusing on people's actions and interactions was particularly useful when examining the impact of specific environments on people's behaviour. By using observations, I could also bypass some of the language and cultural barriers that stood between the participants and me.

Social situation selection

I conducted participant observations within various social situations, which were framed by the activities offered by charities and community groups supporting refugees and asylum seekers. The two main observation sites were the Comfrey Project (Fig.11) and MALENC language group, the two organisations where I had been volunteering since Phase 2. Additional observations were conducted during a popular weekly conversation group held at the Multilingual Library (<http://www.multilinguallibrary.org.uk/>), as well as at Crossings (<http://www.crossings.org.uk/>), a community group providing free music workshops for refugees, asylum seekers and the broader migrant community.



Figure 11 - Comfrey Project allotment site in autumn (Le Louvier)

Two main factors influenced the selection of these social situations. First, I had identified them during Phase 1 and 2 as recurrent activities that structured the everyday life of different groups of local refugees and people seeking asylum, and appeared particularly meaningful to the people I had met. Secondly, I had gained access to them through the networks I had built over Phase 2. These sites have differences and similarities that make a direct comparison impossible. Thus, the aim was not to use each individual site as a case study to compare with others, but to draw from their differences in activities, size, structure, locations and membership to add depth to the ethnography. Additional events, meetings and informal gatherings have also contributed to my comprehension of the field and of the issues faced by people going through the asylum process more broadly, although for confidentiality reasons, they were not recorded as field notes.

Participation and engagement

Combining the exploration conducted in Phase 2 and the participants observations conducted over Phase 3, my engagement in the field lasted for about twenty-one months. Over these months, I spent about half a day weekly at the Comfrey Project, and two hours weekly at MALENC language group. In addition to these regular activities, I spent an approximate average of three hours per week taking part in events and activities held by other organisations.

In all these sites, I conducted participant observations with the aim of being immersed in the same social situations as the participants, and recording my own

perceptions of these situations. Most of my field notes were taken after the event occurred, allowing me to fully participate in these interactions. However, my level of participation varied across the sites and time, depending on my position, as a volunteer or participant, and the activity going on.

At MALENC language group, I led language games, took part in the activities organised by other volunteers, or helped participants with specific needs, such as homework or job search. On the one hand, I was one of the main organisers for the group. On the other hand, the setting was very informal and we regularly engaged in social activities outside of the language session that blurred the boundaries between volunteers and participants.

At the Comfrey Project, I did not have an organisational role but contributed to whatever was needed: weeding, sowing seeds, cooking, washing up dishes, cleaning, playing, chatting, ensuring that members were welcomed and engaged, and that the necessary tasks were conducted, etc. Within that group, positionality was determined by various factors such as the time spent in the organisation, the level of English, and the individual skills people could contribute. Thus, I had fewer responsibilities and was less involved in the project than other members who may have been, or were still going through the asylum system, but had been coming to the project for many years and were resource people for specific tasks such as cooking and gardening. Most of the time, I was taking part in the different activities together with the other members, but I was not leading these activities.

In the other sites where I conducted observations, my participation was similarly context dependent, and varied from learning to play the violin to helping someone reading an administrative letter, going to a gig, or attending a meeting.

Even though I was, to some extent, an insider within these microcosms, I could never be a full insider in the social unit as I had not been through the asylum system myself. Consequently, I only had access to the everyday life of the participants through participation in these social situations, which gave me a fractured view of their experiences. Engaging in the field of research for a prolonged period of time allowed me to mitigate this limitation.

Being engaged in the field for twenty-months allowed me to get a more nuanced comprehension of the settings I was exploring, to avoid misinterpretations, and to confirm some of the accounts I was given by comparing them with other accounts. For instance, it allowed me to qualify my interpretation of why many people seeking asylum were looking for volunteering opportunities:

- (1) Field note One participant said that one of the first things that the lawyer would ask a person seeking asylum is whether they are volunteering somewhere or not. If they didn't, it would look bad and they might have to look for volunteering opportunities. [...] This is something I didn't know last summer, when I was surprised that everybody during the focus groups was volunteering. People may not only volunteer because they need some meaningful occupations, they may also volunteer because it is expected from them.

This excerpt shows how spending a year in the field and talking to different people in different situations allowed me to get a new perspective on the need for voluntary activities that had first come up during the sensitising focus groups. Thus, I could review my interpretation and refine my analysis.

Long-term engagement in the field also allowed me to regain some distance and to adopt a more critical perspective on what I was witnessing. Field notes taken during my first month of observation reflect my excitement at discovering this community:

- (2) Field note It was a lovely day, sunny and warm. Being in the garden, shelling beans, and having lunch outside with a lot of people reminded me of my childhood. It felt like family.

Later notes move on from this idyllic vision to take into account moments of tension within the group:

- (3) Field note Once in the kitchen, this person tells you what to do, gives you orders. It becomes their space, their responsibility. Another member walked in the kitchen and helped themselves to some rice. They told them off quite rudely, saying that people cannot just come to the kitchen and pick up food. [...] There is a sense of territoriality related to the kitchen. You can feel the tension that arises between members when they all want to get control over the cooking process. What is interesting in that this tension just disappears from the kitchen space after the cooking is finished. When washing up the dishes, the space is reconfigured and transformed from tensions to confessions.

These excerpts show that spending a prolonged period of time in the field allowed me to engage in different types of relationships with the participants, to experience good days and bad days, to observe the tacit issues and tensions that take place in every group, and to therefore mitigate biases by having a wide range of data to interpret.

Furthermore, this long-term engagement was important for my positionality in the field, as I was part of the community beyond the scope of the research. I was a volunteer before, during, and after I conducted data collection.

Field notes

To record these observations, I wrote field notes as soon as possible after they occurred. As I did not exactly know what I was looking for, I tended to note everything I could remember: impressions, interactions I had with participants, interactions between participants, or between the participants and their environment, observations related to the structure of the organisation, as well as reflections on my own positionality. When an event seemed particularly meaningful, I intended to describe it as a scene that could allow readers to visualise what was happening. The use of an ethnographic narrative style (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2011) allowed me to present participants as protagonists of the scenes, thus conveying their individuality and agency.

Writing field notes is an interpretive process, not a neutral transcription of events. What I remembered and found meaningful, as well as the way I transcribed it, resulted from my own perspective and interpretation, and was therefore neither complete nor absolute.

In order to put my interpretations into perspective, I needed to add to my own narrative voice that of the people I was writing about. Therefore, I completed the data collection with interviews.

2.5.2. Semi-structured interviews with insiders

The second stage of this ethnographic study consisted of semi-structured interviews, which I conducted with people who had an insider experience of

exile and of the asylum system. Interviews allowed me to get to know more about the personal experiences and feelings of the participants (Kvale, 1996). It also allowed them to express and interpret their life stories in their own words. The aim was therefore to record different perspectives on the process of settling in Newcastle-Gateshead after claiming asylum, and to contrast my observations with the informants' interpretations of their own experience, in line with constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006).

Interview guide

Interviews were semi-structured, which allowed me to be responsive to the interviewees' remarks while ensuring that all interviews covered the same basic grounds (Ellis, 1993, as cited in Pickard, 2013). The interview guide was designed to get a greater depth into some of the themes that had emerged from the iterative analysis of the field notes, and to explore topics that had not been covered in the observation stage.

The interview guide covered four main themes: the local area, the asylum system, information practices, and cultural practices. Each theme was first explored through an open-ended question, such as "do you remember your first day in Newcastle?", "what was your experience of the asylum process?", "where do you go when you need information?", or "what element of your culture is important for you to keep?". These questions intended to leave space for the interviewees to explore the topics that they deemed relevant, to avoid those that they did not wish to disclose, to develop their own interpretation, and to "encourage unanticipated statements and stories to emerge" (Charmaz, 2006, p.26). They were followed by more specific questions, which were based on the interviewee's input and aimed at exploring these themes in greater depth (see interview guide example in Appendix 3).

Interview setting

Most of the interviewees were people who I had previously met during my volunteering activities and participant observations. This familiarity facilitated in-depth discussions. The fifteen interviews with insiders were audio-recorded. They lasted on average one hour and twenty-one minutes each. Depending on

what was most convenient for the interviewee, the interviews took place either on the premises of the Comfrey Project in Gateshead, or in a private and quiet space at Northumbria University, located in Newcastle city centre.

When hosted at the university and to facilitate the comfort of the participants, refreshments were provided and a break was taken either halfway through the interview or when they requested it. Beyond comfort, breaks had the effect of changing the dynamic of the interview. In the first part of the conversation, participants tended to be careful in the way they answered questions and could sound slightly unnatural once the recorder was on. In contrast, the informal conversations we had over breaks seemed to allow them to come back to the interview much more relaxed. Their answers were longer and they allowed themselves to make jokes and divert from my questions to say what they wanted to say.

As my first language is French, I offered the possibility to interviewees to speak in either French or English. When the interview was conducted in a language that was not the participant's first language, the length of the interviews allowed mitigating communication barriers by giving us time to explain ourselves, repeat, and use an online translator when needed.

Recruitment, inclusion criteria and sampling

I first recruited interviewees via word of mouth at the various charities and community groups where I conducted fieldwork. Thanks to the networks I had built throughout Phase 2 and 3, I could then broaden the sample by circulating a call for participants (Appendix 4) and presenting the project at two different English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes. Participants were offered a gift voucher for the local shopping centre as a good will gesture for their time and contribution. Travel expenses were also covered when needed. This small incentive appeared necessary as most participants were facing strong financial difficulties that may have prevented them from reaching the interview room.

Four inclusion criteria were used to select participants:

- **Being over eighteen years old** – A person under 18 years of age claiming asylum in the UK is either dependent on their parents/carers, or, if unaccompanied, is “entitled to the same local authority support as any other looked after child” (Home Office, 2017a, p.9). The experience of children seeking asylum is therefore different to that of adults and was not included in the context of this research.
- **Having settled in the UK through the asylum route** – There are two ways for refugees to arrive in the UK. The first one is via a resettlement programme, such as the Gateway Protection Programme and the Mandate Scheme or the Syrian Vulnerable Person’s Resettlement Scheme. The second way is via the asylum route (UNHCR, n.d.b). In the first case, people are recognised as refugees before being resettled in the UK. Therefore, they do not go through the asylum system. Although some of their needs and some of the services they access may be similar, they are part of specific programmes that make their experience of the integration process different to that of asylum seekers (All Party Parliamentary Group on Refugees [APPGR], 2017). People taking the asylum route submit their asylum claims once in the UK. Until granted asylum, they do not have the same rights and do not benefit from the same support as refugees. This research only focuses on the latter group and their distinct information and settlement experience.
- **Living in Newcastle-Gateshead** – The focus of this research is on the local area and the barriers and affordances it has on the information experience of refugees and asylum seekers.
- **Speaking English or French** – To be able to communicate directly and for the interviewees to provide informed consent, they needed to have a reasonable command of either English or French.

Within this group, my aim was to include participants that reflected a diversity of individual experiences. This approach is commonly used in LIS research on forced migrants for this is a particularly heterogeneous group (see Alan & Imran, 2015; Lloyd, 2014; Lloyd, Kennan, Thompson, & Qayyum, 2013; Lloyd, Pilerot,

& Hultgren, 2017; Oduntan & Ruthven, 2019). I therefore used a combination of convenience and maximum variation purposive sampling, based on the following criteria:

- **Social situation** – Most interviewees were regular participants in the social situations where I conducted the observations. This was because I was able to compare my observations with their accounts and also due to the individual differences of the people attending each group. In order to open up the research to other experiences of the city, participants in other social situations were also recruited.
- **Ethnicity** – Refugees and asylum seekers living in Newcastle-Gateshead came from diverse ethnic backgrounds. The sampling strategy aimed to reflect this diversity.
- **Gender** – Although the majority of asylum claimants in the UK are men (Refugee Council, 2019), women and men can have very different experiences of the asylum process (Canning, 2017). Without seeking a statistical representation, the sampling strategy sought to include experiences from both gender groups.
- **Immigration status and asylum experience** – I sought to include people who were granted asylum immediately, people who were granted asylum after appealing, and people who had been refused and were still going through the appeal process or submitting a fresh claim. These different statuses impact on the information needs and overall experience of the individuals (Oduntan & Ruthven, 2019). I considered that when looking at inclusion, this criterion was more relevant than the time spent in the UK, as it limits the rights and possibility of integration of an individual: someone who spent eight years in the asylum system may not feel more integrated than someone who receives the refugee status after eight months.

As experienced during Phase 2, conducting research with people seeking asylum and refugees can be challenging, for people live in precarious conditions making it difficult for them to commit to research projects. Moreover, they often have busy lives, battling through the legal and administrative process, learning English and other skills, managing childcare, or whatever their obligations may

be. The interview setting may also be intimidating, for it may be reminiscent of the asylum interview, or of potentially traumatic events. Some people I met also told me they felt tired of being asked to tell their personal stories, which often did not bring them any direct benefits. Trust appeared particularly important in order for people to agree to take part in these interviews. My long-term engagement in the field thus proved necessary in order to engage participants in the interviews and for enhancing the depth of the conversation.

Demographics

With the interviewees consent, I collected personal data related to:

- Country origin;
- Gender;
- Legal status;
- Time they spent in the UK;
- Time spent within the asylum system;
- Time since they obtained leave to remain (if granted).

Interviewees came from eight different countries (Table 2), which appear amongst the most common countries of origin for clients of the Newcastle-based charity West End Refugee Service ([WERS], 2018). One of the interviewees was stateless, and two others chose not to disclose their nationality. Four interviewees originated from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This was due to the fact that interviews could be conducted in French, providing an opportunity for them to share their experience in a native language.

Country of origin	Number of Participants
Democratic Republic of the Congo	4
Syria	2
Iran	1
Iraq	1
Eritrea	1
Bangladesh	1
Libya	1
Sri Lanka	1
Stateless	1
Unspecified	2

Table 2 – Insiders interviewees’ country of origin

One third of the participants identified as female and two thirds identified as male (Table 3). As previously stated, the aim was not to achieve parity but to be able to encompass the experience of both gender groups.

Gender	Number of Participants
Male	10
Female	5

Table 3 – Insiders interviewees’ gender

The sample comprised both people who were in the asylum system and people who had obtained a form of leave to remain (Table 4). In this research, I consider a refugee any person who has been granted Indefinite Leave to Remain, Exceptional Leave to Remain, Humanitarian Protection or Discretionary Leave, as a result of their asylum claim in the UK. The category asylum seeker refers to people whose asylum claim is still pending, and who may be at different stages of the asylum system – initial claim, appeal, or fresh claim. Interviews encompass the experience of people who have acquired the refugee status early on the process of settlement, and that of people who have remained in the asylum system long after having settled in.

Status	Number of Participants
Refugee	8
Asylum Seeker	7

Table 4 – Insiders interviewees’ legal status

Two interviewees obtained a leave to remain after six months, which allowed them to move on to finding a job, pursuing their education, getting their own accommodation and using the generic benefit system. However, the majority of interviewees went through lengthy appeal procedures, and for some, periods of detention and destitution. Three interviewees were still in the asylum system after respectively eight, ten and thirteen years in the UK. About 67% of the participants who had received an initial decision at the time of the interview had been refused (Table 5), which reflects the national statistics for 2018 (House of Commons, 2019).

Interviewees who went through appeal	8
Interviewees granted asylum on initial decision	4
Interviewees waiting for an initial decision	2

Table 5 – Insiders interviewees’ stages in the asylum process

Those out of the asylum system had obtained a leave to remain for between three months and seven years (Table 6).

Approximate time since leave to remain was obtained	Number of Participants
Not obtained	7
3 months	1
4 months	1
5 months	1
6 months	1
2 years	1
3 years	1
6 years	1
7 years	1

Table 6 – Insiders interviewees’ approximate time since obtaining of a leave to remain

For the majority of the participants, the experience of the asylum system was current or very recent. The participants who had obtained a leave to remain several years ago had more distant perspective on the process. However, their accounts did not differ much from those who were still going through the system. These variations allowed me to investigate both the effect of the asylum system and of the process of adaptation to a new socio-cultural environment on the participants’ experiences.

These interviews contributed to add nuance and individual insights to the picture I had drawn with the observations. To further refine this picture and balance the emic view of the participants with an etic perspective (Pickard, 2013), I conducted interviews with key informants.

2.5.3. Semi-structured interviews with key informants

The third stage of this study consisted of twelve semi-structured interviews, which I conducted with people who had gained an external knowledge of the experience of asylum by working or volunteering with people who have been through that process (Table 7).

The aim of these interviews was to get a different perspective on the issue I was investigating by talking to professionals of the field as well as volunteers who had a more global view of the issues that people face on the local level, and a more in-depth knowledge of some of the organisations supporting refugees and

Organisation	Key Informant	Recording Modality
West End Refugee Service	Support Worker	Audio-recorded
Comfrey Project	Development coordinator	Audio-recorded
North of England Refugee Service	Director / Volunteer	Note-recorded Audio-recorded
Conversation Group	Volunteer	Audio-recorded
Angelou Centre	Volunteer	Audio-recorded
Multilingual Library	Volunteer	Audio-recorded
Crossings	Former Chair	Audio-recorded
Newcastle City Council	Migration, Refugee and Asylum Lead	Audio-recorded
Action Language	Project Manager	Note-recorded
Regional Refugee Forum	Project Manager	Note-recorded
Newcastle City of Sanctuary	Coordinator	Note-recorded
Freedom from Torture	Volunteer	Note-recorded

Table 7– Interviews with key informants

asylum seekers. This allowed me to incorporate sites and experiences on which I had not focused during my participant observations, and to further investigate and clarify some of the elements that had emerged from the observations and interviews with insiders.

This phase started with meetings with representatives of local migrant organisations that allowed me to get an initial insight into the local context and issues faced by people seeking asylum. These meetings were recorded via note taking. As the research progressed, in-depth interviews were conducted that were audio-recorded and lasted one hour and thirty-six minutes on average.

The interviews with key informants explored similar topics to those explored with the insiders – the local area, the asylum system, information and cultural practices, but through the lens of the organisation they were related to (see interview guide sample in Appendix 5). Additional insight was sought into the specific services provided by these organisations and how they networked with each other. These interviews were also used to triangulate the findings emerging from the ongoing data analysis by discussing them with professionals in the field.

The organisations selected included local charities, community groups and authorities that appeared of particular relevance to the information experience of

local refugees and asylum seekers over the previous stages of the research. They comprised:

- Information and service providers;
- Language classes and practices;
- Therapeutic and leisure activities.

As explored in the findings and discussion chapter, these different places and services act as important information providers and grounds that contribute to shaping the information practices of the participants.

2.5.4. Transcription

Transcribing interviews was an ongoing process, which I conducted as I collected new data. This allowed me to acquire an in-depth knowledge of the data and to revise the interview guide between each interview. I followed a denaturalised approach to transcription whereby I thought to transcribe the exact speech of the interviewees, but did not include non-verbal and extra linguistic features. The aim of the transcription was to accurately render “the meanings and perceptions created and shared during a conversation” rather than focusing on linguistic and speech patterns (Oliver, Serovich, & Mason, 2005, p.1277). Transcriptions are written in the language used during the interview, that is, English or French. When excerpts of interviews conducted in French are used in the body of this dissertation, I present their English translation and provide the original text in appendix 6.

2.5.5. Data analysis

The process of data analysis followed a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006). I conducted the analysis over two stages. During the first stage, I simultaneously collected and analysed data, starting with the field notes and adding the interviews as I conducted and transcribed them. The analysis was therefore an iterative process, which consisted in comparing newly gathered data with previously collected data, thus repeatedly revising the emerging codes and categories. The second stage of the analysis started after I considered that I was

nearing data saturation, and stopped collecting new data. Then, I took some distance from the field and went through a phase of theoretical coding.

Coding process and data saturation

The simultaneous data collection and analysis phase consisted of three steps that I conducted iteratively: initial, focused and axial coding. Each time I collected a new piece of data – field note or interview, I conducted an initial coding of that material, using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo. The aim of initial coding is to create code names that are as close as possible to the data in order to avoid theoretical bias (Charmaz, 2006). I therefore conducted incident-by-incident coding to break down each meaningful unit of data into different codes. This method was preferred to line-by-line coding, which did not allow me to draw meaning from the data. Codes were named using gerunds rather than topics, in order to focus the analysis on processes, be they related to actions, thoughts or emotions (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1978). In vivo codes were also used when interview participants used a particularly meaningful wording.

Figure 12 provides an example of the initial coding process for one page of an interview transcript with an insider. It shows that the analysis of that page led to the creation of sixteen initial codes, which are presented on the right side of the page, next to the associated quote. In total, the initial coding process led me to the creation of one thousand eight hundred and fourteen codes for the three types of data I collected, which shows the richness of the codes that emerged from that process. As I collected new data, I conducted focused coding by comparing initial codes with each other, and grouping them under new categories. These categories were iteratively completed or transformed as I collected new data and created new initial codes. Through this process, the one thousand eight hundred and fourteen initial codes were grouped under eighty-two focused codes.

As codes and categories started to accumulate, I moved on to axial coding, by regrouping categories under overarching themes and analysing their relationships (Charmaz, 2006). I conducted this process iteratively at various points of Phase 3. For the axial coding phase, I left NVivo and came back to paper, as this allowed me to assemble categories and sub-categories by physically moving the different codes.

So you said before that people don't know about England before they arrive.	
<i>Yes exactly, when people arrive in UK or Newcastle, so most of people like 90% they don't know anything about Newcastle</i>	Knowing nothing about Newcastle
About Newcastle or about England in general?	
<i>About law, about culture, about how to go to town or they don't know what is keeping, they don't know how the contract house, how to sign, they don't know how they will live, they don't know how to use the electricity, like gas. So people depend, some of them better than other people. So...</i>	Needing cultural and practical information
What about you? What did you know before you came?	Not knowing how to go out
<i>When I came in the UK, so the difficult thing was for me, I tried to know how I can go to out so fortunately I have a friend, not friend just he lives in our house. So he told me let's go to show you the post office and took your money from the post office. I didn't know anything any complete about the post office what is post office, and he told me this is your house, this is your address.</i>	Feeling lucky to have a housemate Needing to find the Post Office to get allowance
So is it just your housemate who told you that?	Not knowing what a post office is
<i>So who share with us the house because usually when people arrive in Newcastle the home office contracts with Jomast or G4S give refugees or the new asylum seeker you can say house sharing. So house sharing depend, some of them 1 person 1 room, some of them 2 person per room.</i>	Finding the Post Office through housemates Not being provided information by Jomast
Did you have a room for yourself?	
<i>My room is not for myself, we are sharing room... Ok the sharing room, because when people arrive they don't know anything about the UK. First meeting when they go to the police station or to immigration they ask him 'are you ok with people or not?' but they don't ask him, because he don't know anything about the UK just he says 'ok I'm ok with people'. 'Ok, can you sign'. So the refugee when he signs they give him sharing room because he says he is ok with people.</i>	Being forced to share a room Not knowing that you sign up for room sharing
So basically you sign and you don't know what you are signing for.	
<i>Yes, exactly. So it's ok, I'm no problem with people I have no problem so can you sign? After you sign it. So the sharing room, the life is difficult because when we arrive we don't know anywhere any people, any persons so.. I met first person my chance in my room. He was very very good person, now he is my friend and I'm proud of him he is very good. It was my chance, but some.. so... really people don't get that chance.</i>	Signing papers without knowing what they are Housemates as first friends Feeling lucky to have a nice housemate
Yeah sometimes you don't get along well with the person.	
<i>Yeah the culture if not similar it is very difficult, the language is difficult. Second thing, if people don't respect each other it's really difficult. Some people drink alcohol some of them is not, so about religion. So the house sharing is no problem but room sharing, I'm not with this thing, it's really really bad. I remember I had operation, so after operation the person he has to be at home for 5 days in, resting in the bed. So in bed, so the guy is with me, it helped me and he does his best. But usually after operation the person is getting naked, so it is better for him in bed without clothes. So if you don't know someone in your room it is really...</i>	Struggling with housemates 'It's really really bad' Lacking privacy

Figure 12 - Initial coding process: one page interview transcript and initial codes (Le Louvier)

Figure 13 provides an overview of all the focused codes created during the analysis and of the four overarching categories they were associated with during the axial coding process.

In order to better demonstrate how codes and categories were created and how they relate to each other, Figure 14 presents the tree of codes that emerged from the sixteen initial codes created during the analysis of the one page interview transcript presented in Fig. 12 (e.g. “needing to find the Post Office to get allowance”). It shows how these initial codes were grouped under one or two levels of focused codes (e.g. needing the Post Office). It also shows how axial coding was then used to start drawing meaning from the data and specify the relationship between the different aspects of a focused code (e.g. Why do people need to find the Post Office? To receive their allowance; How do they find the Post Office? Via their housemates; What do they know about the Post Office? Nothing). It also shows that at this stage, some of the focused codes appeared in more than one focused coding category.

As codes and categories were created, I could direct the sampling process or orientate the interview questions towards specific aspects that needed refining or confirmation. For instance, I intended to interview more women participants to understand if their experience of topics such as room sharing was similar to that of male participants. I also intended to ask more questions about the relationship between housemates, to better understand the positives and negatives it involved. The aim of this “theoretical sampling” process was to intend to saturate the categories until no new sub-categories emerged (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

To assess when I was nearing data saturation, I kept track of the number of new focused codes created after each piece of data was analysed. Similarly, to the results put forward by Guest, Bunce & Johnson (2006), Figure 15 shows that when coding the insider interviews, no new focused code emerged after the twelfth interview. At the fifteenth interview, I therefore considered that I was nearing data saturation and stopped conducting more interviews. For the interviews with key informants, the number of relevant local organisations determined the sample size.

<p style="text-align: center;">Fracture</p> <p>Being misinformed Being moved around Not Knowing anything Living in economic poverty Not doing anything Loosing identity Being detained Waiting Not being believed Struggling with mental health issues and negative feelings Not being able to communicate with the Home Office Living in asylum accommodation Facing cultural differences</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Healing</p> <p>Joining or creating community groups Learning your rights Working hard to integrate Rebuilding Identity Building a sense of belonging Relating to the local heritage Helping others Trying to make sense of your situation (meaning making) Re-enacting past habits Receiving emotional support Appreciating what the UK gives you</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Needs</p> <p>First day needs Advising newcomers Lacking guidance and support Needing specialised information Needing to learn the language Needing to work Needing access to education Needing access to health services Needing mental health support Needing food Needing a bank account Needing access to mobility Needing cheap appropriate clothing Needing internet access Needing the Post Office Needing an interpreter Needing a solicitor Needing to find a house Needing information about benefits Needing travel documents Needing the shopping centre Needing the library Needing cultural activities Needing physical activity Needing to volunteer Needing a family Needing social contact Needing to meet people who speak your language Needing to learn how to navigate the city Needing to learn how to navigate the system and facing its contradictions</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Resources</p> <p>Needing local volunteers Needing charities Going to the Multilingual Library Going to Crossings Going to foodbanks Needing to go to Citizen Advice Going to the Angelou Centre Going to the Red Cross Needing to go to the international house Needing to go to the Chinese Centre Going to the Language Group Needing to go to the Comfrey Project Needing to go to the Conversation Group Needing to go to the Refugee Service Needing to go to Action Foundation Needing Schools Going to College Being given information by the local police Needing to talk to local MP Finding information through social worker Calling Asylum Help Being provided information by Jomast (or not) Searching for information online Being provided information by friends Being provided information by your housemates Needing to go to Church and the Mosque</p>

Figure 13 - Overview of the overarching themes and related codes during the axial and focused coding process (Le Louvier)

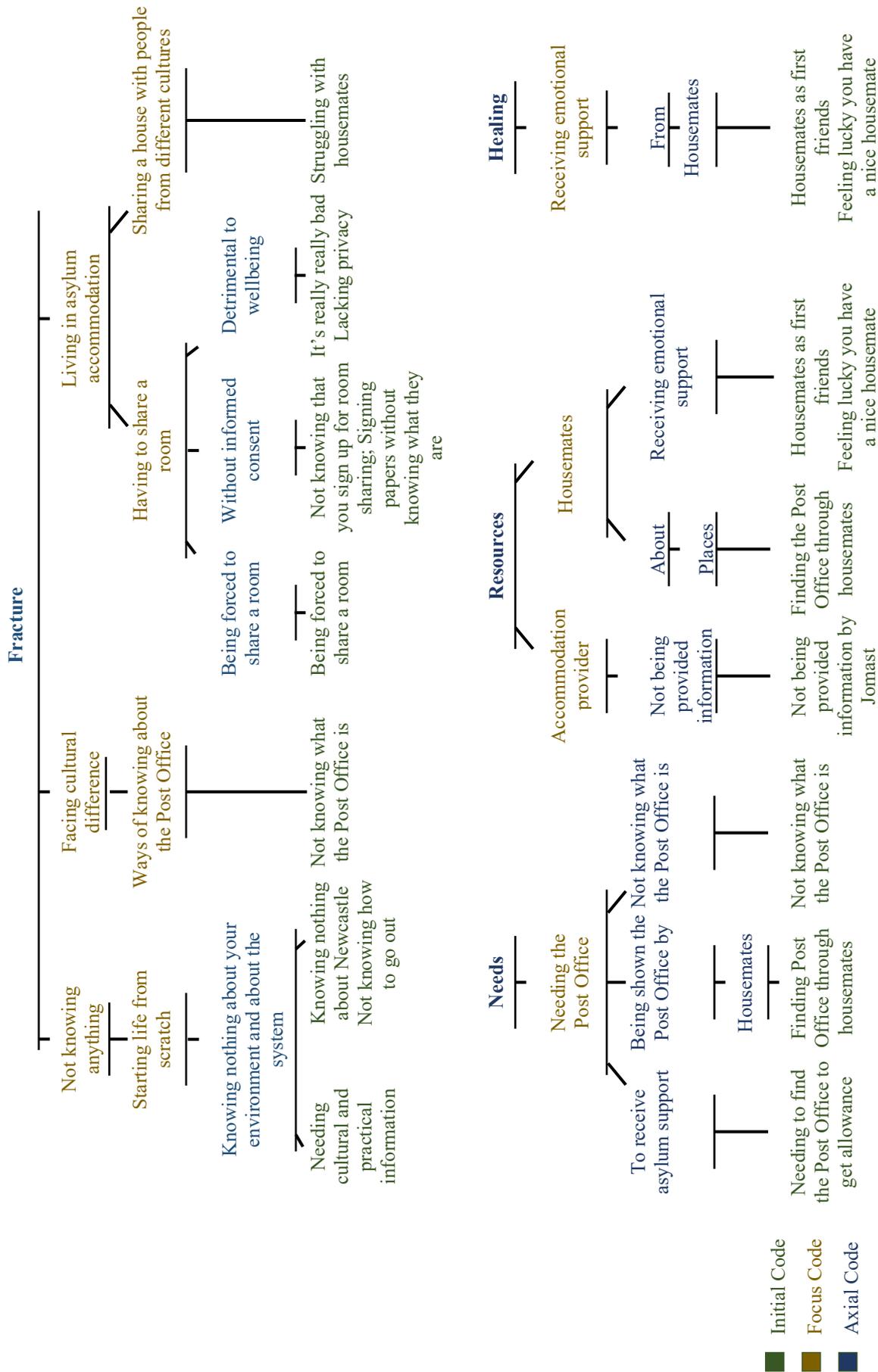


Figure 14 - Excerpt of the tree of codes after the initial, focused and axial coding process (Le Louvier)

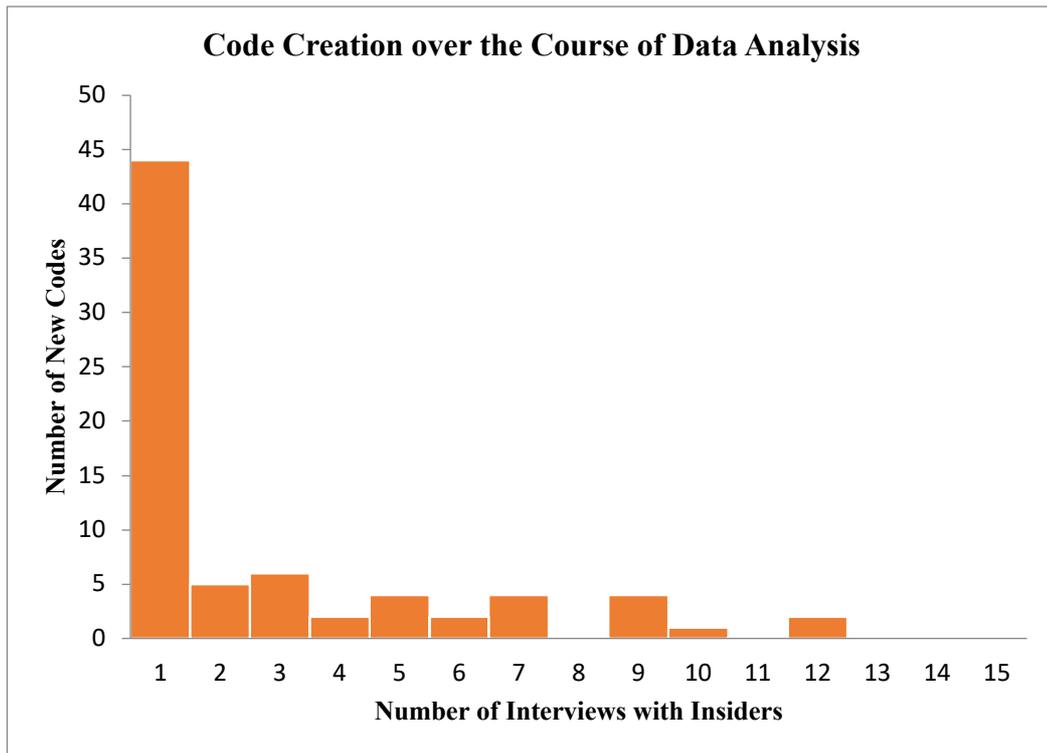


Figure 15 – Code creation over the course of data analysis of insiders’ interviews (Le Louvier)

Theoretical coding

After immersing myself in the field and in the data collection and analysis process during the seventeen months of Phase 3, I withdrew myself from the field and went through a phase of theoretical coding. My aim was to generate theoretical codes that would best analytically describe the processes at stake in the data by incorporating ideas and analytical tools from a range of disciplines. This led me to restructure my categories, focus on the codes that were the most insightful, and put aside those I could not analyse in sufficient depth. For instance, the category “resources” included an overwhelming number of third sector organisations that were grounded on a high number of quotes. I therefore chose to focus on that aspect, which developed into the analysis of the third sector information environment. Doing so, I left aside some of the other resources mentioned by the participants that appeared less systematically used across the data, such as educational institutions or faith-based groups. These third-sector organisations appeared under other focused codes as enabling participants to meet their needs and to go through the healing process, but did not appear under the “fracture” category. That category seemed to relate to the process of resettling, and predominantly, to the asylum system. The asylum

system also appeared as a barrier to many of the needs. It therefore emerged as another key information environment that was common to the experience of all participants and on which I decided to focus.

In general, the “fracture” and “healing” categories appeared to be predominantly related to the asylum system and to the third sector respectively. Returning to the LIS literature on migrants and refugees allowed me to compare these findings to relevant concepts, such as that of “fractured information landscape” (Lloyd, 2017b) and to identify practice theory (Giddens, 1984; Schatzki, 1996) as a key lens from which to read the differences between the participants’ experiences of the asylum system and of the third sector. Using this lens, I looked back at my field notes and transcripts, as well as my initial, focused, and axial codes. This allowed me to reorganise and reformulate some of these codes in order to better describe the processes at stakes within the information environments that the participants experienced in relation of the asylum system and of the third sector.

Figure 16 presents the new hierarchy that emerged from the theoretical coding process in relation to the asylum system. It shows that some of the focused codes presented in Figure 13 directly correspond to one of the new categories (e.g. “not being believed” became “disqualified information”, “loosing identity” became “fractured identity”), while others were deconstructed to use only some of the aspects they encompassed (e.g. within the “needing an interpreter” focused code, the category “barriers to direct communication” builds on all the axial codes “Being misinterpreted by your interpreter” and “Not trusting your interpreter”, but not on “not asking for an interpreter”).

Theoretical coding	Focused coding
Information environment of the asylum system	Struggling with mental health issues and negative feeling
Information deprivation	Lacking guidance and support
In the housing system	Living in asylum accommodation
	Being moved around
	(Not) being provided information by Jomast
In the asylum process	Not knowing anything
	Being detained
	Waiting
	Needing a solicitor
Information sharing agency denial	Not being believed
Disqualified information	Not being able to communicate with the Home Office
Barriers to direct communication	Needing an interpreter
	Calling Migrant Help
Restrictions on expressions	Not doing anything
	Needing to learn the language
	Needing to work
	Needing to access education
Unconsented information sharing	Needing the Post Office
	Needing the library
Controlled information sharing	Living in asylum accommodation
	Needing food
Fractured way of knowing	Not being believed
Fractured forms of information	Needing to learn how to navigate the system and facing its contradictions
Fractured logic	Living in economic poverty
Fractured identity	Loosing identity

Figure 16 - Relationship between focused codes and theoretical codes in the analysis of the asylum system environment (Le Louvier)

2.6. Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was received from the Faculty of Engineering and Environment at the University of Northumbria. Beyond this formal procedure, ethics considerations formed an integral part of the research and had to be reflected and acted upon as the research progressed.

2.6.1. Consent, participant's safety, and confidentiality

Different types of consent were obtained depending on the situation. During the interviews, I discussed it with the participants, who provided signed consent (see consent forms in Appendix 7). The aim of the participant observations was to be

able to share activities and experiences with participants on an equal footing. In that case, asking for signed consent would have distorted the relational dynamics and behaviour within the context. Moreover, the nature of the social situations where the observations took place made this type of consent inappropriate as participants may change every week. Thus, alternative consent arrangements had to be put in place in order to protect participants' safety and confidentiality. Firstly, all the data resulting from participant observations was fully anonymised to ensure that nobody could be recognised. Secondly, no information that was too personal, or may have compromised the participants' personal safety or asylum claim was recorded. Thus, the vast majority of the information I gathered through my long-term engagement in the field and the relationships I built with the participants contributed to the research by allowing me to get a more nuanced understanding of their everyday life, but was not used as part of the data analysed and presented in this thesis.

The face-to-face interviews that followed the observations gave me the opportunity to explain and discuss the aim of the research with some of the participants. During these interviews, I carefully explained that participation was voluntary, that participants were free to end their involvement at any moment and could refuse to answer any question. They were also given time to ask questions and offered the opportunity to access the transcripts and withdraw any information that they did not wish to disclose. I was careful to avoid potential retraumatising, and therefore did not ask any question that may have caused distress or discomfort, such as questions about their migration journey or reasons for fleeing their country (Chambon et al., 1998). I did not seek any information that might have compromised their personal safety or asylum claim, and I asked open ended to allow participants to provide the information they wanted and avoid topics that they do not want to address.

2.6.2. Positionality

Issues of consent are also linked to questions of positionality. The relationship between researchers and participants is always a complex one, involving various types of power dynamics and ethical dilemmas. To take a critical look at my

positionality within the research and at the different issues it involved, I follow Cunliffe & Harunanyake's (2013) concept of hyphen spaces, a series of in-between spaces through which researchers negotiate their positionality and identity in the field.

Insiderness-Outsiderness

My positioning as insider or outsider varied over time and depended on the situation. Where I acted as a volunteer, I acquired more of an insider role while, in other contexts, I had a more peripheral position. As I inhabited the field, the activities I shared with the participants became an inherent part of my everyday life. I felt more "at home" in the community, where people associated me to different identities: a language tutor, a student, a friend, a researcher, or simply a person whom they often saw and shared activities with. This allowed me to access nuanced and multidimensional information. However, this blurred line between insiderness and outsidership sometimes led me to unsettling situations, where people thought I was a refugee and I had to remind them that I was actually a Ph.D. student. Although this ultimately made me be an outsider, the fact that I had not come to the UK to seek protection allowed me to build my relationships with participants on similarities that were beyond this circumstance: we were sharing the same activities and had other personal commonalities.

Sameness-difference

Some of the aspects that differentiated me from the participants influenced my relationship with them. This means that the reality I had access to was always biased. For instance, as a woman mainly interacting with men, I could sometimes sense that some of my male interlocutors wanted to look good in front of me, which might have led them to embellish or avoid some topics.

I was in a privileged position in society, which impacted the power dynamics of our relationship. As a student, I was living in the UK by choice. As a French citizen, I could travel without constraints, and meet my family and friends when I wanted to. As a studentship holder, I was financially advantaged. As a researcher, I had the power of representation and would ultimately be the one

directly benefiting from the research. This privileged position was the source of many questionings and of a constant feeling of guilt. I was aware that even though I was sharing some aspects of the everyday life of the participants and I was trying to help where I could, unlike them, I always had the option to leave. Moreover, conducting a research study often seemed futile in comparison to the serious and painful issues they were facing, and I knew that it could not have a direct impact on their life.

I intended to mitigate the effect of this power differential in different ways. First, using an inductive process allowed me to adapt the research to issues that were relevant to them rather than focusing on the ones I had initially found interesting as a scholar. Although research could not directly change their lives, I could at least use it to document issues that were important to them. Secondly, I intended to treat people with respect and honesty, and build a genuine relationship with them beyond the research project.

Drawing on our similarities rather than differences facilitated this process. Similar to the participants, I was not British, not a native English speaker, and was new to Newcastle. This meant that I could relate to some aspects of their experience, and that we could help each other. I was also a migrant, with a migrant heritage. My Algerian background allowed me to relate to aspects of some people's culture. For instance, explaining the origin of my name, which is not Arab but Amazigh, led some Kurd participants to relate to me as a member of a similarly oppressed people, which created a kind of kinship between us. Being French was an advantage when conversing with other French speakers, and helped me build a rapport with people who had spent an extensive period of time in France on their way to the UK. Moreover, in many activities I shared with them, I was a novice and they were the experts, which meant that they could teach me what they knew and were in the position of power. Thus, although I had to acknowledge my privileged position, I could to some extent attempt to reduce the effect of the power dynamics.

Engagement-distance

As I became more involved in the field, it became difficult to draw a clear line between my research and my personal life. People would sometimes share with

me information that was too personal to be included in the research. In order not to break the trust that they had placed in me, I had to distance myself from my researcher identity and not to include all the information that I received or observed as part of the dataset. However, these insights provided me with a better comprehension of the everyday life and situations of the participants that nourished my analysis and interpretations of that data.

2.7. Limitations

One of the limitations of my research approach resulted from the difficulties of conducting qualitative research with such a heterogeneous population. The focus group technique used in Phase 2 involved a limited number of participants, who were predominantly male, young, and had less difficulties to navigate their new environment than others. The results may therefore not reflect the experience of other people going through the asylum system, such as single mothers or individuals suffering from severe mental health issues. To widen the research sample, Phase 3 combined two different data collection techniques: interviews and observations. The use of a maximum variation purposive sampling strategy allowed me to include a variety of individual experiences. However, interviews could only include the voices of a small number of representatives of the refugees and asylum seekers living in the city. They could communicate in English or French, and had access to the voluntary sector. Therefore, they may not reflect the experience of those who are the most excluded from society, or located at the margins.

I sought to compensate for this limitation by combining these interviews with observations and interactions with individuals who had a lesser command of the English language, and conversations with key informants who have a more global overview of the issue faced by the research population and of the support they can access. In spite of the limited size of this research sample, the grounded theory method enabled me to establish when I was nearing data saturation and had therefore identified the main facets of their collective experience.

Another limitation comes from the challenges of investigating one group's practices through the lens of others' experiences of the effects of those practices.

The analysis allowed me to draw a picture of the practices shaped by the local third sector and by the asylum system. However, my description and analysis of these practices stems from my interpretation of how people who have been through the asylum system perceive them. For the third sector, the direct accounts of professional and volunteers working in these organisations complement this perspective. For the asylum system, however, the perspective of the main actors of the practice – the Home Office and its sub-contractors, is not included. It is therefore important to note that the picture of the asylum system practice I draw corresponds to the experience of the participants but may not reflect how other actors perceive it.

2.8. Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness and credibility of the research was established through a prolonged engagement in the field, the triangulation of four different research techniques, and a detailed account of the research process.

Combining Phase 2 and 3, my engagement in the field lasted twenty-one months, during which I interacted with the participants at least twice a week. As I explain in Section 2.5.1., this allowed me to draw a rich and nuanced picture of the participants' experiences, by building relationships with them, going beyond the initial honeymoon phase of fieldwork (Malachowski, 2015), and experiencing a shared context with the participants through a variety of moods and activities.

Over this prolonged engagement, I collected data in various ways: participatory focus groups, participant observations, semi-structured interviews with insiders and key informants. Through these diverse techniques, I could access multiple perspectives on the experiences of people who have gone through the asylum process in Newcastle-Gateshead. The process of simultaneous data collection and analysis allowed me to triangulate results. Triangulation also allowed me to verify or explore further some of the findings. For instance, during the interviews with key informants, I shared my provisional list of needs and resources, and asked the interviewees if it needed to be changed or added to. I could also discuss my interpretation of some of my observations by interviewing their protagonists. As an example, I interpreted the fact that one of the participants

drew the landscape of their childhood on an Easter egg while they could have drawn anything they wanted as the expression of nostalgia and of the need to connect with their past. This was confirmed during the interview I conducted with them, as they expressed their love for this landscape, which they linked to unforgettable memories (see excerpt 111 and Fig. 33). When triangulation did not allow me to confirm some of the interviewees' accounts, I compared them with academic and grey literature. For instance, most of the participants' accounts related asylum accommodation were also mentioned in the report written by the Home Affairs Committee on that matter (2017; see excerpt 10).

The use of a multi-technique approach also allowed me to mitigate the biases that each technique entails, giving more nuance to the analysis. As a newcomer in the field, I was at times romanticising some of the phenomena I observed. For instance, the readings and engagement with the field I conducted in Phase 2 led me to become particularly interested in the concept of community, which I applied to interpret how people seeking asylum and refugees helped each other out. Yet, when asking one of the focus group participants if they felt part of a community, they answered: "community, community, everybody talks about community here, but where is the community?!". This led me to understand that my observation was biased by my academic readings and by the British language, but did not correspond to the participants' personal experience and cultural understanding. I therefore had to review my interpretation, by replacing the highly connoted term of "community" by the more descriptive expression "informal network", and by being attentive to the limitations of the phenomenon it described.

Prolonged engagement and triangulation thus allowed me to draw a detailed picture of the specific context I was studying, which ensured the transferability of the findings: readers can assess the transferability of the findings by comparing the similarities between the context I describe with the one they know (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper and Allen, 1993).

Finally, throughout this chapter, I established the trustworthiness of the research by providing a detailed and reflective account of the research process. I showed that as a human instrument, I collected and analysed data through my own

subjectivity, chose what was recorded or not, and decided what to report on. I explained what influenced my choice of research techniques, and how I came to interpret the data, providing evidence of how my codes and categories emerged from the raw data.

2.9. Chapter conclusion

In this chapter, my intention was to provide an in-depth, transparent and reflexive account of the research process, including instances when I encountered challenges and how I addressed those. I explained how I used ethnography to investigate the everyday life experiences of people who had settled locally after claiming asylum. I detailed how I used both participant observations and semi-structured interviews with insiders and key informants to triangulate the data I gathered, comparing the participants' voices to my account of their behaviour and including diverse individual experiences. I explained how I used constructivist grounded theory analysis to generate a theory from the raw data. Finally, I discussed the ethical issues, limitations and trustworthiness of this research project.

The next chapter presents a discussion of the literature identified and analysed during this research process.

Chapter 3 – Literature Review

- (4) Kahina What does it mean to integrate?
Boubakar *So, you need to like basically, to try and find people from all over and talk to them, and get to know the culture. Be open-minded, don't just try to hold your beliefs.*

This chapter analyses how the themes of forced migration and social inclusion are discussed in three areas of research: social sciences, library and information science (LIS), and heritage studies. It highlights the research gaps that this thesis explores and provides a background to the issues and concepts discussed in the following chapters.

The literature review was conducted iteratively throughout the research process, and finalised after all data was collected and analysed. As explained in the Methodology Chapter, I have used some of the concepts and research gaps discussed in this chapter to guide the research design and ensure the relevance and novelty of the study. At the same time, my engagement in the field influenced how I interpreted the literature, what concepts I chose for the analysis, and what areas of the literature I decided to explore further. I therefore place this chapter after the methodology, for I consider it as part of the analysis.

This chapter is divided in four parts. The first part provides a contextual background to the findings. It focuses on how the integration of forced migrants has been discussed in social research and policies, and provides an overview of these issues in the context of the UK. I initially uncovered this body of literature through a focused search on the concept of “migration”, “inclusion” and “integration”. As I centred the study group on people seeking asylum (see Methodology Chapter), I conducted further research on the definitions of “asylum” and “refugee”, alone and in association with the terms “integration” and “inclusion”. Once the UK asylum system and third sector emerged as the key themes of the analysis, an additional search on the evolution and critique of immigration and asylum policies in the UK allowed me to contextualise my findings and compare them with previous studies.

The second part of this chapter turns to the field of LIS. It discusses how an information perspective can provide a powerful tool to investigate the integration of forced migrant. As this is the primary lens I use for my investigation, I provide a complete review of empirical studies related to the information experience of forced migrants in the context of resettlement. This search was conducted iteratively throughout the study, by systematically collecting books and journal articles registered in Northumbria University Library and Web of Science multidisciplinary databases that combined the term “information” with “migrant”, “migration”, “refugee” or “asylum”.

