Internal Borders, Bordering Processes and Intersectionality as Lived Experiences – A Case Study of Refugee Women in Switzerland

GEO 511 Master's Thesis

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Abstract

The so-called refugee crisis of 2015 led to significant challenges for both host countries and for refugees themselves, including limited access to basic necessities such as food, shelter, and healthcare, as well as legal and social discrimination. Additionally, several researchers have noted an increasing securitization of migration in Europe, which has led to individuals in need of protection being progressively seen as a security threat. Governments have used this portrayal of migration as a security problem to legitimize harsh control regimes, including legal detention of migrants and refugees and mechanisms of exclusion. Even after passing the territorial borders of Switzerland, individuals categorised as asylum seekers continue to experience bordering processes. This master's thesis explores the experiences of refugee women in Switzerland, focusing on their challenges and difficulties related to intersectionality and bordering processes. Based on the narratives of four refugee women who were interviewed to understand their perspectives on these issues, this thesis argues that the intersectionality of refugee women is highly impacted by them being refugees. Intersectionality is socially, spatially and temporally embedded in specific contexts and identifications as well as disidentifications occur simultaneously. Further, the intersectionality of refugee women is characterised by the fluidity and complexity of identities and the dominant social systems in place often determine whether they are included or excluded from certain spaces. Therefore, this master's thesis asserts that the dominant spatial orderings that lead to the exclusion and discrimination of refugee women manifest in the internal borders and bordering processes that refugee women face on an everyday basis. As the presented empirical material clearly illustrates, this results in experiences of non-belonging, of social and economic pressure, of being a lower class refugee, of guilt towards their children, of uncertainty and of being defencelessly dependent.

Keywords

Internal Borders, Bordering Processes, Intersectionality, Refugee Women, Feminist Geography, Critical Border Studies, Asylum, Switzerland

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Abbreviations

AOZ	Asylorganisation Zürich
AsylA	Asylum Act of 26 June 1998
BAZ	Bundesasylzentrum (Federal asylum center)
CEAS	Common European Asylum System
EASO	European Asylum Support Office
EU	European Union
EURODAC	European Dactyloscopy
EUROPOL	European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation
EUROJUST	European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation
FNIA	Federal Act on Foreign Nationals and Integration
FRONTEX	European Border and Coast Guard Agency
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OFF	Ort für Frauen
SAB	Students Across Borders
SEM	State Secretariat for Migration
SFH	Schweizerische Flüchtlingshilfe (Swiss Refugee Council)
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

1 Introduction

European Governments today are faced with a significant challenge in how to manage and control the influx of refugees seeking asylum. As of 2021, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that there are over 89 million people globally who have been displaced from their homes, with 4.6 million seeking asylum and 27 million recognised as refugees (UNHCR, 2021a). In the summer of 2015, there were 1'216'860 first-time asylum applications in EU member states (Eurostat, 2022). The European Union is obligated to adhere to the legal framework regarding Human Rights and the Geneva Convention of Refugees (European Union, 2016). The 1951 Refugee Convention states that refugees should not be sent back to a country where they may be in danger or face persecution. The principle of non-refoulment, which is a key aspect of the Convention, protects refugees from being returned to such situations (Joly, 1996: 5). Therefore, European Governments are compelled to protect refugees from persecution (UNHCR, 2021b).

However, migration policies are not always implemented in a way that respects the rights and freedoms of refugees. While the number of applications has decreased since 2015, there is an increasing mistrust towards refugees in Europe and as a result, European governments have increasingly portrayed and treated migration as a security problem, legitimizing the use of harsh control measures such as legal detention and mechanisms of exclusion (Gilbert, 2009). Borders and bordering processes play a significant role in regulating migration flows and shaping the experiences of migrants and refugees. In Europe, these measures are used not only at territorial borders, but also within nation states through the use of internal borders. According to Basaran (2008), these borders are often employed strategically to manipulate the balance between security and liberties, and can be used to differentiate between different groups of people and make decisions about who is included and excluded from certain legal rights and procedures.

As a result of these processes, asylum seekers are subject to restrictive asylum policies and thorough asylum hearings in which their credibility and the plausibility of their narratives are closely scrutinised (Shuman & Bohmer, 2012; Fassin & Kobelinsky, 2012; Kagan, 2015). European countries have also developed discourses linking immigration to crime and

portraying undocumented migrants as illegal, undeserving of the same political, social, and cultural rights as citizens (Fabini, 2017; Basaran, 2008). These discourses serve to further marginalize and discriminate against certain populations, making it more difficult for them to access their rights and protections.

Refugee women face unique challenges and vulnerabilities in their experiences of displacement and seeking asylum (Freedman, 2016; Oliver, 2017; Pangas et al., 2019). They experience intersecting effects of race, gender, class, and nationality which result in different forms of discrimination and oppression. Additionally, they are exposed to sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) and trauma before, during, and after their flight from their home countries (Asaf, 2017; Charles & Denman, 2013; Chossière, 2021), and also face gender based discrimination and violence in their host communities (Valentine, 2007; Mollett & Faria, 2018).

Researchers have studied the challenges faced by refugee women worldwide. Some studies, such as Freedman (2016) draw attention to the sexual and gender based violence refugee women experience in Europe. Other studies such as Charles & Denman (2013) have focused on the special plight of refugee women in countries such as Syria, Palestine and Lebanon, especially discussing children's access to education in Lebanon as well as the violence refugee women and children are exposed to. Further, Asaf (2017) has addressed the shift in gender roles refugee women experience as a result of fleeing. Researchers such as Valentine (2007) and Mollett & Faria (2018) have emphasised the importance of the concept of intersectionality and of the spatialities of intersectionality especially for feminist geography. Nonetheless, I did not find studies that address the intersectionality of refugee women and the impacts of bordering processes on their lived experiences.

This master's thesis focuses on the lived experiences of four refugee women who have applied for asylum in Switzerland and have received a decision on their application. I intend to understand the lived experiences of my research participants through the lens of critical border studies as well as feminist geography. For that purpose I make use of the concept of intersectionality in order to understand how the experience of bordering processes shapes different identity positions of refugee women and on the other hand how these different identity positions translate into discrimination or practices of inclusion and exclusion. Therefore, I

attempt to understand the intersectionality of refugee women while also exploring different non-territorial bordering processes in Switzerland. Hereby I follow scholars such as Basaran (2008), Mezzadra & Neilson (2013), Pickering & Weber (2006) or Fabini 2019, which engage with critical border studies. Along the same lines as these scholars