The third part of this chapter shows how a heritage perspective can complement the social and information approaches by investigating the inclusion process in a more holistic way. This review started with a search for literature related to the definition of “heritage”, and for a combination of the word “heritage” with “migrant”, “migration”, “refugee”, “asylum”, “integration” and “inclusion”. This search uncovered a large body of literature, which I narrowed down to highlight the conceptions that best described what I observed in the field: heritage as an everyday practice.

Finally, the last part of this chapter summarises the key concepts and research gaps that emerged from the review of these three bodies of literature. It shows how combining these three perspectives allows me to address these gaps.

3.1. Integration of forced migrants as a societal debate

The present research aims to explore the integration experience of people seeking asylum in England. Before going through the details of such investigation, it is necessary to understand what the meanings of the terms asylum and integration are, and which theories and debates underpin their different interpretations.

Since the second half of the 20th century, various disciplines, such as social sciences, political sciences, law, geography, anthropology, and later on, refugee studies, have researched and debated the meanings of these terms (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, Loescher, Long, & Sigona, 2014). The aim of this section is not to

systematically review this scattered body of literature, but to draw from it, as well as from international, European, and British policies, to provide an overview of how research and policies have framed and discussed these terms.

This discussion is based on two sets of literature:

- Conventions and policies published since 1951 by the UNHCR, the European Union (EU), and the UK;
- Books and peer-reviewed articles published in English since the 1990s that discuss the semantics of forced migration and integration, how these terms are used in laws and policies, and how these legal and political frameworks impact individual experiences.

I start by presenting different ways to define the terms forced migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. I then explain how they relate to conflictual conceptions of integration. Following on these definitions, I provide an overview of how the integration of forced migrants has been framed in UK policies. Finally, I discuss what aspects should be taken into accounts when investigating the integration experience of forced migrants in the UK, and what is currently missing.

3.1.1. Forced migration terminology

Terminologies related to forced migration are numerous and have changing definitions. The term “refugee” was first used in the English language to refer to the Huguenots who were forced to flee France in the 17th century (FitzGerald & Arar, 2018). Its current definition emerged at the end of World War II and is based on the Convention (UNHCR, 1951), written by the allied forces and signed in Geneva in 1951. The Convention defines the term refugee as:

Any person who [...] owing to 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)

Based on this definition, the term asylum seeker refers to a person who has made an application for asylum and whose proof of persecution and entitlement to

refugee status is still in the process of being assessed. The terms humanitarian migration refers to people who have been granted protection in another country by receiving the refugee status, subsidiary or temporary protection (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2016, p.7).

While these definitions, framed by international organisations, may seem to be universal and objective, scholars have extensively debated their meanings and use. For FitzGerald & Arar (2018), the interpretation of these terms is a matter of paradigm. They identify two main school of thoughts through which these terms are conceptualised: the realist and the constructivist approach.

Realist approach

The realist paradigm is that promoted by the UNHCR, which conceives the refugee category in essentialist terms. This institution considers that one does not become a refugee once receiving the refugee status, but is recognised as a refugee because he or she is one (UNHCR, 2019a). This is exemplified by the emphasis that the organisation puts on differentiating between refugees and voluntary migrants. Feller (2005), former UNHCR director of International Protection, states that this differentiation is necessary to ensure that refugees receive the protection they need. Within that framework, to confuse the two categories is seen to blur the line between refugee protection and migration control, which can in turn lead to augment public misconceptions towards refugees and intensify their criminalisation. Research shows that over the past years, the conception of refugees as economic migrants who abuse the asylum system has gained popularity in both media coverage and political discourse (Squire, 2009). This trend is accompanied with a rise in immigration policies that consider asylum seekers as illegal migrants (Scheel & Squire, 2014). To counter these arguments, the UNHCR and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) advocating for the rights of refugees have emphasised the difference between migrants, who voluntarily choose to move to another country, and refugees, who are forced to flee war and persecution. However, this approach is criticised for framing voluntary and forced migration as ontological properties, and to reinforce the political discourse that opposes economic migrants to “genuine” asylum seekers (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018; Long, 2013).

Constructivist approach

According to FitzGerald & Arar (2018), the second way to look at this terminology is through a constructivist lens. This approach, which appears dominant in the refugee studies academic literature, focuses on the social and historical construction of these legal categories, and on the political agendas that underpin their different interpretations. It considers these definitions as biased, for they do not correspond to intrinsic realities, but change over time and across contexts to serve different purposes (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018; Geddes, 2003). The constructivist literature confronts the realist categorisation previously described by considering that:

- **There is no clear boundary between forced and economic migration**, as people often have “mixed motivations” to flee their countries (Castles, 2006, p.270). Castles (2003) refers to this complex dynamic as the “asylum-migration nexus” (p.17).
- **The Convention’s definition is narrow and excludes some forced migrants from its protection**, such as internally displaced persons, people who are fleeing a situation of conflict or generalised human rights abuse rather than individual persecution, people whose asylum claim has been rejected but remain in the country where they sought asylum, people being unable to go back to their country of origin because of war or persecution but do not fill an asylum claim, or people fleeing sexual violence and gender-based prosecution (Essed & Wessenbeck, 2004).
- **Nations interpret these categories in different ways** that reflect changing political agenda (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018; Sigona, 2005).

In order to emphasise the difference between legal categories and real life experience, Zetter (2007) uses the term “refugee label”. This concept allows him to investigate how refugee identity is formed, transformed and politicised by different actors. He notes that the label “forced migrant” is increasingly used in the literature for it is less restrictive and allows relocating the process of seeking refuge as part of a wider migration process. It can allow overcoming the limited definition of refugee framed by the Convention (Castles, 2006). This shows that naming is mainly a political choice.

As Hansen (2014) argues:

The 1951 Convention creates not a right to asylum but, rather, a right to ask for it; the Convention imposes on states not a duty to recognise refugees but rather not to return them to countries where they face a well-founded fear of persecution. (p.2).

As the numbers and nature of asylum applications in Europe increased after the Cold War, nation states tried to limit them (Hansen, 2014). To do so, Western nations intended to keep asylum seekers away from their borders by stopping them at sea, setting up off-country detention and declaring airports international zones outside the jurisdiction of courts (Hansen, 2014). Borders were then displaced, airline companies and coast guards having the duty of border control. Zetter (2007) similarly shows that in the beginning of the 2000s, the refugee label became increasingly politicised. While it was originally framed to protect forced migrants and provide them with rights, it is now used to determine who can belong to the nation.

The interpretation of the term asylum thus changed from a human right responsibility to a burden that should be managed (Angeloni & Maria Spano, 2018). Crawley & Skleparis (2018) demonstrate that the differentiation between “refugees” and “migrants” has been used during the so-called “migration crisis” to legitimise exclusion policies. To restrict access to the refugee status, forced migrants have increasingly been criminalised and illegalised (Scheel & Squire, 2014). Within this framework, the use of the terms “refugee”, “asylum seeker” or “forced migrant” is already a matter of inclusion and exclusion as they reflect who a nation state considers worthy of protection and belonging.

In this doctoral research, I adopt a constructivist perspective and recognise that when using the term “refugee” or “asylum seeker”, I do not refer to a person’s intrinsic qualities but to legal categories as understood within the specific context of the UK. While recognising that these categories are not fixed and may exclude some forced migrants from the research, using them is necessary to understand the effect that certain asylum laws and policies have on the participants’ everyday experiences. Interpretations of these categories frame different integration strategies, which are discussed in the following sub-section.

3.1.2. The integration of forced migrants

The challenge for forced migrants is not only to be able to flee the country where they have been persecuted, but also to be able to build a new life in a safer place. The question of resettlement is therefore central to refugee studies. Yet, this is a complex process that is at the source of numerous debates. While the integration of refugees in host countries should be the ultimate form of protection (UNHCR, n.d.), the reality is much more complex and varies across political contexts. To understand how the integration of forced migrants is conceptualised in the literature, I provide a discussion of its different definitions, and of the actors and domains that contribute to it.

Contested definitions

From the perspective of host societies, there are three main ways to conceptualise the reception and incorporation of new members into the social structure: assimilation, integration and inclusion.

Assimilation is a one-way process, whereby newcomers must adapt to an allegedly homogenous society, while giving up on their own cultural, traditions and languages (Castles et al., 2002).

Integration on the other hand, is considered as a two-way process where both newcomers and the host society adapt to each other. Within this framework, it is the responsibility of society to enable newcomers to maintain their own culture and traditions (Castles et al., 2002). The UNHCR (2014) emphasises this mutuality by defining the integration of refugees as a:

Dynamic and multifaceted two-way process, which requires efforts by all parties concerned, including a preparedness on the part of refugees to adapt to the host society without having to forego their own cultural identity, and a corresponding readiness on the part of host communities and public institutions to welcome refugees and to meet the needs of a diverse population. (p.1)

Finally, the concept of “inclusion” has been put forward for providing a more holistic definition. It refers to the ways migrants and refugees “have access to, use, participate in, benefit from and feel a sense of belonging to a given area of society” (Castles et al., 2002, p.115). For Omidvar & Richmond (2003), social inclusion involves “the basic notions of belonging, acceptance and recognition”

and represents for migrants and refugees “the realization of full and equal participation in the economic, social, cultural and political dimensions of life in their new country” (p.1). Social inclusion has first been defined by its antithesis – social exclusion – a concept that emerged in France in the early 1970s to describe people who do not only lack economic capital, but are also disconnected from state institutions and from their interpersonal networks (Silver, 1995). Becoming socially included therefore means acquiring material means, as well as being able to participate in various domains of society (Mitchell & Shillington, 2002).

This chapter shows that although social inclusion is often described as a preferred mode of incorporation in theories, its applications in policies related to forced migrants is extremely limited. Research and policies tend to favour the word integration that they use as an umbrella term to refer to these different approaches. Integration is therefore a polisemantic, contested and contextual concept that reflects different political agendas (Castles et al., 2002; Robinson, 1998; Sigona, 2005).

Actors of integration

Two parties are generally highlighted in the process of inclusion: forced migrants and society. While some scholars argue that integration is a process whereby both the receiving communities and the newcomers change and influence each other (Castles et al., 2002; Omidvar & Richmond, 2003; Strang & Ager, 2010), most of the research focus on one part or the other, that is, on policies and national strategies, or on individual experiences of adaptation.

Some scholars insist on the role of society and the nation state in fostering integration (Hynie, 2018; Mestheneos & Ioannidi, 2002; Schibel, Fazel, Robb, & Garner, 2002). Hovil (2014) calls this process *de jure* integration. It is integration as framed in official policies and in the 1951 Convention. This perspective tends to see integration as a durable solution based on national belonging. Obtaining a new citizenship is indeed a way for forced migrants to gain full access to legal rights. However, national governments tend to avoid this option, making naturalization a rather exceptional instance. While the European Council on Refugees and Exiles ([ECRE], 2002) frames integration as a dynamic, two-way,

long term and multidimensional process, which starts upon arrival in the host country, these recommendations do not always result in applications on national levels, where an assimilationist approach is often favoured. This is illustrated by the creation of citizenship courses, which aim at setting clear boundaries between who belongs to the nation and who does not (McPherson, 2010). Asylum seekers, who are not yet recognised as refugees, are increasingly treated as criminals and sent to detention centres until proven “genuine” asylum seekers (Losi & Strang, 2008).

The other way to approach integration is through the role of forced migrants. Here again, different perspectives are confronted. Some scholars consider that integration is mainly the responsibility of forced migrants who must adapt to the host society (see Berry, 1990). Other scholars highlight the agency of forced migrants in the process of integration, without denying the role of the host society. Hovil (2014) shows that in addition to the *de jure* integration framed by policies, forced migrants who have no access to citizenship or refugee status engage in a *de facto* integration process, by negotiating belonging informally within the local civil society. This is particularly visible when it comes to refused asylum seekers, who are rejected from society by a lack of rights and permanent deportation threats, and yet negotiate their belonging by building social networks and taking part in the local community. Hovil (2014) argues that to be sustainable, local integration should therefore marry national recognition and protection with individually and collectively negotiated forms of belonging.

If the role of society in the process of integration is often related to that of the state, it is not limited to it. Grassroots and civil society organisations, as well as other parties such as the religious institutions, are also actors of integration that often operate in-between national policies and individual belonging (Kappa, 2018; Poteet & Nourpanah, 2016; Sigona, 2005). However, Kappa observes that grassroots initiatives are limited by a lack of sustainability. Indeed, in countries such as the UK, the voluntary sector faces financial restrictions that limit its capacities (Zetter, Griffiths, & Sigona, 2005). Fostering a dialogue between the different actors of integration can allow avoiding this issue. Poteet & Nourpanah (2016) put forward four principles for the integration of refugees that emphasises this dialogical aspect:

- Priority should be given to the refugees' voices;
- Support should be multileveled and combined both formal and informal, national and local sources;
- Cooperation and coordination between institutional actors, community organisations and social networks should be enhanced;
- Integration strategies should be flexible and adaptable over time.

More research is needed to understand how this dialogue takes place and what are the areas of cooperation and conflict between people who have experienced forced migration and the different actors of the host society.

Domains of integration

Integration strategies are mainly aimed at refugees, a status that entails rights to various services that facilitate settlement. Consequently, most research and policies have focused on access to these services, which correspond to the functional domains of integration (Castles et al., 2002; Korac, 2003). Zetter, Griffiths, & Sigona (2002) identify four areas in which integration takes place: the legal, statutory, functional and social domains. Hyndman (2011) builds her integration framework around six interrelated indicators: economic, linguistic, education, housing, social, and legal. Yu, Ouellet & Warmington (2007) identify two types of integration: economic and sociocultural, and argue that the latter lacks empirical investigation. In their framework of indicators of refugee integration in the UK, Ager & Strang (2008) identify employment, education, housing and health as domains in which success is both a marker and a means of integration. They consider rights and citizenship as foundational domains, language, cultural knowledge, safety and security as main facilitators, and social relationships with members of one's own community, other communities, and institutions as key to successful integration.

Such frameworks present some limitations. First, they tend to treat each domain separately rather than focusing on the interrelationship between them (Phillimore & Goodson, 2008). Secondly, they tend to focus on the functional needs that people face when seeking protection in a different country. They consider that belonging can emerge from the satisfaction of these needs but do not emphasise the emotional aspect of this process or the need for cultural maintenance that is

key to the acceptance and recognition aspects of inclusion. By focusing on functional domains, these frameworks tend to consider integration as being primarily about individuals adapting to the local society, and society helping them to do so, but do not emphasise the need for individuals to take part in the local society with their own sense of culture and identity.

3.1.3. Forced migrants' integration in the UK

In the UK, the reception and integration of forced migrants has been conceptualised in a changing and sometimes paradoxical way. Britain signed the Convention in 1954 and contributed to its drafting (Ibrahim & Howarth, 2018). It has a tradition of providing refuge that predates this convention, having for instance offered protection to the French Huguenots in the 17th century (FitzGerald & Arar, 2018). Yet, the ideal of Britain as a sanctuary for the persecuted is progressively fading in favour of the securitisation of its borders and criminalisation of those who cross it (Ibrahim & Howarth, 2018). This section shows that the UK approach to integration is usually described as one that promotes multiculturalism. Yet, asylum and immigration policies have increasingly framed the integration of refugees in assimilationist terms, and considered the reception of asylum seekers in an exclusionary way, which led other sectors of society to fill the gaps.

The end of multiculturalism in the UK

Multicultural policies gained popularity in the 1970s in various Western states, which sought to promote diversity and the rights of ethnic minorities. Following this trend, Britain adopted a differentialist conception of integration, which recognises that the state should enable ethnic minorities to maintain their cultural identity (Favell, 2001). While there is no law stating that multiculturalism is a core principle of the British state (contrary to Canada), the UK has nevertheless developed it through a variety of discourses, as well as public programmes and policies, that facilitate access to rights and representation to diverse communities (Mathieu, 2018). These policies have shaped the national imaginary and are particularly visible in the cultural sector, which has, since the late 1990's, increasingly been given the task to foster integration (Sandell, 1998). However,

since the 2000s, and in particular, the 2005 London bombing, commentators have proclaimed the “death of multiculturalism” (Back, Sihna & Bryan, 2012, p.140).

This backlash is based on the idea that multiculturalism is a doctrine that fosters separateness, undermines common values, denies problems, supports reprehensible practices and facilitates the emergence of terrorism (Vertovec & Wessendorf, 2010). This narrative shift is framed around the conception of immigration as a threat, and is used to legitimise the implementation of restrictive policies (Back et al., 2012). Back et al. (2012) argue that the end of multiculturalism has led to new hierarchies of belonging, which are not based on the country of origin but on one’s legal status. This is particularly visible in the case of forced migration, as asylum and immigration policies have increasingly shaped an assimilationist view of integration and provide different rights to people with different legal status.

The assimilationist approach to refugee integration

Scholars argue that since the 2000s, the UK has adopted an assimilationist approach that considers integration as a one-way process whereby the state helps refugees to integrate into British society (Da Lomba, 2010; Phillimore, 2012). In the 2006 national refugee integration consultation paper, the Home Office (2006a) defines integration as a:

Process that takes place when refugees are empowered to achieve their full potential as members of British society, to contribute to the community, access public services and to become fully able to exercise the rights and responsibilities that they share with other residents in the UK. (p.3)

In this definition, the emphasis is on refugees’ responsibilities and contribution to the British society, and on functional integration, but the principle of cultural maintenance is not mentioned. The government started to withdraw funds allocated to refugee community organisations and framed citizenship as a reward, which could be acquired by having a sufficient level of English language and passing the Life in the UK test, and facilitated by engaging in voluntary activities (Phillimore, 2012). Yet, da Lomba (2010) argues that citizenship should not be considered as a reward for having integrated, but as a means to improve

integration by removing some of the barriers that prevent it. Considering citizenship as the end goal constitute a prescriptive as well as onerous conception of integration and belonging.

This assimilationist vision contributes to accentuating the hierarchy between those who are deemed legitimate to belong to the nation, and those who are not. In Britain, one's legal status has a great impact on integration (da Lomba, 2010). Contrary to theories and recommendations (see ECRE, 2002), the UK does not approach integration as starting from day one in the country. Policies promoting integration are separate from immigration and asylum policies, and therefore only apply to those who have obtained a leave to remain. This contributes to excluding asylum seekers from society: asylum support can be seen as promoting poverty, and the difficulty of the asylum process may have a negative impact on the future integration of refugees (Dwyer, 2005). One's legal status therefore reflects the relationship with the nation state, a more secure status implying a closer bond and more rights.

Table 8 provides an overview of the different statuses and associated rights for adults seeking asylum in England, which shows a hierarchy between them: refugees have access to the more rights while refused asylum seekers' rights are extremely limited (Home Office, 2018, section 4; Right to Remain, 2016; UK Government, n.d.a, n.d.b; Vassiliou, 2019). Table 8 only focuses on England as even though the Home Office decides immigration policies, local governments can have an influence on other aspects of forced migrants' everyday life. For instance, Scotland frames a different approach to social citizenship that facilitates the inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers (Mulvey, 2018), and allows access to free higher education to asylum seekers (da Lomba, 2010).

Status	Refugee	Humanitarian protection	Asylum seekers on section 95 support	Refused asylum seekers on section 4 support	Refused asylum seekers
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply for asylum at port of entry Meet the legal definition of refugee under the Geneva Convention (persecution based on race, religion, social membership or political opinion) Refoulement would result in a threat to life or freedom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply for asylum at port of entry Do not meet the refugee criteria under Geneva Convention Refoulement would result in a risk of serious harm (e.g. due to conflict) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing asylum claim Destitute or about to become destitute 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refused asylum claim and exhausted appeal rights Destitute or about to become destitute; and/or: Takes all reasonable steps to leave the UK Unable to leave the UK due to physical impediment, or because there is no viable route of return Apply for judicial review Provision of accommodation is necessary for avoiding a breach of a person's Convention rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refused asylum claim and exhausted appeal rights Do not meet section 4 criteria
Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 years leave to remain Permission to work Access to home fees and student loan for higher education Access to mainstream benefits Permission to apply for family reunion Permission to apply for a Refugee Convention travel document 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 years leave to remain Permission to work In England, at least three years residence before qualifying as a home student Access to mainstream benefits Permission to apply for family reunion Cannot apply for a Refugee Convention travel document 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing, on a no choice basis £37.75 weekly allowance loaded onto a debit card that can be used to withdraw cash Free healthcare Access to higher education with overseas student fee and no access to student support Access to ESOL classes after six months no right to work (unless exceptional circumstances) No family reunion Detention is possible with no time limit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing, provided on a no choice basis £35.39 allowance on a payment card that can only be used for food, clothing and toiletries No right to work (unless exceptional circumstances) No family reunion Detention is possible with no time limit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No right to work No recourse to social welfare No family reunion

Table 8 – Status and associated rights as of July 2019 (Le Louvier)

Strategic social exclusion

The UK does not currently have a national integration strategy for refugees and asylum seekers that would help coordinating support homogeneously (APPGR, 2017). This lack of coherent national policy increases the risk for forced migrants to face poverty and social stigma (Sales, 2002). Moreover, the literature indicates that social exclusion does not only result from an absence of inclusion strategy, but also from policies that are purposefully exclusionary (Ibrahim & Howarth, 2018). Politics of austerity and cost benefits analysis have led to restrict the numbers and rights of forced migrants in the UK, which is in contradiction with the Convention principles and may paradoxically cost more to the state (Poteet & Nourpanah, 2016). This budget cuts foster the narrative that asylum seekers are pulled to the UK by economic opportunities rather than persecution (Mayblin, 2019). Mulvey (2010) argues that the asylum policy designed by the New Labour constructed an image of asylum seekers as a threat that fostered hostility in the population and was used to promote restrictive policies. Sales (2005) shows how these exclusionary policies unfold in the White Paper “Secure Border, Safe Haven” (Home Office, 2002), which title encapsulates the contradiction of the national approach. Indeed, the implementation of punitive policies prevents asylum seekers from entering a “safe haven”, and the narrative of safe borders creates a threat for the safety of asylum seekers who are increasingly discriminated against. The literature shows that these policies developed across three main lines: increased border control, limited positive asylum decisions, and restricted rights.

The UK intensified its border regime both externally and internally (Corporate Watch, 2018a). The surveillance of the external borders is increased via passport controls and patrol boats. While rejecting some EU policies, the UK opted in the most restrictive ones, such as the Dublin Regulations, which forces people to claim asylum in the first European country they enter and therefore allows the UK to send them back to these countries. Through the Schengen agreement, Britain is also allowed to conduct border controls on the French side of the channel to prevent people from entering the British territory (Ibrahim & Howarth, 2018). Internally, the 2014 and 2016 Asylum and Immigration Acts (Home Office, 2014, 2016) extended the responsibility of controlling the border

to ordinary citizens by implementing immigration checks in everyday life domains such as work, housing, finances, health care and education (Ibrahim & Howarth, 2018; Yuval-Davis, Wemyss & Cassidy, 2018). This facilitates the detention and deportation of those deemed illegal.

This process came together with a restriction on the selection of those qualifying for protection. Drawing on the opposition between “genuine” and “bogus” asylum seekers, positive decisions sought to be reduced (Lynn & Lea, 2003). Based on an analysis of reasons of refusal letters, Schuster (2018) argues that the current Home Office approach, which aims at keeping numbers low by proving that asylum seekers’ application are not credible, undermines the rights to asylum by putting people at risk of not receiving the protection they need or being condemned to lengthy appeal procedures. The 1996 Asylum and Immigration Act (Home Office, 1996) established the creation of a white list of countries deemed to be safe. This list contradicts the principles of the Convention as asylum should not be based on a claimant’s nationality (Ibrahim & Howarth, 2018), and was successively abolished and reintroduced (Home Office, 2019a). The 2006 Immigration Act (Home Office, 2006) also established an increased surveillance and excluded those deemed to be terrorists or major criminals from protection (Ibrahim & Howarth, 2018). The successive Asylum and Immigration Acts have increasingly limited rights to appeal, and expanded the use of detention with no time limit (Ibrahim & Howarth, 2018).

In order to deter forced migrants to claim asylum in the UK, the successive governments limited access to the welfare system, which increased their insecurity and vulnerability (Bakker, Cheung & Phillimore, 2016; Dwyer, 2005; Stewart, 2005). According to Ibrahim & Howarth (2018), this strategy is based on “the false premise that people would return to war zones, persecution, and torture if they are denied food and shelter in the United Kingdom” (p.26). These restrictions touched on various domains of integration (Ager & Strang, 2008), such as employment and housing.

Asylum seekers are not allowed to work. This pushes them towards illegality, as those who no longer have access to support must rely on illegal work (Dwyer, 2005). It also hinders their future integration by delaying integration into the

labour market (Dwyer, 2009). The 1999 Asylum and Immigration Act (Home Office, 1999) introduced forced dispersal to avoid the concentration of asylum seekers in the south of England. Stewart (2011) shows that dispersal exposes asylum seekers to prejudice, harassment and social isolation. Indeed, dispersal hinders the development of social capital by separating people from their social networks and ethnic communities (Bakker, Cheung & Phillimore, 2016; Darling, 2016). When dispersed in locations with low diversity, asylum seekers are subject to hostility and abuse, as well as poor accommodation conditions (Dwyer, 2005). Darling (2016) demonstrates that these conditions were worsened with the privatisation of asylum accommodation, through which the government chose to promote economic austerity over human dignity. An example of this can be found in the red door scandal, which revealed that the private company contracted by the Home Office in Middlesbrough painted the doors of asylum accommodation in red, thus exposing residents to racism and harassment (Darling, 2016). A national audit conducted after this privatisation revealed that most accommodation failed to meet contractual standards (National Audit Office, 2013), and research shows that poor quality accommodation contributes to bad physical and mental health, and hinders integration (Bakker et al., 2016).

Finally, successive asylum policies have limited the leave to remain period provided to those granted asylum. Until 2005, most refugees were granted indefinite leave to remain. They now mostly receive a five-year leave to remain after which the need for protection is reviewed (da Lomba, 2010). This prevents refugees from integrating in society as it deprives people from the certainty and stability they need.

As the state increasingly marginalises asylum seekers and refugees, the civil society took on the role of fostering integration and catering to their basic needs (Communities and Local Governments [CLG], 2012; Dwyer, 2005; Griffiths et al., 2005; Sales, 2002). Mayblin & James (2018) quantified this support, showing that third sector organisations spend around £33.4 million per year on poverty alleviation for asylum seekers, refused asylum seekers and refugees. This shows that the Home Office has created more demand on that sector, while not seeking to collaborate or contract with them. The number of refugee

community organisation has increased, but they are competing for funding and take on short-term and emergency roles that do not always allow them to promote social capital and cultural diversity (Zetter et al., 2005).

The UK context epitomises the conflict previously explained that opposes actors of society with contradictory visions of integration. While the influence of the state's exclusionary policies is thoroughly discussed, more research is needed to understand how individuals experience these policies and how they negotiate their own inclusion in the midst of this conflict.

3.1.4. Research gaps

In this section, I have defined the key concepts used in the present research. This showed that the terminology linked to forced migration is debated and different paradigms result in different interpretations. In this research, I adopt a constructivist perspective, whereby I understand the terms “refugees” and “asylum seekers” as constructed legal categories that do not correspond to intrinsic individual properties but can be used to understand how such labels influence the everyday life experiences of people who are subjected to them. When using these terms, it is therefore necessary to highlight the context that shapes them.

The literature also shows that social inclusion is an ideal mode of reception and incorporation of forced migrants that is rarely used in policies, especially with the recent assimilationist turn witnessed in Europe and Britain. Studies that analyse these policies rarely use social inclusion as a framework. The emphasis is generally on the functional domains of integration, but little is known about the emotional and cultural aspects of inclusion. Yet, using social inclusion as a research lens may allow for a broader understanding of the experience of forced migrants, not only as framed by inclusionary and exclusionary policies, but also as negotiated by individuals, through conflict and cooperation with various actors and across different functional and emotional domains.

Finally, this section showed that the inclusion of forced migrants in the UK, and England in particular, is a particularly problematic issue for it is not promoted by the state. Further investigation is needed to better understand how individuals

navigate this complexity and negotiate inclusion when the political and legal structures of society work to exclude them.

The literature reviewed in this section mainly focuses on policies. A different approach is required to map the inclusion process holistically within the specific UK asylum context, and understanding the everyday experience of the individuals who go through it. In the next section, I explain how information science can provide such a lens and discuss the findings that emerged from such studies.

3.2. Integration of forced migrants as an information problem

The development of refugee studies within the field of LIS builds on Caidi & Allard's (2005) conceptualisation of inclusion as an information problem. The authors argue that using an information lens can contribute to a better understanding of how host societies can foster the social inclusion of immigrants. While they use the word "immigrant" as a generic term that refers to a broad and heterogeneous social group, their paper also set the basis to the understanding of the relationship between refugee integration and information. This argument stems from the observation that when settling in a different country, individuals may face difficulties in finding, understanding and using the information that they need to be able to take an active part in society. By understanding how migrant populations seek, use and share information, and what barriers prevent these actions, host societies and their information institutions can adapt their services in a more inclusive way, that enable newcomers to participate in society.

In this section, I first provide a review of the concepts that underpin this theory. I then critically present the empirical findings that emerged from refugee information studies. Finally, I discuss the research gaps that I seek to address in this research.

3.2.1. Social inclusion from an information lens

The LIS body of research focuses on the interaction between individuals and information. It starts from the principle that in order to make sense of our environment and navigate through it, we need information. While the meaning of “information” is disputed (Case & Given, 2016), a common usage of the word within the literature on migration defines it as “a difference which makes a difference” (Bateson, 1973, p.453). This broad definition means that any external or internal stimuli that appears significant to the human mind is information (Case & Given, 2016). Within this framework, information can be seen as a process that is happening constantly on different levels as we engage in everyday life activities. Indeed, these stimuli alter the state of our knowledge to allow us to function, develop and meet needs. One of the main conceptualisations of this activity is Dervin’s (1998) sense-making model, which explains that when the human mind identifies a gap in its knowledge, that is, an information need, it engages in a process of acquisition of information that allows it to bridge the gap. This gap is often wider for people settling in a different country, as a lot of new information is required to make sense of a new environment. Moreover, some may lack the resources and abilities to bridge the gaps, limiting their possibility to function and take part in society in an optimal way.

To better understand this process, the four main concepts that underpin the conceptualisation of inclusion as an information problem are explained: everyday information practices, information poverty, fractured information landscape, and social capital.

Everyday information practices

Caidi & Allard (2005) base their conceptualisation of the social inclusion of immigrants as an information problem on the concept of information practices. There are two ways to approach the interaction between people and information: information behaviour and information practices (Savolainen, 2007). The former focuses on cognitive individual aspects while the latter adopts a constructionist viewpoint that assumes it is a socially and dialogically constructed process. More specifically, Savolainen (2008) defines information practices as “a set of socially

and culturally established ways to identify, seek, use, and share the information available in various sources” (p.2). Information activities are understood as shaped through the interactions between members of a community within a specific context, determined by specific norms and rules.

One of the main frameworks used to study migrants’ information practices is Savolainen’s (1995) “Everyday Life Information Seeking” (ELIS). This model stems from the will to move beyond the study of information practices in a workplace environment to bring it to the study of ordinary daily life needs. It builds on Bourdieu’s (1984) concept of “habitus”, which describes a socioculturally determined system of thinking, perception and evaluation that individuals internalise and which conditions, or at least orientates, their everyday tastes and decisions, such as the type of food they buy or the leisure activities they engage with. Savolainen (1995) uses the expression “way of life” to qualify the way the habitus is enacted in everyday life actions to maintain the “order of things” that constitute one’s taken for granted daily assumptions. He uses the expression “mastery of life” to describe the process of maintenance of this way of life. This process can be passive, when everything goes as expected, or active, when a problem appears that undermines the order of things. It pushes the individuals to engage in a socially determined information seeking process that provides them with the information needed to bridge the gap and re-establish the order.

Lingel (2011) describes the ELIS model as particularly relevant to the study of the everyday information practices of immigrant communities, since “unlike temporary travellers whose experience of a new urban environment is intended to be extraordinary, the immigrant community seeks to make a host environment ordinary” (p.710). Within this framework, social exclusion occurs when people fail to meet their everyday information needs and to master the dominant way of life, thus running the risk of becoming information poor.

While the ELIS model focuses on information seeking, Savolainen’s (2008) broader conception of everyday life information practices can allow identifying how forced migrants adapt the modalities of their information seeking and sharing activities to their new context, and what barriers they encounter. By

acknowledging the constructed and situated nature of information activities, this concept allows framing the issues related to the information experience of forced migrants in terms of difference rather than deficiencies. However, understanding integration as a mastery of the dominant way of life limits the focus to how individuals adapt to the mainstream way of knowing of their new environment rather than on how they preserve their own, which runs the risk of replicating an assimilationist viewpoint.

Information Poverty

The concept of information poverty was developed by Chatman (1996) to explain that when it comes to information, not all social groups are equal. Economically poor groups lack the capacity and social networks that would allow them to effectively access and share information (Chatman & Pendleton, 1995). Similarly to Savolainen, Chatman's argument stands from a socio-constructivist epistemological standpoint that sees information as situated, emerging from a specific social system that determines the norms through which it is shaped and transmitted (Chatman, 1996). Borrowing from sociology the theory of the insider/outsider, she argues that people sharing a same information world constitute an exclusive group of insiders, which protects access to their specific way of knowing from the outsiders (Chatman, 1996, p.195). As they are marginalised from society, the information poor are situated in an information world that emerges at the margin. Their understanding of the world is therefore different, and is considered by the dominant group as being "dysfunctional" and "impoverished" (Chatman, 1996, p.197). Thus, marginalised groups have difficulties accessing and understanding information that is shaped by the dominant norm, which prevents them from solving everyday life problems. This results in an information poverty that reinforces their marginalisation.

Chatman's concept of information poverty is particularly relevant to the situation of socially excluded migrants, such as people within the asylum system, as it allows highlighting the geographical boundaries, legal constraints and economic limitations that maintain them at the margin of society and impact their access to the dominant information world. However, by emphasising the structure, Chatman tends to see the boundaries of an information world as rigid. Similarly,

the term information poverty implies that is a permanent state of being. Thus, it does not allow investigating individuals' agency and inclusion work.

Fractured information landscapes

The concept of information poverty builds on social class theories, and consequently, does not allow comprehending the interaction between different world (Burnett & Jaeger, 2008) and the passage from one cultural environment to another. When focusing on migration, it is necessary to consider that migrants are not information poor solely because they are enclosed in a small world that prevents them from accessing the dominant form of information. They can become information poor because they transition from one information world to another. This means that when settling in a different country, individuals also enter a "culturally alien information environment" (Mehra & Papajohn, 2007, p.13).

To conceptualise this transition, Lloyd (2017b) puts forward the concept of "fractured information landscape". This stems from a socio-constructivist and practice approach to information, which considers that different cultures and societies frame different ways to understand and interact with information, its institutions and its technologies (Caidi & Allard, 2005). These socio-cultural specificities are constitutive of information environments. People draw from the knowledges of these information environments to construct their information landscapes. These reflect "the taken for granted and agreed modalities and sources of information that people who are engaged in collective enterprises and performances agree upon and legitimise" (Lloyd, 2017b, p.39). As they arrive in a new country and enter new information environments, refugees experience a "disjunction between the familiar and unfamiliar which fractures their way of knowing" (Lloyd, 2017b, p.40).

A good illustration of this dissonance is provided with Lloyd's (2014) study of the health information environment in Australia. The ways of knowing about health vary across cultures and are instilled with various cultural beliefs. Therefore, refugees entering a new health information environment may not be able to identify its affordances and to understand its meanings because they do not correspond to their expectations (Lloyd, 2014). Such disruption creates a

state of uncertainty that forces individuals who experience forced migration to develop strategies that can allow them to bridge the gaps in their knowledge and to negotiate the shared meaning of their information environment, thus rebuilding their information landscape. For that purpose, they need to build the capacity to identify the affordances of the setting that enable them to access information, understand it and adapt to its specific communication (Lloyd, 2015).

Lloyd coined this capacity “information resilience” (Lloyd, 2015) and defines it as the capacity to reconstruct one’s information landscape by identifying “places and spaces that will afford practical and affective support” (p.1034). Information resilience requires engaging with specific information literacy practices, which represent the “ways of knowing those modalities made available to people as they experience and learn to go on in a social site” (Lloyd, 2019, p.5). The relationship between information literacy and social inclusion has been widely recognised by scholars and institutions such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). In the “Alexandria Declaration” (2005), UNESCO states that information literacy is a “basic human right” that can promote “social inclusion in all nations” by empowering “people in all walks of life to seek, evaluate, use and create information effectively”. However, this concept can be approached from different angles.

While the behaviourist approach has been the dominant paradigm, it has been criticised for reducing information literacy to a universal set of measurable skills that an individual should acquire (Hicks & Lloyd, 2016). This universalist approach does not account for the sociocultural essence of information and focuses on failing those who do not possess the necessary skills to understand their information environment rather than on highlighting the resilient strategies that they develop to make sense of it (Hicks & Lloyd, 2016). On the opposite, the constructivist approach recognises information literacy as shaped within a specific sociocultural context. Komlodi, Caidi, Martin-Hammond, Rayes, & Sundin (2016) refer to this process as culturally-situated information literacy. However, this approach only focuses on the relationship between the individual and the setting (Hicks & Lloyd, 2016). Therefore, Hicks and Lloyd (2016) argue for a third way that considers “information literacy as a complex sociocultural

practice that is shaped through the negotiated meaning making of the community” (p.339). Lloyd (2017a) offers to use the expression “literacies of information” (p.97) to emphasise both the contextuality of literacy and the absence of hierarchy between its different occurrences. Literacies of information are not only about being able to identify and critically understand relevant resources, but are also about making sense of the “structured and embodied knowledges” that constitute a particular information practice (Lloyd, 2017a, p.94).

The concept of a fractured information landscape was built on empirical studies of the information experience of forced migrants and is consequently particularly relevant to their situation. Studying how people reconstruct their information landscapes can allow investigating in details the various modalities of the environment in which forced migrants are immersed, as well as how they interact with it and how both individuals and the environment influence each other.

However, refugee information studies have not yet adopted this approach in the UK. This lens was used to either focus on one specific information environment, such as the health system (Lloyd, 2014), or on the rebuilding of everyday life information landscapes (Lloyd et al., 2017). Nevertheless, these works do not consider the conflicting information environments that different communities within the host society may frame, and how they may complicate the remaking of one’s landscapes. Applying this lens to the complex UK context can allow investigating this issue in greater depth.

Social capital

Information landscapes and information practices are considered as intersubjective. To reconstruct the former and adapt to the latter therefore requires social relationships. Central to the information literature on the experience of migrants and refugees is the concept of social capital. Coined by Bourdieu (1986), this term refers to:

The aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital. (p.248)

In LIS, this concept refers to the use of social networks as key sources of information. Social capital is decisive for forced migrants to develop the relationships that allow them to both access information, and make sense of the embodied ways of knowing that frame it (Lloyd, 2017a). A lack of social capital induces information poverty and constrains the rebuilding of information landscapes (Caidi & Allard, 2005; Lloyd, 2015). Conversely, experiencing information poverty and a fractured information landscape can prevent the development of social networks, thus deepening the process of social exclusion. The more social capital therefore equals the more social inclusion. However, suffering from a deficient social capital is a risk that people forcibly displaced to areas where they do not have any social connection are particularly likely to experience (Lloyd, 2015).

Putnam (2000) distinguishes two types of social capitals that LIS researchers often point at when analysing the information sources used by newly settled immigrants (e.g. Khoir, Du, Davison, & Koronios, 2017; Lloyd, 2015; Quirke, 2014; Varheim, 2011). The first one is a bonding social capital and refers to the need to connect with people who come from one's own community, be it national, religious or linguistic. The second is a bridging social capital, which allows for connecting with other communities. Woolcock (2001) adds social links as a third type of social capital, which correspond to institutions and governmental structures. For Ager & Strang (2008), these three types of social capital are key components of the integration of refugees who, in order to feel at home and take part in the social life of their host country, need to build connections with local networks, people from their own backgrounds, as well as institutions.

In conclusion, information research shows that as people settle in a different culture and country, they encounter local ways of knowing that differ from theirs, which creates a fracture in their established information landscapes. Yet, not being able to engage effectively with the local information practices prevents them from functioning optimally in their everyday life and to take an active part in society. To become socially included, individuals therefore need to be able to access the information environments relevant to their needs and to learn their collective ways of knowing. This allows them to adapt their information

practices, recompose the pieces of their information landscapes and develop their social capital. Although they use different approaches, these concepts underpin most empirical refugee information studies. The next section provides an overview of their findings.

3.2.2. Empirical studies of refugee information practices

Refugee studies in LIS form a growing field of research, which stems from an increased interest in the study of the information experience of immigrants. Beretta, Sayyad Abdi & Bruce (2018) identified a pool of sixty-three peer-reviewed articles published on this topic over the last three decades. This literature refers to a very wide population. It includes studies of social groups as different as migrant workers in Malaysia (Baharuddin, Masrek & Shoid, 2015), the United States (Fisher, Marcoux, Miller, Sánchez, & Ramirez Cunningham, 2004), or Israel (Bronstein, 2019); polish immigrants in the UK (Listwon & Sen, 2009); Chinese or Thai immigrants in New Zealand (Machet & Govender, 2012; Sirikul & Dorner, 2016); undocumented migrants at the United States–Mexico border (Newell, Gomez & Guajardo, 2016); or international students (Jeong, 2004). If some of the information needs and barriers that these various migrant groups face in the settlement process are similar, it has been argued that refugees should be studied separately, for the traumatic circumstances of their departure from their homeland affects their information needs and capacity to cope with a new information environment (Lloyd et al., 2013).

In the early stages of this field of study, refugees tended to be included as part of a broader sample of migrant participants (Allen, Matthew & Boland, 2004; Lingel, 2011; Lloyd, Lipu, Kennan, 2010; Kennan, Lloyd, Qayyum, & Thompson, 2011; Quirke, 2011). However, more recently, an increasing number of studies have focused specifically on their information experience. Following on this evolution, this research started with a bibliographic search of all literature related to migrants and information. However, the literature selected for this review only includes empirical studies that mention refugees and asylum seekers as constitutive of their sample group, either partly or integrally.

These studies have focused on the information experience of refugees in three different contexts: the refugee camp (Fisher, Yefimova & Yafi, 2016; Obodoruku, 2018), the migration journey (Alencar, Kondova & Ribbens, 2018; Carlson, Jakli & Linos, 2018; Fiedler, 2018), and the process of rehoming in a host country. Not all refugees go through these three contexts, and the studies referring to each of them therefore reflect the experience of different individuals (Fisher, 2018). Each of these contexts also frames different information experiences. Consequently, this review only focuses on studies related to the information experience of refugees who have settled in a country where they have sought protection.

Researchers refer to refugee's engagement with information using various terms. As seen in the previous section, a particularly popular lens is that of information practices (Kennan & al., 2011; Lingel, 2011; Lloyd et al., 2010; Lloyd et al., 2017; Quirke, 2011). Other researchers prefer the framework of information behaviour (Fisher, 2018; Oduntan & Ruthven, 2019), or information seeking behaviour (Akullo & Odong, 2017; Mansour, 2018; Palmer, Lemoh, Tham, Hakim, & Biggs, 2009; Silvio, 2006). Some studies focus on information needs (Akullo & Odong, 2017; Lloyd & Wilkinson, 2016; Mansour, 2018; Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018; Silvio, 2006), or on information sharing (Elmore, 2017). Other studies add a focus on information literacy (Elmore, 2017; Lloyd et al., 2013; Lloyd & Wilkinson, 2017; Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018; Richards, 2015). Lloyd (2015) introduces the concept of information resilience, and Olden (1999) talks more generally about information experience. While these terms correspond to different approaches to the study of information, they highlight, with different emphasis, similar aspects of the refugees' engagement with information: their information needs, information channels, literacy practices and information barriers. This section reviews the empirical findings related to each of these aspects in order to map the state of knowledge and identify the gaps. It starts with a discussion of the contexts in which these studies were conducted.

Research contexts and sample groups

While most studies focus on the generic experience of refugees in a specific context, others define their sample group around specific demographic criteria

(Table 9). One of the most common demographic factors used in refugee information studies relates to the participants country of origin. Following on the conflict in Syria, which led to the displacement of millions of citizens (UNHCR, 2019b), a number of studies have focused on the situation of Syrian refugees (Kaufman, 2018; Mansour, 2018; Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018). Other studies have engaged with participants from Afghani, Iraqi, Sudanese, Karen, Hmong or Somali origins. However, the main information needs, sources and barriers identified in these studies are similar. Therefore, the country of origin does not seem to have a major impact on people’s information practices.

Gender	Women	Akullo & Odong, 2017 ; Palmer et al., 2009
Age	Youth	Fisher et al., 2016; Gifford & Wilding, 2013; Lloyd & Wilkinson, 2016, 2017; Quirke, 2011, 2012; Silvio, 2006; Wilding, 2012
Nationality/ Ethnicity	Syrian	Fiedler, 2018; Kaufman, 2018; Mansour, 2018; Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018
	Iraqi	Fiedler, 2018; Mikal & Woodfield, 2015
	Afghani	Quirke, 2011, 2012; Smith, 2009
	Sudanese	Mikal & Woodfield, 2015; Palmer et al., 2009; Richards, 2015; Silvio, 2006
	Karen	Gifford & Wilding, 2013; Wilding 2012
	Hmong	Allen et al., 2004
	Somali	Olden, 1999

Table 9 – Refugee information studies per demographics

Women are considered as a particularly vulnerable refugee group, which led some researchers to focus on the specific issues they face. Studies reveal that women face a high need for health information, be it about generic health services in Uganda (Akullo & Odong, 2017) and HIV specific health information in Australia (Palmer et al., 2009). Other studies focus on refugee youth and their information experience during leisure activities in Canada (Quirke, 2011), in everyday spaces in Canada and Australia (Lloyd, Wilkinson, 2016, 2017; Silvio, 2006), or in relation to ICTs use (Fisher et al., 2016; Gifford & Wilding, 2013; Wilding, 2012). Shankar, O’Brien, How, Lu, Mabi & Rose (2016) focus on the specific needs of refugees coming to study at university in Canada. Quirke (2012) argues that factors such as the age, family status, immigration class, cultural background and migration pattern of Afghan youth have a significant impact on their information needs and available resources. These demographic factors relate to the individual particularities of the participants. External factors

related to the sociocultural and political context in which refugees resettle are less investigated.

Table 10 shows that the refugee information studies identified in this review have been conducted in many different countries, with a particular focus on Australia, North America, and Scandinavia.

Austria	Kaufman, 2018
Australia	Alam & Imran, 2015; Gifford & Wilding, 2013; Kennan & al., 2011; Lloyd, 2014; Lloyd, 2015; Lloyd et al., 2010; Lloyd et al., 2013; Lloyd & Wilkinson, 2016, 2017; Palmer et al., 2009; Qayyum, Thompson, Kennan, & Lloyd, 2014; Richards, 2015; Wilding 2012
Canada	van der Linden, Bartlett & Beheshti, 2014; Quirke, 2011, 2012, 2015; Shankar et al., 2016; Shepherd, Petrillo & Wilson, 2018; Silvio, 2006
Egypt	Mansour, 2018
Germany	Schreieck, Wieshe, & Kremer, 2017
New Zealand	Diaz Andrade & Doolin, 2016, 2018
Norway	Audunson & Aabo, 2011; Varheim, 2014
Sweden	Johnston, 2016; Lloyd et al., 2017; Pilerot, 2018
Uganda	Akullo & Odong, 2017
United Kingdom	Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018; Oduntan & Ruthven, 2017, 2019; Olden, 1999
United States	Allen et al., 2004; Lingel, 2011; Mikal & Woodfield, 2015; Smith, 2009

Table 10 - Refugee information studies per country of settlement

However, these countries are often described as a mere background to the research rather than as meaningful contexts. Exceptions correspond to studies that focus on specific national or local programmes. These include the Humanitarian Settlement Strategy and the Settlement Grants Program in Australia (Lloyd et. al, 2010; Richards, 2015), a two-year library introductory programme in Norway (Varheim, 2014), the government-funded “Computers in Homes” initiative in New Zealand, the Student Refugee Programme in Canada (Shankar et al., 2016), or the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme in Scotland (Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018).

A comparison of these different studies shows that resettling refugees encounter similar basic information needs and barriers in any host country. Nevertheless, the information and service provisions supporting them differ, which affects the barriers they encounter, the sources they can use to overcome them, and their overall experience. This demonstrates a need for more studies that are embedded in the local context (Oduntan & Ruthven, 2017).

Only a few studies have investigated the information experience of refugees in the context of the UK. The first one solely focuses on the experience of Somali refugee in London (Olden, 1999). Published over twenty years ago, it does not reflect the situation of people going through the current asylum system in the UK. The other two studies take place in Scotland. Oduntan & Ruthven (2017, 2019) explore the information behaviour of refugees and asylum seekers in Glasgow, and Martzoukou & Burnett (2018) investigate the everyday life information needs of Syrian refugees in North East Scotland. Findings resulting from these studies can only be partly transferred to other nations within the UK. Indeed, although immigration is managed by the Home Office and not devolved to national parliaments, the political contexts are different in Scotland and England. The Scottish government has adopted a much more welcoming narrative, referring to the newly arrived refugees as “New Scots”, and has created separate institutions and strategies to support the integration of refugees and asylum seekers (Scottish Government, 2018). An investigation of the information experience of forced migrants coming from different cultural backgrounds and living in the specific context of contemporary England is therefore lacking.

Moreover, Martzoukou & Burnett’s (2018) paper focuses on people who have resettled in the UK through the Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement programme. This means that the participants have been granted humanitarian protection before arriving in Britain and take part in a specific integration scheme (Home Office, 2017b). The experiences collected in that study are therefore different from those highlighted by Oduntan (2018), whose sample group includes people who have arrived in the UK via different routes: some came via family reunion and humanitarian protection, and had therefore obtained protection and temporary leave to remain before leaving the country of origin, while the majority claimed asylum after arriving in the UK. By taking into account the arrival route and legal statuses of her participants, Oduntan (2018) shows that asylum seekers and refugees have different information needs. This indicates that to fully analyse their experience, these different groups should be investigated separately. However, no studies have yet focused on the sole information experience of people who have arrived via the asylum route.

The present research bridges these gaps by specifying the sample group around people who have gone through the asylum system in England.

Information needs

Refugee information studies in the settlement context have highlighted various information needs. The most common ones correspond to basic human needs such as access to physical and mental health information, housing, education and employment, or finances (Table 11).

Physical health information	Allen et al., 2004; Kennan & al., 2011; Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018; Oduntan & Ruthven, 2019; Silvio, 2006; Schreieck, et al., 2017
Mental health support	Allen et al., 2004; Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018
Housing	Lloyd et al., 2017; Mansour, 2018; Oduntan & Ruthven, 2017
Education	Alam & Imran, 2015; Kennan & al., 2011; Lloyd et al., 2017; Oduntan & Ruthven, 2017, 2019; Schreieck et al., 2017; Silvio, 2006
Employment	Alam & Imran, 2015; Lloyd et al., 2017; Silvio, 2006; Mansour, 2018; Oduntan & Ruthven, 2019; Schreieck et al., 2017
Finances	Oduntan & Ruthven, 2019
Legal information	Oduntan & Ruthven, 2017, 2019
Informal everyday information	Diaz Andrade & Doolin, 2018; Kaufman, 2018; Kennan & al., 2011; Lloyd & Wilkinson, 2016; Mansour, 2018; Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018; Schreieck et al., 2017
Children services	Mansour, 2018
Mobility	Oduntan & Ruthven, 2019
Language	Kaufman, 2018; Lloyd et al., 2017; Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018
How to deal with racism	Silvio, 2006
News from home country	Mansour, 2018; Silvio, 2006
Social contact	Alam & Imran, 2015; Diaz Andrade & Doolin, 2018; Lloyd & Wilkinson, 2016; Oduntan & Ruthven, 2017, 2019
Leisure opportunities	Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018; Quirke, 2012
News from family	Diaz Andrade & Doolin, 2018; Kaufman, 2018; Mehra and Papajohn, 2007; Schreieck et al., 2017; Wilding 2012
Cultural maintenance and identity	Alam & Imran, 2015; Diaz Andrade & Doolin, 2018; Gifford & Wilding, 2013; Mitra, 2006; Wenjing, 2005; Wilding 2012

Table 11– Refugee information needs in information science literature

Similar to other migrant groups, access to information related to language learning appears particularly important to the experience of refugees. Oduntan & Ruthven (2019) also highlights the need for legal information and mobility. Kennan et al. (2011) differentiates between the need for compliance information, which refer to the regulations and procedures of the host society, and everyday information, which refer to daily informal needs. Various studies highlight similar daily life information needs (Diaz Andrade & Doolin, 2018; Kaufman, 2018; Mansour, 2018; Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018; Schreieck et al., 2017). Silvio (2006) also mentions a need for information on how to deal with racism. These practical needs are completed by a series of social needs such as social contact (Alam & Imran, 2015; Diaz Andrade & Doolin, 2018; Lloyd & Wilkinson, 2016; Oduntan & Ruthven, 2017, 2019), leisure activities (Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018; Quirke, 2012), and communication with family abroad (Diaz Andrade & Doolin, 2018; Kaufman, 2018; Mehra and Papajohn, 2007; Schreieck et al., 2017; Wilding 2012).

While most studies focus on identifying the information that refugees need to seek during the settlement process, a small number of studies also take into account the type of information that they need to share. In her research on the benefits of ICTs, Wilding (2012) shows that the Karen refugee youth use digital technologies to share information about their everyday life in Australia, to keep in touch with friends and family, and to maintain their cultural heritage by, for instance, sharing pictures of themselves in traditional costumes.

In this context, ICTs are not only beneficial for young refugees to access the information they need, but also to share information related to their sociocultural identities. Díaz Andrade & Doolin (2016) similarly argue that ICTs can contribute to the social inclusion of refugees settled in New Zealand by allowing them to take part in the information society, communicate in a way that is more comfortable to them, be socially connected with people coming from their ethnocultural group, and express a cultural identity. In their 2010 paper, Caidi, Allard & Quirke called for more research to be conducted on the expressive information needs of migrants. While studies related to ICTs revealed the importance of these expressive information needs in the experience of resettling

refugees, these still have to be explored further beyond the use of technologies.

ICTs studies reveal that cultural identity and belonging are drivers of information activities. They enable people who have been forcibly displaced to maintain a connection with their cultural heritage while also allowing them to connect to the local community and to forms of global culture (Díaz Andrade & Doolin, 2016; Gifford & Wilding, 2013; Wilding, 2012). Lloyd & Wilkinson (2016) similarly mention the need for both connecting to the local culture and a connection to the culture of origin by highlighting the three ways in which youth in Australia enact their information literacy: by recognising important information in the local landscape, maintaining connections to the old landscape, and creating new landscapes that combines the two. However, the interaction between these three landscapes is not explored in-depth and studies on the everyday information practices of refugees rarely mention cultural identity and belonging as drivers of information needs. Additional research is needed to investigate information needs that are not only driven by biological and structural factors and aimed at adapting to the local society, but are also related to the maintenance of culture and identity.

Information channels

Media

Refugees access and share information through a variety of media, people and places (Table 12). Research highlights the preference that most refugees have for oral communication (Olden, 1999) and social and embodied sources of information (Lloyd et al., 2013). Indeed, verbal sources can transmit information in a more nuanced and culturally appropriate way, and may be preferred when addressing sensitive information such as HIV (Palmer et al., 2009). Olden (1999) demonstrates that Somalis refugees in London mainly rely on oral communication provided through telephone communications, Mansour (2017) highlights the importance of mobile phones for Syrian refugees in Egypt. In the latter study, phones are used for oral communications as well as to access internet.

Media	Word of mouth	Palmer et al., 2009; Olden, 1999
	Internet	Lloyd et al., 2017; Olden, 1999; Oduntan & Ruthven, 2017; Wilding 2012
	Visual and audio-visual material	Allen et al., 2004; Kennan & al., 2011; Palmer et al., 2009
	Phone	Mansour, 2018; Olden, 1999
People	Family	Lloyd et al., 2017; Mansour, 2018; Quirke, 2012; Silvio, 2006
	Friends	Kennan & al., 2011; Lloyd et al., 2017; Mansour, 2018; Oduntan & Ruthven, 2017; Quirke, 2012; Silvio, 2006
	Support workers	Kennan & al., 2011; Oduntan & Ruthven, 2017; Quirke, 2012
	Volunteers	Kennan & al., 2011
	Teachers	Quirke, 2012
	Interpreters	Allen et al., 2004; Oduntan & Ruthven, 2017
	Oneself and own experiences	Lingel, 2011
Places	Community associations	Lloyd & Wilkinson, 2016; Olden, 1999; Silvio, 2006;
	Leisure settings and faith-based groups	Lloyd, 2014; Lloyd & Wilkinson, 2016; Qayyum et al., 2014; Quirke, 2011; Silvio, 2006
	Governmental service providers	Lloyd et al., 2017; Qayyum et al., 2014; Silvio, 2006
	Third sector service providers	Lloyd & Wilkinson, 2016; Lloyd et al., 2017; Qayyum et al., 2014
	Libraries	Johnston, 2016; Lloyd & Wilkinson, 2016; Pilerot, 2018; Silvio, 2006; Varheim, 2014

Table 12 – Refugee information sources in information science literature

Olden (1999) shows that internet is a common information resource for Somali university students and professionals. Alam & Imran (2015) reveal that refugees living in areas of Australia, where internet is not accessible, are more likely to suffer from the digital divide and social exclusion. The use of smartphones and internet is also seen as significant for Syrian refugees in Sweden, for they act as a social ground that allow them to develop a sense of place by supporting their information needs (Lloyd et al., 2017). As previously mentioned, Diaz Andrade & Doolin (2016) similarly emphasised the use of internet for both seeking and sharing information and for maintaining transnational ties. Mikal & Woodfield (2015) provide a different account, as their participants were reluctant to engage in online exploration or to form online communities of support, and were concerned about safety and accuracy. Other studies present internet as an unimportant source of information, as is the case for refugees living in regional Australia (Kennan & al., 2011).

When it comes to official sources of information, visual and audio-visual sources are often preferred, especially for people with limited textual literacy and language skills (Palmer et al., 2009; Kennan & al., 2011). Written material on the other hand is often showed as a barrier to information (Kennan & al., 2011; Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018), although it can be seen as useful when translated to people's first language (Lloyd, 2014).

People

The Strength of Weak Ties theory (Granovetter, 1973) is often used in both refugees and migrant information studies to distinguish the types of social networks that people use to seek, use and share information. It allows for differentiating between strong ties – such as colleagues, friends, neighbours and relatives, and weak ties networks – such as social workers, volunteers, teachers, interpreters and other acquaintances (Caidi & Allard, 2005; Courtright, 2005; Fisher et al., 2004; Lloyd, 2014, 2015, 2017; Zhang, 2013). In the context of refugee resettlement, some studies particularly emphasise the role of informal ties such as friends and family (Lloyd et al., 2017 Quirke, 2012; Silvio, 2006). On the opposite, Kennan & al (2011) show that when it comes to compliance information, newly arrived refugees in Australia tend to prefer information provided by authoritative and trusted service providers.

Most studies highlight the multicity of information providers working with refugees in different countries (Kennan & al., 2011; Oduntan & Ruthven, 2017; Quirke, 2012;). These can be governmental agencies, nongovernmental agencies or local initiatives. Research stresses the issues related to the lack of coordination between all these agencies, which increases the complexity of the information landscape (Schrieck et al., 2017). Lloyd and colleagues' (Kennan & al., 2011; Lloyd et al., 2013; Qayyum et al., 2014) three-stages model of the information practices of refugees in Australia show an evolution in their preferred information sources. The first phase, “transitioning”, is characterised by an information overload and a high dependence on caseworkers and volunteers to provide refugees with oral information. The second phase, “settling in”, refers to a phase when refugees are becoming oriented and independent, and can look for information and support (language or community activities) beyond those provided by the initial caseworkers and volunteers. During the last phase, “being

settled”, refugees develop a comprehension of their new information landscape that allows them to participate in the community by sharing information and support newcomers. Refugees transition from being highly dependent on external information providers to become independent information users, able to act as informal information providers themselves. This means that during the last phase, they are able to find the information they need within themselves. They also highlight the importance of social embodied information for refugees to learn about their new environment (Lloyd et al., 2013).

Lingel (2011) similarly shows that even in the early stages of settlement, migrants and refugees living in New York use wandering and their own experiences to navigate the urban environment. However, the role of the self as an information source and of the body as information channel are rarely taken into account and more research is needed to investigate how forced migrants use their own knowledge and experiences to make sense of their new situation.

Places

Qayyum et al. (2014) identify everyday spaces as important sources of information for refugees in Australia and divide them into two categories: official information providers which act as primary sources of information, such as the Multicultural Council, and secondary sources, such as faith-based groups or libraries. While the first ones have a direct access to the clients through the immigration services, the latter must rely on referrals from the primary information providers and word of mouth (Qayyum et al., 2014). However, a lack of communication and coordination between these different services leads to information duplication and confusion. Secondary sources are referred to as information grounds, a concept used in many migrants and refugees information studies.

Information grounds have been theorised by Pettigrew (1999) as “environment temporarily created by the behavior of people who have come together to perform a given task, but from which emerges a social atmosphere that fosters the spontaneous and serendipitous sharing of information” (p.811). They are places which are not meant to provide instrumental information in the first place but where information flows spontaneously and where social capital can be

developed. Information grounds can be English language classes that facilitate information sharing activities (Elmore, 2017), leisure activities, during which refugee youth can seek and share information on different matters (Quirke, 2011), or libraries, which act as both formal information providers and information grounds (Varheim, 2014).

Libraries can be seen as safe places that foster social capital and social trust amongst refugees (Varheim, 2014). Audunson & Aabo (2011) observe that for refugee and migrant women in Norway, the library answers needs such as homesickness (material on their home country or in their native language, transmission to their children), social contact (bonding and bridging), language learning (from children books to adults), and culture differences (how children birthdays are celebrated, understand local social behaviours). Specific library programmes such as language conversation groups can enable refugee participants to improve their language skills, expand their social networks, and increase their knowledge about the host country (Johnston, 2016). Shepherd et al. (2018) reveal that newcomers tend to use the libraries as public spaces and to use a wide range of services, which means that they visit libraries more regularly and stay longer than other users. Pilerot (2018) shows that the arrival of refugees and newly arrived immigrants in Sweden in 2015 led libraries to widen their mission to new services, such as the translation of official documents, and to collaborate with local and national agencies working with migrants.

These studies focus on public libraries but do not explore the role of community-led libraries and little is known about the role of other local charities and community groups in providing information and acting as information grounds. The information lens allows identifying the different actors of integration. However, a lack of focus on the socio-political context can lead to focus only on some institutional actors, while diminishing the role of other, more informal actors.

Information Barriers

The literature highlights various barriers that limit refugees' capacity to seek, use and share information (Table 13). These barriers can be internal and related to skills, abilities and psychology, or external and related to institutional

organisations and resources. These two types of barriers are intertwined and influence each other.

Internal Barriers	Language Skills	Allen et al., 2004; Kennan & al., 2011; Lloyd et al., 2013; Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018; Mikal & Woodfield, 2015; Olden, 1999; Pilerot, 2018
	Textual literacy	Kennan & al., 2011; Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018; Olden, 1999
	Digital literacy	Alam & Imran, 2015
	Trauma	Lloyd et al., 2013; Mansour, 2018; Mikal & Woodfield, 2015
External Barriers	Lack of translated material	Allen et al., 2004; Qayyum et al, 2014
	Lack of culturally appropriate information	Allen et al., 2004; Kennan & al., 2011; Lloyd et al., 2013; Mansour, 2018; Mikal & Woodfield, 2015; Palmer et al., 2009; Olden, 1999
	Lack of intercultural communication training for information providers	Allen et al., 2004
	Complexity of local information environments	Kennan & al., 2011; Lloyd et al., 2013
	Lack of time and resources for individual support from service providers	Kennan & al., 2011; Lloyd et al., 2013; Qayyum et al., 2014
	Lack of communication and coordination between information providers	Qayyum et al., 2014
	Access to digital technologies	Alam & Imran, 2015
	Out of date information	Allen et al., 2004
	Finances	Alam & Imran, 2015; Mansour, 2018; Mikal & Woodfield, 2015
	Information overload and timing of information dissemination	Kennan & al., 2011; Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018; Palmer et al., 2009
Misinformation	Ruokolainen & Widen, 2019	

Table 13 – Refugees information barriers in information science literature

Language is highlighted as the main information barriers in most studies (Allen et al., 2004; Kennan & al., 2011; Lloyd et al., 2013; Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018; Mikal & Woodfield, 2015; Olden, 1999; Pilerot, 2018). This can be increased by a lack of textual literacy (Kennan & al., 2011; Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018; Olden, 1999), and worsened by the lack provision of translated material (Allen et al., 2004; Qayyum et al., 2014).

When it comes to information shared through digital media, digital literacy and access to ICTs are seen as major barriers to information seeking and sharing (Alam & Imran, 2015). Access to internet as well as information provided

through other media is often correlated to a lack of economic resources available to refugee populations (Alam & Imran, 2015; Mansour, 2018; Mikal & Woodfield, 2015). This lack of funds also impacts on the capacity for information providers to create and communicate information that is up-to-date, culturally relevant, appropriate, and provided face-to-face in a timely manner, which may lead to misinformation (Ruokolainen & Widen, 2019).

These structural barriers seem to exacerbate rather than relieve the trauma and cultural adaptation inherent to the process of exile. Although these issues are mentioned, they are not directly linked to the political context in which the studies take place. As previously argued, a focus on the local context can allow identifying and comprehending the factors that affect the information practices of refugees and asylum seekers as they settle in a specific sociocultural as well as political setting. It can also allow linking the different information barriers identified to the different actors of integration.

Information Literacy Practices

Most refugee information studies consider that information is culturally situated and that this creates a barrier for refugees to make sense of a new information context (Allen et al., 2004; Kennan & al., 2011; Lloyd et al., 2013; Mansour, 2018; Mikal & Woodfield, 2015; Olden, 1999; Palmer et al., 2009). Allen et al. (2004) state that specific health literacy programmes are needed to help newcomers to understand the United States' health information landscape. Other studies highlight the need for people to enhance their digital literacy (Alam & Imran, 2015; Shankar et al., 2016). These studies tend to take a behavioural approach to information literacy that considers it as a set of skills. Most refugee information studies do not focus the research on how people adapt their information practices and come to learn how to navigate their new information landscape.

Insights into the information literacy practices of refugees mainly emerge from the research conducted by Lloyd and colleagues in Australia and Sweden, and relate to the theory of fractured information landscape discussed in the previous section (Table 14).

Wandering	Lingel, 2011
Information sharing	Elmore, 2017; Lloyd et al., 2013; Lloyd et al., 2017
Information Mapping	Lloyd et al., 2013
Observing	Lloyd et al., 2013
Listening	Lloyd et al., 2013
Collaborative pooling	Lloyd, 2014; Lloyd et al., 2017
Enacting digital, local and visual literacy	Lloyd & Wilkinson, 2017
Enacting meditational roles between family members and technology	Lloyd & Wilkinson, 2017

Table 14 – Refugee information literacy practices in information science literature

Lloyd (2014) observes that refugee groups recombine their fractured information landscape by collaboratively pooling together various fragments of knowledge from different sources. This observation leads her to consider information literacy as a collaborative practice whereby different people who are brought together to the same place and in similar circumstances share pieces of information with each other. Information literacy practice is therefore developed through activities such as information sharing, mapping, observing, and listening (Lloyd et al., 2013). Lingel (2011) highlights the role of wandering when it comes to the urban space. Information literacy activities can happen in various everyday spaces, such as sport activities, faith-based groups or social events (Lloyd & Wilkinson, 2016; Lloyd et al., 2017). Everyday spaces have “physical, affective and cognitive resonance for those who inhabit or recognise it and reference the shared common understandings of people involved in similar endeavours or performances” (Lloyd & Wilkinson, 2016, p.301). Together, they shape the information landscape that refugees inhabit. Lloyd & Wilkinson (2017) identify various types of literacies that young refugees enact in their everyday life: digital literacy, local literacy and visual literacy. Lloyd et al. (2017) similarly show that to regain a sense of place, Syrian refugees in Sweden engage in social interactions. This allows them to build their social capital and collaboratively pool and layer the fragments of their information landscape. Becoming information literate in a new information environment is a way for refugees to feel safe and develop a sense of place.

Information literacy practices offer a holistic framework through which to investigate the information experience of refugees and their inclusion into a new environment which application onto different political contexts would be

beneficial. However, the literature reviewed in this section tends to put the emphasis on the responsibility for individuals to adapt to the local information literacy, while providing a limited understanding of how they preserve their own way of knowing.

3.2.3. Research gaps

This section has shown that using an information lens was beneficial to understand how the resettlement of forced migrants into host societies could be further facilitated. Information is indeed a major aspect of social inclusion. Yet, as information is a sociocultural construct, people who are forced to move to a culturally foreign environment are not always able to make sense of the ways it is shaped and transmitted. This can lead them to lack access to the information they need to seek, use and share in their everyday life, putting them at risk of remaining at the margin of society. Understanding how people going through exile interact with information is therefore paramount for societies to adapt their services in an inclusive way that allows refugees and asylum seekers to actively participate in society.

A growing number of studies have investigated these practices and highlighted that resettling refugees have both practical and social information needs, which they mainly meet through interpersonal interactions with family and friends, as well as teachers, support workers and volunteers. These interactions occur in different places where information is either directly provided or spontaneously flows, as is the case of information grounds such as leisure activities, language classes or libraries. The literature also highlights various barriers that prevent people from accessing or sharing information, and which can be linked to personal capacities, cultural differences or structural deficiencies. The literature therefore provides various insights into the information experience of refugees in various countries, some being similar, other more nuanced or even contradictory. Throughout this review, aspects of this experience that have remained unexplored or have not been investigated with sufficient depth have also been highlighted.

First, while some research highlights the need to study information practices as embedded in the local context, this context is often describe as a mere background rather than as having a real impact on people’s information experiences. The political context is rarely discussed in relation to information practices, and some national settings have been lacking investigation. To bridge this gap, my research focuses on the experience of people who are going through the UK asylum system in England, a context that is strategically exclusionary, as explained in section 3.1.3. This allows me to not only explore the effect of exile and of making home in a different country on individuals’ information practices, but also of a specific political and legal framework. It also allows me to examine how people renegotiate their information practices within a political context and structure that is not designed to foster integration but has been described as “hostile” (Kirkup and Winnett, 2012).

Secondly, this review has shown that research tends to focus on the functional aspects of integration, and that apart from studies related to ICTs, the effect of problems of culture and identity are little explored. Yet, these are constitutive aspects of social inclusion. This doctoral research aims at bridging this gap by highlighting both external and internal drivers of information needs, and at shedding light on expressive information activities that allow people to renegotiate a sense of belonging and identity in their new environment.

In order to support this investigation, I draw from the field of heritage studies. The next section explains how associating concepts of information science with heritage theories can help investigating the inclusion experience of forced migrants more holistically.

3.3. Inclusion of forced migrants through a heritage lens

The process of inclusion encompasses both the participation of forced migrants in functional domains of the host society and notions of “belonging, acceptance and recognition” (Omidvar & Richmond, 2003, p.1), which relate to the possibility for individuals to take part in society with their own sense of culture and identity. While the latter domains have been lacking investigation in the field

of information science, they are central to how the topic of migration has been discussed in the field of heritage studies.

This section explores how heritage can allow breaching the theoretical gaps in the investigation of the inclusion experience of forced migrants from an information lens. Similarly to the first section of this chapter, dedicated to relevant studies in social sciences, my aim here is not to provide a systematic review of this literature, but to draw from it in order to present a different way to approach the topic of my investigation. As I started the research process with a greater focus on heritage, this review is based on a large corpus of literature. It comprises books and journal papers published since the 90's that associate theoretical discussions with case studies of heritage initiatives and exhibitions, as well as reports and policies published by the UNESCO, the Council of Europe and British heritage bodies. In this section, I present the main arguments that emerged from it, by providing an overview of the different ways in which heritage has been conceptualised over time in the Western world, and how these definitions induce different visions of the place of forced migrants in society. Thus, I identify which conception of heritage is compatible with the study of the inclusion experience of forced migrants and responds to the research gaps and requirements previously highlighted.

3.3.1. Conceptions of heritage

The origins of heritage as something that can be managed and preserved are often traced back to the nineteenth century rise of the nation-state (see Graham & Howard, 2008; Smith, 2006). The national discourse promoted heritage sites, monuments and artefacts as mementos of a common past, used to create the imagined collective memory that was necessary to the maintenance of a collective sense of belonging to the nation (Macdonald, 2003). The definition promoted by the elite of heritage as “‘old’, grand, monumental and aesthetically pleasing” came to be seen as a universal definition (Smith, 2006, p.11). The epitome of this discourse is found in the adoption of the UNESCO's (1972) Convention Concerning the Protection of the “World Cultural and Natural Heritage”. By limiting the definition of heritage to monuments, groups of

buildings, and sites resulting from the work of “man” (UNESCO, 1972, Article 1), this convention universalised a Western and modern conception of heritage that is deeply restrictive and symbolically excludes from the World human community any individual that would identify with other, intangible, forms of heritage (Smith, 2006). Such definition annihilates the very potentiality of a “migrant heritage” that is on the contrary intrinsically intangible, moving and plural. Migrant individuals, regardless of their legal status, are either conceived as foreign nationals, in which case their heritage belongs to their country of origin but has no legitimacy to be represented in the host country, or as new citizens, in which case it is their responsibility to give up their original culture and fully adopt that of their new community (Ashworth, Graham & Tunbridge, 2007; Hall, 2005)

This assimilationist approach is akin to the positive conception of information literacy as defined by Hick & Lloyd (2016), as both these viewpoints recognise the existence of only one definition of information and heritage that stands for the universal and objective truth. They are considered as entities that locals possess and newcomers do not. To be included in the community, the latter should therefore adopt the hegemonic ways of knowing and belonging. Information literacy is thus understood as a rational set of skills that society, often through libraries, should provide to migrants in order for them to assimilate. Heritage is conceptualised as a tangible manifestation of national identity, represented in museums and monuments, which transnational individuals have to know and adopt as their own to become part of society. Within this assimilationist model, adaptation is a one-way process that institutions can help fostering by giving access to the authorised versions of heritage and information.

A shift operated in the 1960s in reaction to this assimilationist model. As the socio-constructivist perspective on information led to turn to everyday life information practices and information poverty (Chatman, 1996; Savolainen, 1995), this new approach valorises “heritage from below” (Robertson, 2008, 146). The value of individual stories that undermine the hegemony of a unique history is recognised, with personal testimonies of everyday individuals juxtaposed to the grand narratives of national heroes. This led the UNESCO

(2003) to extend its conception of heritage to intangible forms such as “oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible”, “performing arts”, “social practices, rituals and festive events”, “knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe”, as well as “traditional craftsmanship”. This turn is also observed in the advent of the narrative of multicultural societies that led countries such as the UK to give the cultural sector the task to tackle problems of social inclusion by ensuring representation, participation and access to culture to all ethnic communities (Sandell, 1998). Ashworth et al. (2007) consider that since the election of the New Labour in 1997, English heritage policies have been at the forefront of the multicultural narrative, and have aimed to “recognise, develop and promote minority heritages as part of a general universal heritage in which all are invited to participate” (p.145). This political move was also influenced by a new school of museum theorists and practitioners called the “new museology”, which recognises that the representation of cultural identity narratives has to be transformed, from a nation-state celebration to the inclusion of diversity.

This second conception of heritage thus allows taking into account the heritage of migrant communities, whose access to heritage institutions is thought to be beneficial, both on the individual and on the societal level. However, the reluctance of institutions to engage in a horizontal form of collaboration that would undermine their role as experts, together with pressure from funders (Lynch, 2014), leads some heritage initiatives to represent migrants “primarily by their ‘otherness’” (Hall, 2005, p.27), and to place them in a position of passive beneficiaries (Lynch, 2011, 2014). Moreover, the focus on race and cultural diversity tends to set aside the political and legal aspects that influence the specific experience of forced migrants. By highlighting the multicultural aspect of society and the benefits of diversity, it frames a narrative that is in contradiction with the death of multiculturalism occurring in British policies and political discourses, as explained in the first section of this chapter, but does not allow shedding light on it. The emphasis is on heritage institutions as key actors of integration more than heritage as a core domain of inclusion, an institutional viewpoint that places heritage out of its context of production. Thus, this approach can be used to study how heritage institutions strive to foster

integration, but not to investigate how individuals who have experienced forced migration, and the asylum system, use heritage to negotiate inclusion in their everyday life.

In this research, I therefore turn to a third conception, which considers heritage as a cultural process (see Ashley, 2016; Harvey, 2001; Silverman, Waterton & Watson, 2017; Smith, 2006). Within that framework, heritage is always intangible, since it is “a mentality, a way of knowing and seeing” (Smith, 2006, p.54). Tangible and intangible forms of the past are not heritage because of their mere presence but because of the meaning and value that people place on them (Graham & Howard, 2008; Smith, 2006). Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2004) considers that in order not to denature heritage, it should be considered not as an archive, as a repository of recorded knowledge, but as a repertoire of embodied knowledge. Ashley refers to this process as “heritagization”, which she defines as “a communicative and relationship-building practice” (Ashley, 2014, p.42), “the conscious making-valuable of the past through embodied actions” (Ashley, 2016, p.7). Similarly, for Silverman et al. (2017) heritage is “produced and mobilized by individuals and communities in any number of actions, including remembering, forgetting, generating, adapting, and performing” (Silverman et al., 2017, 3). Thus, people do not belong to one heritage, nor plural heritages belong to them: it is enacted. Heritage can therefore be migrating, perpetually renegotiated as one moves across space and time (Innocenti, 2014).

Smith (2006) highlights the tension between the inherent intangibility of heritage and its materiality through things and places. For her, the material representation of heritage functions as a physical anchor through which people can negotiate a sense of place, belonging, and collective identity. This allows comprehending the experience of migration as one of simultaneous, rather than linear, “up-rooting” and “re-grounding” (Ahmed, Castañeda, Fortier, & Sheller, 2003, p.1). The concept of “glocalisation” is often used to point to the “multiple layerings of identity and place” (Ashworth et al., 2007, p.56) that migrants experience. This notion thus allows understanding heritage as a “past-presencing” (MacDonald, 2012), that is, “the reassertion of place in the midst of time-space compression” (Ashworth et al., 2007, p.56). This means that forced migrants can take an active

part in society and develop a sense of belonging to it, by expressing their plural pasts in the local present through the embodied act of heritage.

3.3.2. Intangible heritage and social inclusion

The conception of heritage as an enactment can be used to shed a new light on how forced migrants maintain their cultural identity and develop a sense of belonging by considering heritage as a practice that individuals engage in outside of cultural institutions. It focuses on heritage as one domain of integration, whose principle actors are those who directly experience it. This allows investigating how individuals enact their heritage in their everyday life, what meaning it has for them, and how it helps them to negotiate the process of inclusion.

For instance, Ashley (2016) observes that for people going to the Chattri Indian Memorial (Brighton, UK), enacting heritage is an act of citizenship through which they assert their belonging to the UK. Heritage can therefore also be seen as an act of cultural citizenship, that is, an individual and collective process that provides the “power to name, create meaning, construct personal biographies and narratives by gaining control over the flow of information, goods and cultural processes” (Delanty, 2003, p.602).

In a rare study about the intangible heritage of forced migrants, Chatelard (2017) shows that Syrian refugees use their intangible heritage to respond to “social, economic, and psychological shocks” (p.5). She therefore argues that heritage help them to develop their resilience and to cope with the difficulty of life in exile.

Building on these examples, the conception of heritage as an enactment allows me to further explore its role in the everyday life of people forced to exile, and to examine that aspect of inclusion that is often neglected in other disciplines: the need for developing a sense of belonging and the importance of expressing some aspects of one’s culture of origin. However, heritage is only one aspect of inclusion. To understand its role alongside other domains of inclusion, it is necessary to integrate it into the information lens previously highlighted.

3.4. Summary of key concepts and research gaps

This chapter discussed how three different types of literature have approached the social inclusion of forced migrants. Table 15 provides a summary of the key principles and research gaps discussed in this review, and of how this research intends to respond to them. It shows how the literature discussed in this chapter allowed me to delineate and conceptualise:

The geographical coverage of my research – Setting the study in a city and in England allows me to investigate the inclusion process in a complex and rich context that has not been documented and analysed from an information perspective.

My participant group – A focus on people going through the asylum system allows me to examine the influence of the politico-legal system on their everyday life and to contribute to the growing body of refugee information studies literature by highlighting the experience of this specific group.

My conceptual approach – To explore how people seeking asylum negotiate inclusion in their everyday life, across several domains, via various places and media, and in relation to different actors, I use the lens of everyday information practices and information landscapes. This allows me to investigate what information environments they are confronted with, what type of information practices they configure and how people reconstruct their information landscapes within them. In order to bring the focus to the emotional, cultural and reciprocal aspects of inclusion and build a holistic understanding of this process, I conceptualise heritage as an embodied and deeply meaningful information activity and integrate it within the study of everyday information practices.

The following section details how I use and combine these ideas to build the conceptual lens through which I analyse the findings.

KEY PRINCIPLES	RESEARCH GAPS	PROPOSED RESPONSE
<p>“Refugee” and “Asylum Seeker” are constructed categories</p> <p>They are framed by a politico-legal system and cannot be studied apart from it.</p> <p>They have an impact on the everyday life of individuals.</p>	<p>There is a dearth of research on the information experience of people going through the asylum process that would allow highlighting the impact of the system on individuals’ experiences.</p> <p>The heritage literature similarly focuses on the experience of exile but not on the influence of the politico-legal system on heritage practices.</p>	<p>Focus on the UK asylum system as a specific context that determines people’s inclusion experience, information interactions and sense of belonging.</p>
<p>Social inclusion is a multidimensional process</p> <p>It encompasses various domains of everyday life and include functional, practical, as well as cultural and emotional aspects.</p> <p>It requires people adapting to the host society and the host society adapting to them by allowing them to maintain their culture and identity.</p>	<p>Research related to policies does not investigate inclusion as experienced by individuals, and across all these everyday life domains.</p> <p>A limited number of LIS studies highlight the cultural and emotional aspects of the information experience of forced migrants, which require deeper investigation.</p>	<p>Use information lens to investigate the everyday information practices of people seeking asylum across domains relevant to their own experience.</p> <p>Integrate the concept of heritage into the study of everyday information practices in order to explore the place of cultural maintenance and belonging in the process of inclusion.</p>
<p>Social inclusion is a dialogical and conflicting process</p> <p>It is implemented through laws, policies, procedures, and programmes.</p> <p>It is also negotiated by individuals in their everyday lives.</p> <p>It involves various actors who may have conflicting agendas.</p>	<p>Research tends to focus on either programmes and projects that intend to foster integration, policies that impede it, or individual responses.</p> <p>Additional research is needed to investigate the dynamics and conflicts between these different approaches.</p>	<p>Use a practice theory approach to information to investigate the relation between the structural and individual aspects of inclusion.</p> <p>Place the research within two contexts: the UK asylum system, recognised as “hostile”, and a city, as the contribution of local actors to inclusion is increasingly opposed to that of the state.</p>

Table 15 – Key principles, research gaps and proposed response (Le Louvier)

Chapter 4 – Conceptual lens for the analysis

This chapter presents the conceptual lens I use to discuss the findings of this study. I conducted my research following a constructivist grounded theory approach. This means that I followed an inductive process where I avoided imposing any pre-conceived meaning on the data but let the findings emerge from it. The conceptual lens I present in this chapter was shaped through the concomitant exploration of both the literature and the fieldwork. It was not used to initially guide the research process but emerged through it, and was finalised during the last phase of the data analysis.

My conceptual lens is based on two main elements: a focus on everyday information practices and the integration of heritage as part of these practices. I start this chapter by describing the situational diagram I developed through the research to represent the participants' information experience, using a practice approach to information. I then develop a conceptualisation of heritage from an information perspective that can be used to ensure that this representation incorporates the different aspects of the everyday life information experience of people seeking asylum.

4.1. Situational diagram

The diagram shown in Figure 17 was developed during the theoretical coding phase of the data analysis as a schematic representation of the situation of the research participants in relation to their information environments. It shows how the structural and correlative relationship between the concepts of information environment, practice, and landscape, emerged from the data analysis to represent the overall experience of the participants. This diagram is used in chapter 5 to describe how the participants experience the environments and practices respectively shaped by the asylum system and the local third sector.

This situational diagram stems from a practice theory approach to information, which I adopted during the research process based on the work of Savolainen (2008) and Lloyd (2010; 2017a; 2019). In particular, it is framed around my

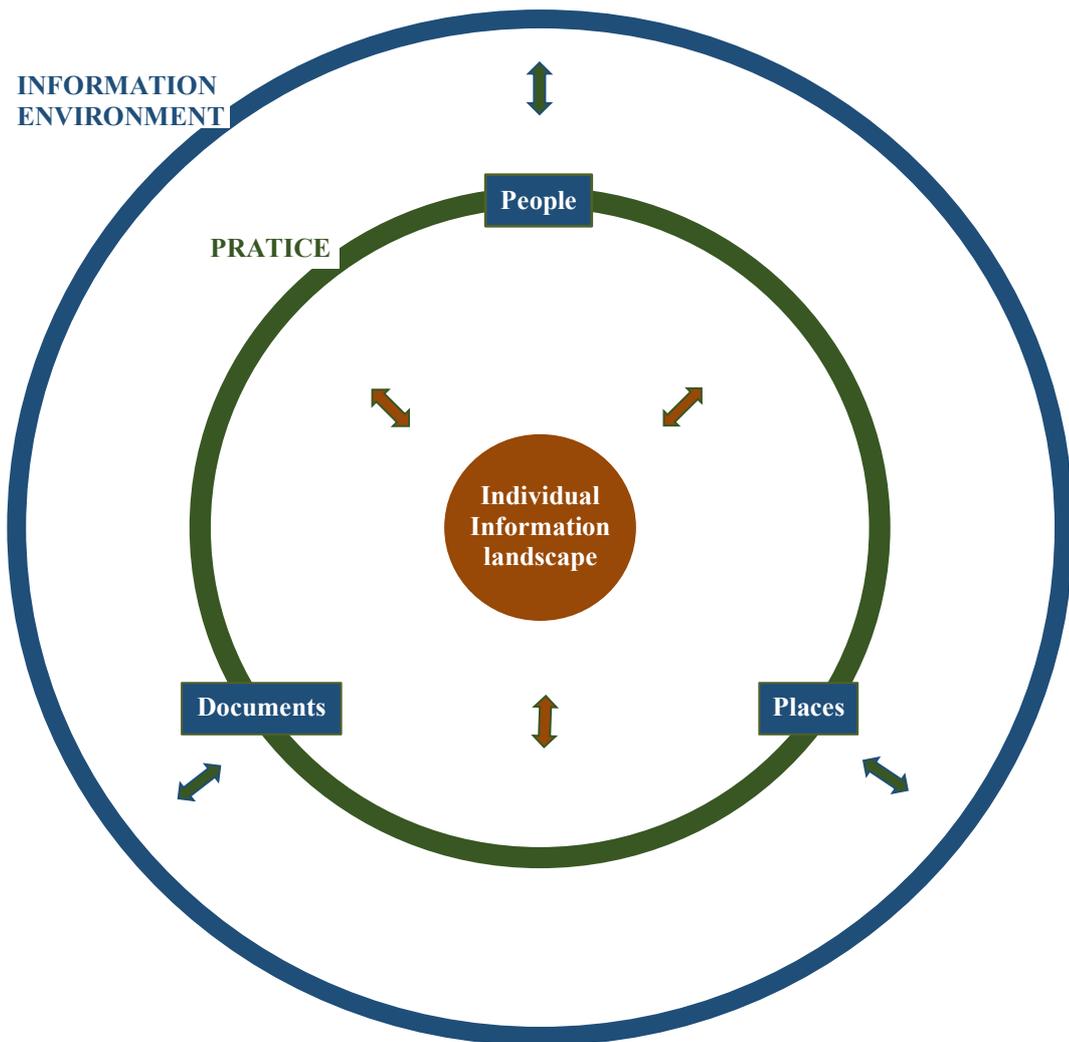


Figure 17 – Situational diagram of individuals in relation to their information landscape, practice and environment, based on research findings and Lloyd’s theory (2017a; Le Louvier)

interpretation of Lloyd’s (2017a) conceptualisation of information environment, literacy practice and landscapes.

This visualisation differs from Lloyd’s (2017a) model of information literacy landscapes by presenting the information environment not as the centre but as the encompassing social site that individuals inhabit. This allows observing the position of individuals in relation to their context and the dynamics between social structure and agency. This situational approach facilitates the reading of the findings by placing the participants’ experience at the centre, and replacing the modalities of an information environment by the concrete people, places and documents that surround them. The following sub-sections further describe this diagram by defining the concepts that shape it and explaining how I interpret and use them to discuss the findings of this research.

4.1.1. Information environment

Lloyd defines information environments as domains, such as the health environment, which are shaped by explicit and tacit norms that have sedimented overtime to form a shared way of knowing about how to operate in that environment. In that sense, information environments can be seen as social sites (Schatzki, 2002), or structures, that comprise a set of stable rules and resources (Giddens, 1984). For Lloyd (2010b; 2017a), an information environment is constituted through three modalities:

- **Epistemic or instrumental modality** – which comprises the norms, rules and regulations that are encoded in documents;
- **Social modality** – which encompasses the tacit knowledges, narratives and way of interacting with others;
- **Physical modality** – which refers to the ways of knowing about the feelings experienced by the body in that environment.

This means that an information environment can be accessed through documents, people and the body, and that it determines a specific way of knowing about them.

Based on this definition, Figure 17 represents the information environment as an encompassing structure within which individuals are positioned. In the context of this research, the information modalities described by Lloyd appeared contained within specific documents, people and places. Figure 17 represents these three elements and shows that they are constitutive of the practice.

4.1.2. Practice

Practice theory stems from a will to overcome the duality between structure and agency (Schatzki, 1996). For that purpose, it assumes that the norms and rules that constitute the structure do not have meaning per se, but are enacted through a nexus of actions that form a practice (Giddens, 1984). By engaging with the

various modalities of an information environment, people negotiate its way of knowing and enact it. Doing so, they bring it into being. This means that although it is constrained by a larger structure/environment, a practice is never static. Indeed, by enacting it, people have the agency to both reproduce and transform the practice. According to Wenger (1998), “the concept of practice connotes doing, but not just doing in and of itself. It is doing in a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what we do” (p.47). Within that framework, an information practice corresponds to the ways in which people interacting within a same information environment enact its legitimised way to “identify, seek, use and share information” (Savolainen, 2008, p.2). Lloyd (2017a) considers that information practices also include information literacy practices, which correspond to the way of knowing about the modalities of an information environment. By engaging in a practice, people negotiate its shared way of knowing and thus enter its community.

In Figure 17, I consider the practice as the second level structure with which an individual interacts, and represent its dynamic and mutually constitutive relation to the information environment. I use the generic term practice to refer to the various forms that it can take depending on whether the focus is placed on information activities, information literacy, or the community. The practice emerges from the interactions between people, places and documents. Depending on the information environment, one of these aspects may have more prominence on the constitution of the practice than others. For instance, Chapter 5 shows that within the information environment shaped by the asylum system, documents have more prominence, while within that shaped by the third sector, people have a greater influence

4.1.3. Information landscape

The last level of interaction corresponds to the information landscape. This can be defined as an individual’s perspective on an information environment. Depending on their own situation (e.g. being refused asylum, having children, or having mental health issues) people do not have the same needs and constraints, and may therefore not relate to an information environment and its practices in

the same way. Thus, an information landscape is both personal and intersubjective: it corresponds to one's individual path into an environment that is collectively constructed (Lloyd, 2010b). Once established, an information landscape is internalised and taken for granted. When moving to a new environment, however, refugees must reconstruct their fractured information landscapes, by engaging with different practices and enacting their information literacy (Lloyd, 2017b). Doing so, they become members of the practice and can contribute to its shared meaning.

Figure 17 represents the information landscape as the last level of the situational diagram, which corresponds to the participants' positionality. It also shows the reciprocal relationship that links one's information landscape to the practice and to the environment that surrounds them.

By using this diagram, my aim is to examine the relationship between the individual and the structure, that is, between the participants and the specific geographic, social and politico-legal environment they inhabit. It allows me to place the participants' experience at the centre, to describe the topography and modalities of the environment that surrounds them, to identify how they relate to it, and to analyse what power dynamics may facilitate or hinder their experience.

To ensure that this topography is comprehensive and reflects the whole experience of people going through exile, I do not only consider the practices that participants join, but also those they carry with them. For that purpose, I turn to the concept of heritage.

4.2. Defining heritage through the information lens

In chapter 3, I argue that a focus on heritage, when combined to the study of everyday information practices, can allow for a more holistic approach to inclusion that accounts for the reciprocity of this process. However, beyond information management and access, heritage is largely unexplored in the LIS literature (Dalbello & Vamanu, 2010). Yet, in this section, I show two ways in which the concepts of information and heritage can be combined:

1. By considering heritage as a profound and pleasurable information activity;
2. By conceptualising it as an embodied information literacy practice.

4.2.1. Heritage as a profound and pleasurable information activity

Information research has traditionally been divided between studies of the workplace and of everyday life, two areas that are commonly conceptualised in negative terms (Clemens & Cushing, 2010). Kari & Hartel (2007) differentiates between lower and higher things in life. The former corresponds to things that are imposed to people and that usually come with negative feelings, while the latter refer to things that are wanted and involve positive feelings. They argue that contrarily to dominant theories, information behaviours are not only triggered by problems that people need to solve but can also be motivated from within, by the need for higher things in life that do not necessarily have a utilitarian purpose, but can be characterised as pleasurable and profound. They consider that by focusing on the lower things in life, the dominant information paradigm sees people as deficient beings rather than complete individuals. To overcome this negative stance, it is necessary to take into account the higher things in life, not as a separate context but as part of everyday information practices. Research shows that including pleasurable activities such as leisure can allow highlighting some of the positive effects of information practices (Fulton, 2009; Fulton & Vondracek, 2009). Here, I argue that heritage practices can also be considered as being part of these higher things in life for they can similarly be defined as “pleasurable or profound phenomena, experiences, or activities that transcend the daily grind” (Kari & Hartel, 2007, p.1131). Indeed, they include activities such as craft, artistic expressions, rituals or religious practices, which are transmitted from generations to generations and provide a sense of pride, identity and belonging (Chatelard, 2017).

The review of the LIS literature on forced migration in a resettlement context showed that the focus was predominantly on issues related to the satisfaction of functional needs. The pursuit of higher things in life is part of our humanity. It is therefore important to consider that people seeking asylum are not deficient

beings, unable to find the information they need to survive, but are agents driven by a variety of needs and aspirations. Considering pleasurable and deeply meaningful activities such as heritage practices as part of people's everyday information practices can allow bridging that gap. By highlighting the role of heritage as part of the information experience of people going through the asylum system, it is possible to identify the activities that they consider deeply meaningful and that form part of their inclusion process. Moreover, I argue that heritage is not only part of broader information experiences but can be considered as a type of embodied information literacy practice.

4.2.2. Heritage as an embodied information literacy practice

In order to show how information literacy and heritage can be combined, I define them both as: 1) embodied; 2) ways of knowing; 3) enacted through affordances; 4) that determine belonging to a community of practice.

Embodiment

Embodiment is gradually becoming a central aspect of information research, as demonstrates the publication of two special issues of *Library Trends* on the relation between information and the body (Cox, Griffin & Hartel, 2018). This development emerged in reaction to the dominant trend of information research, which tends to replicate the Cartesian dichotomy between the mind and the body, focusing on the cognitive aspect of the former while neglecting the role of the latter (Cox, 2018; Cox et al., 2018; Lloyd, 2010a). Bates (2006, based on Goonatilake, 1991) distinguishes three fundamental forms of information: genetic, neural-cultural and exomatic. Exomatic information is information that is recorded and stored in external forms, while neural-cultural information refers to information that is encoded within people in the form of capabilities that are embedded in specific practices, such as language, and that can be transmitted through direct contact between people. As a growing number of studies highlight the role of the latter type of information, a similar development can be observed in the field of heritage, where the focus was initially on monuments and artefacts, and is now increasingly turning to intangible practices. The difference between exomatic and neural-cultural information can be related to the

difference between the archive, as a repository of recorded knowledge, and the repertoire, as embodied knowledge (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004). Thus, heritage as repertoire can be understood as a type of neural-cultural information that is encoded within the body, and can be enacted and expressed. This parallel allows considering both information and heritage as experiential. Pollak (2015) defines experiential information as “sensation, emotion, fact, skill, knowledge, or understanding acquired or otherwise derived from interactive participation in a social or solitary context, or occurring at some point thereafter as a result of contemplation and reflection” (p. 255-256). As such, the body can be seen as a mediator between the individual and the outside world, which receives and interprets external stimuli and transform them into information.

Affordances

If a multitude of natural information surrounds us all the time, not all of it becomes represented information (Bates, 2018). Humans, and other nervous systems, take into account information that is afforded. The term “affordance” refers to the latent meaning of the environment (Gibson, 2015). It is a relational property that corresponds to what the elements of the environment call us to do. As such, it is neither objective nor subjective – if a chair affords sitting, it is as much due to its physical properties as it is a construct of the social mind. In the information context, affordances correspond to the opportunities of a setting, which invite individuals to interact with information. However, individuals only seize them if they perceive them as meaningful and valuable, a judgment that is shaped within a specific practice (Lloyd, 2010b). In the heritage field, affordances have been defined in two ways:

1. As the relation between the physical properties of a heritage landscape and the human being that prompts the act of heritage (Alves, 2014);
2. As the external stimuli that provoke the possibility of a biographic narrative (Candau and Ferreira, 2015).

In both cases, affordances are seen as external elements which latent meaning is only activated when perceived by a human body that interprets it according to its own set of socially constructed knowledges, that is, its own way of knowing.

Ways of knowing

Adopting a practice theory approach, Lloyd (2006) considers that experiential information occurs within specific practices that shape a collective way of knowing. Thus, she defines information literacy as the negotiation of this way of knowing through interaction with a social setting where knowledge is embodied, and therefore through information affordances (Lloyd & Wilkinson, 2016). She considers that when they arrive in a new information environment, refugees must adapt their established way of knowing to the new setting by recognising these affordances. By defining heritage as always intangible, Smith (2006) similarly considers it as a “mentality, a way of knowing and seeing” (p.93). It is thus a process of giving meaning to certain objects, buildings, environments, or actions, which have value within a specific heritage practice. In that sense, heritage, such as information literacy, can be understood as a way of knowing that is enacted. It is through this enactment that people negotiate belonging to a community of practice.

Belonging

Information literacy allows developing a sense of identity and belonging by negotiating membership to the community of practice (Lloyd, 2006; Wenger, 1998). Lloyd (2017b) shows that this is key to the social inclusion of refugees because it enables them to make sense of the specific way of knowing of the local community, and to therefore become part of it. Turning to a very different context, she shows that car restoring can also be seen as a practice, which consists in enacting the specific knowledge and know-how of the craft (Lloyd & Olsson, 2018). By enacting and communicating this knowledge, car restorers develop their own sense of identity and belonging to the community of practice, and help maintaining it alive. Described as such, car restoring can be seen as a heritage community, that is, a group of citizens who identifies to a form of heritage that they wish to safeguard (Council of Europe, 2005). The process of making and preserving a heritage community can therefore be defined as a “cycle of capture and enactment of embodied knowledge” (Lloyd & Olsson, 2018, p.2), that requires enacting the way of knowing of the practice. Although she does not consider it as a heritage community, Guzik (2018) similarly shows

that to become part of the religious community of Islam, people who are in the process of converting negotiate their new identity by seeking information in different worship and learning spaces, sharing information through clothing and postures, as well as creating and communicating information related to their identity through different media. Doing so, it can be considered that they construct their identities by enacting the information literacy of Islam, and thus negotiate membership to that heritage community. Research shows that intangible heritage functions to provide people with a sense of identity and community by linking them to other people, past and present, who share the same practice (Chatelard, 2017). Here, I argue that heritage can be considered as a type of information literacy practice, through which individuals develop a sense of belonging by enacting the way of knowing that unite them to the heritage community.

In the present research, considering heritage as a deeply meaningful and pleasurable information activity and as a type of information literacy practice allows me to explore two aspects of the inclusion experience of people seeking asylum:

1. What affects and effects differentiate heritage practices from other type of information literacy practices?
2. How do people seeking asylum simultaneously maintain a sense of identity that connect them to their past and develop a sense of belonging that link them to new communities?

4.3. Chapter conclusion

This chapter presented my interpretation of the key concepts I used to analyse my findings. It started with the introduction of a situational diagram that represents the interaction between individuals and their environment. Building on Lloyd's practice approach to information, it illustrates the dynamic and mutually constitutive relationship between information environments, practices and information landscapes. I defined these different concepts, and explained how the situational diagram relates to the experience of the participants. I then turned to the need, identified in the literature review, to integrate the concept of

heritage into the everyday information experience of people seeking asylum. Drawing a parallel between conceptions of information and heritage that put the emphasis on higher things in life, practice, and embodiment, I show how heritage can be conceptualised as a pleasurable and deeply meaningful information activity, and as a specific type of information literacy practice. This conceptual basis is used to discuss the findings presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 5 – Findings and discussion

“Belonging is a dynamic emotional attachment that relates people to the material and social worlds that they inhabit and experience. It is about feeling ‘at home’ and ‘secure’, but it is equally about being recognised and understood”

Wood & Waite, 2011, p.201

This chapter discusses the theory of information exclusion and inclusion that emerged from this ethnographic immersion into the everyday life of a sample of people who have resettled in Newcastle-Gateshead after claiming asylum.

Data was analysed using a constructivist grounded theory method (see Methodology chapter). Two overarching categories emerged from this analysis: the asylum system and the local third sector. They correspond to the main two information environments that the participants face in their everyday life. Within these two categories, a series of codes emerged that describe how the participants experience these environments. They form the ground for the theory of information exclusion and information inclusion that I discuss in this chapter.

Figure 18 provides an overview of these theoretical codes and categories. I use it throughout this chapter to guide the reader through the processes that characterise the practices of each information environment.

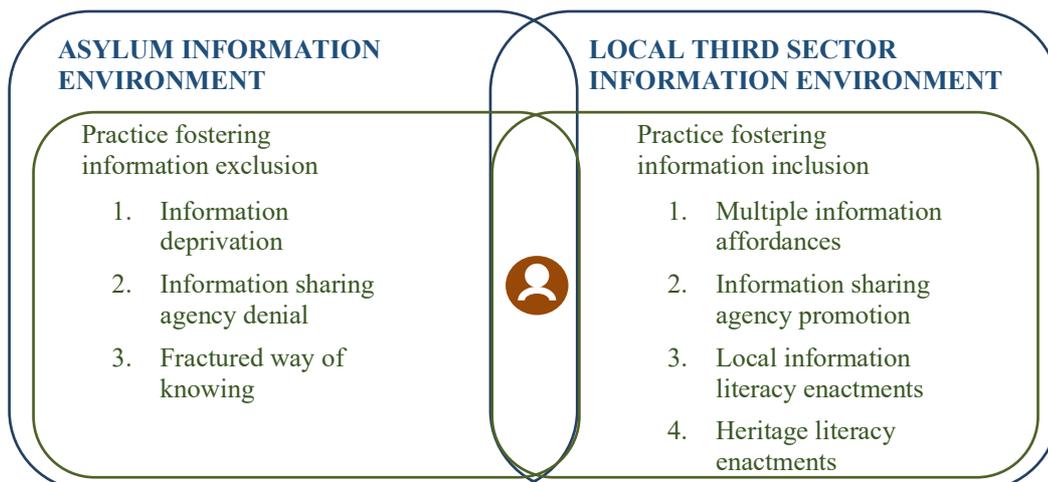


Figure 18 - Overview of codes related to the asylum and local third sector information environments and practices (Le Louvier)

I start this chapter by examining the information environment of the asylum system, which the participants experience as a fostering information exclusion. In the second section, I focus on the information environment of the local third sector, which the participants experience as a practice of information inclusion. I then close the chapter with a summary of the key discussion points and a reflection on methods. Although the findings emerged from the analysis of three types of data – field notes, interviews with insiders and interviews with key informants, wherever is possible, I discuss them using excerpts from insider interviews in order to give space to the participants’ voices. Excerpts from key informant interviews and field notes are used to complement their accounts, give more details, or discuss specific aspects such as heritage enactments.

5.1. The information environment of the asylum system

The participants’ experience is first analysed in relation to the asylum information environment. As discussed in the literature review, information studies on forced migration tend to focus on the experience of people who have already been granted refugee status, and do not examine the information experience created by specific asylum systems. In social sciences, British asylum policies have been described as strict, or even harmful (see Canning, 2017; Ibrahim & Howarth, 2018), acting as postmigratory stressors that contribute to the deteriorating mental health of people who have already experienced the trauma of being forced into exile by conflict or persecution (Morgan, Melluish & Welham, 2017). This section advances these two fields by investigating the type of information environment that the UK asylum system creates, and how the individuals who engage with it experience it.

Amongst the two environments identified in this research, it is generally the first one that the participants encounter, as they arrive in the UK and submit their asylum claim. It is also the one that mostly determines their resettlement experience. Although at the initial stage of the research, I had not intended to focus on this aspect, it quickly became evident through my interactions with the participants that the asylum system had a significant impact on their lives, and

that they wanted the issues they had faced with it to be documented. The asylum information environment thus grew as a key part of the findings.

It is important to note that in this study, the asylum information environment is solely mapped and discussed through the perspective of asylum claimants. No attempt has been made to contact the Home Office and its associated agencies, as an investigation of their internal functioning and motivations is beyond the scope of this study. Consequently, this section does not present a complete account of communication within the asylum system, but a discussion of the norms and culture relative to information within that system as experienced by people seeking asylum.

Each characteristic of the information exclusion practice is discussed using excerpts from interviews. In order to be faithful to the participants' views and to give them as much voice as is possible, I present as many quotes as is relevant to include in a doctoral dissertation. To protect the anonymity of the participants who have experienced the asylum system, names have been changed.

Table 16 presents an overview of their profiles.

Pseudonym	Status at time of interview	Approximate time spent in asylum system	Approximate time with leave to remain
Nasim	Refugee	1 year, 6 months	3 months
Agit	Refugee	8 months	6 months
Jemal	Refugee	2 years	5 months
Hakuna	Asylum seeker	2 years, 5 months (ongoing)	Not granted yet
Vivienne	Asylum seeker	8 years (ongoing)	Not granted yet
Paulette	Asylum seeker	13 years (ongoing)	Not granted yet
Mustafa	Refugee	6 months	4 months
Joann	Asylum seeker	5 years (ongoing)	Not granted yet
Nimesha	Refugee	3 years	6 years
Boubakar	Asylum seeker	10 years (ongoing)	Not granted yet
Adnan	Refugee	6 months	2 years
Sara	Asylum seeker	8 months (ongoing)	Not granted yet
Tarek	Refugee	6 months	3 years
Fardin	Asylum seeker	9 months (ongoing)	Not granted yet
Claudine	Refugee	4 years	7 years

Table 16 – Overview of the participants' pseudonyms, legal status and time spent in asylum system

This background information is used to contextualise their accounts. However, it is not the purpose of this analysis to compare them in light of these characteristics. Participants described in field notes excerpts are fully anonymised. Excerpts of interviews conducted in French are presented in their English translation. Original excerpts in French are provided in appendix 6. Key informants are referred to by their position within their organisation, as discussed and consented during the interviews.

5.1.1. Overview of the asylum information environment

Figure 19 provides an overview of the situation of the participants in relation to the asylum information environment, its components and practices. This information environment is primarily framed by documents: the UK immigration and asylum laws, and the regulations, contracts and procedures that derive from it. These documents have a great influence on the shaping of the practice for they determine the participants' rights and movements. In particular, legal documents frame the participants' information experiences around four main areas:

1. **Asylum claim**, which comprises the initial and substantive interviews, as well as, for the two thirds of the participants who had received an initial decision, the appeal process, and for some, the fresh claim (Right to Remain, 2016);
2. **Financial support**, £37.75 per week for those under section 95, or £35.39 for those who have been refused and qualify for section 4 support (as of February 2019, UK Government, n.d.a);
3. **Housing support**, provided on a no choice basis in a shared accommodation managed by the private companies contracted by the Home Office in North East England, G4S and its subcontractor Jomast;
4. **Right restrictions**, related to possible detention and removal, the work ban, the obligation to report on a regular basis, the interdiction to register to College during the first six months, and for one participant, a study ban.

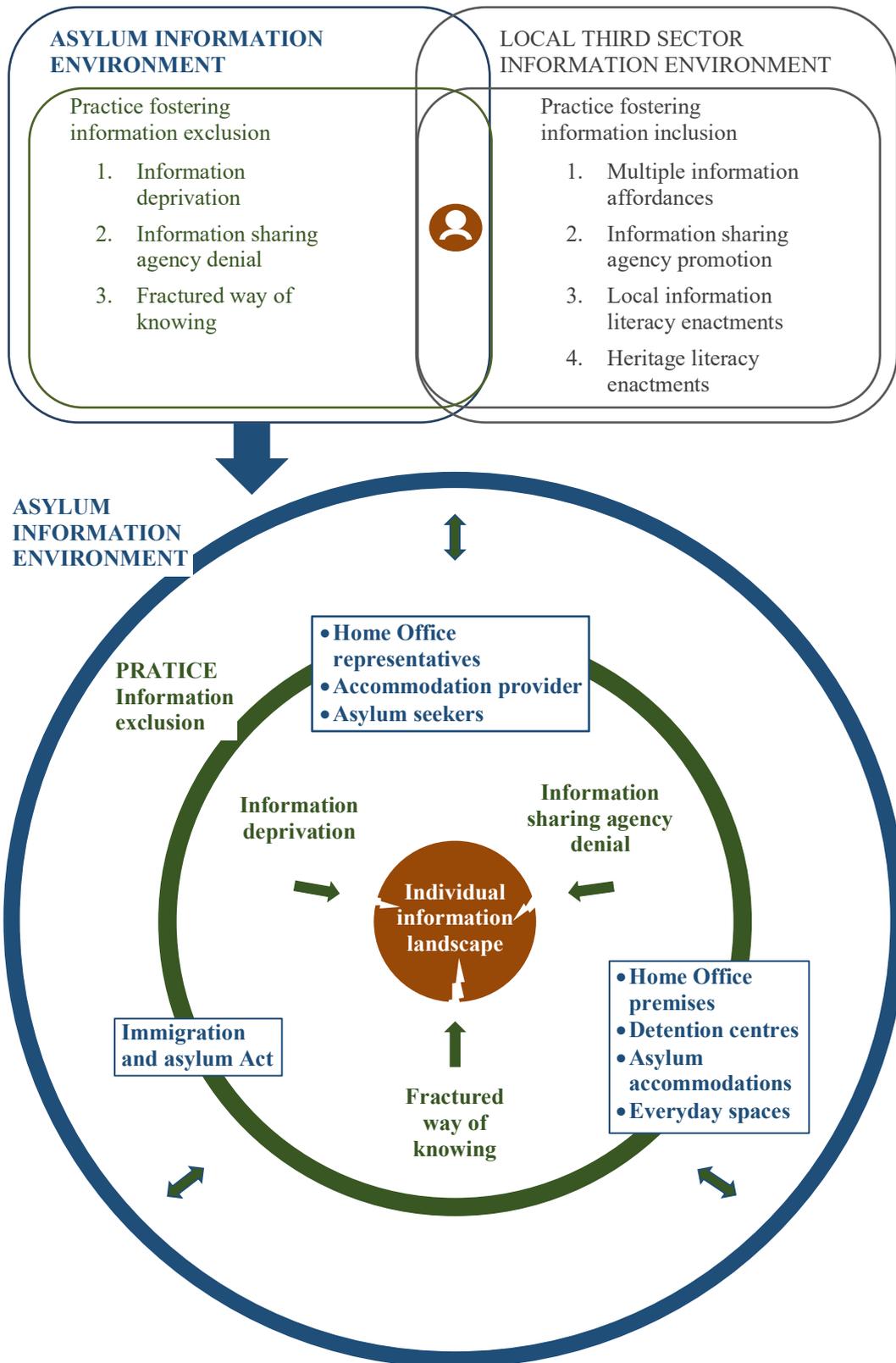


Figure 19 – Situational diagram of the participants within the asylum information environment (Le Louvier)

The asylum information environment operates through three main actors: the Home Office, the accommodation providers contracted by the Home Office, and people seeking asylum. Interactions between these actors mainly occur via letters, phone calls and physical encounters. The latter take place in Home Office premises, such as interview and reporting centres, but also detention centres, initial and dispersal accommodations, as well as a variety of everyday life spaces.

These documents, people, and places, shape a specific practice that the participants experience as information exclusion. To understand how it operates, the three characteristics of this practice are discussed. The focus is first placed on information provision and on the type of information that the participants do not receive, or receive in a way that is perceived as inadequate. Information sharing issues are then explored, highlighting the barriers that prevent participants from expressing information. Information literacy is then discussed, which shows how the practice fractures the participants' way of knowing. Finally, I define the concept of information exclusion to explain how these information practices generate a hostile information environment for the participants.

5.1.2. Information deprivation

The first aspect of information exclusion that characterises the asylum information environment is a perceived information deprivation (Fig. 20). Across the heterogeneity of the participants' accounts of the asylum system, a common theme emerged: the impression of not being provided the information they need. The analysis reveals a series of systemic flaws that lead participants to experience various information gaps that negatively impact their wellbeing.

Theories of information behaviour commonly understand uncertainty as an initial stage, which associated feelings of anxiety trigger an information need and information seeking behaviour that aims at reducing uncertainty (see eg. Dervin, 1983; Krikelas, 1983; Kulthau, 1991; Wilson, 1999). Yet, within that field, little is known about what happens when an information need remains unmet, causing uncertainty levels to rise up. To shed light on this process, I use a concept coming from the field of psychology that is particularly relevant to people who

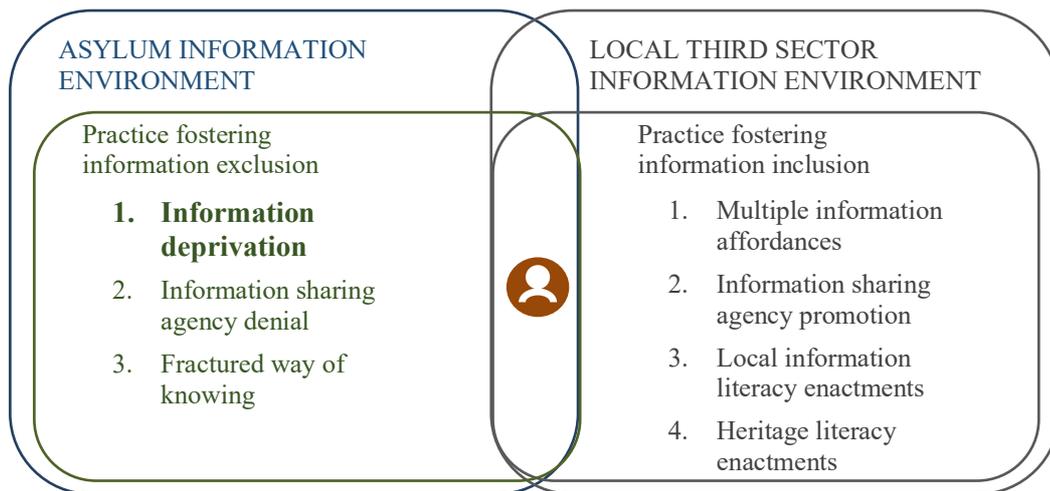


Figure 20 – The asylum information environment: focus on information deprivation (Le Louvier)

have experienced traumatic episodes, as is the case of the participants: Information Deprivation Trauma (IDT).

IDT is defined as:

a negative emotional response (e.g., fear, helplessness, horror) consequent to (a) a lack of understanding of the extent, magnitude, consequences, and probability of a current or impending meaningful event; and (b) an inability to access information about this event that would reasonably allow a person prepare, appropriately respond, or self-protect. (Schild & Dalenberg, 2016, p.873)

In their investigation of trauma in the deaf community in California, Schild & Dalenberg (2016) show that information deprivation can have two effects. First, it can worsen the experience of trauma. Second, it can constitute a traumatic experience in itself.

This subsection demonstrates that the asylum system’s information gaps and systemic flaws produce IDT, as well as a lack of agency and stability, that foster information exclusion. This process is explored through two domains of the asylum information environment: the housing system and the asylum process.

Information deprivation in the housing system

I first focus on how participants perceive information deprivation as being constitutive of the housing system, and how it affects their mental health and inclusion.

The first instance of information deprivation appears after the participants register their claim and enter the asylum information environment: they are sent

to initial accommodation or detention centres in cities like Birmingham, Wakefield or Liverpool, and then dispersed to North East England, without receiving clear information about these destinations.

Hakuna and Sara relate having been moved from city to city without understanding what was happening to them or knowing where they were:

(5) Hakuna *I was leaving London, the next day I went to Wakefield, the day after I went to another city, and the day after that I arrived in Newcastle, or actually Gateshead. [...] They make you wait and so on. They put you in that hotel, they bring you there, they don't tell you that, they don't tell you.*

(6) Sara *After that day they sent me to another place, it was I think it was Bradford I'm not sure about the city. It was a big place something like detention maybe.*

In these excerpts, the interviewees use the subject “they” to refer to various representatives of the Home Office. This indicates that people working for the asylum system are not perceived as individuals with whom participants may have some type of relationship, but as anonymous agents who move them around without communicating information. Secondly, the interviewees do not present themselves as the subject of their sentences. This shows that within that context, they do not consider themselves as “grammatical agents” (Ahearn, 2001, p.120), and consequently, as actors of their lives. Not being provided with information about where they are going therefore lead them to feel deprived of their agency.

When participants are provided with information, it is sometimes misleading. This is particularly the case of room sharing, which four interviewees report having been forced to without providing clear consent for it. For instance, Nasim says he was misleadingly asked to sign the contract if he was “ok with people”, and Boubakar tells me that he was asked to sign a form without being explained what it was about:

(7) Boubakar *When I came from like Sunderland and I came to Gateshead, they open this house and we came inside, and then they showed the room and said this will be your room. And after they brought a bunch of papers and I don't know how to read and they told me to sign, and I don't know it so much, and I just looked at it and I just signed it. Because I was tired as well, you know what I mean, they came early morning, I didn't have a*

good sleep the day before. So, I signed and then apparently the documentation that I was signing said that they can bring somebody there anytime soon.

Although it is not possible to confirm whether these forms effectively bounded Boubakar and Nasim to share a room, their accounts show that they are asked to sign documents without being provided with clear information about their content. This means that their rights and obligations as residents are not explicitly communicated. The Helen Bamber Foundation (n.d.) reports similar cases of people being moved to shared rooms on the basis that they had consented to it by signing a tenancy agreement that they could not understand because it was in English, and that they had no choice but to sign if they wanted to receive asylum support. This ethical bridge, whereby people are forced to sign documents without providing informed consent, may therefore not correspond to isolated cases but constitute a recurrent issue within the housing system. Yet, room sharing is a serious problem for the participants as it deprives them of privacy (see excerpt 53-54). It also gives participants the impression of having been provided with disinformation. This type of information, perceived as purposefully deceptive (Karlova & Fisher, 2013), creates a feeling of distrust towards the housing company.

Distrust is accentuated by the absence of clear information regarding house repairs. Nasim and Sara relate calling the accommodation provider when they have issues in their house but never knowing if and when the repairs will be made:

(8) Nasim *Many times we want to call Jomast please we have problem in bathroom, can you come to help. Ok no problem we will do something for you but next week. So ok no problem. Next week, two weeks, three weeks and they don't come. Sometimes they come quickly but they have different things.*

(9) Sara *Sometimes we have some problems in the house about the heater or about the vacuum cleaner or the fridge. They do something so far. Today we call them, tomorrow we call them, and after tomorrow we call them, and after 2 weeks or 3 weeks they come and fix them. Sometimes they fix and sometimes they say no we don't, we can't do anything.*

These excerpts show that there is a lack of clear and systematic procedures to deal with complaints, which leads to participants not knowing what their rights are and what they should expect from the accommodation provider. The Home Affairs Committee's (2017) inquiry into asylum accommodation reports similar issues regarding the handling of complaints and shows that housing officers often do not log issues reported by residents. This indicates that Sara and Nasim are not isolated cases. These examples evidence the systemic aspect of information deprivation. They show that uncertainty is part of the participants' everyday life, even when it concerns common matters and that it produces frustration, deteriorates their living conditions, and, as the Home Office contracts the housing company, contributes to their distrust of the institutions.

The uncertainty related to housing has more severe consequences when it comes to house moves. After arriving in a dispersal area, there are three instances when asylum claimants have to move to a new house:

1. After receiving a positive answer;
2. After exhausting their appeal rights;
3. When submitting a fresh claim and/or qualifying for asylum support under section 4.

In addition to these reasons, two interviewees indicate being forced to move house while their asylum claim was still being processed. The research reveals a lack of information regarding these house changes, which leads to trauma, instability, belonging deprivation, and a feeling of persecution.

This is first observed in Boubakar and Claudine's accounts, where they explain being forced to move house without prior notice:

- (10)Boubakar *They keep on moving us around. The last time they moved me to Sunderland, the one before it was planned, they give me letter, notice you are moving, but the one from Sunderland, that wasn't the last one actually, but the one from Sunderland to Newcastle they didn't give me notice. They just came the same day in the morning and they said "pack your bag and move, the van is waiting outside". I had only 15 minutes to pack my bag. I didn't have many things though, to leave behind, so I still managed, but I wasn't prepared. I couldn't say bye to my housemates, friends and stuff. [...] I wasn't expecting it, because when I moved from South to North*

I was giving a letter and they told me they were going to pick me up in a week time.

- (11)Claudine *I was in the hospital for six months. After, when I got out, while I was in the hospital, the Home Office had stopped everything. They had also evicted me from the house but my social worker had not informed me. She had only brought my clothes to the hospital, but I didn't need them. I don't want to get change, why do you bring me that? She didn't tell me. [...] Now when I had recovered, they told me you cannot go back where you were living because your case is closed.*

Boubakar's account shows that the accommodation provider can proceed to a house move immediately and with no explanation. This indicates that the Commercial and Operating Managers Procuring Asylum Support contracts ([COMPASS] UK Government, 2014) for the provision of accommodation for asylum seekers signed between the Home Office and the private accommodation providers ensures very limited rights to the residents. Indeed, the COMPASS contract does not consider them as tenants but service-users, meaning that they do not hold tenants rights (Bolt, 2018). Thus, the housing company is allowed to move people without their consent, as long as that does not happen more than twice a year (Home Affairs Committee, 2017). Boubakar's accounts also shows an inconsistency in the procedure, as he was notified of his house move the first time but not the second. This supports evidence provided by the Home Affairs Committee (2017), which reports that several individuals have been moved at very short notice. Boubakar's case is therefore not isolated. This means that providing asylum claimants with prior information about a significant change in their life such as a house move does not constitute an imperative that is ensured by specific procedures and policies. Even if she was evicted from her asylum accommodation because her case was rejected, Claudine's account demonstrates that no exception is made for people who are hospitalised because their mental health is fragile. These information gaps result in a perceived information deprivation that has negative effects on the participants' wellbeing.

The unpredictability of this important change means that participants are not prepared for it. This led them to relive a situation of forced displacement, which they originally experienced when leaving their country. Schild & Dalenberg (2016) provide a similar example in their study of the deaf community,

explaining that some of their clients only learned a few days before a move out of state that their lives will be changed, leading them to experience traumatic behaviours. The researchers explain that in that case, trauma was caused because the change was perceived as negative, and also because not having received information about it beforehand made them think that this kind of rapid change could happen anytime without them knowing it. Similar fear shows through Boubakar's and Claudine's accounts, for whom the unpredictability of their house move seems to have reactivated trauma.

For several interviewees, having to move is a fearful prospect:

(12)Fardin *I lost my way of life already, and now I'm really scared, again if the Home Office takes my way of life, there will be another disaster in my life, in my way of life. [...] Now I'm getting used to the community, I have people I know, they know me [...] I don't want to change my lifestyle, I've established in the last 9 months, I am beginning sort of a new way, it's hard.*

(13)Boubakar *I build a community when I was in Gateshead, I was close to the Mosque, I was a proper member, people know me there. As asylum seeker I don't have my family you know my parents. I am by myself. So my community they are like my family. So I built a good relationships with my community and when they came and say you are moving away it's like they are taking me away from my family.*

The interviewees describe the prospect of having to move to a new place as a re-enactment of exile. This uncertainty prevents them from growing the roots they need to reconstruct their identity. This shows that the Home Office provides them with a house, but does not give them the opportunity to make it a home. The difference between the two can be defined as “the difference between a place to stay and a place to live. A home is a place of safety, security and stability” (Dutch Refugee Council & ECRE, 2001, p.5, as cited in Ager & Strang, 2008, p.172). Without knowing when they might be moved, participants cannot make a home of their house. Yet, according to Ager & Strang (2008), safety, security and stability are key facilitators of integration.

This impossibility to settle down seems to be accentuated by the absence of information regarding why some participants have to move house:

(14)Boubakar *They try not give excuse why. [...] Some people understanding is that they don't want to keep you in one place, they always try to distract you. So that you are not comfortable, you don't feel like the home is your place, so that you will give up your case and you'll go back to your country. You know, the last time they moved, they said that because the landlord wanted the house, that was the one in Gateshead. But my belief is that they move people because it is whatever suit them. For example, if I have a room somewhere else and then they need to put somebody in that room, and they want to put somebody in the room, they don't care about me, or the community I built there, the friendship, my life there. They just remove me and they put somebody that they want to put there. For their own reasons, that could be anything.*

Boubakar feels like the accommodation provider does not have valid reasons for this sudden change beside the will to make him uncomfortable and prevent him to feel at home where he lives. This shows that he feels he is lacking rights, and that he does not only need a notification regarding his move but also a legitimate explanation.

These housing issues reveal that within the asylum information environment, the lack of policies and procedures ensuring that asylum claimants systematically receive information about where, when and why they may have to move produces uncertainty and unpredictability. This leads participants to relive or fear to relive a traumatic event that deprives them from the stability they need to rebuild their lives, and it contributes to their distrust towards the UK institutions.

Having examined examples of perceived information deprivation related to housing, I now analyse how this practice affects the asylum process.

Information deprivation in the asylum process

Participants experience information deprivation throughout the various stages of the asylum process – interviews, decisions, detention and removal. It creates an uncertainty that has severe effects on their mental health.

Participants first indicate lacking adequate information related to asylum interviews. Some indicate not being prepared for that process, which might have led them to receive a negative decision. For instance, Vivienne tells me about her being stressed when going for her interview, not only because she did not know what to expect, but also because she did not know how to reach it. Her interview

took place in Leeds only three days after she had arrived in Newcastle. She was unfamiliar with both cities and had only been provided with a map to help her find her way. However, she was unable to read it. She describes this day as being particularly difficult as she was with her two children and struggled finding her way to and from the train stations. She eventually managed to reach the interview location, by stopping passers-by and asking them to talk on the phone to a cousin living in Birmingham who acted as her interpreter. She recounts feeling scared and exhausted before even starting the interview:

(15)Vivienne *I don't know the language, I don't know the streets, I don't know the places, I know nothing, nothing, nothing. And with small children! It was like bringing a robot, there was only void coming in and out. And when I got there, luckily, I got there, the women asked me more than two hundred questions. With all the stress I had since the morning, looking for the location, arriving in Leeds, from Newcastle to Leeds, the language and so on, and the women ask me more than two hundred... So I was lost. There was only void. Until today, I can say, sometimes I have void in my head*

In order for her to find the interview location, the Home Office sends Vivienne a map that she is not able to use. This shows that although they provide information, the receiver of this information is not always considered. Moreover, it was not given in a timely manner as the interview was arranged almost immediately after her move to Newcastle, which did not give her enough time to get used to the city and to meet people who might have been able to help her find her way. The consequence of this information inadequacy is a state of anxiety that she describes as feeling empty and which, she thinks, contributed to the rejection of her case.

Nasim provides a similar account of how a lack of information led him to arrive at his interview anxious and unprepared. He tells me that he was confused and thought he was already starting the interview when someone was just asking for his details. He was made aware too late that he could see a lawyer, which increased his state of anxiety:

(16)Nasim *So when I came to this country I didn't know they have lawyer. [...] so I told to someone what is lawyer, for what, and solicitor, people here actually in Newcastle I don't know maybe different places they say solicitor, so what I know my English is lawyer, I don't know*

solicitor. So he told me “you don’t have even now a solicitor?”. “No, for what?” And he told me “the interview, and it’s late, you have to find someone”. [...]

Kahina Did they not give you any book? Any paper?

Nasim *Anything, anything. I can’t remember, except the house contract, flat contract. And I can’t remember if they gave me something else. So, it was not easy, it was very difficult. So I went very quick to find a solicitor. [...] She told me just before the interview, one day, you can come to me and I will listen to you. Unfortunately, I went before my interview the interpreter he was not my accent at all, it was different, we talked and like it was really like 5-10 minutes and the interpreter gave up, he told me I can’t understand you. [...]. So I come back home and I didn’t know what will happen, I didn’t know what is the interview, how they make the interview.*

While the majority of interviewees indicate that they received a list of solicitors as part of their information pack when they arrived in Newcastle, Nasim tells me that he does not remember receiving it, which reveals another inconsistency, or inadequacy, in the information provision. Yet, knowing what a solicitor is and where to find one that can be accessed for free is particularly important to help people like Nasim to feel ready for their interview. Interviews are extremely stressful events, as people may be asked to talk about traumatic episodes and they largely constitute the grounds on which the Home Office determines an asylum claim; it is therefore crucial for claimants to be prepared. However, the study reveals that overall, participants’ preparation is limited, and information gaps such as those detailed here contribute to raising people’s level of anxiety. Vivienne in particular seems to have experienced the interview as a traumatic event, describing the void in her head. Conversely, receiving appropriate information might have allowed the participants to reach the interview in a better condition, which might have influenced their asylum case.

After the substantive interview, uncertainty concerns the time participants will spend within the asylum system. Although Mustafa only spent six months in it – which is the shortest time experienced by a participant – he stresses the worries that having to wait for such decisive information as an asylum decision created:

⁽¹⁷⁾Mustapha *Even sleeping it was a disturbance at night because nowadays I cannot return to my country, that would be very threaten to my life, and even my future is not clear, if they give me the permission to start working or to start something, I can start working on my next plan, but in 6*

months, I was hanging. [...] There is no clear guidance or something, you have to explain everything by yourself. The first time I was in the Home Office, I checked the website before, to know the process. Everything was clear online, after you get to the first and blablabla, but the time is not clear. Because you know, time is more important than money. The time, you can bring your money back but you can't bring your time back. So the time is not clear. I couldn't find any answer how long it would take my case, how much it will take the interview, and where it will be, nothing.

For Mustafa as for other participants, the feeling of wasting time is particularly tormenting and is increased by the absence of a clear timeline that would allow them to know what to expect. Not knowing when they will get a decision seems to lead participants to put their lives on hold, be it for six months, in the case of Mustafa, or for an indefinite period of time, as is the case of Boubakar and Vivienne, who have respectively spent ten and eight years in the asylum system since the time of the interview.

These two participants have received an initial negative decision, and are now waiting for the outcomes of appeals and fresh claims. Joann, however, tells me that he is still waiting for the initial decision five years after his substantive interview:

(18)Joann *It's been five years now, I've waiting for the answer.*

Kahina *The first decision?*

Joann *The first decision. Because normally you have two interviews. I did the first one, I did the second one. [...] I did all of that and until now five years, because I was told that normally the system here is that if you have the interview, it should be six months they tell you if they accept you or not. But I've done five years, no answer.*

Joann's story is indicative of an anomaly in the system that he was the only one to experience within the sample group, but that most participants faced in other forms. Neither the Home Office, nor his solicitor or his Member of Parliament (MP), are able to tell him when he will get that decision. This is particularly problematic, because it means he cannot even move forward and go through the appeal system. The government website indicates that applications "will usually be decided within 6 months" but that "it may take longer if it's complicated" (UK Government, n.d.b). This loose timeline leads people like Joann to expect

their case to be decided within six months and does not allow them to reevaluate their expectations if this delay is not respected. This plunges them into uncertainty and leads to a feeling of having been misinformed that further breaks the trust they have in the institution.

Moreover, about 67% of the interviewees who had received an initial decision had received a negative one, which reflects the national statistics on asylum for 2018 (House of Commons, 2019). This high likelihood of receiving a negative decision and having to go through the appeal process further prolongs uncertainty, which prevents participants from developing a sense of belonging. Thus, Sara explains that until she obtains a leave to remain, she will not feel at home in Newcastle-Gateshead:

(19)Sara *Do I feel this place is my home? No. Until now I couldn't find it it's my home, It's my home I can be very relaxed, no.*

Kahina *Why?*

Sara *I'm nervous. I don't know what happen tomorrow, because it's temporary. I can't decide about anything. Just pass the time to process be done.*

The uncertainty of asylum decisions also prevents participants to visualise the future. For Nasim, to anticipate the future is part of our humanity, and it is a capacity that he only recovered after being granted asylum:

(20)Nasim *Before I'm resident yes I was feeling not very well, thinking of the future, ok I lost my country, I'm in this country as well, I will be homeless, I have no one who will look after me, who will take care of me. So lot's of thinking, lots lots lots. But now I know I have my paper and I know I have future, I can work, I can have flats, I can have, I can feel better, much better. I can feel I am human, only, that's enough. [...] I feel like now, I live in Newcastle and I have, I feel I am human actually. Asylum seekers are not human, they don't feel sorry that things completely.*

Hakuna similarly says that while being in the asylum system, he feels like being in a limbo where time expands:

(21)Hakuna *So it's a whole mess and during that time, you don't have any news from your family, you are in what my friend Viktor Frankl, who is an important Austrian psychologist who survived the camps [...], he wrote a book, The Man's Search for Meaning, and he calls this*

kind of existence the provisional existence, and you recognise yourself in that because there is no hope, no hope for tomorrow, no you don't have any, because you don't even know what is going to happen. You're in a situation where in fact, days become longer than years. [...].

Kahina You can't project yourself in the future?

Hakuna *No, because nothing depends on you anymore. [...]
That's it, you've got no news from your family, you've got no news from yourself, in fact you've got nothing.*

In these excerpts, the uncertainty of the asylum system leads to an incapacity to look to the future that makes participants feel like they are deprived from their humanity. Indeed, projectivity (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998), the capacity to imagine future possibilities, is a key tenant of agency.

For those who receive a negative decision, projectivity is further hindered by the possibility of being detained, which can happen at any point and without notice. Two participants indicate having suddenly been arrested while they were reporting:

⁽²²⁾Paulette *I remember, I was arrested one day, at the immigration. They refused my case, refused, refused, but I was arrested. I went reporting, and they arrested me. You have to go back to your country. They brought me to Yarl's Wood in detention. I was there for three months and twenty-two days.*

⁽²³⁾Boubakar *My worst fear at the moment, it's every time I go to report I feel fear in my heart, oh I might not come back. Sometime before I used to pack my suitcase and carry it with me, for reporting. I had my little bag and I put my important stuff there like pictures, friends' pictures and you know what I am saying, things that are valuable to me, and I take with me just in case they detain me, then I have those things at least. Then I was doing it for a time and they haven't detained me so I stopped doing it. One day I went there and I didn't have it and they tried to hold me. But everything was sorted after, they just asked me a few questions and I don't know if they tried to scare me a bit, just to like, to let me know that they still, they are still intending to deport me, you know. It's not a good place. When I went to report this Tuesday, as I walked in, somebody was detained. Some guy that came to report they detained him, and I was so afraid like oh this might happen to me as well. Then I go out the place I feel joy again. The whole week I manage to live my life, the whole 5 days, and then after when it comes close to the reporting day, then it's like ah... you know what I mean. [...] They detained me before twice and all this*

time I was detained before I was never told. I heard some cases here they might tell you, I heard some cases but it never happened to me. In my case and I know at least around 4-5 people who have been detained and they didn't know. They wasn't like expecting it. It was out of the blue. They came, they took them.

Although the two interviewees knew that detention was a possibility, they did not know if and when it would happen. This leads Boubakar in particular to develop a high level of anxiety that, he says, rises each week when he goes back to the reporting centre.

Detention is a particularly dreadful prospect for it can lead to forced removal. Between 2015 and April 2019, people whose asylum claim had been refused were issued a three-month removal window during which they could be removed at any point without notice, and which could be renewed seemingly indefinitely if removal had not been organised (Home Office, 2019b). This policy was challenged by the organisation Medical Justice (2019) and suspended by the High Court in March 2019. However, it was enacted during four years, which provides a clear example of problematic information deprivation.

For many people seeking asylum, removal means being sent back to extortion, persecution and imprisonment (Alpes, 2015; Blondel et al., 2015). Its enforcement therefore requires clear and comprehensible information. Yet, Paulette tells me that while she was in detention, she was taken to the airport four times, but never eventually deported:

⁽²⁴⁾Paulette *I went there [Yarl's Wood Immigration Removal Centre]. They brought me to the airport four times. Really, they brought me there four times. If you push, they put you the kraka [handcuffs], they put you that, they don't care.*

In this case, not knowing when she will be removed and being provided with misleading information regarding removal acts as mental torture and leads Paulette to feel like she is “half dead”. She did not explain why this happened and did not seem to know it. It might be a case of what the organisation Corporate Watch (2018b) refers to as the “reserve system”, by which more people are booked on charter flights than can actually be deported, just in case one seat becomes available last minute. According to this organisation, during

the year 2017, only about 40% of people told they were going to be deported actually got on the plane, which shows the extent of that type of misleading information within the asylum system.

In Boubakar's account, the uncertainty is created by the unpredictability of deportation. In Paulette's case, this is increased by not being able to fully believe the information with which she is provided. Both accounts show that detention and deportation can be highly traumatic events, and that information deprivation related to when they may happen increase the intensity as well as the longevity of the trauma. It is re-activated each time Boubakar goes reporting, and each time Paulette is brought to the airport, and may have effects beyond these occurrences.

When it comes to removal, misinformation, uncertainty and unpredictability are particularly detrimental to the participants' mental health. Amongst the fifteen interviewees who have been through the asylum system, two tell me having attempted to take their own life and three others recount having thought about it. Although there is no statistics available, a number of studies highlight the high rate of self-harm and suicides amongst asylum seekers (Athwal, 2014; Athwal & Bourne, 2007; Canning, 2017; Cohen, 2008; No Deportation, 2015). Claudine explains how this difficult decision came from the uncertainty of her situation in the UK:

(25) Claudine *When I was in the hospital, I told everything to my psychiatrist. I said the cause of my illness is that I think that are going to deport me, and I think I'm going to die. But what kind I death am I going to have? That's why I don't have peace in my heart. I'm too scared, I'm too scared, I don't know my fate. [...] When I got my leave to remain, at first, I wasn't happy because they had only given me one year. One year. For someone, imagine someone who wants to live for good in this country and they only give you one year. And then my solicitor called me, I went to see him. I said but why did they only give me one year? That's insignificant. He told me they only gave you one year so that you can recover, when you are recovered they will send you back to your country. The day I went to see my solicitor and he gave me that news, I thought I'd better complete suicide and stop living. But it is good to pray because when I think about my decision, if I complete suicide I will go to hell, I will never go to heaven, but I thought what for, because I thought the pill I'm taking I will take everything at once.*

Better dying than going back to my country, it's better if I die here. I will die in peace, while in my country I will be tortured and then, they torture you and then they kill you. But when I was reading the Bible, no the fight continues, God is for me. If God is for me, he is not against me. So I thought my God will support me. If they could give me one year, they will be able to give me more. But unfortunately, I was attempting suicide too many times, so by the end of the year, I was back to the hospital.

Claudine's account shows that the prolonged uncertainty of one's status in the UK can have fatal consequences. Hakuna and Vivienne similarly associate this period of limbo as mental torture:

(26)Hakuna *At the same you think that they are killing you psychologically, which is even more dangerous, because to understand that they are killing you psychologically you need some kind of spiritual elevation. Some people think they were happy but you think no they are more dangerous, over there they wanted to kill me with weapons, here they are killing me psychologically.*

(27)Vivienne *That's the anonymous punishment. It's like killing someone slowly. During ten years, five years, you stay somewhere, you don't have the right, you have the right to nothing.*

In these excerpts, not knowing if, when and why they might be removed is perceived as voluntary harm and increases the participants' distress.

Finally, in addition to the uncertainty of their situation, participants lack information about their rights. In particular, they lack information regarding the support they are entitled to after receiving a negative decision:

(28)Boubakar *Section 4 is a support that you need to have until they remove you out the country, even if you have no case. You have no case, but you're still here, because deporting somebody is not that easy, sometimes it can take 3-4 years just to get the right documentation, sometimes it's impossible, sometimes you go to some embassy for some interviews, and the embassy they refuse to give you documentation. During this time you still need a home, that's why you go for section 4. But some people they get confused between the two and they become homeless. Or because the Home Office tells them oh you need to leave the place, and now if you're scared and worried to apply for Section 4, but if they apply for section they are going to get detained and deported, even if they know, the majority doesn't know, even if they know some people might not want to do it because they think they're gonna come for them.*

According to Boubakar's account, people whose claim is refused are not provided with clear and adequate information regarding their support entitlement. This lack of information is accompanied with a fear and distrust of the Home Office that leads some people to become homeless. This confirms the findings put forward in Oduntan's (2018) study of information gaps in societal needs provision in Glasgow, which shows that refused asylum seekers lack information about their rights.

Systemic information deprivation and trauma

This sub-section has shown that within the asylum information environment, participants experience information provision as being incomplete and inadequate, a perceived information deprivation that fosters information exclusion.

The examples described above indicate that these information gaps are partly due to the absence of clear guidelines and procedures regarding the asylum process and housing support, as well as regarding the rights of asylum claimants, and the roles and responsibilities of the Home Office and the accommodation provider. These gaps include the absence of a timeframe for asylum decision to be made, of notifications for detention, forced removal, moves or room sharing, of efficient complaints procedures, as well as residency rights, legal aid and support entitlement.

Interviews also show that when this information exists, it is not always adequate. A map or a long document in English may not allow people to find their way to the interview location, to know that they need a solicitor, or to understand that they are consenting to room sharing.

This lack of clear rules, procedures and communication leads to various errors and inconsistencies:

1. Nasim does not know he needs a solicitor before his asylum interview;
2. Joann has not received an initial decision five years after his asylum interview was conducted;
3. Boubakar is forced to move out of his house immediately without any notice;

4. Paulette is brought to the airport four times but never actually deported.

Some participants interpret these issues as being voluntarily designed. Thus, they perceive them as purposeful disinformation (Karlova & Fisher, 2013), which breaks their trust in the Home Office. In that sense, and in some of the instances discussed above, they cannot merely be understood as information gaps that the participants can bridge by developing the adequate information literacy. They correspond to information that they cannot successfully seek.

The concept of IDT, as defined in the field of psychology, provides a way to understand the effect of uncertainty on people's mental health that is particularly relevant to these research participants' experiences. Indeed, the various information gaps and systemic flaws evidenced in the interviews appear to have caused or increased the severity of traumatic events by preventing the participants from being able to predict them. While experiencing information deprivation can be seen as frustrating for a minor event, such as house reparations, it can become traumatic when an event is emotionally meaningful, such as a house move, an interview, detention or forced removal. Thus, this research argues that by shaping an information practice where the lack of clear procedures and communication leads participants to experience various information gaps that they perceive as information deprivation, the asylum system does not intend to reduce their premigratory stress. Conversely, interviews show that it re-activates trauma.

This prevents participants from feeling safe and stable. Yet, Ager & Strang (2008) identify these elements as key facilitators of social inclusion for they allow refugees to get a sense of continuity and permanence. By depriving the participants from safety and stability, the asylum information environment therefore prevents them from feeling included in society.

Having analysed the effects of information deprivation on the participants' mental health and inclusion, I now show the exclusion produced by the lack of information sharing agency.

5.1.3. Information sharing agency denial

Findings show that in addition to not providing essential and adequate information, the asylum information practice also prevents individuals from expressing meaningful information (Fig. 21).

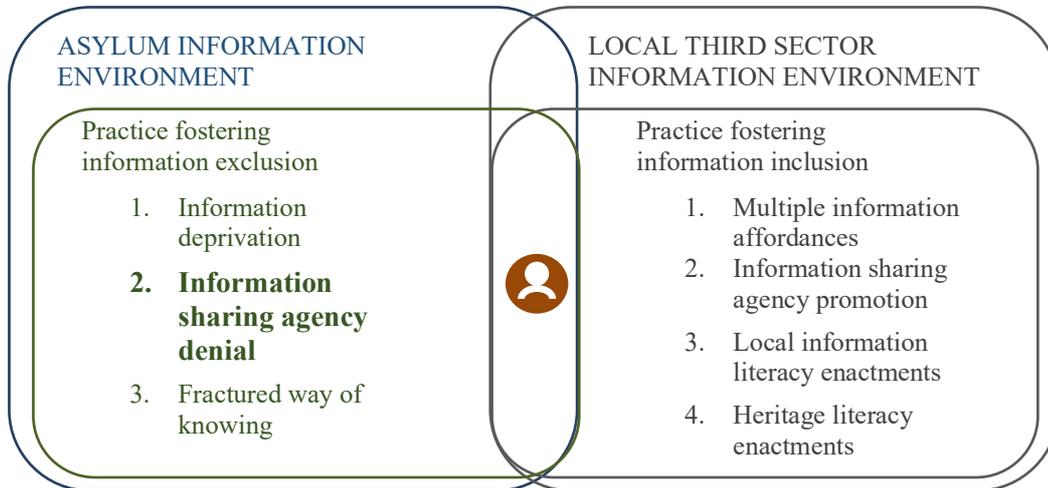


Figure 21 – The asylum information environment: focus on information sharing agency denial (Le Louvier)

Information sharing agency denial thus appears as the second characteristic of information exclusion. Interviews reveal four types of information sharing barriers:

1. Information is being ignored or disqualified;
2. Participants are unable to communicate directly with the other actors of the asylum information environment;
3. They are prevented from expressing themselves in key domains of society;
4. They are forced to share information without their consent.

This sub-section discusses how the asylum information environment shapes these barriers and how participants experience them.

Disqualified information

In various interviews, participants express their frustration at feeling that they are not listened to or not believed. Similarly to information deprivation, these impressions are observed in relation to housing and asylum claims.

Excerpts 8 and 9 have shown that when complaining about housing issues, participants did not receive clear information as to when the issue would be solved. Yet, this only happens when they do register a complaint. On certain occasions, participants tell me that they do not dare complaining to the Home Office or the accommodation provider. For instance, Nasim thinks that in his position, he cannot refuse to share a room with someone else. Hakuna similarly feels unentitled to complain about the asylum system in general:

(29)Hakuna *Because the system in itself, first you arrive and you spend 4-5 months living in subhuman conditions. You don't complain because you think that at least they make an effort and give you some food. Back home, they wanted to kill me but here they want to help me a bit.*

In this account, Hakuna considers that he has no choice but to accept his situation, because no matter how bad it is, it is always better than the torture and death awaiting him back home. This is an internal view and nothing actually prevents him from complaining about his living conditions. Yet, the asylum system seems to shape a culture that do not facilitate this expression but rather hinders it. Indeed, Boubakar tells me about being threatened by Jomast so that he would not complain:

(30)Boubakar *Sometimes they tell you if you refuse to move they will tell the Home Office. And when they said we will tell the Home Office, that word it is going to impact my claim and I'm getting worried, I'm thinking oh, don't tell the Home Office, I'm not gonna get my paper. So that's the tool they have over us. [...] I do think it's every time I refuse to do their orders it's going to have an impact on my case, that's why I'm like, I don't want to refuse.*

Boubakar's treatment does not seem to be an exception. Indeed, Migrant Voice (2016) reports similar accounts of threats in Birmingham. In this context, the accommodation provider seems to use people's fear of detention and removal to stop them from complaining about their practices.

Three participants tell me that on some occasions, they did register a complaint, but their voice was not heard. Boubakar says it is because his complaint was probably not formally logged:

(31)Boubakar *I said to him I want to complain but I was expected to give me complain form because usually when you want to complain they use a complain form. But they said ok tell us*

the complaint and we will pass it over. So I was like what is this, is this a complaint, and I told them but there was nothing happening after the complaint. There was no result, no changes.

Fardin explains that the officer on the phone did not take him seriously:

(32)Fardin *I don't have gas for the past week in my house. They cut the line suddenly. I keep calling them, emailing them. The lady on the other side of the phone was just telling me "I can suggest you you can go for salad and bread". And I said "it's been four days, you're asking me to eat salad for 4-5-6 days?"*

Vivienne tells me that besides all her efforts to prevent her family to change house when her children had exams, they were eventually forced to move out:

(33)Vivienne *We made huge efforts to manage: we saw the doctor, we saw the schools, we saw the MP... And with all of that, and the stress, they even, and that's serious, they even sent someone to my house. I was supposed to move on Thursday, and on Wednesday the guy came to mine to convince me to leave. But I said that's not possible Sir. I asked him, do you have children? Because the whole house was crying, the children were crying, I didn't know what to do, you know. [...] So because I said no, the man left. On Thursday, they sent a message like it was cancelled. And we stayed. And the kid started the GCSE exam. And suddenly, one day, when I got back to the house, I found another letter. I had only been one month, they sent us another letter saying that we still had to move out. [...] The day the man came to get us, I explained him, I told him listen, the children have their exams, if you could leave us until they finish, and after the exams we will go wherever you want. The man took pity on us. He called the office. Then he called the office, I heard a woman's voice shouting on the phone, saying "no, no, no! First, we told them to leave, they said no. They have to leave!". She started shouting on the phone. My daughter was crying. My daughter came to take my hand. She said Mum leave it, we should leave. That was really, as the English say, "sadness". I looked at the man, I said, alright then.*

Vivienne's story shows the frustration that some people may feel when they eventually manage to say no to a decision made for them by an external body, after tedious efforts and negotiations, but that their voice has, at the end, no impact.

Throughout these various accounts of participants intending to complain about their housing conditions, one can see that sharing information on that subject is

neither encouraged nor really allowed, as the accommodation provider may prevent people from lodging a complaint or ignore their request without justification. The Home Office demonstrates a similar behaviour by either questioning the information that the participants share with them, or by not providing them access to a direct communication channel.

When discussing the asylum process, different participants mention the difficulty of being asked to share information that is systematically questioned. The Home Office's approach consists in proving that asylum applications are not credible (Schuster, 2018), which leads participants to feel that they are never believed, and to be forced to provide additional evidence that is not always possible to obtain. Tarek shares his frustration at not being believed that he is from Syria:

(34)Tarek *They are asking me about roads name in Syria. I don't know all the routes! I know my city routes. Because they told me how you are from Syria and you don't know the routes. If you're from the UK do you know all the routes in the UK?*

In this excerpt, Tarek has to prove his nationality by answering questions that he finds absurd. In another account, Nimesha tells me that finding enough evidence for her case was long and onerous:

(35)Nimesha *So refused again we applied, again refused. But they can refuse very quickly but after two years they refused. So now, after they said they need a proof me and my husband and the children, so we give a fresh application like our DNA test for my children and my husband and mine, everything. So we paid nearly £100 for that. Yes we did that one and after that we get the visa.*

Providing verbal information about her relationship to her husband and children was not enough for Nimesha to obtain a leave to remain, so she had to do a DNA test. As he was separated from his wife, Tarek could not provide such evidence when his marriage was questioned:

(36)Tarek *When I took my visa, I applied to bring my wife here. They refused it. I tried two or three times, they refused it. Then I went to the government to ask them why. They asked me for photographs, photographs me and my wife. Wedding party, videos. I left everything in my old house because we moved to another city. My old house is burnt. I lost everything, my paper, my ID, everything, my passport I don't have anything. I told them they didn't believe me. Then my wife waited about 2 years. They refused me two*

or three times. I tried to bring her but I couldn't.

This account shows that when fleeing a country because of war or persecution, it is often difficult for people to bring any certificates or documents with them, and the only type of information they can share to support their case is that they carry within themselves. Yet, the Home Office seems to disqualify information that is not transmitted as an external record. This has dramatic outcomes for Tarek, as it prevented him from bringing his wife to the UK and living with her.

Being asked to provide physical evidence also has negative consequences for Claudine, who is still very emotional when telling me about this very difficult time of her life when her case was constantly rejected:

⁽³⁷⁾Claudine *It's not easy, no it's really hard, especially when you talk and they don't believe you, They don't believe you, they reject your case, like mine, they rejected it, they rejected it. They didn't believe me but I don't know what people should do to prove that have been tortured in their country, I don't know. I don't know so it's really hard. That's also what got me sick, too many rejections [...]. I had no evidence, only what I could say, I had not brought anything with me because I had left my country in a hurry. Even my birth certificate I did not have it, so it was very hard. [...] Go back to your country, we don't believe you, you're lying.*

Being asked to provide information that is not believed leads Claudine to attempt to take her own life. Like Tarek, she only had embodied information to share. These examples demonstrate an asymmetry between the form of information that participants are able to share and the form of information that the Home Office considers valid, which makes the communication between the two parties impossible. This evidences the “culture of disbelief” of the asylum system (Anderson et al., 2014; Jubany, 2011; Souter, 2011; Trueman, 2009), and shows how it fractures participants’ information landscapes (Lloyd, 2017b; see section 5.1.4).

Barriers to direct communication

In addition to not being heard by the accommodation provider and believed during asylum interviews, communication is also broken down by the impossibility for the participants to address the Home Office without the help of an intermediary. As Mustafa tells me:

- (38)Mustafa *There is no connexion between the asylum seeker and the Home Office, or the case control, just the lawyer, because there is a legal aid lawyer, only he has the responsibility to send something for the Home Office.*
- Kahina *Ok, but you cannot contact them?*
- Mustafa *No, there is no direct option. [...] I think, even the connexion is problem because there is no direct connexion. Even the lawyer if I call them, the lawyer, usually, has 100 cases, so you don't imagine to get a great response from the lawyer.*

To contact the Home Office, asylum claimants need an intermediary such as a solicitor, but these are very busy and hard to reach. This seems to contribute to making Mustafa feel that he is powerless and has no voice. When he has an issue with his Asylum Registration Card (ARC), there is no one he can call himself to complain. Instead, he has to ask other people to ask for him. Joann faces a similar issue when intending to understand why he has not received an initial decision after five years (excerpt 18). He cannot complain to the Home Office directly and therefore has to ask his solicitor and his MP. It is only after the MP sent a letter that he received an update from the Home Office – although only telling him to wait.

Similar communication issues appear with the accommodation provider. When having issues in his house and being mocked by the housing officer, Fardin asks a local campaigning group for help. It is only after the forum contacts the housing company that he receives an answer. A local support worker interviewed confirms that very often, participants need his help if they want reparations to be made:

- (39)Local support worker *To come me, they may have called the accommodation provider 5 times, 6 times, reporting something. Nothing done. But when they come here, I see the problem, I know who I can phone, what's going on, you tell the client 5 times that you are going to send someone, please, you know. Oh really, I don't see anything. Well, that's what he was told. So as someone responsible will make sure that problem is gonna be seen. So he came here, the same day the problem has been sorted.*

These examples indicate that for their voice to be heard by the Home Office or the subcontracted accommodation provider, participants need to first share information to a person or an organisation that is considered as a valid interlocutor and who will then transmit this information. The role of

intermediaries is often mentioned in information studies related to migration, particularly in the context of information seeking. Indeed, social networks such as family, friends, or interpreters are shown as key sources of information for resettled refugees (Allen et al.; Kennan & al., 2011; Lloyd et al., 2017; Mansour, 2018; Oduntan & Ruthven, 2017; Quirke, 2012; Silvio, 2006). In these studies, intermediaries appear as enablers, who facilitate access to information, although some may also filter, amend or withhold important information (Caidi, Allard & Dechief, 2008; Lloyd et al., 2010). Less emphasis is placed on the role of intermediaries for information sharing, in particular, when these are imposed rather than chosen by the individuals. Yet, the above-mentioned examples show that not being able to provide information directly is a way to invalidate the participants' voices, which leads them to feel deprived of their worth and agency.

In other cases, participants remark not being able to communicate directly because of language barriers. To communicate with the Home Office, they all say they needed an interpreter. Yet, communicating via this third person is sometimes problematic. For instance, Vivienne thinks that during the appeal process, the interpreter misinterpreted her:

(40)Vivienne *With the solicitor, for years and years, they refused, they refused. Why? It's always the interpreter. Different interpreter, different message. [...] You never meet the Home Office, only the solicitor. The solicitor changes interpreter like he changes clothes. And the interpreter who is here, he says things that you don't hear in your ears right or wrong. What he says is what he understood.*

In this case, there were two different intermediaries between Vivienne and the Home Office: the solicitor and the interpreter. She could not choose the latter, and believes that because they were changing all the time, they all provided a different interpretation of her account. This mistrust towards interpreters can also be found in the accounts of Adnan and Hakuna:

(41)Adnan *Because I'm from Syria and sometimes I don't understand the people from Algeria or Libya, because all the interpreter or Sudanese, they are not similar to the accent to us, and sometimes the interpreter makes mistakes and at the end when you get your papers, or not get your papers, sometimes the people loose the case because of the interpreter.*

(42)Hakuna *When I arrived, I couldn't speak good English, so I found an interpreter. The poor girl she was trying to help me, but she just interpreted what she could understand, so there is always a loss of originality, or of meaning really, from one language to the other. And that's why there was some misunderstandings between the judge and the interpreter. And when that was happening, I could understand that's what I had really said but when you say that in English, you translate it like that, but for her in English it means that, so it deformed the system, and the lass said no. I had a choice, either I would get angry with her, or I would get angry with the interpreter. I chose to get angry with myself, because I thought, if I had upped my game and talked the language myself, I would not have needed her. And she would not have made that mistake.*

These are two more instances when not being able to share information directly but having to communicate via an interpreter may have jeopardised an asylum claim. Hakuna says that he only blames himself because he should have learned English. Yet, learning English takes time and is delayed by the restrictions placed on asylum seekers. This leads to the third aspect of information sharing agency denial related to the asylum system: the impossibility to express oneself in meaningful ways.

Restrictions on expression

Rights restrictions imposed on asylum seekers limit their capacity to express themselves in major domains of society such as education and work.

Information studies indicate that language is a major barrier to the integration of forced migrants (Allen et al., 2004; Kennan & al., 2011; Lloyd et al., 2013; Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018; Mikal & Woodfield, 2015; Olden, 1999; Pilerot, 2018). Yet, the UK asylum system reinforces rather than alleviates this obstacle. Indeed, asylum claimants are not allowed to register to ESOL classes at College during their first six months in the country. The only way for them to learn English at that stage is via charities and community groups. However, these are not always easy to find for newcomers and are often unable to provide certificates. Adnan and Hakuna indicate not understanding why they are not allowed to study English when they arrive in the country:

(43)Adnan *I just wait for my paper done, for my case. It's like nearly 7 months, 6 months. I am home like nothing to do, nothing.*

Just I wait for my case. Even I was looking for studying English, like none can help. That time it was my time like 7 months. I didn't do anything just like sitting at home.

⁽⁴⁴⁾Hakuna *So I arrive. I want to learn and they tell you no, you can't, you can't learn the language. It's not possible before you've done six months. Are you crazy? During these six months, how do I communicate with people? Actually, when you think about it, when you reflect on it, it's their way of getting you mixed up with the interpreter, and all of this gives them the right to reject you because, you know, the meaning was lost in translation. I think they do it on purpose, I mean I don't know, but I think they do it on purpose because someone who would think and who would want to move things forwards, that's something he would find out very quickly, no brain, you don't need to be a genius to understand that.*

Adnan recounts that instead of using these six months to learn the language, he spent them doing nothing at all, which was a waste of time for him. This delays the process of integration and is detrimental to his wellbeing. Hakuna tells me that not being able to learn English contributed to his case being rejected, as not knowing the language well enough forced him to rely on an interpreter who misinterpreted his account. He therefore sees this ban as a deliberate strategy from the Home Office that aims at increasing their refusal targets. In this case, the limitation of rights that the participants are facing impacts their information sharing capacity by preventing them from learning the language they need to communicate with the Home Office. This also limits their activities and socialisation.

In addition to being denied access to ESOL classes during their first six months in the UK, some asylum claimants are denied access to higher education. Thus, Fardin had been granted a university scholarship but was imposed a study ban:

⁽⁴⁵⁾Fardin *Home Office sent a letter to Teeside University saying that he cannot go back to study, because he was in this country in 2016 and he was in signing. I came in this country in 2017 June. So the caseworker who sent that email to the university, did she read anything about my case? [...] When I challenge that education ban of mine, I think I mentioned in the conference as well, they can't answer it, why they tell the university that if he's been scholarship or someone else will pay for my tuition fees, I'm not taking government money or public funds, so why do they stop me to go back to education?*

These examples show that restrictions on access to education limit the participants' freedom of expression and stop them from sharing information in the places they want.

This is further accentuated by the work ban that denies participants access to employment. Jemal and Hakuna highlight that without working, they are obliged to live on asylum support, which is too small for them to do what they want:

(46)Jemal *So let's say you arrive to Newcastle. If you want to travel to Birmingham, you don't have enough money unless you get help from out, so you are getting support from the government but that is only for food, like £5 a day, you know, obviously you can't do anything.*

(47)Hakuna *Ok, I can't work, so what do you give me in exchange? They give you £35 per week. Well, you have £35 per week, you can't work, you can't do this, you can't do that.*

These excerpts show that by being banned from the labour market, participants are also banned from other domains of society because they do not have the financial means to engage in them. Boubakar relates the work ban to the absence of a basic human right:

(48)Boubakar *I think I know my rights, what I should be having, but I don't think my right is respected, because I have a right to work, I should have the right to wake up in the morning, put my suit on, put my shoes on, and go to work. It's obviously every human should have that right and come back and provide myself. Go buy food, food I want to buy, pay for my rent, buy clothes, whatever I wanna do, if I want to go out buy myself things you know. [...] When I talk about my rights here, I'm not talking about my rights in the English law, I'm talking about human beings, what humans should be allowed to in the globe, what humans deserve, I'm basing my rights on that. Not about law of land. I'm basing my rights on every human should be allowed to work. [...] Because everybody wants to have a right to be happy, you know what I mean. This life, everybody wants to be happy. That's why I want to get my paper, work and be happy, you know. Like everybody else, you know what I mean.*

This excerpt shows that the Home Office and Boubakar have different conceptions of human rights, and that for the latter, being refused the right to work is being denied the right to happiness that is necessary to all humans.

By limiting their rights, the asylum system also prevents some of the participants from an important part of who they are: their professional identity. Not being able to work as a doctor appears particularly difficult for Mustafa, who feels like he cannot be part of the city without working:

(49)Mustafa *But I can't make imagine or comment about the city until I start working [...], I spent about 7 years in my life studying medicine, and about 2 years studying masters degree, so why I studied that if I don't practice my profession? Of course there is the financial side because I don't live on benefits, I want to live on my own, that's the first thing.*

In this excerpt, Mustafa highlights three consequences of the work ban. First, he considers that he cannot belong to the city and feel socially included while he is banned from taking part in the key domain of integration that constitutes the labour market. Secondly, he explains that medicine is what he dedicated many years of his life to. The work ban therefore undermines his projectivity by making the plan he had for the future uncertain and uncontrollable. Finally, financial independence is particularly important to him and not being able to work may compromise it. This also appears to be a particularly sensitive topic for Adnan who does not like depending on benefits:

(50)Kahina *And what's important for you in general in life?*
Adnan *To improve my English is the important thing. And get a job at the same time as well. Because I don't want to sit at home. And I don't like to get support from the government as well. I feel sometimes so bad.*

Hakuna shares this opinion and considers that working is primarily a matter of dignity:

(51)Hakuna *I find it more honourable, because then people can try to manage on their own. Because as was saying that writer, how do you call him, the one who wrote Le Boulanger, I forgot his name but anyways, he said that work liberates people, work diverts us from three vice: boredom, and I don't remember how he said that, theft, because at least you are working so it gives you a certain dignity.*

Being forced to lose the sense of honour that some find in work seems to deprive them from an important part of what constitute their value and identity. For Vivienne, the feeling of losing value does not necessarily come from the dignity

of work, but from the impression that while waiting within the asylum system, she is wasting her potential:

(52) Vivienne *Yes, I haven't been working for the last eight years. I don't do anything apart from College. Even at College now that I've left, I gathered lots of certificates and there is a level you can't exceed. But that's not freedom you know. [...] I don't know the laptops, I don't know the internet, because of the system, because now my brain is gone. Sometimes I start forgetting about things. Sometimes, if I want to do things on the internet, I have to ask the kids. And yet on the year I came here, I could have done well, I could have contributed to society, I could have paid taxes, contributed. But now with all that happened. They tell you no don't do anything, stay there. But it's like killing someone anonymously. Now I'm hopeless. I can't work. All the intellectual capital I had is gone. It's gone.*

Vivienne explains that she feels she has lost her capacities, and that it is now too late for her to be able to contribute to society as she would have wanted to. The work ban therefore limits the participants' agency by preventing them from taking part in a key part of society that would allow them to become independent, and develop their skills and self-esteem.

Employment and education are key markers and means of integration (Ager & Strang, 2008). By preventing participants from sharing information within these domains, the asylum system thus contributes to their exclusion.

Unconsented information sharing

In addition to not being allowed to share certain type of information, participants also indicate being forced to share information they do not want to. Unconsented information sharing thus forms the last aspect of information sharing agency denial and is observed in relation to housing, finances and status.

Previous accounts showed that some participants are led to share their room without having consented for it (excerpt 7). Several participants criticise the lack of privacy that results from having to share room with someone else:

(53) Sara *It's a small room for 2 persons, two adults, and our beds are so near, just about 40cm far from each other. It's so small, so small. Maybe the worst thing during my process is this room. [...] There isn't any privacy.*

(54) Nasim *I remember I had operation, so after operation the person*

he has to be at home for 5 days in, resting in the bed. So in bed, so the guy is with me, it helped me and he does his best. But usually after operation the person is getting naked, so it is better for him in bed without clothes. So if you don't know someone in your room it is really...

Kahina Yeah you don't feel comfortable.

Nasim *I don't know it's not comfy. You are sick, you are ill and.., this thing is really bad.*

These accounts show that by being forced to share a room, some participants are forced to share information with their roommates that they would rather have kept private, such as having to share information about your body while recovering from surgery. This privacy denial contributes to their feeling of dehumanisation.

For other participants, the lack of privacy comes from having to share information with the Home Office about their daily purchases. Hakuna and Boubakar receive their Section 4 support on a card, which they cannot use to withdraw cash. They tell me that the Home Office can thus monitor and restrict what they can buy:

⁽⁵⁵⁾Hakuna *Have you seen the card I have? They put thirty pounds on it, weekly, but with these thirty pounds you cannot buy things as you want, no, you can't take money out, that's not possible, you can only buy things directly. Here I was surprised it actually worked.*

Kahina So you can pay directly but you cannot withdraw cash?

Hakuna *Exactly, it depends on where you go, because in some of the shops I go to it can work. So sometimes you end up stuck it's the only shop you find but you can't go. What do you do in that situation? I can't buy train tickets with it, I can't, it doesn't work. [...] Like they control everything. My card I don't know what happened but it got blocked I call them and they tell me what happened, it's Wednesday and you still have twenty pounds on your account. Like you are going to tell me when I have to use my money and what I should buy.*

⁽⁵⁶⁾Boubakar *Now we can go to different shops. Before, it didn't use to be like that. Through complaining and campaigning that's how it got done as well. So I used to go to Hallal shop and look at the meat, but I can't buy the meat. And then I used to just get my meat in Tesco because it's obviously, God will understand, you know what I mean.*

Boubakar explains that recipients of Section 4 support used to be given an Azure Card, which could only be used in a few national retailers (Home Office, 2017c).

This restriction meant that he could not choose where to buy his food and was therefore unable to practice his religion in the way that was right for him by buying Hallal meat. As his card was blocked without an explanation, Hakuna feels like the Home Office spied him on, and that some of the purchases he makes may be used against him. Since 2017, both Section 4 and Section 95 recipients use an Aspen card, which can be used as a debit card. Various media and organisations have recorded similar accounts of debit card usage being tracked and used to cut support if, for instance, purchases are made out of their dispersal area (The Independent, 2019; Poggrund, 2019; Right to Remain, 2019).

Finally, some participants tell me having to share information about their legal status in contexts that made them feel uncomfortable. Before the introduction of the Aspen Card, people receiving Section 95 support had to go to the Post Office to retrieve their money. Hakuna describes this practice as humiliating because it means having to disclose his legal status and need for financial support to possibly unkind employees:

(57)Hakuna *You see the £35 you have to get them from the Post Office. It's not like they give you a card to withdraw money, no, you have to go to the Post Office, so you have to queue, and so you queue and you present yourself. The lad who receives you, or the lass who receives you, she looks at you with disdain because she assumes that you are eating on taxpayers' money. She doesn't realise, she thinks that you are useless, you don't work, you come here every Monday, you come to take the £35 for free. The lass has no idea about what you are going through, and that £35 is nothing.*

Hakuna's story shows that the asylum system creates a context where asylum claimants are forced to disclose their legal status, and that this changes the way people look at them. Even if people seeking asylum no longer need to go to the Post Office to receive their weekly allowance but receive their support directly on their Aspen Card, there are still various occasions when people are forced to disclose their status. For instance, Fardin tells me he has to show his identity document (ID) in order to be able to work as a volunteer:

(58)Fardin *Newcastle when I came here, I had to find myself what sort of opportunities I got, I went to different organisation myself, by walking from my home everyday, keep asking them can I do volunteering. First thing they ask, where are you from? Even if you have to do volunteer, where are you from, where is your passport, do you have any ID? To do*

charity work you need ID [...] they encourage the GP, the library, anywhere you go, to be immigration officer themselves.

Similarly to Hakuna, Fardin would prefer not to have to disclose his legal status when applying for a voluntary position, because it makes him feel that he is in front of an immigration officer. He refers to the practice implemented by the Home Office since 2014 (Home Office, 2014, 2016) that consists of giving the responsibility of conducting immigration checks to ordinary citizens working in various areas of society. He explains that he feels obliged to provide his ID and therefore disclose his status in contexts where this information should be irrelevant, as everyone should be treated in the same way regardless of their status. Research shows that this practice of “everyday bordering” (Yuval-Davis et al., 2018) corresponds to a technology of control implemented by the Home Office since 2014 throughout various domains of society with the aim of facilitating the identification of immigrants deemed illegal. In Fardin’s account, the practice of everyday bordering, by being forced to share information about his legal status, acts as a reminder of the precarity of his situation in the UK that leads him to feel excluded.

Controlled information sharing

These four aspects of information sharing agency denial show that the asylum system frames an information practice where people seeking asylum are not free to decide on the information they want to share, and where this information is banned, dismissed, taunted, not believed or used against them. Interviewees say that they were stopped from sharing information with the Home Office or the accommodation provider because they were scared to lodge a complaint, because the information they provided was not taken seriously or not considered as valid, and because they had no direct means of communication. They are also prevented from expressing themselves in some key domains of integration such as labour and education, which limits their information sharing capacities and possibilities. Finally, they are also forced to share information without their consent, be it by having to share their privacy with people they do not know, having their everyday purchases controlled by the Home Office, or having to disclose their legal status in various everyday contexts. Within the asylum

information practice, participants therefore experience information sharing as being characterised by a lack of freedom and agency, as well as by a fear that any shared information could be used against them. This seems to have an impact on the trust they have in the system, in other people, as well as in themselves.

Having discussed the effects of the information deprivation and information sharing agency denial experienced by the participants, I now turn to the last characteristic of information exclusion: a fractured information literacy.

5.1.4. Fractured way of knowing

The previous subsections have shown that the asylum system frames information provision and sharing practices that do not correspond to the participants' needs and understanding. This reveals that, in line with Lloyd's (2017b) theory, their established ways of knowing do not correspond to that of the asylum information environment leading to a fracture of their information landscapes. However, Lloyd (2017b) mainly considers such fractures as resulting from cultural difference. The present findings shed a different light on this theory by showing that the fracture does not merely result from an initial dissonance between culturally contrasting information literacies, but is increased by the exclusion produced by the asylum practice.

This subsection explores the three ways in which this fracturing process occurs and contributes to information exclusion (Fig. 22): an incompatibility between the preferred forms of information, a perceived absence of logic, and an experience of identity loss.

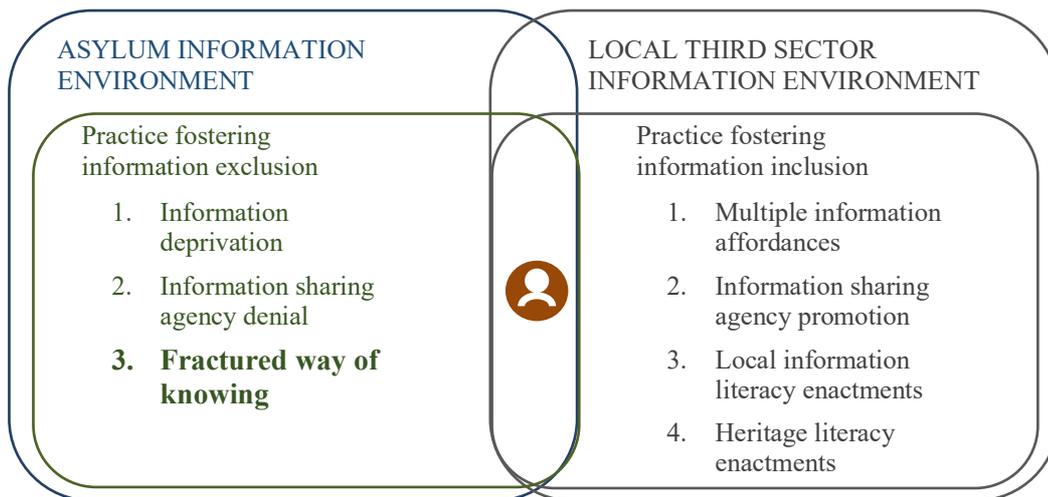


Figure 22 – The asylum information environment: focus on fractured way of knowing (Le Louvier)

Fractured forms of information

Previous interview excerpts have evidenced a breach between the form of information that the Home Office considers as valid and the type of information that the participants can provide and understand (excerpts 15-16, and 35-36). According to Bates (2006), two main forms of information exist beyond the genetic realm: neural-cultural information, which corresponds to embodied capacities that can be transmitted through direct contact between individuals, and exomatic information, which is stored and transmitted in external forms. The examples presented in the previous subsections showed that within the asylum information practice, exomatic information is privileged. The Home Office communicates primarily via letters, forms and documents that the participants sometimes find difficult to understand. This has previously been seen with the accounts of Vivienne and Nasim (excerpts 15-16), who felt unprepared for their asylum interviews because they were not provided with enough information and not in a relevant way. Mustafa, as well as two members of the local third sector confirm this issue:

(59)Mustafa *But sometimes when I was in the lawyer office, I've seen many people, they cannot speak English, they are struggling with some information from the Home Office, because they just send letters.*

(60)Local support worker *If you get someone who never go to school in this country, and you give him a welcome pack, he will look the pictures and that's it, what's this, what's this. So they come here, they don't know they need to register to the GP, they don't know they need a lawyer, in order to follow up their cases.*

(61)Local volunteer *People bring letters, because the letters are in the UK, which I didn't realise, there are so many of them compared to other places, and the language is so complicated, it is for people who got English as a first language as well. There is like a whole page and it doesn't even tell you anything.*

Similarly, the Home Office mainly accepts receipt and only considers as valid information which does not come directly from the participants but that is mediated, be it by material evidence or the representative of an organisation whose voice is considered legitimate (excerpts 35-40).

On the contrary, participants seem to prefer neural-cultural information. It is often the only form of information that they can provide to support their case, as well as the form of information that they are most likely to understand. Yet, the asylum system does not offer many opportunities for such occurrences. Even when participants did exchange face-to-face with representatives of the Home Office or the accommodation provider, these are often referred to by the organisations' name or as 'they' (excerpts 5-6), but never by using individual people's names, which shows that no relationship was created to facilitate the exchange of this form of embodied information.

The form of information that is expected to be transmitted within the asylum information environment is therefore incompatible with the participants' capabilities. This shows that the asylum practice does not adapt to the participants needs, and that the fracture is not only due to a lack of textual literacy, but also a lack of individually appropriate information provision. Moreover, this dissonance prevents participants from actively, autonomously and efficiently taking part in the asylum practice.

Fractured logic

Information literacy is about making sense of the norms that determine a specific information environment (Lloyd, 2017a). However, some participants find it difficult to understand how the system works and why it works that way, for they view some of its rules as contradictory and arbitrary. The previous sections have demonstrated that this system is characterised by a clear lack of set procedures (excerpts 8-10 and 18), which lead information provision and sharing to be

patchy and uneven across participants. Moreover, the decisions that highly complicate the life of some of the participants do not appear to them as providing any benefits to the local society either. For instance, Hakuna does not understand why asylum seekers are not allowed to work, since this ban ends up being more costly to the state:

(62)Hakuna *You tell us you can't work, but you are surprised that people work off the books. Where is the logic there? You are losing millions because these people I know who are working, now they don't pay taxes, right? They are getting... but they work for a wretched wage, but who is the one who is making money? That's the guy who hires them, he's making lots of money. Who is losing? The state.*

The contradiction also concerns the intention of the British state, which, from Vivienne's point of view, only half helps asylum seekers, as it provides her with a minimum of support while at the same time keeping her in poverty and uncertainty for years. For her, the Home Office refusals appear even more difficult to understand as she says that they know what is going on in her country:

(63)Vivienne *How can you not believe someone who comes from far away? Do you live there? And you know very well why I am here. They know very well that all of our rulers are corrupted, you know. [...] But here you punish us because you say that we lie, because those who stayed they say no she is lying. No! No! No! Because if we were all right, we would not be there, we would have stayed.*

If refusals appear as a significant source of incomprehension in the interviews, removals seem even more problematic. While in theory, people who have been refused asylum should be deported, and are sometimes threatened with it or reminded that they can apply for voluntary return, the reality is not that straightforward. As was previously seen, Paulette was brought to the airport four times, and yet never removed (excerpt 24). Hakuna tells me being in a similar situation, when the Home Office refused to grant him asylum, and yet, was also unable to remove him:

(64)Hakuna *I have almost been through the entire system. I started as an asylum seeker, they said no, and then I've done what they call the fresh claim you know. But in the meantime, you find yourself in situations when the guys tell you listen we want to help but we can't help you here. So you have to go back home, if you want. Ok, I want to go back home,*

how do I do that? Well actually we've checked and we can't send you back, there is no way to send you back home, so you have to manage by yourself.

Kahina They told you that?

Hakuna *Yeah because it's too dangerous, because I have an arrest, a warrant for arrest against me. I can't go back or I will be imprisoned. Ok where is the logic there? Either you give me the possibility to live, and to provide for myself, so that I'm no longer dependent on you, or you send me back. But no we can't do that. And then you find yourself in the streets, alone, you don't have money, you have nowhere to sleep and so on.*

In that context, the decision of the Home Office does not make sense to Hakuna, who does not understand how they can concede that sending him back to his country would be too dangerous, and yet, not consider this as a valid asylum claim. A local support worker in Newcastle-Gateshead explains this tendency as follows:

⁽⁶⁵⁾Local support worker *We have people that we have supported since I started to work here. They are destitute failed asylum seekers for the last 15-16 years. And sometimes you don't understand what's going on you know. These people are people who Home Office has no way to deport them. Maybe they have, maybe their country is still at war so Home Office has no way to put them in a flight and send them to that country. Or they don't have relation, they don't have embassy in the UK. These are countries where a lot of atrocities are going on, you know, abuse. [...] There is no way you can send someone into war. So ok we can wait until it's calm and we can send them, but we cannot support them. They have no way to be supported, because if they keep them in detention it's very costly.*

According to Boubakar and Hakuna, to develop a literacy of the asylum information practice requires going through it and, through that experience, getting used to the fact that it does not make sense:

⁽⁶⁶⁾Boubakar *It's always like with the Home Office, like there is no set rules or everybody. It's like it's only, you only know these things when you go through it, when you experience it because if you don't experience it you don't understand there is no set of rules, for everyone, it's every case they deal it how they want it.*

⁽⁶⁷⁾Hakuna *You can't know these things if you are not asylum seeker, it's not possible. You can have an idea of what it is, but if you aren't inside, you can't really know what I'm talking about. [...]*

- Kahina So what would you say, what advice would you give to someone who just arrived here in Newcastle-Gateshead and who goes through this system?
- Hakuna *I would tell him cousin, you have arrived in hell, and now it's your choice to really make it a real hell or to put all the conditions on your side to still enjoy yourself a bit in the hell you're living in. [...] Forget about what you were in your country. Forget about how people used to look at you back home. Look at your environment. Try to adapt. [...] Don't expect anything from anyone. Not even from the guy from the government, not even from the Home Office, don't expect anything from them. You will be disappointed your whole life. You will go on their website, they will tell you within two weeks we will give you an answer, you will be like yeah great. You will wait three-five months and the answer won't be there, you will be disappointed. It's not worth it, don't expect anything. Expect nothing, you know. Expect nothing from no one. Expect everything from yourself.*

These excerpts indicate that Boubakar and Hakuna perceive the development of an understanding of the asylum system as a learning process that is experiential. They understand coping with the asylum practice as accepting its absurd and sometimes cruel rules, and giving up on any expectations.

For Hakuna, to adapt to this environment also requires changing himself. This leads to the third way in which the asylum information environment fractures participants' way of knowing: by shattering their identity.

Fractured identity

The asylum information environment fractures the participants' external and internal ways of knowing. Throughout the interviews, most participants expressed having experienced identity loss in some ways, for the asylum information environment frames a way of knowing about themselves that do not correspond to their own conception. With the asylum seeker label and the connotations it entails in contemporary Britain, but also through the right restrictions and specific conditions in which they live, the asylum system frames a practice where the participants receive information that reflect a negative image of themselves. The process of identity loss can be observed through three different aspects:

1. Discrimination;
2. Loss of social status;
3. Criminalisation.

Several participants tell me about situations when they felt humiliated by other people because of their legal status. As was previously mentioned, Hakuna tells me feeling humiliated when having to get his weekly support from the Post Office (excerpt 57). This discrimination is due to his status, as well as his language proficiency, as people change their attitude when hearing that he is not a native English speaker:

(68)Hakuna *When you arrive, because you don't speak the language so well, the guy who's receiving you thinks that you're stupid. [...] But you don't judge the intelligence of a fish by its ability to climb a tree. [...] I went through that not long ago, because when I called, I introduced myself and on their thing it's shows asylum seeker, so of course he is stupid, he doesn't English, he's useless you know. And the woman talks rudely to me and I was speaking English normally, so I put her in her place. And then, she have forgotten to put her thing on mute because she said to her colleagues oh but this guy can actually speak English, she was shocked you know. They treat you like shit, just because you have that written on your face.*

Another account of abuse is told by Paulette and happened when she was in detention:

(69)Paulette *One day I remember, there was a guy there, who was working there, they gave me a room, there was no heating. But it was cold, it was in October, November, December. It was cold over there. I went and asked to the guy, can you give me another room it is too cold there. And he asked me the question: why did you come to England? [...] You knew that it was cold here, why did you come? But why did you put the heating? Did I ask you to put the heating? No it's because you know that we are going to need it at some point. Oh no, no, nobody asked you to come here. If you are cold just go back to your country.*

Vivienne remembers feeling discriminated against when signing at the reporting centre:

(70)Vivienne *I remember one day because I was signing at the immigration, so if you go to sign you have to go at the time they indicated you, you have to respect the time. So one day because it was snowing I arrived maybe ten minutes or fifteen minutes early, and the man told me to wait outside.*

[...] Even if it's raining you have to wait outside. Even the old men, the children. [...] They don't care. My dear, so I went outside, I cried.

These accounts of psychological harm show that by giving participants the asylum seeker label and forcing them to go to places where they are in a clear position of subordination, like detention and reporting centres, the asylum system confronts them to people who send them negative information about themselves, with both their words and behaviours. This label becomes part of their identity because it is how other people see them. However, it is not an identity that they choose. Thus, Hakuna tells me that when it is possible, he prefers not telling people about his legal status:

⁽⁷¹⁾Hakuna *When I'm in a social context with all the people I meet I never tell them I am an asylum seeker because it's like it blocks the relationship you're going to have with the person. [...] But at the beginning I used to do it, I used to tell them and I quickly realised that it would change the relationship and the way people looked at me. I don't want people to look at me with pity, I don't want to inspire pity. No, that's why I never tell them. But that's because of the system, because the way we are treated, we're back to what I was saying at the beginning, that we need to spread the information so that people understand. When people understand better, their approach changes.*

These different examples show that the asylum seeker label is an important piece of information that determines how participants are perceived, and consequently, also the way they see themselves.

Identity loss is not only due to participants being actively discriminated against but also related to their positioning in society as part of a lower social group that is marginalised. For many participants, becoming an asylum seeker in England means losing everything they had. Adopting a new status, in a new society, is often experienced as a downgrade. For instance, Agit tells me that as a Kurd living in Iran, he used to be treated like a second-class citizen. Yet, he thinks that his position in the UK is even worse, as he feels considered as a third-class citizen. For Jemal, the impression of being downgraded is even more difficult to cope with when one had a higher position in their country of origin:

⁽⁷²⁾Jemal *It's not easy, especially if you had everything in your country and so, war or something happens and you left everything and you came here and here you don't have*

anything you want, at the same time you don't speak the language, you don't know the culture, it's not easy. Believe me it's not easy, it's not easy.

Hakuna confirms this impression, and tells me how losing his social status forced him to reconsider who he is:

(73)Hakuna *It was a new experience in the sense that it breaks you down you know, it puts you down to a level where you think, shit I thought I was at that level but actually I wasn't, so that gives you a bit more perspective on how you used to perceive yourself. [...] I start from a position where in my country I have everything, I have a family, I have a house, I have a job, I have an organisation where people call me president you know, I have a certain esteem, down to a level where you are nothing actually, you're zero, nothing.*

These excerpts show that the asylum system places participants in a position where the information they receive from the people and environment around them tell them that they are part of a lower social position, and forces them to belong to a social group that is different to the one they used to belong to, thus leading them to rethink their identity.

This identity deconstruction goes further when participants are refused and become destitute. Hakuna explains that becoming homeless, after his appeal rights were exhausted, led him to betray his values:

(74)Hakuna *Human in general, as Jean-Jacques Rousseau said, they were born good. Society corrupts them. Because you know that normally you are a good person, but the situation makes you become bad. You start doing things that in other conditions you would never have done. And people are surprised you do them. But you can't be shocked, because you put me in that situation. I don't know where to sleep, I don't have anything to eat, so what do I do? Well, I steal. It comes naturally, I mean that one day you wake up and you realise you took a sandwich from Tesco without paying. You know, you started eating it already and you start thinking, but what am I doing? And well, it's actually a matter of survival, it was either eating or dying.*

By leading him to commit an offence, although minor, the asylum system makes him behave as a person he does not want to be. Thus, it leads him to send himself information about his own identity that is negative.

While information studies mainly highlight the difficulties that forced migrants have to make sense of their external environment (see Allen et al., 2004; Kennan & al., 2011; Lloyd et al., 2013; Mansour, 2018; Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018; Mikal & Woodfield, 2015; Oduntan, 2018; Olden, 1999; Palmer et al., 2009), this analysis shows that entering the asylum information environment also creates a fracture in the participants' way of knowing about themselves. Indeed, it forces them to adopt a new identity, that of asylum seeker, which is related to limited rights, a lower position in society, and negative connotations. Consequently, in some situations, participants receive information from their environment and the people they encounter that reflect these aspects and send them a negative image of themselves that do not correspond to their own conception of their identity.

Exclusionary information practice

By investigating how participants experience the information environments shaped by the asylum system, this sub-section has shown that there is a discrepancy between their ways of knowing and what they perceive to be considered as being a valid form of information, as making sense, and as representing them within that practice. Participants thus perceive the information literacy of the asylum system as different as well as rigid: it fractures rather than adapts to their ways of knowing. However, this process only corresponds to the concept of fractured information landscape to some extent.

Lloyd (2017b) understands information literacy as an enabler of social inclusion because she conceives it as a collective negotiation of meaning. She builds this conceptualisation on practice theory. Within that framework, a practice is seen as emerging from the dynamic relationship between structure and individual agency, as individuals have the capacity to both reproduce and transform the norms of the structure (Giddens, 1984, Schatzki, 2002). Thinking along those lines, Lloyd (2010b) conceives an information literacy practice as a sociocultural construct that acts as a structure, with specific norms and modalities, which is not merely imposed on people to determine their behaviour, but expresses their "individual agency" (Lloyd, 2019, p.5). Thus, she considers that although refugees' information landscapes are fractured when they arrive in a host

country, because they are confronted to a new information literacy practice, they eventually negotiate its meaning by taking part in it. This dialogical process allows them to become members of the practice and contribute to it. In Lloyd's theory (2015), the emphasis is therefore on individual agency and resilience.

However, Lloyd's research is based on the experience of refugees, not asylum seekers. Thus, the dynamic and reciprocal process she describes does not entirely correspond to what is observed in this analysis. The present research shows that the information practice shaped by the asylum system leads participants to feel deprived from their agency, and does not allow them to contribute to its structure. Not all members seem to occupy the same place and to equally contribute to its shaping. Members of the Home Office and its affiliated services may be able to exercise their agency, but the present study shows that people seeking asylum feel they cannot. They are forced to engage with the practice by submitting their claim, but are simultaneously maintained at the periphery by being prevented from contributing to its meaning making. Moreover, by its absence of logic and predictability, the information literacy of the asylum practice, when acquired, allows coping with its fracture. However, it does not enable participants to regain the control and agency that would allow them to become full members of the community of practice of this environment.

Applying practice theory to an ethnographic study of the asylum procedure in Austria, Dahlvik (2017) reaches a similar conclusion and shows that while decision-makers do have agency and therefore have the power to reconfigure the rules of the structure, claimants do not have this capacity. These results are in line with some of the criticisms addressed to Giddens' (1984) practice theory, which highlight the social hierarchies and power inequalities that exist between, on the one hand, macro actors who can reshape the rules and rearrange resources, and on the other hand, micro actors who are forced to comply with them (Mouzelis, 1995). The asylum system epitomises this imbalance and demonstrates that when analysing an information environment, it is necessary to take into account the hierarchies that determine the position of the different actors within the practice, and that constrain or enable their agency. This present study focuses on the experience of micro actors, who experience the practice as

being exclusionary. However, further research is needed to understand how other the macro actors of the asylum system perceive this practice.

5.1.5. Information exclusion

Information studies related to the experience of forced migrants in a resettlement context tend to adopt the framework of social inclusion (Alam & Imran, 2015; Diaz Andrade & Doolin, 2016; Kennan et al., 2011; Lloyd, 2016; Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018) or integration (Kaufmann, 2018; Oduntan & Ruthven, 2019). By focusing on individual resilience or integration systems and initiatives, they start from the premise that integration is limited by information barriers but is desired by the host society. Conversely, the present study shows that the participants perceive the UK asylum system as purposefully fostering information exclusion.

Grounded in the experience of people going through the UK asylum system, information exclusion is defined as the process of preventing individuals from engaging in an information environment as equal members of its practice.

It builds on three characteristics:

1. **Information deprivation** – Individuals lack information concerning meaningful events in their life, or are provided with information that is inaccurate, incomplete or inadequate. This results in making these events uncontrollable, unpredictable and incomprehensible, and contributes to breaking the trust towards the information provider.
2. **Information sharing agency denial** – Individuals are prevented from controlling the information they want to share. Their voice is devalued, they are denied participation in key domains of society such as employment and education, and they are forced to share information without consent.
3. **Fractured information literacy** – The shaping of the way of knowing of the practice is a one-way process that is imposed on the new members. This prevents them from regaining agency by negotiating the literacy of the practice and breaks down their sense of identity.

While this study cannot demonstrate that the macro actors of the practice purposefully decided to foster information exclusion, it demonstrates that those for whom the system is supposedly designed are not taken into account and involved in the shaping of its information practices, leading them to experience information exclusion.

When social inclusion is defined as equal participation, the information exclusion framed by the UK asylum system is based on control and agency deprivation. Agency is a process based on three temporalities: the past, with the iteration of past patterns of thought and action; the present, with the capacity to make decisions; and the future, with the capacity to imagine different possibilities (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Within the asylum information environment, individuals feel deprived of these three modes of agency:

- Information deprivation prevents them from looking to the future by keeping them in uncertainty. Nasim and Sara feel that they are not human and do not belong until they have the refugee status (excerpts 19-20), Hakuna says that he lives a “provisional existence” (excerpt 21), and Claudine attempts to take her own life (excerpt 25).
- Information sharing agency denial stops them from choosing what they want to do. Fardin cannot go to university (excerpt 45), Mustafa cannot practice as a doctor (excerpt 49), and Boubakar cannot buy food that corresponds to his religious beliefs (excerpt 56).
- The rigid information literacy practice disqualifies their established ways knowing, even when it concerns their personal stories. Nimesha needs a DNA test to prove her relationship to her daughter and husband (excerpt 35), and Hakuna has to reconsider his position in society, from president of an important organisation to destitute asylum seeker (excerpt 73).

The present research complements the findings of studies that define the UK asylum policies as exclusionary (see Ibrahim & Howarth, 2018) by demonstrating how people who have gone through the asylum system have experienced its information practices as depriving them from their agency and preventing them from being included in society.

This research also shows that although they face an exclusionary system, participants continue living in the UK. To understand how they adapt to their new life in Newcastle-Gateshead in spite of these challenges, I turn to the second information environment that dominates their experience: the local third sector.

5.2. The information environment of the local third sector

Having analysed the information environment shaped by the asylum system, the focus is now on that formed by the local third sector. It is the information environment participants interact with in their everyday life, and that allows them to cope with the issues they face regarding the asylum system and the process of settling in Newcastle-Gateshead.

The everyday is often considered as a series of routine actions that occur seamlessly and are taken for granted. Yet, for people forced to resettle in an unknown environment, even the most habitual action can be challenging (Lloyd, 2017b). Participants describe this process as having to “start life from zero” (Nasim) and “live like we are born again somewhere else” (Vivienne). To build their new lives, they must learn how to meet their everyday life needs (Fig. 23).

These needs pertain to one or more of these domains:

- **Functional** (e.g. food, clothing);
- **Practical** (e.g. internet, legal aid);
- **Social** (e.g. friends, family);
- **Cultural** (e.g. walks in nature and heritage sites)
- **Emotional** (e.g. maintaining a like to culture, faith and values)

Participants may experience them at different stages of the asylum process. Figure 23 presents them in no defined order for participants appear to experience them in an interconnected and non-hierarchical way. It shows that their resolution is complicated by the new legal status that conditions the participants’ rights, the cultural differences they face, and the specificities of the city they are sent to. For instance, food is constrained by the politico-legal system that limit their economic capital, the cultural differences that shape the local food habit, and the local specificities that determine where and how food can be accessed.



Figure 23 – Participants everyday life needs and fractured information landscape (Le Louvier)

These factors prevent the participants from understanding the general information environment that surrounds them and that would allow them to easily satisfy their needs. Thus, participants are “thirsty for information” (Nasim), and this thirst pushes them to learn how to navigate their immediate environment, which is that of the city.

Throughout the research, Newcastle-Gateshead appeared as a complex information environment that comprises many different actors and encompasses various sub-information environments and practices, such as religious practices or the education sector. However, these were not relevant to everyone I met. The information environment that appeared the most significant to the shared experience of the participants was that of the third sector. Newcastle-Gateshead counts a high number of organisations supporting refugees and asylum seekers

comparatively to its population size (Mayblin & James, 2018). This section shows that interactions with these organisations allow participants to negotiate their inclusion in the city in spite of the effects of the asylum system's exclusionary practice. To build an overarching picture of this information environment as experienced by the participants, I first provide an overview of its typology. I then examine the four characteristics through which it fosters information inclusion.

5.2.1. Overview of the local third sector information environment

Figure 24 represents the key constituents of the local third sector environment. Contrarily to the asylum information environment where documents had the prominence (see Fig. 19), this practice is primarily shaped through the people that form the third sector organisations.

Table 17 provides an overview of the organisations identified during this research (2016-2018). The statuses, membership and funding availability of these groups is not stable, and this list is therefore not exhaustive or representative of the entirety of their activities.

Participants do not engage with all these organisations. Some of them engage with a couple of groups, while others are actively involved in mainly one organisation. All the insider interviewees mentioned the West End Refugee Service (WERS) and the North of England Refugee Service (NERS), often interchangeably referred to as Refugee Service. Most of them have used Action Foundation and the Conversation Group, which shows the importance of advice and the necessity for English practice. These groups do not receive public funds for their general activities with asylum seekers and are not part of an integrated resettlement scheme. Therefore, they do not form a coordinated network, but a nexus of independent organisations.

To better understand their internal functioning, I use the concept of information grounds: places where people gather for a specific purpose (e.g. hairdresser, café, library programme), and spontaneously share information (Pettigrew, 1999).

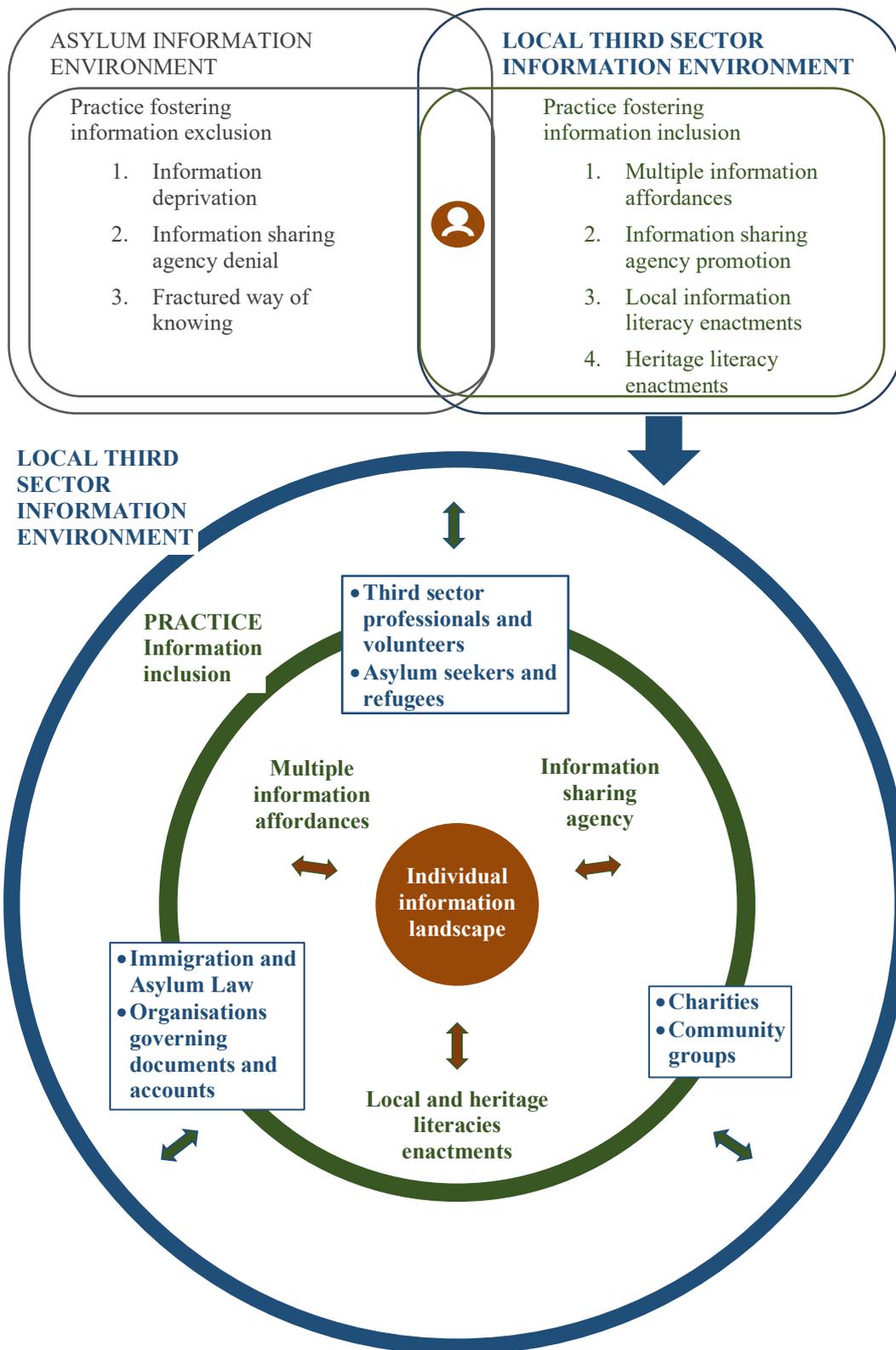


Figure 24 – Situational diagram of the participants within the local third sector information environment (Le Louvier)

Organisation	Data collected
NERS , https://www.refugee.org.uk/ Charity providing immigration advice and support, as well as ESOL classes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview with director and volunteer • Mentioned in insiders' interviews
WERS , http://www.wers.org.uk/ Charity providing non-immigration advice, as well as a hardship fund for refused asylum seekers with no recourse to public fund, a befriending scheme and a clothing store.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview with support worker • Mentioned in insiders' interviews
Action Foundation (https://actionfoundation.org.uk) Charity providing ESOL classes, as well as housing for refused asylum seekers with no recourse to public funds and newly granted refugees at risk of homelessness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview with Action Language coordinator • Mentioned in insiders' interviews
Conversation Group (No website) Community group providing an informal English language practice meeting at the Multilingual Library.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview with volunteer • Observations • Mentioned in insiders' interviews
Multilingual Library (http://www.multilinguallibrary.org.uk/) Community library providing books in multiple languages and a space for community events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with two volunteers • Mentioned in insiders' interviews
Comfrey Project (http://thecomfreyproject.org.uk/) Charity providing therapeutic horticultural and craft activities in an allotment in Gateshead.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview with director • Observations • Mentioned in insiders' interviews
Crossings (http://www.crossings.org.uk/) Community group providing a space for music practice: guitar, violin and choir.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview with former chair • Observations • Mentioned in insiders' interviews
Angelou Centre (http://angelou-centre.org.uk/) Charity providing support, advice and activities for black and minority ethnic women.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview with volunteer • Mentioned in insiders' interview
MALENC Language Group https://www.mynsu.co.uk/organisation/let/ Student-led community group providing informal English language practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations • Mentioned in insiders' interviews
Freedom from Torture (https://www.freedomfromtorture.org/) National charity supporting victim of torture. Locally provides access to medical report to evidence trauma, therapist, and wellbeing activities (allotment, yoga) .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview with volunteer
Regional Refugee Forum (http://www.refugeevoices.org.uk/) Independent membership organisation that provides a platform for refugee-led community organisations to defend the voice of local refugees and asylum seekers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview with project manager
Migration and Asylum Justice Forum (No website) Campaigning group that defends the rights of local migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentioned in insiders' interview
Investing in People and Culture (https://i-p-c.org/) Charity promoting the economic and social inclusion of refugees, asylum seekers in the region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal meeting with director
Food Banks Includes various organisations that provide food and sometimes a space for socialising.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentioned in insiders' interview
NEST (https://www.nusu.co.uk/volunteering/details/536/) Student-led English language practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentioned in key informant interview
British Red Cross (https://www.redcross.org.uk/) National charity locally providing a hardship fund for refused asylum seekers and help to find missing family.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentioned in insider and key information interview
JET (https://www.jetnorth.org.uk/) Charity helping people from the Black Minority Ethnic community to find work and improve their professional skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentioned in insider and key information interview
Peace of Mind (https://peaceofmindnortheast.org.uk/) Refugee-led community organisation providing an advice drop-in, social events and educational projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentioned during observations
Crisis Skylight (https://crisis.org.uk/get-help/newcastle/) Charity supporting people in situation of homelessness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentioned during observations

Table 17 - Overview of the organisations that form the local third sector environment

An information ground emerges from the entanglement of information, people and place (Fisher, Landry & Naumer, 2007) whereby:

1. Information covers a variety of topics, benefits people on different levels, is discussed several times, and is communicated through different media;
2. People gather deliberately or involuntarily and form a socially heterogeneous group that varies in size;
3. The place is convenient and convivial, provides a regular activity, and facilitates different types of information exchanges.

These characteristics are observed in the different local third sector organisations identified in this research. They can be described as “designated information grounds” (Oduntan, 2018, p.195), that is, places where people encounter information both purposefully and serendipitously. Some agencies such as NERS primarily act as formal information providers, which means that information grounds only emerge occasionally as a by-product of their services. Organisations such as the Comfrey Project, Crossings and the Conversation Group do not provide formal information but social activities that are already constituted as information grounds.

Several studies have shown the importance of information grounds in the resettlement of forced migrants for they allow bridging information gaps, building social capital and developing information resilience (Elmore, 2017; Lingel, 2011; Lloyd, 2014; Oduntan, 2018; Quirke, 2011, 2015). To advance the understanding of what makes information grounds beneficial for people seeking asylum specifically, I analyse the different types and forms of information flows that third sector organisations in Newcastle-Gateshead facilitate. In particular, I show that they foster information inclusion based on four characteristics:

1. Multiple information affordances;
2. Information sharing agency;
3. Local information literacy enactment;
4. Heritage literacy enactment.

The following sub-sections provide an overview of each of these characteristics and discuss their effect on the participants’ sense of agency, belonging and identity.

5.2.2. Multiple information affordances

The first characteristic of information inclusion, as shaped by the local third sector information environment, is access to multiple information affordances (Fig.25). To cope with their new life in Newcastle-Gateshead, participants have a high variety of needs (see Fig.23). Meeting them does not only require being provided with relevant information, but also understanding the complex and nuanced ways of knowing that surround these needs (Lloyd, 2017b). This subsection shows that local third sector organisations help this process by facilitating access to both multiple types and forms of information.

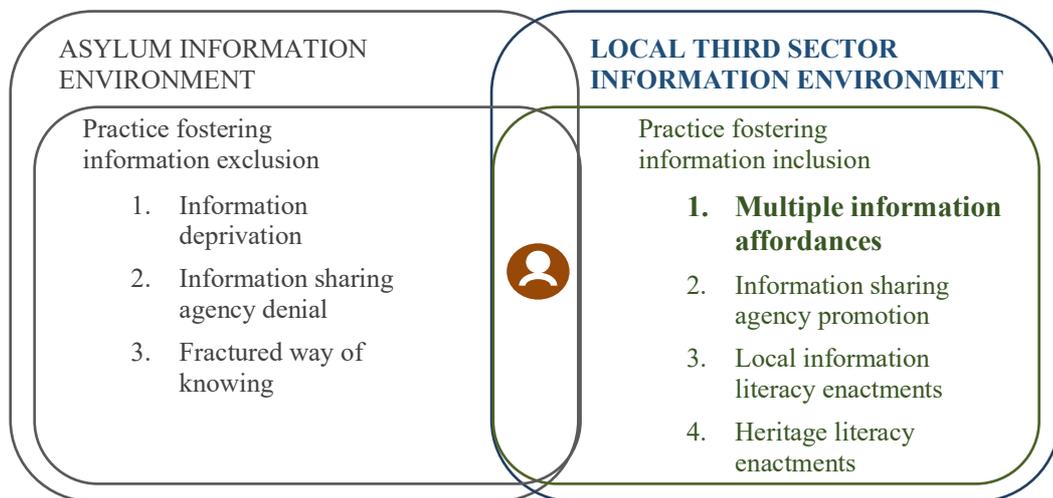


Figure 25 - Local third sector information environment: focus on multiple information affordances (Le Louvier)

Multiple types of information

Charities and community groups afford information exchanges that are experiential, personal, familiar and casual.

Most participants enter the third sector information environment via the Refugee Services, where they seek help with Home Office letters, casework issues, destitution, or other administrative procedures. Later on in the settlement process, they also seek information in agencies that are not direct information services, but where the staff and volunteers are trusted sources of information. Beyond this formal information provision, it is often in these organisations that participants meet people who have also been through the asylum system and

share their experiences with them. This is particularly important for them to access information that is relevant to their specific needs.

For instance, some interviewees tell me that experiential information is key when it comes to choosing a solicitor to advise them on their case:

(75)Sara *The first day the person from Jomast gave me a paper with the solicitor's names and address. And in the NERS, refugee service, somebody introduced some solicitors and I asked them do you know this solicitor, do you know. They said all of them are the same, no different. But a person was client there in the Refugee Service. He said I had this solicitor and it was, she was good for me. And after that I claimed to have this, to make it my solicitor.*

(76)Local volunteer *When you meet a community and you would listen to their own experiences, then you start questioning who you signed up with. Because charities of course can't give you legal advice, of course it's protective for them and also for you. You get told by other people. And sometimes it's not even them saying oh you should get my solicitor, sometimes it's just listening to that person.*

As these quotes demonstrate, receiving a list is not enough, for the participants need advice on who can be a good solicitor for their particular case. This is not provided via formal information provision, but by creating space for social interactions through which people share their experiences.

For one of the local volunteers, social interactions are what make places like Crossings and the Conversation Group particularly valuable:

(77)Crossings volunteer *I see that information exchange between them is more like about asylum seeking cases, or which lawyer's good, or which one is not good, or about benefits, and about where to get access to information that is benefit for them [...]. And also I like the [Conversation Group], also they share information as well, which people like it because you share information not from the organisation, but from the members. It makes a difference. It's like a recommendation more than just tell you.*

This volunteer explains that in addition to providing direct information, these two groups allow participants to converse on a variety of topics. The Conversation Group is a particularly central information ground, for it is very popular. As it is an informal practice rather than a class, participants have time to talk to each other, and to ask volunteers to help them in different ways, from

reading Home Office letters to advising a local bike shop. Thus, people can access information that is directly relevant to their specific everyday life needs.

As an information language practice, the Conversation Group also allows providing linguistic information in context:

(78)Mustafa *[The Conversation Group] is very interesting to improve your skills and for your communication because it's a good mixture between the native English and advance English people and some refugees they want to learn English elementary or intermediate level. [...]And it's very nice because every time I was there I got new vocabulary, especially from the local people with the Geordie accent.*

(79)Vivienne *College, it's like classes, it's like school, very structured. But there, people bring what they think is useful, and it's good for us because we learn.*

Participants appear to particularly appreciate the Conversation Group because it allows them to learn conversational language that native English speakers find relevant. Contrarily to the administrative English of the Home Office (excerpts 59-60), here they can receive linguistic information that is adapted to their level, associated with visual or bodily information. People can also easily ask questions and seek linguistic information. This allows them to build a better understanding of the language and of the nuances it may convey about the various aspects of everyday life they interact with.

By facilitating social interactions and experiential information exchanges, the local third sector allows participants to find information that is directly relevant to their specific practical and functional needs. This allows them to make sense of the nuanced and situated knowledge of the local environment, which is necessary for them to reconstruct their information landscapes (Lloyd, 2017b).

In addition to experiential information, the local third sector organisations provide space for people to share emotional information. This type of interaction is particularly common at the Comfrey Project, where several of my field notes entries are about sharing feelings and personal stories:

(80)Field note *I briefly talked with [...], who told me that back home, they studied information and communication. They seemed to be missing studying and working. They did not seem to be doing well, but they wanted to talk about their situation and share their anxiety. It was good that they could do it*

here.

- (81)Field note We were doing the dishes when a member who is always nice and smiley entered the kitchen. They told us that they had not been able to come here over the past weeks because they were mourning. They were very sad about not being able to be with their family back home during such a difficult time. In Newcastle, they were feeling lonely in their sorrow. It's interesting how the kitchen is often the place where people share their stories, where people can open up. This might be because it is a small space, with usually no more than three people at a time, so it feels intimate. Not everybody will hear you.

These notes show that the Comfrey Project provides a space where participants can meet with other people they can confide in. Three elements seem to facilitate emotional information exchanges:

1. **Space** –The small kitchen (Fig. 26), the noisy common room and access to the outdoors shape different atmospheres that invite different kind of conversations. For example, it is often in the confined space of the kitchen, while preparing food or doing the dishes, that intimate conversations occur.
2. **Frequency** – The Comfrey Project offers weekly activities, attended by a limited group of people. This means that members meet regularly and form bonds overtime, which facilitates the flow of emotional information. This is also observed in the other organisations that offer regular activities.
3. **Activities** – Through cooking, gardening, playing music or learning English, participants appear to connect together and create bonds.

Place-related factors, frequency and a focal activity that brings people together are key elements of a successful information ground (Fisher et al., 2007). This research shows that they particularly contribute to emotional information sharing. While it is beyond the scope of this research to explain what motivates these personal information activities, or their long-term psychological effect, I observed that talking about oneself was a need that some of the participants fulfilled spontaneously when the situation was appropriate and that provided them with a sense of relief. It also created a connection and a sense of care between us. Thus, exchanging personal information had a momentarily positive



Figure 26 - Cooking and sharing personal information in the small kitchen space of the Comfrey Project (Le Louvier)

effect on our wellbeing, and strengthened our sense of belonging to the organisation, which allowed participants to fulfil their social and emotional needs.

In addition to personal conversations, participants meet their emotional needs through familiar information. As was previously seen, being constantly confronted to unknown environments is particularly overwhelming. Conversely, exchanging familiar information appears to provide time to rest and restore. The local third sector produces familiarity by facilitating access to different types of social capital (Putnam, 2000; Woolcock, 2001):

1. Bonding, when participants meet people from their cultural, linguistic or religious community;
2. Linking, when the staff and volunteer link them to institutions and governmental agencies;
3. Bridging, when sharing activities with people from many different backgrounds.

Access to bonding social capital is promoted by gathering people from different ethnic, religious and linguistic communities. A volunteer at the Angelou Centre tells me about the importance of meeting someone who can speak your language:

⁽⁸²⁾Local volunteer *One of the ladies who came in once said “I’m only here to try to find someone who speaks my language”, and [...]*

she was happy because she found someone at the end, but she said, you know, if she went somewhere else it would have been harder for her because this is much more catered to ethnic minority groups. [...] It's not only the emotional support that you get from talking to someone who understands you but some people feel a lot of joy when they can converse again in their own language and they are comfortable.

As this volunteer explains, participants can find comfort and joy in receiving and sharing linguistic information they are familiar with. During an interview, Joann similarly told me that for him, life in the UK started the day he met someone who spoke his language. Familiar information thus provides strength and emotional support.

The development of linking capital comes from feeling supported by an organisation:

⁽⁸³⁾Comfrey
Project
Staff *They would often come to us with queries that we cannot always answer, it might not be in our limit but we might be able to signpost people. It just gives people that comfort as well because very often the higher state organisation is too far in the sense that they are not always approachable so I think it's important to feel that they can have that kind of support as well, so that they don't feel isolated.*

As this key informant explains, participants feel less isolated when knowing that they have a trusted organisation they can turn to when they need.

Finally, bridging capital is developed through social interactions with the other members of the organisation. By providing frequent activities and services, charities and community groups allow participants to become acquainted with the organisations and their members, which enable them to transform their initial unknown characteristics into familiar information (see section 5.2.4).

The local third sector thus allows participants to meet social, emotional and cultural needs by providing them with both initially familiar information, through bonding capital, and acquired familiar information, through bridging and linking capitals.

The feeling of rest and emotional support that emerges from this familiarity is also observed in the sharing of casual, happy, information. All the interviewees

mentioned the need for social activities as one of the first needs they experienced after arriving in Newcastle-Gateshead:

(84) Vivienne *What helps me is to go out, to visit the different charities, to meet people, to chat. We became familiar with the people we've met here. That's it! Without that, I would have lost my mind. If I had stayed at home, alone with my problems, maybe today I would not be here talking to you. I would have lost it.*

(85) Kahina What kind of information is important for you to share with other people?

Sara *At first to be patient, because the first weeks I was so depressed. They have to wait, they have to spend time, and I tell them attend the Conversation Group, some groups, and spend your time between the people, between the society and it's very important for you to learn something and you don't know how pass the time, don't understand how pass the time.*

These testimonies show that for Vivienne and Sara, socialising is not a secondary need that appears after all functional needs are met, but is a primary necessity that allows them to function in their everyday life and to cope with the difficulty of the asylum process. Moreover, it allows participants to have fun and relax:

(86) Claudine *I joined the Comfrey Project when I arrived in 2007 [...] I like it because it allows me to unwind.*

(87) Vivienne *Here we just come to relax [...] I like the Comfrey Project because each time I come here, it's like a family. I meet people I like. We chat, we laugh, we meet, we prepare, we do everything. What's important is that another day passes. When I'll come back home, the kids will be back, and that's it. The day is gone. That's why I go to the Comfrey Project, even if I don't know anything about gardening, I just like the atmosphere. I like the people I meet there. What we talk about, what we do, how we live. That's it! It's like a second home.*

(88) Crossings volunteers *I think people would like to come back for the happiness, because even if you think of music it makes you happy, doesn't it? And feeling welcoming, and I always think that feeling comfortable and feeling normal is a thing that you don't feel, sometimes as a human you want to feel special but if that special makes people look at you in a different way that is not special. [...] I believe it's fun.*

In these excerpts, participants highlight the sense of lightness that they get from joining these organisations. They can seek important information, share personal

feelings, but can also have casual conversations. This allows them to unwind, feel happy, feel normal, and break their isolation.

This shows that some type of information may not be seen as important for decision-making or practical needs, and yet benefit one's wellbeing (Fisher et al., 2007). This is consistent with Tinto & Ruthven's (2016) observation that sharing happy information, even trivial, enhances happiness and is essential to build relationships. This also shows the importance of a varied third sector environment, where organisations not only aim at providing practical services, but also social and recreational activities. A community group like Crossings thus forms an essential part of the civil society ecology for it enables people to learn music and do something that makes them happy. When feeling dehumanised by the asylum process and forced to inactivity for an unlimited period of time, as described in the asylum information environment section (excerpts 20-21), having a chance to practice music for free allows participants to engage in a meaningful activity that is pleasurable and fosters self-fulfilment.

These findings support Quirke's (2015) claim that recreational activities are important for forced migrants to improve their wellbeing and integrate in the host society. This is important to reconsider a common conception of the order of needs, going from physiological to psychological and self-fulfillment (Maslow, 1943), that is sometimes used to order the information requirements of people seeking asylum (Oduntan, 2018). Indeed, findings reveal that participants seek and benefit from information that allows them to meet their emotional, social and cultural needs in the very early stages of settlement, and that these can also facilitate access to more basic needs. For instance, social interactions during recreational activities can facilitate experiential information exchanges, which allow meeting essential needs such as finding the solicitor that can help one being granted asylum and access to rights, housing and employment.

Having shown the benefits that the local third sector information environment provides by affording multiple types of information, which cater for the participants' wide range of needs, the focus is now brought onto the various forms of information exchanges that these organisations facilitate.

Multiple forms of information

The analysis of the asylum information environment revealed that within the asylum system, exomatic forms of communication were imposed, that prevented participants from understanding the information they received (excerpt 15), supporting their case efficiently (excerpts 35-36), and easily adapting to the asylum literacy (section 5.1.4). To enable participants to overcome this barrier, the local third sector information environment provides access to forms of information that are embodied, mediated, and ambient.

The majority of the participants indicate that people are their primary source of information. The only exception comes from a participant who prefers relying on the internet first. However, he is also the only participant in the sample group who was not receiving asylum support and therefore had a different experience of settlement. The preference for social interactions as sources of information is consistent with the majority of the literature on the information behaviours of migrants and refugees (see Beretta et al., 2018). By acting as information grounds and providing services through human contact, the local third sector information practice adapts to the needs of the participants:

(89) Boubakar *Not all asylum seekers can speak English like me so when I came myself I couldn't speak any English so sometimes it's very helpful to have somebody to take them to these places. I don't know if it's like care for them, but you know what I mean. [...]Guide them and show them around, and take them places. It's very very helpful like I did that to many people like friends, housemates.*

As Boubakar explains, seeking information through human contact is the most efficient strategy for it allows overcoming potential lack of language and textual literacy.

In addition to this primary mode of communication, local third sector organisations experiment with different forms of information provision. They use posters and flyers to advertise about their activities and these of other organisations. They often have different forms of online presence, using social media, websites and/or newsletters. They make announcements during their sessions. They sometimes receive members of other agencies who can introduce

their services to the participants. The Conversation Group, in particular, experiments with different types of information provision:

⁽⁹⁰⁾Conversation Group volunteer *We also sometimes do an icebreaker where people have photos of different organisations and that's quite good for sharing information if some people know already and some people won't know about it. And then we do mapping activities where people work together to draw a big map of the local area and then they say, and they share information on what is useful and what is important. We try to do that quite often because then people who have been here longer can share information with people who have more newly arrived. And other things, yeah we do other activities like that, which is part of the language practice as well, like if someone was moving to Newcastle, what places would you tell them to go to, what places would be useful for them. Like activities about what are the best places to relax in Newcastle, where can you go for information or advice on different topics. So we try and do a lot but I think that of all of the ways, probably the mapping one works the best.*

This quote shows that through its language activities, the Conversation Group guides information flows in different ways, and that its success comes from the multiplicity of information forms it affords.

Such diversity is also observed at the Comfrey Project. For instance, a member of staff tells me that while they usually privilege social interactions, putting information about mental health support on the wall was beneficial for people who were not in a place where they could share their distress with someone else. Similarly, a support worker at WERS tells me that distributing leaflets about support for LGBTQ people in the toilets had a positive effect as it allowed people to consult them in privacy, without having to disclaim it.

By providing information via different media, third sector organisations ensure that people find the most convenient and relevant way to access the services they need, without having to disclose any information they do not want to share.

Finally, in addition to embodied and mediated information, local third sector organisations facilitate access to ambient information. This corresponds to the multisensory stimuli conveyed by the material, social and natural properties of the organisations' settings.

This includes refreshments, which most groups offer to accompany their activities:

⁽⁹¹⁾Nasim *And the nice thing in Newcastle anywhere when you go they have coffee, you can drink coffee or biscuit. That's good when you study or when you're learning something the mind is working, it's getting tired you need dark coffee.*

Although Nasim's testimony may seem anecdotal, it illustrates the importance of a safe and friendly space for people to feel welcome in an organisation. Fisher et al. (2007) explain that food and drinks help creating a convivial setting that facilitate information flows. The research shows that it also allows participants to feel more comfortable, by sending them positive information about the organisation and how it considers them. This comes in contrast with the negative information that comes with the asylum seeker label and shatters the participants' sense of identity (section 5.1.4).

Positive information is also conveyed through the vibrancy of the place:

⁽⁹²⁾Claudine *[At the Comfrey Project] I meet people, we chat, we have a nice time together, we eat together, but at home I'm alone. I am lonely, I am bored.*

⁽⁹³⁾Field note Young people from the National Citizen Service in Gateshead came because they wanted to do a social media campaign around asylum matters. They took part in the activities and tried to gather some quotes from participants about the project. One of them said that when they are at home, they are depressed and cry all the time, but when they come to the Comfrey Project, they can think about something else.

⁽⁹⁴⁾Crossings volunteer *There is also one man [...]he told me oh you know I really like the group and it makes me feel like it's my second home now, and he said I wish I know earlier and he was here 2 years and he feels so bored, so isolated and lonely, and he found this place.*

Although the liveliness and messiness of these organisations may at times feel overwhelming, being stimulated by a variety of sensory information also allows people to relax and unwind. This comes in contrast with the loneliness that many of them experience during the asylum process and allows them to replace their often anxious internal chatter with a diversity of external information, which appears to have a positive effect on their wellbeing.

Finally, ambient information can also facilitate access to the local way of knowing about the natural surroundings. This is notably observed at the Comfrey Project, which provides a specific access to the outdoors:

(95)Comfrey Project staff *When people work with the land, and when the weather conditions are different from wherever they're from, it just help them understand that side of British heritage in a sense. It's a very important aspect that is very often overlooked and if I'm honest with myself, I hadn't quite gotten it until I actually started talking to people here and how this is actually another level of integration, integrating with the environment and the land that surrounds you.*

This excerpt highlights how perceiving and feeling the specificity of Newcastle-Gateshead's climate in a safe and friendly condition can help participants to learn the local weather literacy and adapt to it. This embodied sensory experience can thus foster place literacy (Sommerville, 2007) and allow participants to develop a sense of belonging to the local environment. Positive ambient information thus enables participants to feel welcome, restore and learn the local literacy.

This sub-section has described how the local third sector allowed participants to access the information they require to meet their functional, practical, social, cultural and emotional needs in the most adequate way. Conversely to the asylum information environment, which fosters information deprivation by communicating in a way that is incomplete, inconsistent and inadequate, and produces trauma, the local third sector affords multiple types and forms of information, which contributes to fostering information inclusion.

Having discussed the first characteristic of information inclusion, I now move on to examine information sharing agency.

5.2.3. Information sharing agency promotion

The previous section has shown that within the asylum information environment, participants had to share information but were denied agency in the process. Findings related to the local third sector environment evidence the opposite practice: it facilitates two-way information flows through which participants regain information sharing agency (Fig. 27). This second characteristic of the process of information inclusion is described through three aspects:

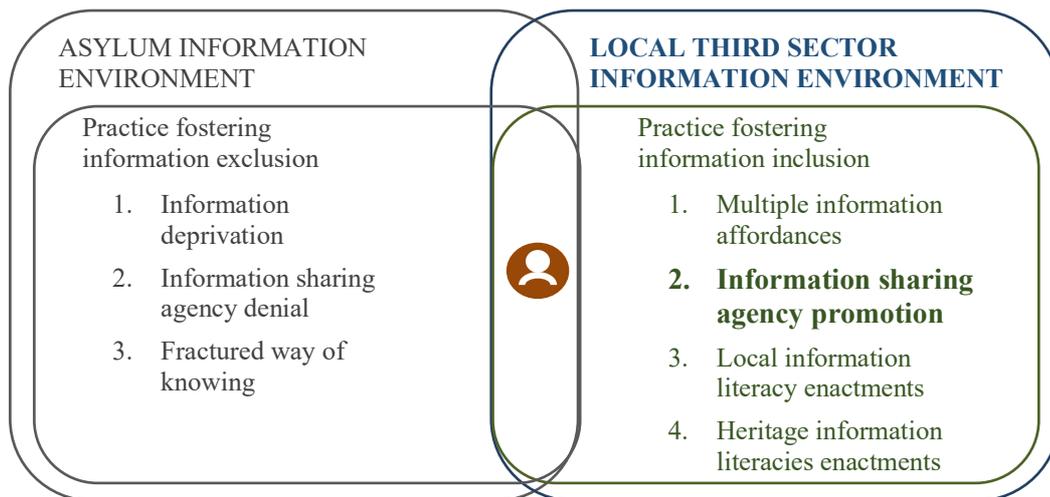


Figure 27 - Local third sector information environment: focus on information sharing agency promotion (Le Louvier)

1. Shared information is valued;
2. Participants choose its content;
3. As well as its form.

Sharing information that is valued

The local third sector information environment shapes a space where participants' personal stories, knowledge and expertise are valued.

For instance, Agit tells me why he often talks about his country of origin at the language group:

⁽⁹⁶⁾Agit *Because you know Europe people only watch news, for example BBC, Euronews, everything, some people never go to Iran.. [...] Sometimes you see something on TV and TV speak about that and maybe they don't like Iran and maybe they say something that is wrong.*

Agit's excerpt shows that the language group is a place where he feels entitled to speak his own truth, and to counter the narratives spread in the mainstream Western media by sharing his own knowledge about his country. Although political discussions sometimes lead to arguments and other members sometimes challenge the participants' contributions, the organisations I observed intend to encourage people to tell their personal stories and share their knowledge without being silenced or questioned.

The participants' voice is valued and can also be amplified. For instance, members of the Migration and Asylum Justice Forum tell me feeling particularly

proud of the change they achieved through the campaigns they ran with this group:

(97)Boubakar *It was good to know that there was a debate on room sharing at the House of Parliament a couple of days ago, something we've been campaigning for. And I felt like pride, my work is making changes. Not making changes but my word is being valued, you know.*

(98)Fardin *What helps me to go forward as asylum seeker is the dream and hope that I will get a good life. I can do something, maybe I can change the system. And I have been succeeding as I told you. I fight for education rights for asylum rights and I have been succeeding.*

These excerpts show that by campaigning and achieving change, participants regain the sense of dignity and value that the asylum system had deprived them of (excerpts 50-51).

The participants' expertise is therefore valued and put to good use. Activities offered by the local organisations often rely on peer teaching. Participants help each other to learn different skills, such as how to play the violin (Fig. 28):

(99) Field note *The violin session was busy. There was barely enough violins for everybody. At the beginning they taught me how to handle the bow. Another person who I didn't know told me to hand the violin lower. At the end, the three of us were explaining a new member how to play the B note. As it is a group lesson and new people arrive each week, people need to help each other in order to make progress.*



Figure 28 - Sharing one's expertise by helping each other to play the violin at Crossings (Le Louvier)

This vignette illustrates a common practice, at Crossings as well as in other organisations, that consists in learning by doing, and learning by helping each other. Most of these organisations do not consider members as service beneficiaries but as active participants. By giving value and utility to the information that they share, the local third sector information environment also gives them agency.

Choosing what information to disclose and share

In addition to valuing the information they share, the local third sector organisations offer non-coercive settings. This allows them to preserve their agency by choosing when and how they want to share information with the group, while still be part of it.

This is notably facilitated when organisations are able to adopt a drop-in format. While some agencies need to register new members and collect some of their personal data, more informal organisations such as the Conversation Group or MALENC language group enable anyone to join in without having to provide any form of identification. A volunteer highlights the positives and negatives of this format:

(100)Conversation Group volunteer *It's good because you are not asking a lot of question and formalising things too much, but in a way, it means that you have less knowledge of what people have gone on to do and things like that.*

This volunteer explains that drop-ins have the advantage of giving people more choice and flexibility. They do not have to share personal information or to commit in the long-term, which is more appropriate to the complex situation of people going through the asylum system. On the other hand, this format may constrain the sense of strong community that more limited and regular groups such as the Comfrey Project have. This shows the complementary function of these different types of groups, and the importance of having a diverse third sector ecology.

According to one of the Multilingual Library's volunteer, the flexibility of third sector organisations is also what makes the difference between that charity and the City Library:

⁽¹⁰¹⁾Multilingual Library volunteer *The City Library is free as well but some people don't want to give their addresses. So when you are signing up with the City Library [...] you need something to prove your address. So when I signed up with the city library I had to bring a bank statement with my address. I don't know how it works for asylum seekers. I don't know if the letter from the Home Office is enough. And sometimes because of the stigma of being an asylum seeker or a refugee people don't want to show that, so it's kind of like you lose access. [...] But with the Multilingual Library, there is no judgement [...] for example, some people from the Centre who come and join the library they don't put the address on the library card, and that's fine, they use the Angelou Centre address, and that's fine. But they can't do that with the City Library.*

This volunteer highlights the distrust that some people seeking asylum may have for institutions, which was noted in the context of the asylum environment (excerpt 58), and the consequent importance of third sector organisations such as the Multilingual Library, which people can join without having to show a proof of address that would force them to disclose their identity and status. This allows participants to have more control over the information they share and to avoid feeling judged, discriminated or policed (excerpts 55-58). However, although not forcing participants to disclose their identity is essential to foster an inclusive information practice, it is not possible for all third sector organisations, which may receive pressure from funders to collect statistics and figures about their members.

These examples show that in order for the participants to regain a sense of agency, they must be able to engage with organisations that do not force them to share personal information, and that this is also essential for them to trust these organisations that link them to the host society.

Choosing the form of information shared

Finally, by providing space for different kind of activities, such as music, gardening, cooking, knitting and other crafts, organisations such as Crossings and the Comfrey Project also provide different opportunities for people to share

their knowledge in a way they are comfortable with. Thus, participants can be part of the group and help other people even when they do not have a common language:

(102)Field note As it was a cold winter day, everyone was inside. Most of us were knitting. They became the teacher for four of us, including two men who are not usually doing craft activities and who were, like me, new to knitting. They were very patient and very busy, running between all of us, answering questions, making up for our mistakes. All of this with almost no words. They taught us through demonstrating and mimicking, using body language and basic words like 'up' and 'down'. It was nice to see them so active and confident, when the language barrier often tends to make them look shy.

This excerpt shows how, by allowing people to express themselves via a non-verbal medium, the Comfrey Project allows people to overcome the language barrier. This seems particularly important for people to regain confidence, even if this is through very simple acts:

(103)Field note We were cutting pieces of paper to make the Christmas decorations. They were very fast and organised, as if this was a task that they had performed many times in the past, and that came back to them naturally, reminding them of the time when they worked as a school director. It was very interesting to see how something as simple as cutting pieces of paper could suddenly reactivate a sense of pride and achievement. They were performing a task they knew, and knew how to do well.

In this field note, the participant is reminded of their professional identity and regains a sense of dignity and social status by being able to do something they are good at. Through these different activities, the Comfrey Project provides opportunities for participants to express themselves in ways that they master. Information sharing agency thus allows participants to rebuild their self-confidence and gain trust in the organisations, two processes that are necessary to the integration work.

Having discussed how the local third sector enables participants to seek and share information in the ways they need and want, I now show how this also allows them to learn the local literacy and develop a sense of belonging to its practice.

5.2.4. Local information literacy enactment

The previous section has shown that the asylum information environment fractured the participants' way of knowing, and by the same token, prevented them from being included in its community of practice. Here, I demonstrate that the local third sector environment intends to promote the opposite endeavour (Fig. 29). For that purpose, I examine how it encourages participation within the organisations, as well as part of the nexus.

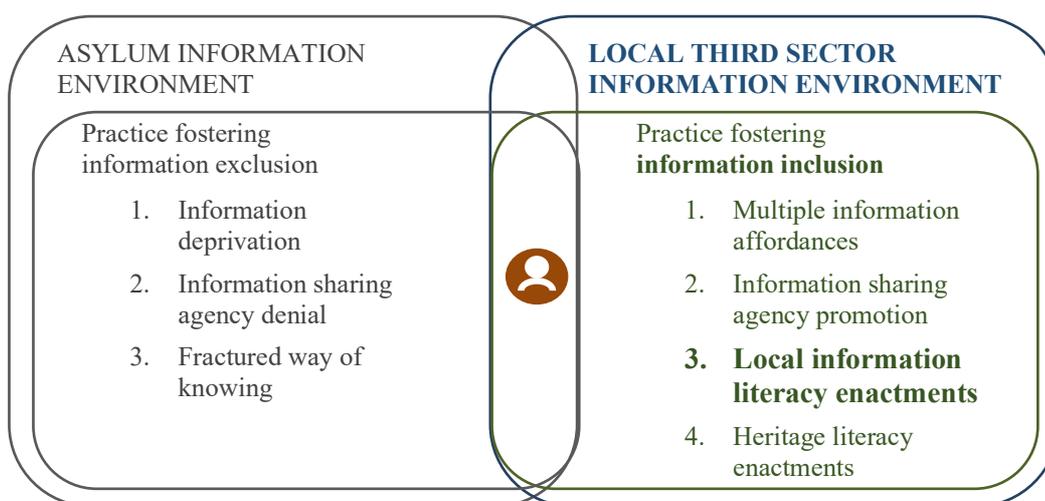


Figure 29 – Local third sector information environment: focus on local information literacy enactments (Le Louvier)

Intra organisation literacy

When facilitating information grounds, local third sector organisations can also be described as communities of practice, that is, “a group of people who interact, learn together, build relationships, and in the process develop a sense of belonging and mutual commitment” (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002, p.34). One of the main tenants of communities of practice is the development of a shared repertoire, which corresponds to customs, rituals and narratives performed by the group that may be surprising to newcomers but taken for granted by long-term members.

Because they offer regular activities, local third sector organisations give opportunities for participants to learn their shared repertoires. At the Comfrey Project, this means learning where the gardening tools and craft materials are stored, knowing that members have to sign the attendance sheet upon arrival,

calling people for lunch, introducing yourself during the communal lunch, or getting one's travel expenses reimbursed before leaving (Le Louvier, 2019). At the Conversation Group, it means helping yourself to a cup of tea when you arrive, joining the circle when the session starts to hear the announcements, or knowing when to move the chairs and tables to split into groups or tidy up the room. These rules are often implicit, and can be either established by the organisers or develop spontaneously. For instance, members of MALENC language group started bringing snacks to the session, which became a custom (Fig. 30). Other rules may be contested or contentious. Thus, the appropriation of the Comfrey Project kitchen by a specific group of people was at a time a tacit agreement that created tensions between members. The shared repertoire is never fixed but evolves in function of the staff, volunteers and participants who make the practice, as well as the financial situation, space and projects of the organisation.



Figure 30 – Language games and snacks as the shared repertoire of MALENC language group (Le Louvier)

Participants learn this shared repertoire by taking part in the activities, talking with other members and observing. This learning process allows them to negotiate the specific information literacy of the group, which enables them to become part of the community.

In addition to acquiring the literacy of the organisations' practices, participants contribute to them. Local charities and community groups intend to answer their members' needs – within the limits of their resources and capacities. This means that they usually listen to people's queries and feedbacks, and endeavour to organise activities that suit them. For instance, after members shared their needs for a food hygiene certificate, the Comfrey Project organised a free training course within their premises. As a member of MALENC language group needed help with their digital skills course, access to a laptop was provided. Small and informal organisations such as language groups are particularly flexible, which means that participants can easily shape the practice.

Third sector organisations often give them opportunities to become volunteers and take on responsibilities, be it by helping other people to learn English at the Conversation Group or Action Language, acting as an interpreter at JET, or being in charge of cooking or gardening at the Comfrey Project. The motivations for participants to volunteer are varied: it provides a meaningful occupation, as well as recognition and responsibility. A participant tells me it is also a tacit obligation for their asylum case to look good by demonstrating they are acting as good citizens (excerpt 1). Volunteering allows them to assert membership to an organisation, and increases their capacity to shape its practice.

Participants thus enact the information literacy of the different organisations on the micro level, by learning their shared repertoire and contributing to the practice. This is also observed on the macro-level, as the participants learn to navigate the nexus created by these different organisations and contribute to it.

Inter organisation literacy

The local third sector information environment comprises a variety of organisations, and is therefore difficult for newcomers to navigate. Being literate within this context requires knowing the different places where information can be accessed, and knowing how to find or share information within them.

As Hakuna explains, this means knowing how to locate the people who hold the information one needs:

(104)Hakuna *Now I'm really immersed in the system [...]I know where I should go, who I should talk to, I have contacts.*

Two participants appear to have mastered the local third sector information environment particularly well. First, Jemal demonstrates an acute understanding of how to find the information he needs:

- (105)Kahina Where do you usually go when you need information?
- Jemal *It depends if the information has to do with the asylum process I go to the refugee service. If the thing I want to know is related to personal or normal things I ask friends or local people.[...] Newcastle has many services and also with the services the people who work in the services are also in general they help, you know, they are helpful. [...] When I came to Newcastle after I found these places where they help refugees and that kind of stuff in terms of English classes, and information, and especially information about the city, I found many services. [...] It's not easy to find accommodation or to change from British government support to local council support. But for me it was easy, I was lucky because I know many people. By the time I got the refugee status I asked many people and at the same time I applied for local council support and for accommodation and like everyday I was going to them and ask them, and apply, apply, apply. I've got quickly action, it was easy for me actually. But many people, they don't find it easy.*

This account shows that while he was going through the asylum system, Jemal has developed a good knowledge of the local third sector information environment, which allows him to easily meet his needs. Thanks to the literacy he acquired during this process, he was able to transition to the mainstream system after receiving his leave to remain without major difficulties. Throughout the research, I observed that he had built an extensive social capital and was particularly good at using it effectively. For instance, as he was aware that I was a student, he would always come to me for questions related to university access. He is the member who made the most of the MALENC language group, asking volunteers for help with whatever he needed – ESOL homework, curriculum vitae, applications, and using the computer and printing facilities.

Vivienne demonstrates a similar command of the local information environment, although adapted to her own needs as a single mother of two, living in the asylum system for a prolonged period of time:

- (106)Kahina What would you say to someone who just arrived in Newcastle? [...]

Vivienne *I would tell him that it is a very quiet place. There aren't really any crimes like you can hear in London. It's a really quiet place, especially with kids. You can find many people, you should not be alone. There are many places you can go to if you need help with anything. As I told you, it's not only about financial help. There is help, I can show them. I've always done that. There are two Refugees [services] in Newcastle, the small Refugee in Benwell, and the big Refugee in town. If you have time, there are also lots of places where you can find food banks. Because asylum seekers don't get much money. You can go to town, if you want to, if you want to get trainers, or a skirt, or some trousers, but you don't have money, you can go to the food banks, get some food there, and that might help you to save some money to buy whatever you want. I can show you all the places where you can get food for free. That can help you to save money. I can help them like that, and introduce them to new friends, like "look, here is a newcomer".*

Vivienne's account shows how she learned to adapt her routine to her specific situation by getting to know all the different charities, food banks and community groups that could help her. In order to be able to afford what she wants for her children, and to have the social life she needs, she has learnt to make the most of each of these organisations. Her use of the local third sector information environment is similar to a fulltime job, which she carries out before her children come back from school and that allows her to improve her financial situation.

These two participants show how important it is for people seeking asylum to develop a literacy of the local third sector information environment. It allows them to answer everyday needs and improve their living conditions. It also allows them to develop a sense of belonging to the city, by becoming familiar with its structure, navigate it independently, know people, and be known. By being able to identify the local organisations where they can find practical and affective support, participants develop their "information resilience" (Lloyd, 2015).

Once participants are able to navigate the local information environment, they can introduce newcomers to it. When arriving in a dispersal accommodation in Newcastle-Gateshead, participants receive very little information (section 5.1.2). To bridge this gap, they often rely on their housemates. As they become familiar with the city, they help newcomers in return:

- Jemal introduces people from his asylum accommodation and from the Mosque to the Refugee Services, as well as to all the different language groups, ESOL classes, and free sports activities;
- Nimesha shows the ladies only session at her local swimming pool to her friend;
- Boubakar guides newcomers through the city, helping them to register to the GP, or explaining how to transition to the mainstream benefits and searching for employment and housing;
- Tarek helps newcomers to register to College, and shows them where to find Arabic food;
- Vivienne shares her extensive social capital and knowledge of the local support networks, such as the Conversation Group or the Comfrey Project;
- Participants regularly bring new members to MALENC language group, whom they meet at College or in other organisations.

The third sector information environment is not a coordinated network but an informal nexus of organisations. By mapping the different organisations and linking newcomers to them, participants enact their literacy of the third sector environment, and contribute to its shaping as a community of practice.

Finally, being involved in some of the local third sector can also motivate participants to create their own group. This is what Vivienne did, with the help of the Multilingual Library:

⁽¹⁰⁷⁾Vivienne *That's a group I created myself, based on my own experience. It is called the Silence Cry. Because many times, I've been crying in silence. Nobody could hear it but I was suffering. As I told you, when I see people, I smile, I chat, I don't talk about my problems, but they are inside me. Nobody can understand. If I don't speak, we can say that I am a bit different, because God created me different, because I am brave. I can integrate easily but many people don't integrate that easily. Some people, they are also suffering in silence. They need you and me. If we could find these people, help them. [...] Money doesn't make you happy, but meeting people, smiling, sharing with other people, communicating, loving other people. That's why I created the Silence Cry. If we can first help people that we meet here.*

In this excerpt, Vivienne highlights the importance of supporting people who suffer in silence, and how her own experience led her to create an organisation with that aim. Her connection to other organisations means that she can advertise her project and recruit members through them, and can introduce members of her own organisation in return. Thus, she actively contributes to enriching the local third sector.

This sub-section has shown that the local third sector information environment facilitates the development and enactment of its information literacies. This allows participants to regain agency by navigating the city autonomously. They also develop a sense of belonging to the organisations and to the local environment by becoming familiar with it and being active members of its practice.

In addition to facilitating adaptation to the local ways of knowing, the next sub-section shows that the local third sector environment allows participants to preserve and enact their established information literacies.

5.2.5. Heritage literacy enactment

Heritage literacy enactment constitutes the last characteristic of information inclusion (Fig. 31). Research shows that heritage is important for forced migrants to maintain a sense of identity and feel at home in their new environment (Chatelard, 2017). By considering heritage as a deeply meaningful information activity and as a specific type of information literacy practice (see Chapter 4), I explore what facilitates its enactment and what affects and effects it produces. I focus on four main aspects: meaning making, identity reconstruction, literacies superposition, and literacies bridging. Vignettes taken from the field notes illustrate these aspects.

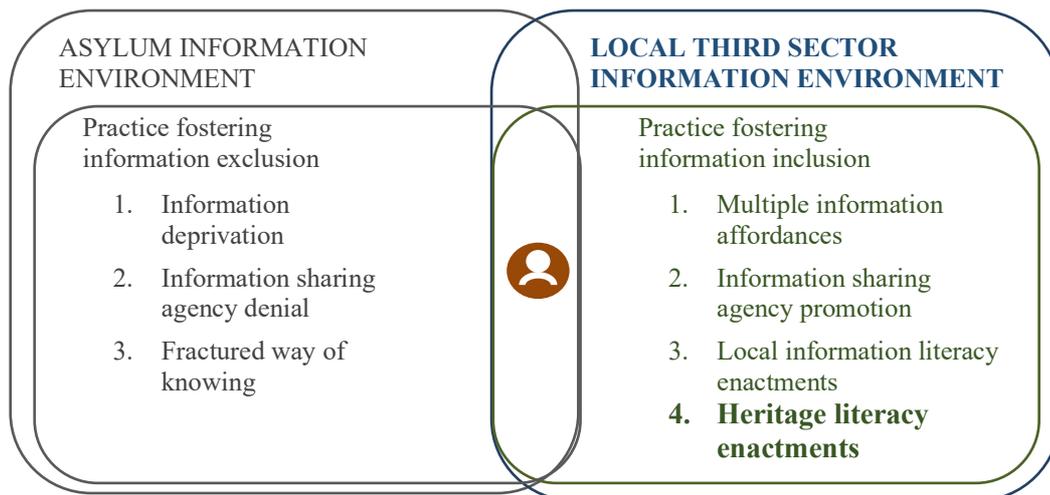


Figure 31 – Local third sector environment: focus on heritage literacy enactments (Le Louvier)

Finding meaning

The first vignette presents a scene of everyday life at the Comfrey Project, where each session is punctuated by a communal meal, followed by dishes duties:

(108)Field note On that day, after lunch, they were doing the dishes, I was drying them, and we started talking. They told me that when they arrived in England, they used to be very depressed. This changed when they started to come to the Comfrey Project. Here, they were able to socialise with other people and, more importantly, they could reconnect with nature. Nature had talked to them and showed them the way. They said that they no longer needed to take medications. They looked strong and confident, and encouraged me to have trust in myself in order to be successful in life.

This vignette first illustrates how the space facilitates heritage enactments. As was previously mentioned, the limited size of the Comfrey Project kitchen creates an intimate atmosphere. The window above the sink provides a view of the garden. Thus, the kitchen affords the intimate conversation, the view affords the connection with nature, and that connection affords the enactment of a spiritual practice.

The participant explains that the Comfrey Project allowed them to reconnect with the environment in a way they had lost since coming to the UK and living in asylum accommodations. As the asylum system often fractures people’s identities and confront them to absurd situations (see section 5.1.4), individuals I met during the fieldwork appeared to not only need to make sense of their new environment, but also find meaning to their life. This vignette shows that being

able to enact spiritual practices in a third sector space facilitates this meaning making process. It has positive effects on the participant's mental health and gives them the resilience they need to face the difficulties of exile and asylum. It also provides them with a sense of belonging to the Comfrey Project, as well as a strength that permeated their movements and voice, and allowed them to assert their identity.

Rebuilding identity

When exile and asylum shatter people's identity, heritage can provide a way to rebuild it. Traditional celebrations often facilitate this process for they offer people opportunities to share their culture and acting as hosts:

(109)Field note They invited the language group members to celebrate Eid. [...] They prepared a lot of food: a delicious kind of aubergine puree with peanut butter, a similar dish made with black beans, a huge salad, and a tahini smoothie, all served with the traditional bread. They insisted that I had to finish my plate and had more food, although I clearly could not. They said that in their culture, guests had to finish their plate, and that they could come whenever they wanted, but the host decided when they could leave. Then, they made a delicious coffee with ginger, cinnamon and cardamom. They also burned some sandalwood on a tin to perfume the room, and put some music on.

This vignette is interesting on several aspects. During an interview, the participant had told me that for them "celebration was dead", since they did not want to take part in celebrations related to a country that had forced them to leave. Yet, one week later, they invited me to a celebration, which was not national but performed in a very specific cultural way. This shows that although talking about heritage is often difficult for it relates to national aspects that some people forced to exile reject, it is an act that people perform unconsciously. Secondly, in this vignette, heritage is enacted through the recreation of a familiar multisensory experience, which includes gustatory, visual, olfactory and auditive information (Fig. 32). The participant recreates a sensory information literacy that they know, that is part of the celebration, and allows them to transcend the space. Indeed, although involving members of the language group, this vignette takes place in an asylum accommodation where people do not feel at home (see section 5.1.2) and sometimes told me being ashamed of. Yet, inviting people



Figure 32 - Enacting heritage information literacy by recreating a familiar smell (Le Louvier)

where they live allows the participant to enact an important part of their heritage that is hospitality. By acting as a good host, in accordance with their own way of knowing about hospitality, they regain a sense of social identity that is lost within the asylum information environment (excerpts 72-73).

A similar process can be observed in the following vignette that takes place at the Comfrey Project:

⁽¹¹⁰⁾Field note They recruited me to help them cooking. The usual cooks were not available, so they were in charge. They told me they liked cooking here because it made them feel like a parent, which was really important to them. It gave them responsibilities. Indeed, in the kitchen, they reminded me of my own parent. You could feel their authority as they would give you orders. It was their space, their responsibility.

Here, the act of cooking allows the participant to enact their social identity as a parent, and to enact it according to their own cultural conception of it. Having the responsibility to feed a big group seemed to give them a sense of purpose and to find a place in the community that could give them pride. This appears particularly important for them to rebuild identity and self-confidence when living in a society where their skills are not valued, and where their socio-economic situation may not allow them to enact their parent identity in a way that makes sense to them or give them value.

Literacies superposition

Heritage is defined as an act of “past-presencing” (MacDonald, 2012). For people going through exile, it is also a way to bring the distant closer. Throughout the research, this was observed through a variety of everyday acts. For instance, during an Easter party organised by MALENC language group, Agit drew the landscape of their childhood on an egg (Fig. 33).



Figure 33 – Enacting landscape heritage by drawing on an Easter egg (Le Louvier)

During an interview, they explain:

- (111) Agit *My area in [country] have a lot of mountain and already I like mountains, I like my area in [country]. It is very very very beautiful about weather and nature. [...] That time maybe I draw this one because maybe I think about my area, my village. [...] I lived in this area 32 or 33 years, and 32-33 years, this is about when I was a child, and after when I was young. You know, this is, I think, the best time for one person because you are young, you are happy with your friends, your family, with everything. Never, never, if I have for example very very luxury life in the UK, not just in the UK anywhere, never I cannot forget my area or my family because I really really like it, it's very beautiful.*

Here drawing mountains can be seen as an act of nostalgia, which allows Agit to remember his land, and to therefore maintain a connection with it.

Heritage enactments enable participants to create a continuity with their past and with communities that are distant. They have a strong affective component, which is always visible in the participants' behaviour. Such emotions permeate the following vignette:

(112)Field note We attended a Crossings open-mic event with the language group. After the choir, a person performed a song with their guitar. They dedicated it to their friends, who are political prisoners. They named them one by one, and told us about the horrible conditions of prisoners in that country. Next to me, one of the language group's new members gave them a very warm and genuine applause. Then, the performer sang a song from one of their favourite artists, who seemed to be a political resistant. My neighbour was again really touched and joined the tribute. At the end, they went to see the singer to congratulate and thank them. It was interesting to feel the emotion, to feel that something deeply meaningful and emotional was happening that only these two people could really understand. This emotion was probably amplified by the fact that for my neighbour, this was an unexpected encounter. They only came to the open-mic to follow their friends, and did not know they would experience this connection with someone who shared the same political and musical heritage, and would express it in such a powerful way. After this performance, they started telling me about their life, as if the music had awakened memories of their past that they needed to share.

This vignette shows that by providing a space for people to perform the music they want, Crossings can afford both performers and listeners to enact their political, musical and linguistic heritage. This enables them to establish a connection with a community that shares a similar history and similar values while being far from them, and thus links a far away memory to their new local present. In this vignette, the heritage enactment also leads to the need for an autobiographical account, which anchors the participants' past in the local moment.

By bringing the past in the present, heritage enactments can facilitate adaptation to one's new environment:

(113)Field note A person came to the Comfrey Project for the first time. I showed them around, willing to tell them about the allotment and the different activities people could do here. However, they did not seem very interested. They already knew what they wanted to do. They wanted to cook food from their homeland. They asked me where the vegetables and ingredients were, impatient and seemingly frustrated by my lack of comprehension. While I was guiding them through the unknown space of the Comfrey Project, their movements were abrupt and their manners a bit sharp. However, once we arrived in the kitchen, with all the material they needed, their behaviour changed. They finally seemed to relax and to look confident in their

moves. They started cooking and I left them to enjoy this moment.

This vignette shows a strong dichotomy between the unknown information environment of the Comfrey Project where the participant feels uncomfortable, and the familiar space of the kitchen, which resonates with ways of knowing and doing that they know. In the kitchen, their movements are fluid and confident, as if the setting brought back embodied memories. Through the act of cooking, they enact their culinary heritage, which corresponds to their established information literacy, and share it with others. This enactment of expertise and remembrance allows them to find dignity, to find their place in the community, and to feel confident and comfortable enough to adapt to it.

If third sector organisations often intend to initiate heritage enactments, they sometimes happen as an act of resistance to some of their rules:

⁽¹¹⁴⁾Field note To recreate a sense of family at the Comfrey Project, the current politics is to strongly encourage everybody to speak English, so that French speakers do not stay together but mingle with others. This is complicated for me. Since I am also a French speaker, I cannot really ask people not to speak to me in French. [...] We were told off a couple of times, so much that we ended up hiding in the toilets to talk with [member's name]. They seemed to be really willing to speak, and to speak in French. So much that they did not want to leave the toilets in order to keep the conversation going. They told us about the difficulties they had with their children, as they were afraid that they would forget the French language. They were very moved and said "Déjà que j'ai tout perdu, je ne vais pas non plus perdre ma langue", "I have already lost everything, I don't want to also lose my language".

In this vignette, the language heritage enactment is facilitated by the privacy of the restroom and shows that in some instances, it is an imperative that no rule can stop. The participant explains that language is all they have left and speaking French thus becomes a way to resist to the legal, economic, cultural and identity deprivation they are subjected to.

These vignettes evidence different ways in which heritage enactments enable participants to affirm ways of knowing that are part of their personal and cultural history and identity. This allows their past and distant literacies to anchor in an

unfamiliar local information environment and therefore facilitate “the reassertion of place in the midst of time-space compression” (Ashworth et al., 2007, p.56).

Bridging literacies

Heritage enactments place different information literacies in a state of superposition, and can also build a bridge between them. Music in particular appears to facilitate communication between people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

This can be by demonstrating skills and know-how:

(115)Field note They showed us an instrument that I had never seen before and that resembles a bagpipe. Their friend showed us a video of them playing. They told us it is made with goat leather and they painted it themselves, with colourful stripes and shapes.

In this field note, the music instrument acts as a link between the different participants, which provides a sense of curiosity and admiration to those discovering it and a sense of pride and identity to the heritage bearer.

In the following vignette, music is a direct act of communication:

(116)Field note An artist visited the Comfrey Project to record songs from different countries and in various languages. At first, they struggled to find participants, for singing a song in front of a stranger and a recorder may be quite intimidating. It is only after lunch, when most people had left the room and only a handful of us remained sat around a table that the magic happened. A person who is very extrovert, offered to perform their song for everybody. A song that was dear to them and that they shared with passion and emotion. This chant liberated everybody. A person, who only arrived in England two months earlier, decided to take the next turn and to sing a song for us. This initiative surprised me. They were usually very shy, probably because they were unable to communicate in English. Yet, while singing, they suddenly looked like themselves, like they inhabited their body fully. They were able to express themselves in their own language, in their own way. They could communicate with everybody without constraints, without shame. Everybody shared a song from home. It was a beautiful and intimate moment. Seeing people daring singing in public was like seeing them blossoming.

Here, the heritage enactment is afforded by the presence of the artist and the intimate quietude of the end of session. The act of singing appears to transform

the participant's behaviour, and to transcend their body. It is an enjoyable moment that awakens memories of a way of knowing and communicating that they master. Although it does not correspond to the local information literacy, it appears to fuse with everybody's way of knowing. Thus, the heritage enactment is here an act of communication, an act of sharing personal, cultural and emotional information that people pertaining to a different heritage literacy community can still understand.

Benefits of heritage enactments

This sub-section has shown that heritage enactments have beneficial effects on the participants' mental health and wellbeing and reinforce their resilience. First, by making people's knowledge and know-how valid and valued, they provide them with a sense of meaning, dignity, pride, self-confidence and self-esteem that is necessary to rebuild identity through exile and asylum. Secondly, they allow creating familiarity and continuity. The positive aspects of the participants' past are not erased, for they are bearers of their memory.

Heritage enactments facilitate two essential types of connection:

1. **Connection to the remote past** – They allow participants to maintain a connection to meaningful aspects of their familial and cultural history and to give space to these important and affective information literacies in their new, at times hostile, environment.
2. **Connection to the local present** – They enable participants to adapt to their new environment through the prism of familiar ways of knowing and doing. They create a meaningful link with the other members of their heritage community who share that environment, as well as with members of other heritage literacy communities.

Heritage enactments are not limited to local third sector organisations. They have also been observed in religious places, at home or in the public space. However, some of the local charities and community groups such as the Comfrey Project, Crossings and MALENC language group appear to particularly promote their emergence and are therefore essential actors of information inclusion.

5.2.6. Information inclusion and its limitations

Inclusive information practice

This section has shown that the local third sector, through its members, charities and community groups, frames an information environment that aims at facilitating the participants' integration in the city. Similarly to what Lloyd & Wilkinson (2016) describe in the context of refugee youth in Australia, they constitute "rich sites of informal learning" that facilitate access and participation to the local community (p.300). If charities and community groups are not the only spaces that participants frequent, they are particularly important and contribute to their common experience of the city.

The analysis of the participants' everyday life experience reveals that the local third sector practice fosters information inclusion through:

1. **Multiple information affordances** – that facilitate access to various types of information, which cater for functional, practical, social, cultural and emotional needs, in the most adequate forms.
2. **Information sharing agency** – where participants choose the content and form of the information they share, and it is valued.
3. **Local literacy enactments** – through which participants become autonomous and active members of the local environment and of the individual organisations that shape it.
4. **Heritage literacy enactments** – through which participants connect meaningful aspects of their established ways of knowing with their local and yet foreign environment.

While the asylum information practice breaks up communication and excludes people by preventing them to contribute to it, the local third sector information practice intends to foster participation and agency, in its three temporalities:

- **Past** – Heritage enactments allow participants to maintain a sense of continuity in their personal history and identity.
- **Present** – Participants develop the information literacy that enables them to become independent within the local environment and to contribute to it.

- **Future** – Participants get involved in the community, have things to look forward to, and improve their resilience, mental health and wellbeing.

Limitations of the practice

The local third sector information environment is an informal nexus of organisations that share a common practice, led by the goal to support people seeking asylum and refugees who live in the local community. However, it is not an organised network and is not supported by a national integration strategy, which limits its positive effects.

The third sector capacity to foster inclusion is first restricted by a lack of resources, which limits its accessibility, coordination and sustainability. The complexity and lack of coordination of support agencies have been observed in information studies conducted in Germany and Australia (Schreieck et al., 2017; Qayyum et al., 2014). However, it appears particularly significant in the context of this research, where the integration of people seeking asylum is not supported by public organisations or public funds, and is not coordinated as part of a specific resettlement programme.

Upon arrival in the dispersal area, participants do not receive any formal induction and the information provided by the housing company appears inadequate:

(117)Regional Refugee Forum staff (meeting notes) The welcome pack provided by the Home Office is too big. Plus, when you arrive, your mind is in different things. What works is to have something explaining you rather than receiving a book. But it currently doesn't work like that.

(118)WERS support worker *On the welcome pack they give every asylum seeker who is dispersed in the North East, there is information about North of England Refugee Service, Migrant Help. [...]A paper which includes all the agencies in the region, which for many asylum seeker who doesn't speak English is terrible difficult to find out. [...], it's much easier, if new dispersal come, bring them here. [...] So they agreed that every new dispersal, they will bring them and say you see this is the West End Refugee Service [...]but the last year it stopped.*

Interviewees confirm these observations, indicating that the content of this pack is neither sufficient, nor appropriate, and that they lacked people to “show them around, and take them places” (excerpt 89). This means that unless their housemates are already integrated in the local third sector practice, it is difficult for them to find these organisations. This leads some participants to be isolated and unable to meet their various needs until they eventually build the social capital that links them to this nexus. Statutory provision and enhanced resources are therefore necessary for local third sector organisations to increase their visibility and reach out effectively.

The lack of resources also prevents third sector organisations to collaborate effectively. Various key informants regret having to compete for funding:

(119)Volunteer at the Angelou Centre and Multilingual Library *I noticed in the different charities [...] they compete so much for funding it sort of loses the individuality of it. They're lack 'oh we can do this because we want funding for this', when it's supposed to be 'there's another charity that offers this, we should connect with them'.*

(120)Comfrey Project staff *It's a shame that there are a lot of organisations that can do great things but that constant battle with funding is just... It's a bit of a pain.*

A volunteer at Crossings tells me that third sector organisations do not have the means to implement sustainable partnerships and therefore tend to reach out only when they need it, usually for specific one-off projects. She also observes different levels of collaboration: while the heads of the biggest charities may know each other and collaborate, they do not link up with volunteers and members of smaller organisations. Indeed, some members of community groups such as Crossings, the Conversation Group, MALENC language group, the Multilingual Library or the Migration and Asylum Justice Forum, know each other, navigate between the different groups, and facilitate information exchange between them. However, they may not be invited to discuss with the professionals working for more established charities such as NERS, WERS or Action Foundation, or with the City Council. Challenges to collaboration limit the capacity of the third sector to move from nexus to network, and to develop an integrated strategy that would allow supporting people seeking asylum efficiently.

Finally, the lack of resources means that these organisations are precarious. Many rely primarily on volunteers to organise activities and provide informal advice. However, volunteers have “limited time and energy” (Volunteer at NERS and the Multilingual Library). They may also not be qualified to answer every request, which can lead to frustration and misinformation. Providing accurate information is also complicated by the unstable nature of the local third sector information environment. Over the course of my fieldwork, the Comfrey Project almost closed down, and was forced to dismiss its four employees, relying solely on volunteers before being able to recruit one new staff member only. Similarly, at the beginning of this research Crossings was a registered charity with employed staff, but soon faced financial difficulties that led them to become a volunteer-led community group. Smaller grassroots organisations may have even more precarious existences and not have the capacity to integrate the local third sector nexus. It is therefore difficult for everyone – professionals, volunteers, and people going through the asylum process, to build a complete picture of all these organisations. Moreover, this research shows that organisations that are more likely to facilitate heritage enactments, such as Crossings and the Comfrey Project, tend to be more precarious than those providing practical information and services, such as WERS, NERS or Action Foundation. This means that the capacity of the local third sector information environment to preserve the diversity that is necessary to foster a comprehensive inclusive practice is always at risk.

The second limitation of the local third sector concerns its restricted power: if it is essential for participants to integrate, it often mitigates rather than overcomes the negative effects of the asylum information environment.

People going through the asylum system experience the city in a specific way, for their status determines the places they go to: charities and community groups supporting forced migrants, food banks, and spaces, such as the shopping centre, that can be accessed for free. Being literate means knowing how to use the third sector resources effectively, but it may also be seen as internalising the social and spatial place that society allocates to people with the asylum seeker label. Thus, it can be argued that “specific sites [...] rather than ‘the city’ as a whole, offer refuge” (Aparna & Schapendonk, 2018, p.2).

The local third sector facilitates belonging and agency, and therefore promotes a type of citizenship that is not granted by the legal system or based on an abstract conception of nationality, but that people seeking asylum negotiate *de facto* (Hovil, 2014), through their informal interactions with the local civil society (Bauböck 2003; Doomernik & Ardo, 2018). This facilitates “emotional citizenry” (Askins, 2016), through which participants build meaningful relationships and develop an emotional sense of belonging to the local area. However, it does not enable people to be included in society at large.

For instance, the local third sector environment comprises many informal conversation groups, which act as information grounds and promote information inclusion. However, they do not provide the language certificates that people need to access higher education and employment. Although conversational English is essential, people also need to improve their reading and writing skills, and this setting is not always adapted to the needs of people who are uncomfortable in groups. Thus, informal language groups are important, but should be there to provide additional help rather than being the sole alternatives people can use to mitigate the lack of certified ESOL classes and their inaccessibility during the first six months of settlement.

Moreover, some people may have spent many years in Newcastle-Gateshead and developed a high literacy of the local information environment, and yet, being refused asylum and excluded from key domains of society. One of the most active local volunteers has been living in the UK for over eighteen years. They are a resource person within their organisation, are highly literate and have a strong sense of belonging to it. Yet, as long as the asylum and immigration system deprives them of rights, they remain excluded from society.

Rights and citizenship are foundational domains of integration (Ager & Strang, 2008), and as inclusive as the third sector environment can be, it does not suffice for participants to fully participate in society. In line with Hovil’s (2014) definition of sustainable inclusion as a combination of *de jure* and *de facto* integration, this research therefore argues that individually negotiated belonging, although essential, does not suffice without national recognition.

5.3. Chapter conclusion

This chapter has shown that people settling in Newcastle-Gateshead after seeking asylum in the UK are confronted with two main information environments, shaped by the asylum system and the local third sector. The theory of information exclusion and inclusion emerged from the analysis to provide an understanding of their conflicting practices, as experienced by the participants.

Information exclusion describes the information practices of the asylum information environment. Although encompassing them, it is preferred to the concepts of “information poverty” (Chatman, 1996) or “fractured information landscape” (Lloyd, 2017b), for it does not describe a state of being, created by a situation of marginalisation or the transition from one cultural information environment to another, but the process of being forced to engage in an information practice while not being able to take part in its shaping. The term information inclusion is coined to describe the opposite process. It encompasses opportunities to seek and share different types of information in various forms, and refers to the possibility to both negotiate the local information literacy and to enact heritage ones.

These two practices have different purposes and structures. The analysis of the asylum information environment demonstrates that within this practice, not all actors have the same power. Institutional actors contribute to shaping the practice while this is much more complicated for asylum claimants. On the opposite, within the local third sector environment, participants have opportunities to be heard, have responsibilities, help newcomers, and contribute to shaping the practice. The difference between these two practices is also observed in the speed at which they evolve. While the asylum practice is rigid, and difficult to change, the local third sector practice is informal and flexible. This is due to the prominence given to the different attributes of their information environments: the asylum system puts the emphasis on documents such as asylum and immigration laws, while the third sector places more importance on people. This makes the latter more responsive to the changing needs of people seeking asylum. However, it also makes it more precarious. The

rigidity of the asylum environment means that structural changes are required to transform its practice towards more inclusivity.

This study shows that rather than complementing each other, these two information environments are in opposition. The local third sector allows the participants to cope with the asylum system, while the asylum environment constrains the possibilities of the third sector. Confronted to these two information environments, participants can progressively reconstruct their information landscapes, but that does not always allow them to rebuild their lives completely.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion

(121) Vivienne If you want to help someone, help them. Don't help with two faces.

This thesis provides a critical account of an ethnographic grounded theory study into the information experience of people seeking asylum in Newcastle-Gateshead that sheds a new light on the conflicting practices shaped by the UK asylum system and the local third sector.

To bring my thesis to a close, I first provide some reflections on the research journey. I then present a synthetic overview of the findings, drawing out my contributions to the fields of refugee information studies, information literacy, information practices and heritage studies, as well as the methodological contributions of my research. The societal implications and practical recommendations of this study are then outlined. Finally, I discuss the limitations of the study, indicate directions for future research, and provide some concluding thoughts.

6.1. Reflections on the research journey

The research journey was a rather tortuous one. Based on constructivist grounded theory, it followed an inductive process that reshaped as I immersed myself into the field, met my informants, explored the state-of-the-art, and faced practical difficulties. Being new to Newcastle-Gateshead and having never worked with people going through the asylum system before, I was a complete outsider both in regard to the social field and to the social unit. This means that I had to find my way through the field, which was not without challenges.

First, when working with people seeking asylum and refugees, language barriers and cultural differences may impede communication. Then, a variety of factors can prevent them from engaging with the research. Those within the asylum system may not be able to commit to a research project for they are living in uncertainty, and may be at risk of relocation or detention. Those who have obtained a leave to remain may not want to be associated with asylum anymore.

Practical issues related to their administrative and economic situation may also act as barriers. These can be related to not being able to afford childcare, as well as personal priorities associated with setting up life in a new country: people are busy navigating the city, the culture, and the system, learning English, and developing the skills they need to integrate the job market. Those allowed to have a job may be working night shifts or have little free time. Furthermore, some people may not want to take part in a project because they feel over-solicited by researchers, journalists, artists, or other organisations, who ask them for their stories and participation while offering them little tangible benefit. Research may also feel daunting, and some people may not be comfortable with talking about themselves, because of safety and privacy reasons or mental health issues. Finally, collaboration with third sector organisations is necessary to meet with refugees and people seeking asylum and build relationships with them. Yet, as shown in the Chapters 2 and 5, the lack of resources of these organisations can make research collaborations difficult.

To mitigate these barriers, and engage in a research that makes sense to the participants, is a complex process that requires trust building – a well-known strategy for working in an ethnographic context. The ethnographic approach was therefore essential for it allowed me to immerse myself in the field on the long-term, to build meaningful relationships with some of the participants and organisations, and to avoid *faux pas* by better understanding the complexities of their lives. I therefore learned that doing research in this context is a transformative process: I had to change my positionality, engage in new types of activities, challenge some of my biases and preconceptions, and go through a multidimensional learning process that involved intellectual, emotional, relational, and embodied experiences. For that purpose, the use of multiple research techniques was essential, for each technique had advantages and disadvantages that made them complementary.

As discussed in the Methodology Chapter, my research journey started to unfold when I began volunteering in two local organisations working with refugees and people seeking asylum. It allowed me to step into the field, understand who the main actors were, identify issues and important matters, and question some of my assumptions. This pre-data collection stage was necessary as it allowed me to

share the same context and activities as some of the participants and to develop an insider view of the third sector, although from a different position to that of the participants. Volunteering thus set the grounds for the data collection phase.

This phase started with participatory focus groups. These would not have been possible to organise without the preliminary voluntary activities through which I built networks and got to know participants. Participatory focus groups were particularly good to foster playfulness and a positive group dynamic that allowed participants to take ownership of the research process – to some extent – and to guide it towards what they found most relevant. They allowed me to get an initial picture of their everyday life experiences in terms of needs, barriers and emotions, which then gave me leads as to what to explore further. However, as this technique was constrained to a small group of participants and occurred in a controlled setting, I could not use it to gather a broader variety of perspectives, discuss personal experiences in more depth, or explore the more implicit ways people relate to their environments. I therefore complemented this approach with other techniques.

Participant observations allowed me to continue my voluntary activities while adopting a researcher perspective and recording what I was witnessing. I could thus continue to build relationships with the participants, and investigate implicit behaviours, such as heritage enactments. I could also refine my observations and interpretations through time, gather a variety of perspectives, and overcome some of the language and accessibility barriers, by using informal talks and going where the participants would normally go. Due to the complexity of consent and ethical issues, most of these observations were not recorded. However, they informed my comprehension and interpretation of the data. By being a human instrument immersed in the field, I could be attuned to the environment I shared with the participants. This was particularly important to understand the multi-sensory aspect of the participants' information experience. It also allowed me to sense emotions, and to feel when a meaningful event was happening that was worth recording via field notes. Participant observations therefore gave me direct and rich data about the information environment of the third sector. However, they were more limited in describing the information environment of the asylum system, for I did not have access to Home Office sites

and asylum accommodation. What participants told me about this environment during informal talks was also more sensitive, either because it might have put their safety and privacy at risk, or because they reflected personal experiences that needed to be evidenced by their direct testimonies. Participant observations therefore needed to be complemented with first-hand accounts.

Semi-structured interviews with people who have experienced the asylum system gave participants the opportunity to choose what they wanted to be documented. I could record their voices directly, and they could share what mattered to them. This was particularly important to build a picture of the information environment of the asylum system, as I could record their experiences directly, without adding the extra layer of interpretation that field notes entail. I could also discuss my observations with the interviewees, in order to triangulate my interpretation, assess whether they related to common experiences, and ask for more details. Although semi-structured interviews with insiders were essential, they would not have been the same without the observations, for my questions were shaped through my long-term engagement in the field and the quality of our discussion reflected the relationships we had built. To confirm some of their accounts, the participants views also needed to be contrasted with other perspectives.

Semi-structured interviews with key informants who worked or volunteered in third sector organisations allowed me to triangulate the data by talking to people who have a different perspective on the issues discussed. Some of them had worked in the field for many years and had witnessed the effect of the various asylum and immigration policies. As they worked with different people, they also knew about different experiences of asylum and had an idea of what the most common issues were. Very often, they had been asking themselves the same questions I asked in the research and had tried different approaches to resolve them. Their long experience in the field also helped me to better understand some aspects of the asylum system and of the third sector that I had not understood fully. Only one of the key informants I interviewed had been through the asylum system themselves. Most key informants therefore held different biases from those held by the participants who had a direct experience of the asylum system. At the same time, being front-line practitioners meant that they had limited time to reflect on all the implicit behaviours and interactions

that occurred in their organisations. Being well used to hearing about the different experiences that people seeking asylum go through may also have desensitised them, meaning that they perhaps did not mention some important aspects of these experiences. Therefore, combining these interviews with the direct voices of the participant, together with my observations was necessary in order to obtain a rich and detailed picture of the field, and uncover the findings discussed in this thesis.

6.2. Summary of main findings

The combination of these different research techniques allowed me to gather qualitative insights into the everyday life experience of people who have claimed asylum in the UK. Through the analysis I discuss in this thesis, I demonstrate that their resettlement experience is affected by two contradictory dynamics: the asylum system frames a practice that actively excludes asylum claimants, while the local third sector intends to mitigate these negative effects by shaping an information practice that is inclusive. I also show that although they are essential for people seeking asylum to cope with their situation, the capacity of third sector organisations to foster inclusion remains limited by the national framework.

I summarise this conflicting process by answering the research questions presented in the introduction, which took shape as I delved into the fieldwork and analysed data.

Q1. What information environments and practices do people experience when they settle in Newcastle-Gateshead after claiming asylum?

Two information environments stood out from the variety of everyday life domains that the participants encounter in the city as common to their shared experience (Fig. 19 and 24):

1. **The asylum information environment** – which is shaped by the Asylum and Immigration Act, and its derived procedures and policies. Home Office's direct and subcontracted employees and asylum claimants enact

it in various spaces, such as Home Office premises, detention centres, or asylum accommodations.

2. **The local third sector information environment** – which is framed by charities and community groups, their volunteers and employees, and the asylum claimants and refugees they support.

Each of these environments foster practices that participants experience in contrasting ways:

1. **Information exclusion** – a set of information practices characterised by information deprivation, information sharing agency denial, and a fractured information literacy, which exclude individuals from engaging in an information environment as equal members of its practice.
2. **Information inclusion** – a set of information practices characterised by multiple information affordances, information sharing agency promotion, as well as the facilitation of both local and heritage information literacy enactments, which allow individuals to take part in the local community while maintaining a link to their established ways of knowing.

Q2. How do people seeking asylum reconstruct their information landscapes within these new environments?

The asylum information environment does not help participants to reconstruct their information landscapes. On the contrary, it broadens the fracture by imposing forms of information that do not correspond to their capabilities, and by fostering a systematic lack of consistency, logic and predictability. To adapt to this environment, participants need to accept its exclusionary nature and seek help elsewhere. This leads them to enter the local third sector information environment.

By taking part in the services and activities offered by local charities and community groups, participants can find the help they need to go through the asylum system and cope with their everyday life needs. They can engage in social interactions, which allow them to learn and appropriate the local ways of knowing. Becoming part of the local third sector practice therefore enables participants to reconstruct their information landscapes by helping them to build their social capital and to negotiate the subtleties of the local literacies. It also

allows them to maintain their established ways of knowing by providing them with different opportunities to enact their heritage, be it through cooking, singing, playing music, gardening, drawing, knitting or sharing memories. By facilitating both adaptation to the local ways of knowing and perpetuation of heritage ones, the local third sector environment helps participants to reconstruct information landscapes where both literacies can cohabit. However, the capacity to rebuild their information landscapes does not suffice for participants to be included in society at large if they are not recognised and ensured rights by the state.

Q3. What impact does this have on the sense of identity, belonging and agency of people seeking asylum?

The exclusionary practice of the asylum information environment deprives participants from their sense of identity, agency and belonging, while the local third sector environment facilitates it.

This is observed through three temporalities:

Past

The asylum system tends to erase people's past. During asylum interviews, the participants' life stories are called into question. By imposing a mode of communication based on text, which does not correspond to their capabilities, and hindering their learning process, the asylum system devalues their established ways of knowing. Their identities, as professionals, parents or citizens, framed around certain values and standards, are denied and replaced by the connotations and limitations of the asylum seeker label.

Conversely, the local third sector environment intends to valorise the participants' knowledge by giving them opportunities to share their expertise. They can also facilitate the maintenance of the participants' established information literacies by allowing them to meet with people who come from a similar background. Through their spaces and activities, they afford the enactment of heritage, and thus provide people with the opportunity to connect with their past, and to express values, beliefs and know-how that are meaningful

to them. This gives them a sense of dignity and continuity that enhances their wellbeing.

Present

This research shows that within the asylum information environment, participants have no information sharing agency. Indeed, their voice is not heard. They cannot address the Home Office directly without an intermediary. They are not allowed to work and do what gives them a sense of dignity. They have little privacy, as they are forced to share information such as their legal status or their expenses with the Home Office and other actors. Moreover, they are forced to wear the asylum seeker label, which connotations and obligations do not correspond to their own sense of identity. Indeed, this label induces discrimination, criminalisation and a loss of social status, processes that lead them to receive negative information about themselves. The dominant forms and modes of information imposed by the asylum system do not correspond to their needs, capacities and identities, and the practice does not facilitate their learning and adaptation. They are forced to engage with the asylum information literacy practice, and yet, they are unable to influence its rules and structure, and are therefore not allowed to take part in it as equal members.

Conversely, local third sector organisations intend to foster information sharing agency, by privileging the drop-in format, affording the opportunity to share various types of information through different media, and not forcing people to share information they do not want to disclose. They intend to value their voice and allow them to take an active part in the practice by becoming volunteers, making decisions, and creating their own groups or activities. They also provide participants with opportunities to engage in activities that are meaningful to them and allow them to recover a sense of dignity and identity. Moreover, the third sector environment helps people to negotiate the information literacy they need to become independent in the local information environment. By affording experiential and ambient information, they facilitate access to the nuanced knowledge of the local environment. This allows participants to transform the unfamiliar into familiar. Thus, they can become full members of the organisations, and full members of the practice. By becoming familiar with the

city, its landscape, services, opportunities, people and ways of knowing, participants can develop a sense of belonging that anchors them in the local present.

Future

The research shows that within the asylum information environment, participants face various instances when they do not receive information regarding what is going to happen to them, when and why. When this information is provided, it is often not in a way that is intelligible or timely. The analysis reveals that such information deprivation often results in a traumatic experience, which prevents participants from healing from past trauma and from being able to look to the future. Information deprivation means that they cannot predict or control the course of their life. For instance, people within the asylum system can be moved house any time, and some of them can even be detained or deported without prior notice. This uncertainty deprives them from the security, safety and stability that is foundational to inclusion (Ager & Strang, 2008) and that they need to rebuild their lives.

On the opposite side, the third sector environment provides spaces where participants feel welcome, can come back to and build relationships. Some of the local charities and community groups offer activities that allow participants to unwind by sharing and being surrounded with information that is casual, happy or pleasurable. Thus, they provide them with occupations to look forward to. Moreover, by facilitating the development of their information literacy and membership in the community, they enable participants to find the emotional support they need to grow roots, regain a sense of control on some aspects of their life, and look to the future.

6.3. Contributions to knowledge

6.3.1. Contribution to refugee information studies

This research contributes to the growing field of forced migration in LIS in four different ways.

First, it brings the investigation to England, an understudied context that has different institutions and integration policies to the neighbouring Scotland (da Lomba, 2010; Mulvey, 2018; Scottish Government, 2018), and is marked by conflicting conceptions of asylum. In 2012, Theresa May, then UK Home Secretary, advocated a “hostile environment” for illegal immigration (Kirkup and Winnett, 2012). Subsequent legislations have increased social control for immigrants, deteriorated the living conditions of people seeking asylum, and fuelled negative narratives in political discourses and mainstream media (Allsopp, Sigona, & Phillimore, 2014; Yuval-Davis et al, 2018; Webber, 2019). This political context demands a rethink of the role of the host society in the information experience of forced migrants.

Within that field, information gaps and barriers tend to be considered as resulting from mismanagement (Allen et al., 2004; Kennan & al., 2011; Lloyd et al., 2013; Oduntan, 2018; Qayyum et al., 2014), or cultural difference (Allen et al., 2004; Kennan & al., 2011; Lloyd et al., 2013; Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018; Mikal & Woodfield, 2015; Mansour, 2018; Mikal & Woodfield, 2015; Olden, 1999; Palmer et al., 2009; Pilerot, 2018). Bringing the study to England allows me to approach this issue from another angle by considering information barriers that are purposefully designed to create exclusion. The present study therefore calls for refugee information studies to pay a greater attention to the political situation of resettlement. Assimilationist strategies and strict asylum policies are not particular to the UK but are increasingly observed in the EU (e.g. Schuster, 2011; Tazzioli, 2018). Adapted to other political contexts, the concept of information exclusion can provide a relevant tool to investigate these approaches.

Second, while the great majority of the literature focuses on the experience of refugees, this research only takes into account people who entered the host society via the asylum route. By focusing on this specific context, the study confirms Oduntan’s (2018) observation that people who go through the UK asylum system have a different information experience to those who come with refugee status or humanitarian protection for they do not engage with the same information environments. Indeed, they go through a specific legal system and do not possess the same rights as people with refugee status. In the UK, people

within the asylum system, or whose asylum claim has been refused, are considered as illegal immigrants and are therefore not included in society as equal citizens, which affects their information experience. Following on Lloyd's (2016) call for LIS researchers to make a distinction between migrants and refugee, the present study shows the importance of distinguishing between refugees and asylum seekers.

Third, this research evidences the impact of national and local actors on the information experience of people seeking asylum. In particular, it analyses the information environments shaped by the state and by the local third sector and reveals their conflicting practices. This shows the importance for LIS studies to take into account the role of different actors in the social inclusion of forced migrants and in the rebuilding of their information landscapes.

Finally, this research demonstrates that a comprehensive approach to the process of inclusion necessitates a consideration of the various aspects of human life, ranging from functional needs, to emotional and cultural ones. Thus, it shows that pleasurable, mundane, and heritage information activities are part of the primary information seeking and sharing needs of people seeking asylum, which emerge from their initial stages of settlement. Further evidence of the importance of information grounds in that process is provided (Quirke, 2011). Moreover, conceptualising intangible heritage as a deeply meaningful and pleasurable information activity and as a specific type of information literacy practice allows me to highlight the mutuality of the inclusion process. I demonstrate that for people seeking asylum in England, heritage enactments provide ways to develop a sense of belonging, identity and agency by allowing meaningful and familiar literacies inherited from the past to integrate within a less familiar local environment. Thus, this research advances the field of refugee information studies by providing a novel conceptual tool that allows for a deeper investigation of the cultural information needs and expressive information activities of forced migrants in the process of settlement. Integrated within the theory of information inclusion, it provides a comprehensive way to look at the inclusion experience of forced migrants.

6.3.2. Contribution to information literacy

This novel conceptualisation of heritage also contributes to the field of information literacy practices. It builds on the conception of information literacy as an embodied practice (Lloyd, 2010a) and of heritage as always intangible (Smith, 2006) to show the parallels between both processes. Within that framework, heritage is defined as a way of knowing and giving value to certain actions. It is shaped within a specific cultural practice and its enactment determines belonging to the heritage community related to this practice.

The integration of heritage in the field of information literacy allows for a complex understanding of information literacy in a migration context by enabling the investigation of the simultaneous processes of cultural maintenance and adaptation. Lloyd & Wilkinson (2017) observe that upon resettlement, refugees must reconstruct new information landscapes that combine the way of knowing of their host society with their previous landscapes, and other studies highlight the importance for them to express their cultural identity (Díaz Andrade & Doolin, 2016; Gifford & Wilding, 2013; Wilding, 2012). The conceptualisation of heritage as an information literacy practice provides a tool for a deeper investigation of this process that is integrated within the broader study of everyday information practices.

This comprehensive approach allows me to contribute to the sub-field of information literacy in an intercultural setting in two ways:

1. I provide additional evidence about what constrains and enables individuals to learn the nuanced knowledges of a place as they transition to a new cultural environment (see Lloyd, 2014; Hicks, 2018).
2. I shed a new light on this process by also examining what facilitates or hinders the enactment of established and meaningful ways of knowing, and the impact of people's sense of identity and belonging.

6.3.3. Contribution to heritage studies

From a heritage perspective, this new conceptualisation allows considering the place of heritage as part of people's everyday life practices and to therefore

emphasise the role of its enactment in everyday spaces. It provides further evidence of the beneficial effects of heritage in a context of forced displacement (Chatelard, 2017), by showing how it allows people to develop resilience and to rebuild a sense of identity, agency and belonging in the midst of a hostile asylum process. It also demonstrates some local third sector organisations can be considered heritage actors, and that this contributes to making them essential in the shaping of an inclusive host environment for forced migrants.

6.3.4. Contributions to information practices

This research further demonstrates the appropriateness of extending practice theory to research that explores the information experience of forced migrants. The grounded analysis of the data evidences the relevance of Lloyd's (2017a; 2017b) conceptualisation of information environments, practices and landscapes (Lloyd, 2017a). It also expands it by enabling a conceptual view of the structural and correlative relation between these concepts (Fig. 17), which resulted in a more comprehensive schematic view through the critical analysis of the fieldwork findings (Fig.19 and 24).

This conceptual view, represented in Figure 34, offers an easy-to-read representation of the situation of individuals in relation to their information context, by showing their interactions with the documents, people and places that form the specific practice of an information environment. By placing individuals at the centre, and the practice and environment around them, this diagram allows highlighting the mutually constitutive aspects of these different levels, as well as the power dynamics between them. Its use to depict how people seeking asylum experience the information environments shaped by the asylum system and the local third sector illustrates its applicability to distinct types of environments, and its capacity to highlight their dialogical or coercive nature. Further research is needed to confirm the transferability of this diagram to other contexts.

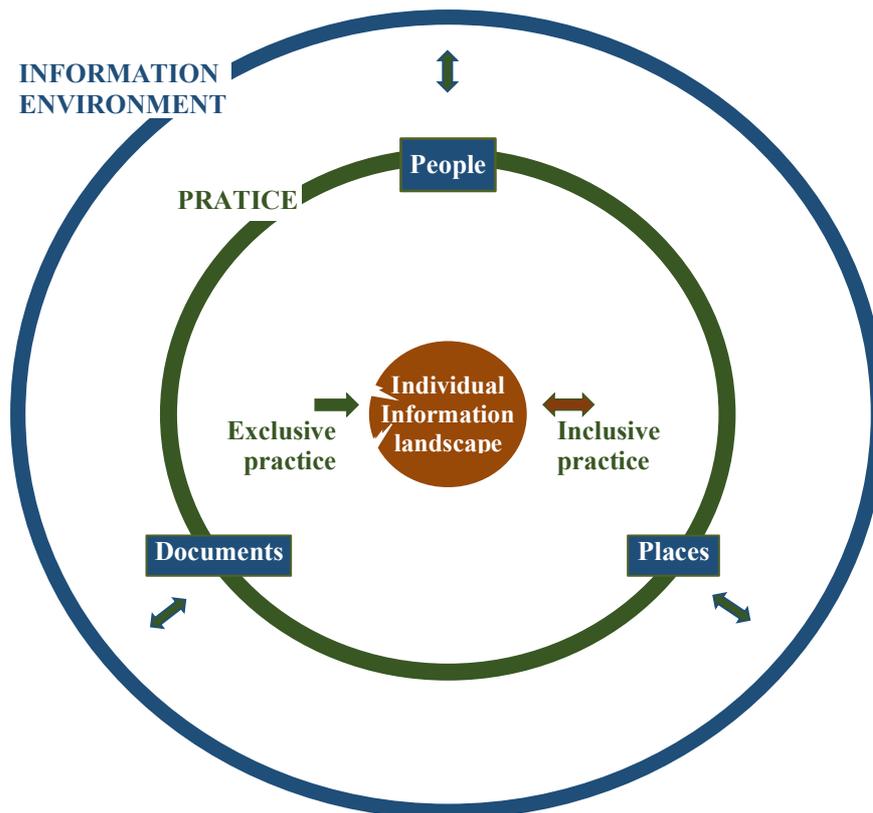


Figure 34 – Situational diagram of individuals in relation to exclusive and inclusive information environments and their practices (Le Louvier)

6.3.5. Methodological implications

Constructivist grounded theory

Studies that use constructivist grounded theory to investigate the information experience of forced migrants are rare (see Kennan et al. 2011; Lloyd & Wilkinson, 2017). Yet, this approach is particularly relevant to explore how information literacy takes shape within a specific context (Hicks, 2018). This research shows that the inductive approach of constructivist grounded theory allows adapting the research design and questions to the needs and interests of the participants, and therefore avoids imposing pre-conceived meaning on their lived experience. This is particularly important when researching vulnerable communities such as asylum seekers, who often lack the means to represent themselves in the public discourse. This approach also allows comparing findings grounded in data with existing theories, which means that their transferability can be confirmed a posteriori, without constraining the analysis. As this research shows, the value of constructivist grounded theory also comes

from its emphasis on the relationships between individuals and larger social processes (Charmaz, 1995), which allows me to visualise the power dynamics between individual agency and social structure at stake in the data.

Moreover, the combination of constructivist grounded theory with ethnography allowed me to develop an original multi-method and cross-sectoral approach through which I could build a rich picture of the participants' experience that included both implicit and explicit phenomena.

Information board game

The inductive nature of this research allowed me to experiment with various research techniques. In particular, I designed a novel way to collaboratively identify the everyday life information practices of vulnerable groups: the information mapping board game (Le Louvier & Innocenti, 2019).

The game proved to provide a collaborative way to engage participants in mapping and discussing their own information practices, and to thus become aware of their acquired information literacy. Playfulness appeared as a particularly important factor, for it allowed participants to have a good time, and gain confidence and agency. As a participatory device, the game appeared successful when the participants started changing its rules to shape it into an information ground, where they exchanged helpful experiential information with each other. The visual aspect of the game, which used colourful flags to place on a city map, also appeared beneficial for collaboration and to easily visualise their collective contribution, identify related issues, and discuss potential solutions.

The pilot study showed that the information mapping board game was a novel research technique that allowed engaging participants with different language and education levels to collaboratively draw an initial picture of the information affordances and barriers of their local environment. This can be used to inform community-based actions and policies. The limited number of participants and the controlled setting of the game constitute limitations that shows that it cannot be used as a stand-alone technique but may best be used in initial research stages and reiterated with different groups. Further research is needed to evaluate its applicability to different contexts and groups.

6.4. Societal contribution and practical recommendations

(122)Fardin *The reason I came here today is because you are doing a research, if I can help you with this research, I will feel myself really happy because I'm doing something for you or maybe for the community. It will not be lost, because it will be documented, which is very powerful.*

As this interviewee indicates, the societal contribution of this research consists in documenting the experience of people going through the UK asylum system. While I had initially not intended to focus on the effect of asylum policies, it became very clear as I stepped into the fieldwork and began the interviews that it was the key issue that participants wanted to discuss. They shared with me personal accounts of injustice, destitution, detention, degradation and other forms of structural violence that they wished to record in the hope that future asylum seekers will not have to face them. By orientating the research towards their interests and priorities, this study provides new evidence to the debate over the harm caused by the UK asylum system (e.g. Allsop et al., 2014; Anderson et al., 2014; Bloch & Schuster, 2005; Canning, 2017; Crawley, Hemmings & Price, 2011; Darling, 2016; Kissoon, 2010; Mayblin, 2017). The use of an information lens allows me to shed a new light on this issue by specifically characterising the practices that emerge from asylum policies and analysing their effect on people's everyday life experiences, mental health, and wellbeing.

The research demonstrates that people seeking asylum perceive the information practices shaped by the Home Office as depriving them from receiving and sharing the information they need, and fracturing their information literacy. The research evidences some of the harm caused by these practices, such as marginalisation, poverty, discrimination, criminalisation, anxiety, trauma, or suicidal behaviours. The concept of information exclusion can be useful for civil society actors and policy makers to further document these detrimental practices, and to know what to avoid when designing an inclusive system.

On the opposite, examples of best practice can be found in the third sector information environment. By analysing the functioning of the local charities and community groups, this research demonstrates how specific information environments can allow people seeking asylum to negotiate their inclusion in the

city and to regain a sense of identity, agency and belonging. In particular, the study highlights the benefits of organisations that function as information grounds and foster social interactions around activities that enhance their wellness and allow them to find meaning and dignity. Facilitating the enactment of intangible heritage is particularly important in that regard, for it allows people to maintain a meaningful connection to their past. However, organisations that foster heritage enactments tend to be the most precarious.

The research also highlights the limitations of the third sector, which suffers from a lack of resources and coordination. It shows that although it helps people seeking asylum to integrate in the city, it cannot allow them to be included in the broader society if they remain deprived of equal rights.

An envisioned information environment for people seeking asylum

Inclusion is a political matter that is particularly controversial in the case of asylum. As this study takes the perspective of people seeking asylum, the recommendations drawn from it are concerned with improving their experience, but may not correspond to the will of all societal actors.

Figure 35 synthesises recommendations to national and local actors from the public, private and third sectors. It presents a visualisation of an envisioned information environment for people seeking asylum based on the findings of this qualitative research. It first shows that their experience would be enhanced by the implementation of an inclusion strategy that would set a vision and practical steps for the integration of people seeking asylum starting from day one, similarly to the “New Scots refugee integration strategy” (Scottish Government 2018). While the study shows that the Home Office and the local third sector currently frame two distinct and conflicting information environments, this inclusion strategy should merge both. Thus, the envisioned information environment is shaped and enacted through collaboration between various actors: Home Office representatives, accommodation providers, local third sector organisations, local authorities, cultural institutions, and most importantly, experts by experience. In addition to Home Office premises, the ideal asylum information environment should be enacted in various spaces that facilitate the emergence of information grounds. Within such environment, an inclusive

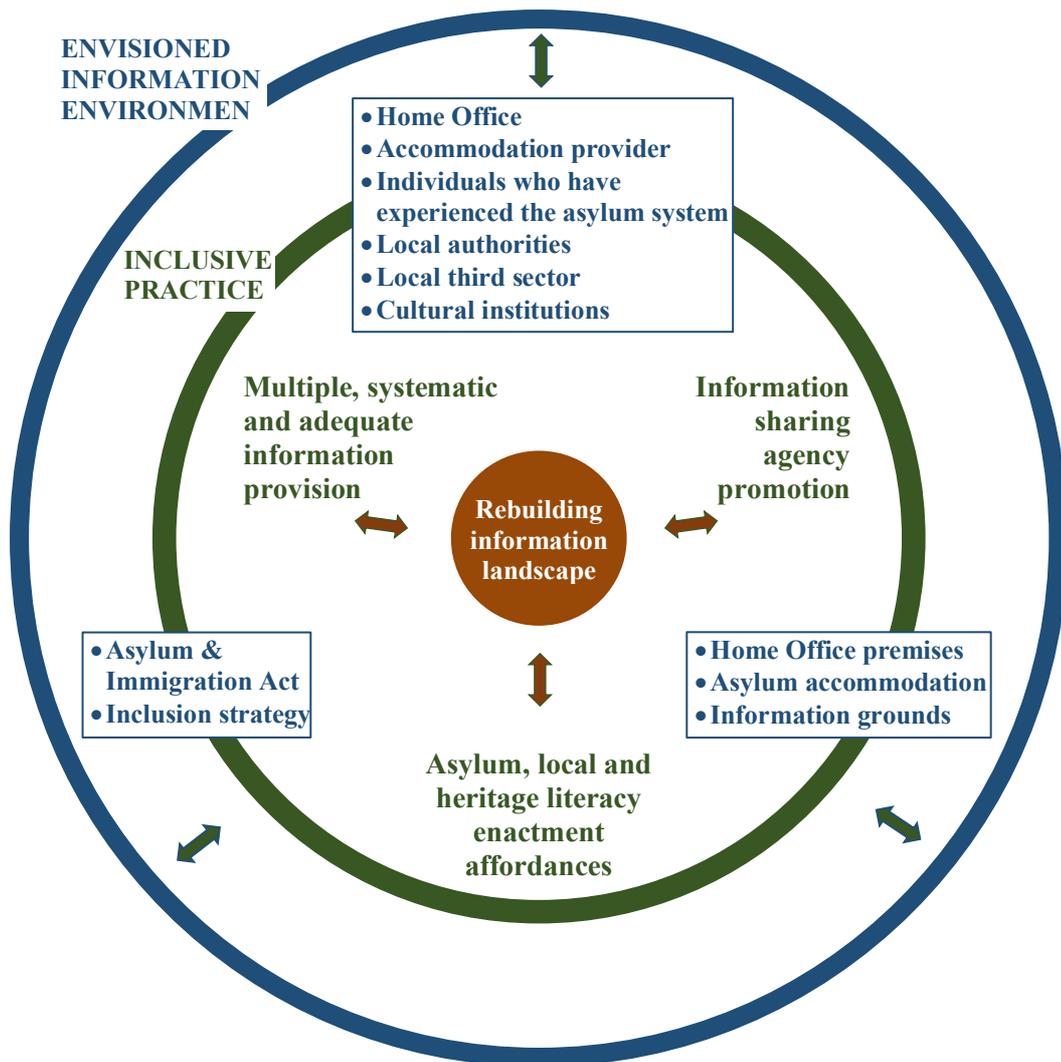


Figure 35 – Envisioned information environment and inclusive practices for people seeking asylum based on the research findings (Le Louvier)

information practice should promote information acquisition, sharing and literacy. In the following paragraphs, I detail how these processes would apply to the specific research context of Newcastle-Gateshead.

1) Multiple, systematic and adequate information provision

Asylum process

The research revealed a lack of consistency in the information provision related to the asylum process. An inclusive information practice would ensure that this information is systematically provided and include:

- Information about the proceedings and related rights and obligations of each stage of the asylum process – transfer to initial accommodation and to dispersal area, appointment with solicitor, preparation for the

substantive interview, asylum decisions, appeal procedures, fresh claim, detention, removal, leave to remain and transfer to mainstream welfare system.

- A clear timeline indicating for each of these stages.

This information should be provided at the start of the asylum process and allow claimants to know what to expect. Clear standards and procedures should be implemented to ensure that information about what, when and why changes and decisions happen are systematically and adequately communicated.

Everyday life

Access to the local information environment should be facilitated upon arrival in the dispersal area and include information about:

- How to meet basic needs (food, health, mobility, language);
- Where to find help with the asylum process (Refugee Services, legal aid);
- Where to find information grounds that allow rebuilding social capital, accessing experiential information, and finding emotional support;
- Where to engage in free enjoyable activities and find places that facilitate heritage enactments.

Textual, visual and oral information

At the time when the fieldwork was conducted, the participants in this research appeared to have received inconsistent and insufficient information from the accommodation providers upon arrival. The creation, during the last month of this research, of two initiatives that aimed at filling this gap demonstrates the crucial need for a relevant and adequate information pack. Coordination between these different initiatives appears necessary to ensure their development, efficiency and durability.

Based on these research findings, such a welcome pack should include information regarding the asylum process and everyday life, and be relevant to the specific area where people are dispersed to create a bridge between newcomers and their local information environment. It should use easy language, as well as visuals, and be translated into people's first language.

It also appears important for this printed material to be combined with oral face-to-face information. Submitting an asylum claim and being sent to an unknown city are particularly stressful events. In these conditions, textual information may be difficult to integrate properly and may lead to information avoidance or overload (Kennan & al., 2011; Martzoukou & Burnett, 2018). Human contact may therefore allow reducing distress. The preference for social sources of information is consistent with the literature (see Lloyd et al., 2013; Lloyd et al., 2017; Oduntan, 2018; Olden, 1999; Quirke, 2012; Silvio, 2006). Implemented systematically, face-to-face information would ensure that all newcomers join the local third sector information environment as soon as they arrive, and therefore avoid being isolated and falling into information gaps. Some participants regretted having received a house visit only once before being left alone in the city. To avoid this feeling of abandonment, home visits should be organised at regular intervals. Additional resources are needed to ensure that this is done systematically.

2) Information sharing agency facilitation

The research demonstrates that information sharing agency is a key tenets of information inclusion. It includes three main aspects: representation, participation and control.

Representation

The study shows that within the asylum information environment, people seeking asylum are often silenced. An inclusive practice should on the contrary ensure that people are heard. This requires the creation of direct communication channels and fair procedures that ensure that:

- Complaints regarding asylum housing conditions are taken into account and dealt with in due course;
- Asylum claims are treated with fairness and within a reasonable timeframe;
- Those who can have the option to enquire about issues related to the asylum process themselves, without needing an intermediary.

To ensure representation, it is also necessary to facilitate language learning from day one. This means allowing access to ESOL classes before six months, increasing resources for language provision, and linking newcomers to English classes and informal conversation groups provided by the third sector. More broadly, it is important to facilitate access to organisations where people's voice is valued, where members can help each other and talk about themselves without judgement, and where they can share information through different forms (e.g. different languages, body, arts, crafts).

Participation

Information sharing agency also means being able to choose where and how to express oneself. Work is the main domain that participants indicated being crucial for them to find dignity and autonomy. It therefore appears necessary for an inclusive information practice to ensure them the right to work. Opportunities to volunteer, to be actively involved in the local community and to engage in meaningful occupations also appear necessary to foster participation. This also requires being introduced to the third sector environment as early as possible.

Control

An inclusive information practice requires ensuring that people have control over the information they share and have a right to privacy. Yet, the research highlighted various instances when participants were denied privacy in different ways. Practices such as being forced to share a room without consent, having personal purchases verified by the Home Office, or being obliged to disclose one's legal status in everyday life contexts should be avoided. This means changing hostile environment policies that turn citizens into border guards, and encourage funders not to push charities and community groups to collect personal data. Indeed, in the third sector, drop-in formats appear particularly beneficial when they welcome anyone and do not require people to disclose personal information.

3) Information literacy promotion

Asylum and local information literacy fostering

For people to be included in the city, they must be able to understand the asylum process and makes sense of their new environment. An inclusive information

practice should facilitate this process. For the asylum system, this means providing intelligible information and designing coherent, systematic procedures, so that people seeking asylum have a clear information environment to navigate.

The research shows that organisations that foster information grounds facilitate access to experiential and environmental information, and consequently, to the nuanced knowledges of the local environment. These information grounds thus appear essential for newcomers to negotiate the local information literacy and rebuild their information landscapes. Yet, the research also reveals that the charities and community groups that facilitate information grounds lack resources, which makes them precarious and difficult to access. To foster an inclusive information practice, it is therefore important to ensure the sustainability of these small civil society actors. In addition to increased funding, a better coordination and cooperation between organisations could enhance their visibility, by facilitating information flows, and strengthen their capacities, by pooling resources.

A concrete area of struggle for both individuals and organisations is mobility. One of the biggest expenses that compromises the stability of these organisations in Newcastle-Gateshead is the reimbursement of the bus tickets necessary for people to take part in their activities. Collaboration on that matter may therefore be an important area of investigation for allowing local organisations to develop.

Heritage enactments affordances

Finally, an inclusive practice should ensure that people seeking asylum have opportunities to maintain a connection to their past by enacting their heritage. This means facilitating access to, and enhancing the sustainability of, charities and community groups that provide a space for people to express themselves in ways that are meaningful to them, be it through music, cooking, gardening, sharing memories, celebrating cultural festivals, or any other type of intangible heritage. Throughout the research, local cultural institutions did not appear to play an important role in the everyday life of the participants. Yet, they may also be able to provide some of these affordances and should therefore also be included as part of an inclusive information environment.

To conclude, findings from the study call for a more inclusive reception of people seeking asylum in the UK, and in particular in England, and demonstrate the role that information can play to that aim. By defining the processes of information inclusion and exclusion, it provides tools to design and implement practices that foster agency, identity and belonging, and can therefore improve the settlement experience of those seeking sanctuary.

6.5. Limitations and areas for future research

The findings of the study are subject to methodological limitations (see 2.6). This research is qualitative and sits within the interpretivist paradigm. I therefore accept that it does not represent an objective and integral reality, but a partial overview of a phenomenon, accessed and analysed through my own subjectivity, within the limitations of the timeframe and resources of a doctoral project. I followed an inductive approach, based on constructivist grounded theory. As the main findings emerged from the continual data collection and analysis process, other interesting aspects appeared that I could not investigate in details. In this section, I outline these limitations and indicate how further research could bridge these gaps and build on the findings:

1) Type of data – In this study, I do not draw a picture of both information environments from the same type of data. The local third sector information environment is analysed through interviews with people who have experienced the asylum system as well as employees and volunteers of these organisations, and is completed by participant observations conducted in these organisations. The analysis of the asylum information environment, however, is only based on interviews and discussions with people seeking asylum. This disparity is due to the inductive nature of the research and to issues of access. Observations and interviews with the Home Office and the accommodation provider were beyond the scope of this study. A different research programme is needed to provide a more nuanced picture of the information environment of the asylum system, and investigate how Home Office employees and its contractors contribute to shaping the asylum information practice.

2) Social situations – This research intends to draw a comprehensive overview of the experience of people who have resettled in Newcastle-Gateshead after seeking asylum, which is a very heterogeneous group. I therefore chose to focus the research on the asylum system and on the third sector, as information environments that are common to everyone I met on the field. However, individually, participants engage with different additional information environments that I could not explore in detail. In particular, several participants highlighted the importance of religious organisations in their settlement experience. This study gathered initial insights into their role as information grounds and as bridges between a familiar religious heritage practice and an unfamiliar environment. On-site observations and additional interviews are needed to specifically characterise their internal functioning and analyse their place within the local network of organisation working with refugees and people seeking asylum.

3) Context and transferability – This research provides a snapshot of the experience of people going through the asylum system in Newcastle-Gateshead. This conurbation has a relatively dense civil society. It is also associated to specific asylum accommodation providers, which information practices may be different to these shaped by the companies contracted in other regions. Some of the specific findings of this research may therefore not apply to other dispersal areas in the UK. A multi-sited study would shed light on the particularities and similarities in the settlement experience of people seeking asylum in different places, such as smaller towns or metropolis. This would allow refining the theory of information inclusion and exclusion and adapting it to different contexts.

4) Study population – This study is based on a limited sample group that focused on people who came to the UK via the asylum route. Further research is needed to explore the transferability of the theory of information inclusion and exclusion to other marginalised communities. Comparative research in different European countries could also allow refining these two concepts based on different asylum systems and civil society responses. The situational diagram provided in Figure 17 can be used as a comparative tool to examine the information experience of people going through different asylum systems, or of

people entering a host country via different immigration routes, such as the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme.

6.6. Concluding thoughts

This thesis started with the story of Kelemua Mulat, who was denied potentially life-saving cancer treatment because of her status as a refused asylum seeker and because the Home Office had misclassified her fresh claim. This tragic report illustrated the paradox of asylum in the UK where seeking refuge is a right, but asylum policies are increasingly hostile. This research provided further evidence of this paradox by analysing the conflicting information environments that people seeking asylum encounter when settling in England, between the exclusive practices of the asylum system and the inclusive approach of the third sector. This provided clues as to how to best develop and implement integrated practices that would shape the information environment of asylum as a sanctuary. Such practices can overcome the tension between hospitality and hostility that undermines the efficiency and adequacy of the current UK asylum system, and allow fostering social inclusion as the ultimate form of asylum.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Pilot Study - Call for Participants

Practice your English and contribute to research !

Study Essentials



Thursdays, 17:30-19:30



July 20, July 27, August 3



Verb (next to the Multilingual Library), Upper Level,
Eldon Garden, NE1 7RA



Group discussions and activities

Benefits



Practice English in a small group and improve your
speaking and listening skills



Develop your teamwork skills



Contribute to a research that aims at improving the
experience of people settling in Newcastle



Refreshments provided

Requirements



Over 18 years old



Basic command of English language



Non EU citizen

Contact

kahina.lelouvier@northumbria.ac.uk
07 544 903 840



Appendix 2: Pilot Study - Information Sheet and Consent Form



RESEARCH PROJECT INFORMATION SHEET

What is the purpose of the research?

The aim of the research is to understand how people who recently arrived in Newcastle experience the process of settling in the city in order to identify ways to facilitate this process.

Why have I been chosen?

As a person who comes from a different country and has settled in Newcastle, your knowledge and experience of the process can provide invaluable insights to the research.

Do I have to take part?

Of course not! Participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to end it at any moment. You can refuse to answer any question or to take part in any activity.

What do I have to do?

You will take part in different group activities during which you will be invited to talk about your experience of living in Newcastle. You will also be invited to take pictures that reflect different ways you interact with information in your everyday life and to discuss them with the group.

What are the benefits for me?

The activities are designed so that you can practice your English in a small group and with the help of language tutors. By taking part in the group discussions, you will develop your listening skills and improve the way you express your ideas and feelings in English.

What happens to the information I give during the group sessions?

If you agree, the sessions may be photographed and/or audio recorded. This material will be kept on Northumbria University's Computers protected by secure log-ins and will be destroyed at the end of the formal period of retention.

The written and visual materials created during the study may be shared by the researcher as part of the PhD dissertation, scientific presentations, publications in journals and conference proceedings, and reports.

Your name will be replaced by a pseudonym or a code so that no data associated with your name will be shared and published. No identifiable picture will be published or shared without your consent.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The results will be used to inform a PhD dissertation, scientific presentations, publications in journals and conference proceedings, and reports.

Contact for more information:

Kahina Le Louvier
kahina.lelouvier@northumbria.ac.uk
07 544 903 840

Appendix 3: Interview Guide Sample (Insiders)

Intro

- Can you tell me a bit more about yourself

Newcastle

- When did you arrive to the UK?
- How did you at that time?
- When did you arrive in Newcastle? Was that long after coming to the UK?
- What did you know about Newcastle before you arrived?
- Do you remember your very first day here?
 - How do you see the city now? Has your perception of the city changed?
- What did you need to know when you arrived here? What have you learned since you're here?
- Do you have a favourite place in the city?

Asylum System

- What was your experience of the asylum process?
- What kind of information did you receive and what kind of information did you need to get through this process (before the interview, after, if refused, for reporting...)
- What was missing? What could have helped you?
- What would you say to someone who just arrived in Newcastle as an asylum seeker? What advice would you give them?

Information

- If you have a problem or if you need something, what do you do? How do you find help?
- Can you describe a time when you didn't know something? Didn't know what to do?
- Can you describe a time when you were given information that was not correct? Or information that you didn't know if you could trust?
- Can you describe a time when you knew something and could help somebody else?

Culture

- What is inside you that helped you to cope with your situation?
- What's important for you in life in general? What do you value?
- Can you describe a time when you felt calm and relaxed?
- Can you describe a time when you felt happy?
- Can you describe a time when you really felt yourself?
- Can you describe a time when you didn't feel like yourself anymore?
- What does it mean for you to be at home? What do you do that makes you feel at home?
- Do you keep a link to your past, your family, your ancestors, your culture, in some ways?
- Can you describe a time when you shared aspects of your heritage or your culture with others? How did you feel?
- Have you ever felt like you could not express some aspects of your culture or your identity here?
- What do you find different in the British culture?

Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

Appendix 4: Main Study – Call for Participants

Participants needed

As part of a **research** project funded by **Northumbria University**, I am looking for people who would like to **share their experience of settling in Newcastle-Gateshead**, and of going through the **asylum process**.

If you are **over 18 years old** and want to take part in this research, I will invite you to a **conversation**, which will be:

-  **1.5h-2h** long, on the **day and time that suits you best**
-  **held** at either **Northumbria University** or on the **premises of a charity you are familiar with**
-  in **English** or in **French**
-  **supported** by a **£15 Eldon Square voucher** as a good will gesture for your time and contribution. **Reasonable travel expenses** may also be covered upon travel receipts
-  **fully anonymised**, so your name won't appear anywhere
-  **voluntary**, you can to stop it an anytime or refuse to answer any question

Please, contact me if you are interested:

Kahina Le Louvier, PhD researcher
kahina.lelouvier@northumbria.ac.uk



Appendix 5: Interview Guide Sample (Key Informants)

ORGANISATION

- Can you tell me more about your organisation and the work that you do here?
- How many people are supported and how? Did the number of people using this service vary over the last years?
- How do you work and network with other groups and organisations? How do you think this process could be further facilitated?

INFORMATION

- How do people come to learn about your service?
 - Since when do you distribute booklets via the accommodation providers? What is the impact and the reception? Is there any mistrust?
- What kind of information do people seek when coming here?
- What kind of information do you seek to provide?
 - Is there any information that you provide that people don't spontaneously ask for?
- How do you provide this information? What kind of issues do you encounter when intended to provide information?
- Do you have any example of an instance when someone going through the asylum process could not understand the information that was provided to them because it was not provided in a way that was culturally appropriate?
- Can you think of an instance when people did not trust the information they were given? Or should not have trusted it?

ASYLUM SYSTEM

- What piece of advice would you give to someone who just arrived in Newcastle as an asylum seeker?
- According to what you could hear and observe, what are the main issues that people face when they arrive in Newcastle and have to go through the asylum system?
- List of needs: what would you add? Where would you advise people to go to satisfy these needs or to find information about it?
- In your opinion, how could the reception of people seeking asylum be improved? What is missing in the city?
- How do you think that they cope with these issues?

CULTURE

- How do you think that your clients maintain a sense of identity in this process?
- In which ways do you think that people intend to maintain a link to their heritage? To which extent do you think it's important?
- Can you think of an instance when people felt like they could not express or live their culture or their personal heritage the way they wanted to?
- Is there anything else that you would like to tell me?

Appendix 6: Translated interviews – original French excerpts

- (5) Hakuna *Parce que je quittais Londres, le lendemain je suis parti à Wakefield, le lendemain je suis parti à une autre ville là, et puis le lendemain j'arrivais à Newcastle, enfin Gateshead.[...] on te fait attendre et tout. On te met dans tel hôtel, on t'emmène là-bas, on te dit t'as pas ça, on te dit.*
- (11) Claudine *J'étais à l'hôpital pour 6 mois, Home Office avait tout arrêté. On m'avait aussi chassée de la maison mais mon assistante sociale ne me l'avait pas dit. Elle avait seulement amené mes habits à l'hôpital. J'ai dit pourquoi est-ce que tu amènes mes habits à l'hôpital, moi je n'en ai pas besoin. Je n'ai pas envie de me changer, pourquoi tu m'as amené ça. Elle m'avait rien dit. [...] Maintenant seulement lorsque je m'étais rétablie on m'avait dit tu ne peux plus repartir là où tu vivais parce que your case is closed.*
- (15) Vivienne *Je connais pas la langue, je connais pas les rues, je connais les places, je connais rien, rien, rien... avec des petits enfants ! C'est comme si vous amenez un robot, alors ma tête c'était, il y avait que du vide qui entrainait et sorti. Et arrivée là-bas, par chance je suis arrivée là-bas, et la bonne dame m'a posé plus de 200 et quelques questions. Avec tout ce stress que j'ai eu depuis le matin : trouver la place, arriver à Leeds, de Newcastle à Leeds, la langue tout ça, et la bonne dame me pose plus de 200... Alors j'étais perdue. Parfois, y avait que du vide. Jusqu'à aujourd'hui, je peux dire, parfois j'ai le vide dans ma tête.*
- (18) Joann *Et j'ai attendu la réponse, jusqu'à maintenant. Jusqu'à maintenant. C'était en 2013.*
Donc ça fait 5 ans ?
5 ans, c'était 2013. Ça fait maintenant 5 ans, j'attends la réponse.
La première réponse ?
La première réponse. Parce que normalement on fait 2 interviews. Je fais la première interview, je fais la 2^e interview. [...] J'ai fait tout cela, et jusqu'à maintenant 5 ans, parce que normalement on m'a dit que dans le système d'ici si tu as fait l'interview, ça doit faire 6 mois, on doit t'apprendre s'ils acceptent ou non. Mais j'ai fait 5 ans, pas de réponse.
- (21) Hakuna *Donc c'est tout un truc et pendant tout ce temps, t'as aucune nouvelles de ta famille, tu es dans ce que mon ami Viktor Frankl qui est un grand psychologue autrichien qui a survécu les camps[...]. Il a écrit un livre, The Man's Search for Meaning, il appelle ça lui donc*

cette espèce d'existence the provisional existence, et tu te trouves en fait dans ça, où tu n'as pas de hope ou d'espoir pour demain, non tu n'en as aucun, parce que tu ne sais même pas si ça va arriver. Tu es dans une situation où en fait, les jours deviennent plus longs que les années même. [...]

Tu ne peux pas te projeter dans le futur ?

*Non, parce que il n'y a plus rien qui dépend de toi [...]
Voilà, et tu n'as aucune nouvelle de ta famille, tu n'as aucune nouvelle de toi même, t'as rien en fait.*

(22) Paulette *Moi je me rappelle, j'ai été arrêtée un jour, à l'immigration. Ils ont refusé mon dossier, refusé, refusé, mais j'ai été arrêtée. Je suis partie signer, on m'a arrêtée. Tu dois partir chez toi au pays. On m'a amené à Yarl's Wood en détention. J'ai fait 3 mois et 22 jours là-bas.*

(24) Paulette *Et je suis allée, on m'a amenée 4 fois à l'aéroport. Franchement. Franchement, on m'a amenée 4 fois. Si tu pousses, on te met les kraka, tac on me met ils s'en foutent.*

(25) Claudine *De maintenant, comme lorsque j'étais à l'hôpital j'avais tout raconté chez mon psychiatre, j'avais dit en tout cas moi, la cause de mon maladie c'est que je pense que peut être on va me refouler un jour et je pense que je vais mourir, je vais subir quelle genre de mort, donc c'est pour cela. En tout cas je n'ai pas la paix dans mon coeur. Je crains trop, je crains trop, je ne connais pas mon sort. [...]*Ben lorsque j'avais eu mon séjour, au départ, mon séjour, j'étais pas contente parce qu'on m'avait donné seulement une année. Une année. Moi quelqu'un, imagine quelqu'un qui veut vivre pour de bon dans le pays on lui donne seulement une année. Et puis mon avocat m'avait appelé, j'étais partie le voir. J'ai dit mais pourquoi on m'a donné seulement une année, c'est insignifiant. Il m'a dit, on t'a donné une année pour que seulement tu puisses te rétablir, après tu vas repartir dans ton pays. Le jour que j'étais partie voir mon avocat lorsqu'il m'avait donné cette nouvelle, je voyais seulement mieux vaut que je me suicide pour pas encore vivre. Mais c'est bien de prier parce que lorsque je repense à ma décision, si je me suicide j'irai en enfer, je n'irai jamais au paradis, mais je me dis mais pour quoi faire, parce que je me disais le comprimé que je prends je vais tout prendre en un seul moment. Que je meurs au lieu que je retourne dans mon pays, c'est mieux que je meurs ici. Je vais mourir en paix, que dans mon pays être torturée, mourir et après, on te torture d'abord et après on te tue. Mais lorsque je lisais pas la Bible, non la lutte continue, Dieu est pour moi. Si Dieu est pour moi il n'est pas contre moi. Moi j'ai dit mon Dieu va me soutenir. S'ils m'ont donné une année ils pourront

donner plus que ça. Mais malheureusement, je faisais encore trop de suicides, de maintenant avant que 1 année s'expire, j'étais encore hospitalisée.

- (26) Hakuna *En même temps tu te dis qu'ils sont en train de te tuer mentalement et ça c'est encore plus dangereux, ça demande une espèce d'élévation d'esprit pour comprendre qu'ils sont en train de te tuer mentalement. Il y a des gens qui pensent qu'ils étaient, voilà heureux, après moi ça prend du temps tu te dis putain non ils sont plus dangereux là-bas ils voulaient me tuer avec les armes, ici ils sont en train de me tuer mentalement.*
- (27) Vivienne *Ça c'est la punition anonyme. C'est comme tuer quelqu'un lentement. Pendant 10 ans, 5 ans, tu restes quelque part, tu n'as pas le droit, tu n'as pas le droit de rien.*
- (29) Hakuna *Parce que le système en lui, t'arrives déjà tu passes 4-5 mois où tu vis mais dans des condition sous-humains déjà. Tu te plains pas parce que tu te dis eux au moins ils font un effort tu vois de me donner à manger. Chez moi même on a voulu me tuer et eux ils veulent m'aider un tout petit peu.*
- (33) Vivienne *Alors la 1^{ère} adresse, j'avais refusé. On a fait des démarches vraiment énormes pour qu'on puisse réussir : on a vu le docteur, on vu les écoles, on a vu le MP... Et avec tout cette adresse et le stress, on m'a même, ce qui était grave, on a même envoyé quelqu'un chez moi. Je devais mové le jeudi, le mercredi le gars est venu chez moi, pour me convaincre d'aller seulement. Mais j'ai dit c'est pas possible monsieur. Je lui ai demandé : toi tu as des enfants ? parce que toute la maison pleurait, les enfants pleuraient, je savais pas quoi faire, tu vois. [...] Alors comme j'ai dit non, non, le monsieur est parti. Le jeudi, ils ont envoyé le message comme si on a annulé. Et on est resté. Et l'enfant a commencé l'examen de GCSE. Subitement comme ça, un jour en rentrant de la maison, j'ai retrouvé encore la lettre, c'était un mois seulement, ils nous ont envoyé encore la lettre il faut toujours mover. [...]Le jour ou le monsieur est venu nous prendre, je lui ai expliqué je lui ai dit écoute, y a les enfants qui font l'examen, si vous pouvez nous laisser jusqu'à ce que les enfants terminent l'examen et après l'examen, on va partir là où vous voulez. Le monsieur a eu pitié de nous. Il a appelé l'office. Quand il a appelé l'office, j'ai entendu la voix d'une femme qui grondait dans le téléphone et disait « non, non non ! D'abord on les a dit de partir ils ont dit non, tu dois partir, tu dois partir ». Elle commençait à crier dans le téléphone. Y a même ma fille qui pleurait. Ma fille est venue me tenir la main. Elle m'a dit maman laisse seulement, on part seulement. C'était vraiment comme dit les anglais sadness. J'ai regardé le monsieur,*

j'ai dit ok ça va.

- (37) Claudine *Ce n'est pas facile, non c'est très dur, et surtout lorsque tu parles on ne te croit pas. On ne te croit pas, on rejette ton dossier comme le mien, on avait rejeté, on avait rejeté. Ils ne me croyaient pas mais je ne sais pas comment les gens doivent faire pour prouver qu'ils ont été torturés dans leur pays, je ne sais pas. Je ne sais pas donc, c'est très dur. C'est ça aussi qui m'avait rendu malade, trop de rejet [...]. Je n'avais pas de preuve, c'est seulement ce que je disais, je n'avais rien amené de chez moi, puisque j'avais quitté mon pays en catastrophe. Même l'acte de naissance je n'en avais pas, donc c'était très dur.[...] Retourne dans ton pays, on ne te croit pas, tu mens. Les lettres qu'on m'a envoyées, retourne dans ton pays, tu mens.*
- (40) Vivienne *Après avec l'avocat comme ça des années, des années, on a refusé, on a refusé. Pourquoi ? C'est toujours l'interprète, différent interprète, différent message. [...] Vous rencontrez jamais l'Home Office, seulement l'avocat. L'avocat change d'interprète comme on change des habits. Et l'interprète qui est là, il te dit des choses que toi tu entends dans tes oreilles vrai ou faux. Ce que lui peut dire, ce que lui aussi a entendu.*
- (42) Hakuna *Quand je suis arrivé je parlais pas très bien anglais, j'ai trouvé une interprète. La pauvre elle faisait un effort de m'aider, après elle interprétait comme elle comprenait, donc il y a forcément un perte d'originalité ou encore de vraiment meaning d'une langue à une autre. Et ça ça fait qu'il y a eu des misunderstanding entre la juge et ce que l'interprète donnait. Et quand ça arrivait moi j'ai compris mais moi j'avais bien dit ça, mais quand tu dis ça en français, en anglais ça se traduit comme ça, bah elle comme ça en anglais ça veut dire ça, bah ça a tout faussé le système, et la meuf elle a dit non. J'avais le choix soit je me fâchais contre elle soit je me fâchais contre l'interprète, j'ai choisi de me fâcher contre moi-même, parce que je me suis dit si j'avais moi up mon game et parlé la langue moi même, je n'aurais pas eu besoin d'elle. Et elle aurait pas fait cette erreur.*
- (44) Hakuna *J'arrive j'ai envie d'apprendre on te dit non tu peux pas, tu peux pas apprendre la langue c'est impossible il faut que tu aies un minimum de 6 mois. Vous êtes fou vous, pendant 6 mois je communique comment avec les gens ? En fait quand tu y passes, quand tu y réfléchis, c'est leur façon que vous met donc cette espèce d'embrouille avec les interprètes et tout ça leur donne toujours le droit de leur dire non parce qu'il y a eu, tu vois le sens is just lost in translation. Ils le font exprès je me dis, enfin après moi je sais pas, mais je me dis qu'ils le font exprès parce que quelqu'un qui réfléchit et qui veut faire avancer les choses bah ça c'est quelque chose très*

rapidement il les découvre, no brain, t'as pas besoin d'être un génie pour comprendre que ça, si tu fais ça ça va donner ça.

(47) Hakuna *Ok je peux pas travailler, qu'est-ce que tu me donnes en échange. On te donne £35 par semaine. Bon par contre t'as £35 par semaine, tu peux pas travailler, tu peux pas faire ceci, tu peux pas faire cela.*

(51) Hakuna *Moi je trouve que c'est plus digne, comme ça la personne au moins elle essaye de se débrouiller elle-même. Parce que comme disait, comment tu l'appelles cet écrivain, celui qui a écrit le Boulanger, j'ai oublié son nom, mais de toute façon il disait que le travail libère l'homme, le travail nous écarte des trois vices tu vois, l'ennui, et puis je sais pas comment il disait ça, le vol, parce que au moins tu travailles ça te donne une certaine dignité.*

(52) Vivienne *Oui ça fait 8 ans je ne travaille pas. Je ne fais rien que le Collège. Tu vois même le Collège là que je suis partie, j'ai récolté beaucoup de certificats mais il y a un niveau que tu ne peux pas dépasser. Mais ça ce n'est pas la liberté tu vois. [...] Aujourd'hui je peux dire, je ne connais pas les laptops, je ne connais pas internet, à cause du système, parce que ma tête aujourd'hui c'est parti. Parfois je commence à oublier des choses. Parfois si je fais des choses à l'internet, je vais toujours appel aux enfants. Et pourtant l'année que je suis venue je pouvais peut être faire du bien, je pouvais peut être contribuer aussi au société, je pouvais payer mes taxes, contribuer. Mais tout ça c'est passé. On te dit non tu fais rien, reste là. Mais ça c'est tuer quelqu'un anonymement. Aujourd'hui je suis devenue nulle. Je ne peux pas travailler. Tout ce que j'avais comme bagage intellectuel c'est parti. C'est parti.*

(55) Hakuna *T'as vu la carte que j'ai là ? Ils mettent £30 à l'intérieur, semaine, mais ces £30 là je peux pas acheter les trucs comme je veux non, je peux pas retirer l'argent, c'est pas possible, tu ne peux que aller acheter des trucs directement. Et là j'étais surpris que c'était passé ici.*

Tu peux payer que directement tu peux pas retirer ?

Voilà, et ça dépend d'où tu vas, parce qu'à des shops je vais et ça peut pas passer. Donc il y a des jours tu te retrouves coincé, c'est le seul shop qu'il y a mais tu peux pas. Bon tu fais quoi dans ce cas là ? Tu fais quoi dans ce cas là ? Je peux pas acheter de billet de train avec, je peux pas, ça passe pas. [...] Genre ils contrôlent tout. Ma carte je ne sais pas ce qu'il s'est passé elle se bloque je les appelle ils me disent qu'est-ce qu'il c'est passé ces mercredi, tu as encore £20 dans ton compte. Genre c'est toi qui me dit quand je dois utiliser mon argent et ce que je dois acheter tu vois.

- (57) Hakuna *Tu vois les £35 tu vas les prendre au Post Office. C'est pas genre on te donne une carte tu peux retirer, non, tu dois aller au Post Office, donc tu dois faire la queue, donc tu fais la queue et tu viens tu te présentes. Le mec qui te reçoit ou la meuf qui te reçoit elle te regarde avec un dédain parce qu'elle assume que tu es en train de bouffer l'argent des tax payers. Elle se rend pas forcément compte, elle pense toi tu serres à rien, tu travailles pas, tu viens ici chaque lundi, vous venez prendre les £35 gratuit. La meuf elle a aucune idée de toi ce que tu vis, et que £35 ça veut rien dire.*
- (62) Hakuna *Vous nous dites vous ne pouvez pas travailler et tout, mais vous êtes surpris que les gens ils vont travailler dans le noir. La logique elle est où là ? Vous perdez en termes de millions là parce que tous ces gens que je connais qui travaillent, maintenant ils paient pas les taxes, ok? Ils se font... mais ils travaillent pour des trucs minables, mais celui qui ce fait des sous c'est qui ? Le mec qui les embauche, il se fait énormément de sous. Qui est en train de perdre ? L'état.*
- (63) Vivienne *Mais comment pouvez ne pas croire quelqu'un qui vient de loin ? Est-ce que vous vivez là-bas ? Et vous savez très bien pourquoi je suis ici. Ils savent bien que tous nos dirigeants sont des corrompus, tu vois.[...] Mais ici vous nous punissez parce que vous dites que vous mentez, parce que ceux qui sont restés là-bas ils disent non elle là elle ment. Non ! Non ! Non ! Parce que si on était bien on allé pas venir ici. On allait rester là-bas.*
- (64) Hakuna *Mais moi j'ai fait presque tout le système en fait. Je suis parti de demandeur d'asile on a dit non, puis là ce qu'on appelle le fresh claim tu vois. Mais pendant que tu fais ça tu te retrouves dans des situations où les mecs ils te disent écoute nous on veut bien t'aider mais là on peut plus t'aider. Par contre faut que tu rentres chez toi, si tu veux. Ok, je veux rentrer chez moi alors comment ça se fait ? Bah par contre nous on a vérifié on peut pas te renvoyer chez toi, y a pas moyen de te renvoyer chez toi, donc là faut que tu te débrouilles.*
On t'a dit ça ?
Bah ouais, parce que c'est trop dangereux, parce que j'ai un arrêt, un mandat d'arrêt contre moi. Je peux pas rentrer sinon je vais être emprisonné. Ok elle est où la logique là ? Si tu me donnes la possibilité de vivre et de vivre pour moi-même, comme ça je suis plus à ta charge, soit tu me renvoies. Bah non on peut pas. Et là tu te retrouves dans la rue, seul, t'as pas d'argent, t'as pas où dormir et tout, et là tu apprends à survivre.
- (67) Hakuna *Tu ne peux pas savoir c'est choses là si tu n'es pas un asylum seeker, c'est pas possible. Tu peux avoir une*

idée de ce que c'est, mais tant que tu n'es pas dans ce truc vraiment tu ne peux pas savoir de quoi je parle. [...]

Alors du coup qu'est-ce que tu dirais, quels conseils tu donnerais à quelqu'un qui vient juste d'arriver ici à Newcastle-Gateshead et qui se retrouve dans ce système ?

C'est lui dire cousin tu es arrivé en enfer, et là c'est ton choix maintenant de le rendre vraiment un vrai enfer ou de mettre les conditions qui te permettent de enjoy au moins l'enfer dans lequel tu es. [...] Oublie ce que tu étais chez toi au pays. Oublie comment les gens ils te regardaient chez toi au pays. Regarde l'environnement que tu as. Essaie de t'adapter. [...] N'attends rien de qui que ce soit. Même pas du gars du gouvernement, même pas du Home Office, n'attends rien d'eux. Tu vas être déçu toute ta vie. Tu vas aller sur leur site ils vont te dire within two weeks on va te donner la réponse, et toi tu es là genre ouais super. Tu vas attendre 3-5 mois la réponse elle arrive pas, tu vas être déçu. Ça sert à rien, n'attends rien. N'expect nothing you know. Expect nothing from no one. Expect everything from yourself.

(68) Hakuna

Quand tu arrives, parce que tu parles pas trop bien la langue, bon le mec déjà qui te reçoit il pense que tu es bête[...] On ne va pas aller mesurer l'intelligence d'un poisson à sa capacité à grimper un arbre. [...] J'ai subi ça il y a pas plus longtemps en plus, parce que quand j'appelle je me suis présenté dans leur truc ça apparaît asylum seeker donc normal il est bête, il connaît pas l'anglais, il sert à rien tu vois. Et la meuf elle me parle mal et là je lui ai parlé l'anglais normalement, je l'ai remise à sa place et tout. Et là elle a dû oublier de mettre son truc sur mute parce qu'elle a dit à sa collègue oh non mais lui en fait il parle anglais, genre elle était choquée, tu vois, elle était choquée. Tu as un traitement qu'on te donne de ouf, de malade, juste parce que il y a ça marqué sur ton visage.

(69) Paulette

Et un jour je me rappelle il y a un type là-bas, qui travaillait là-bas, ils m'ont donné une chambre, il n'y avait pas de chauffage. Mais il faisait froid, c'était au mois d'octobre, novembre et décembre. Il faisait froid là-bas. Je suis allée maintenant demander au type, vous pouvez me donner la chambre aussi il faisait très froid là-bas. Et il m'a posé la question, pourquoi est-ce que t'es venu en Angleterre ? [...] Tu savais que ici il fait froid, pourquoi tu es venue ? Mais pourquoi vous avez mis le chauffage ? Est-ce que c'est moi qui vous ai demandé de mettre le chauffage ? Parce que vous savez que l'on va utiliser ça à tel moment, tel moment. Oh non, non, personne ne t'a demandé de venir ici. Si tu as froid il faut rentrer chez toi.

(70) Vivienne

Je me rappelle un jour aussi parce que j'ai signé à

l'immigration, alors c'était seulement si tu viens tu pars signer l'heure qu'on a écrit dans le papier, il faut respecter l'heure. Alors un jour comme il neigeait, je suis entrée je crois 10 minutes ou 15 minutes avant, le monsieur m'a fait dehors ma chère[...]. Même s'il pleut tu dois attendre dehors. Même les vieilles personnes, les enfants. [...] Il s'en fout. Ma chère, alors je suis sortie encore, j'ai pleuré.

(71) Hakuna

Quand je suis dans les milieux sociaux avec toutes les personnes que je rencontre je leur dis jamais que je suis un asylum seeker parce que ça ça fait genre ça bloque déjà la relation que tu vas avoir avec la personne [...]. Mais au début je le faisais, je disais et j'ai vite remarqué que ça changé la relation et le regard que les gens avaient sur moi. Moi j'ai pas envie que les gens que regardent avec un regard de pitié moi je veux pas inspirer la pitié non. Je sais pas je m'en fous, ma vie elle est difficile mais c'est ma vie, j'ai pas envie que les gens se sentent genre sorry for me, comment on dit ça, qu'ils aient de la pitié pour moi, j'aime pas inspirer la pitié. Non, c'est pourquoi je dis jamais ça. Mais ça parce que le système, parce que la façon dont on nous traite, et encore ça revient à ce que je disais au début, il faut qu'on spread l'information pour que les gens comprennent. Quand les gens ils comprennent mieux, leur approche elle change. Voilà. C'est ça.

(73) Hakuna

C'était une nouvelle expérience dans ce sens que ça te, ça te break down tu vois, ça te ramène à un niveau où tu te dis, putain mais moi je pensais que j'étais à tel niveau, mais en fait j'étais pas, donc ça te donne un peu du recul par rapport à comment tu t'es toujours vu, comment tu t'es toujours estimé et tout. [...] je pars d'une situation où chez moi j'ai tout, j'ai une famille, j'ai un chez moi, j'ai un boulot, j'ai une organisation où les gens ils t'appellent président tu vois, j'ai une certaine estime, à un niveau où en fait t'es rien, t'es zéro, nothing, tu es zéro.

(74) Hakuna

Les hommes de manière générale, comme le disait Jean-Jacques Rousseau, ils sont nés bons. C'est la société qui les corrompt en fait. Parce que toi tu sais que t'es un mec normalement bien mais ta situation te rend mauvais. Tu commences à faire des choses où dans les conditions tu ne les aurais pas fait. Et on s'étonne que tu fasses ça. Tu peux pas t'étonner, c'est vous qui m'avez mis dans cette situation, je sais pas où dormir, je sais pas quoi manger, qu'est-ce que je fais ? Bah je vole. Tu développes ça naturellement, c'est à dire que du jour au lendemain tu te réveilles, tu te rends compte que tu as pris un sandwich à Tesco sans payer. Tu vois, mais tu l'as mangé déjà tu commences à penser un peu putain qu'est-ce que j'ai fait. Et je te dis bah c'était une question de survie, c'était soit je mangeais soit je

mourrais.

- (79) Vivienne *Le collège, c'est les classes, c'est vraiment l'école bien structurée comme ça. Mais là bas, il vient avec lui ce qu'il trouve que c'est bon pour lui et c'est bien pour nous parce que nous on apprend.*
- (84) Vivienne *Ce qui m'aide, c'est sortir dehors, allez dans des différents charités, rencontrer des gens, causer. On s'est familiarisé avec des gens qu'on a trouvé ici. C'est tout ! Sinon, j'allais être folle. Restée à la maison avec tous ces problèmes que je t'ai dit, peut être aujourd'hui, je ne serais pas en face de toi et parler. Ma tête allait partir.*
- (86) Claudine *J'avais intégré le groupe du Comfrey Project en, j'étais arrivée en 2007 [...] c'est bien, ça me défoule. [...]*
- (87) Vivienne *Ici on vient seulement pour se détendre. [...] J'aime le Comfrey Project parce que à chaque je suis venue ici c'est comme une famille. Je trouve les gens que j'aime. On cause, on rit, on rencontre, on prépare, on fait tout. L'essentiel que la journée passe. Quand je vais rentrer, les enfants seront rentrés et c'est tout ! La journée est finie. C'est pour ça que je suis là au Comfrey Project mais si je ne sais pas comment faire le jardinage mais j'aime seulement l'environnement. J'aime les gens que j'ai rencontré. Qu'est ce qu'on cause, comment est ce qu'on fait, comment est ce qu'on vit. C'est tout! C'est comme une seconde maison.*
- (92) Claudine *Parce que je rencontre des gens, on cause, nous passons le temps ensemble, on mange ensemble, mais à la maison je suis toute seule. Je suis toute seule, je m'ennuie.*
- (104) Hakuna *Maintenant je suis un peu imprégné du système [...] je connais où aller, qui il faut voir, j'ai les contacts aussi.*
- (106) Vivienne *Qu'est ce que vous diriez à quelqu'un qui vient juste d'arriver à Newcastle? [...]*
Je vais lui dire que c'est un coin tranquille. Y a pas vraiment de crimes comme on entend à Londres. C'est vraiment un coin tranquille surtout pour les enfants. Y a beaucoup de gens, faut pas être seul. Y a beaucoup d'endroits si tu as besoin de quelque chose, l'aide comme j'ai dit l'aide c'est pas seulement financier. De l'aide y en a, je peux lui montrer. J'ai toujours fait ça. Y a 2 Refugee [centres] à Newcastle petit Refugee à Benwell et grand refuge en ville. Si tu as le temps, il y a aussi les places où tu peux prendre le food bank. Comme aussi l'asylum on donne aussi le petit argent. Tu peux aller en ville, si tu as envie, si tu veux cette basket, cette jupe, ce pantalon, mais comme tu n'as pas l'argent, peut être si tu vas à food bank, tu prends un peu la nourriture, ça va t'aider à économiser l'argent pour

acheter les choses que tu veux. Je te montre les endroits que tu peux aller pour avoir la nourriture for free. Ça ça peut t'aider pour économiser l'argent. Je vais l'aider comme ça et le montrer aussi aux amis « regarde, celui là c'est le nouveau venu ».

⁽¹⁰⁷⁾Vivienne *C'est un groupe que j'ai créé à partir de moi même, de mon histoire. Comme tu vois le titre le cri du silence. Comme j'ai parfois j'ai crié en silence. Personne n'entendait mais je souffrais. Comme j'ai dit, quand je vois des gens, je souris, je cause, je parle pas mon problème mais j'ai ça en moi. Personne ne comprend. Si je parle pas tu vois.. c'est comme ça que j'ai dit si moi je souffre comme ça, moi peut dire que peut être je suis différente, parce que Dieu m'a créée un peu différent, que je suis vraiment courageuse. Je m'intègre facilement mais y a beaucoup de gens qui ne s'intègrent pas facilement. Ils sont un peu, je peux dire lourd mais ils souffrent dans le silence aussi. Ils ont besoin de toi et moi. Si on pouvait trouver ces gens là, les aider. [...] C'est pas l'argent qui fait le bonheur, c'est avoir des gens, sourire, partager avec les gens, communiquer, aimer les gens. C'est comme ça qu'on a fait le cri du silence. Si on peut s'aider d'abord avec tous les gens que je rencontre.*

⁽¹²¹⁾Vivienne *Si tu veux aider quelqu'un, aide-lui. Faut pas l'aider avec deux faces.*

Appendix 7: Main Study – Information Sheet and Consent Form



**Northumbria
University**
NEWCASTLE

Participant Information

Research Project 'Investigating the Information and Heritage Practices of Refugees and People Seeking Asylum in the Local Community'

What is the purpose of the research?

The purpose of this research is to document and better understand the experience of people who are going through the asylum system in Newcastle-Gateshead, in order to identify the difficulties that they face and how they cope with them.

Why have I been chosen?

As a person who has been through the asylum process and lives in Newcastle-Gateshead, your first-hand knowledge of this experience can provide invaluable insights to the research.

Do I have to take part?

Of course not! Participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to end it at any moment. You can refuse to answer any question or to take part in any activity.

What do I have to do?

You will be invited to discuss your experience of living in Newcastle, the different types of information you needed when you arrived and still need now, how the asylum process influence your everyday life and how you maintain a connection to your past and heritage in this new environment. The length of the session will be agreed with you. With your consent, the interview may be audio-recorded.

Will the information I provide be kept confidential and anonymous?

Your name will not be written on any of the data we collect. Your name will be replaced by a pseudonym or a code so that no data associated with your name will be shared and published. The consent form you have signed will be stored separately from your other data.

What will the information I provide be used for?

Findings might be reported in a Ph.D. dissertation, scientific journals or presented at a research conference, however the data will be anonymized and you or the data you have provided will not be personally identifiable. We can provide you with a summary of the findings from the study if you email the researcher at the address listed below.

How will my data be stored?

All paper data, including the typed up transcripts from your interview and your consent forms will be kept in locked storage. All electronic data; including the recordings from your interview, will be stored on the University U drive, which is password protected. All data will be stored in accordance with University guidelines and GDPR.

What are my rights as a participant?

You have the right to:

- request a copy of the information comprised in your personal data;
- have inaccurate personal data rectified;
- object to decisions being taken by automated means;
- complain to the Information Commissioner's Office if you are dissatisfied with the University's processing of personal data.

Contact for further Information

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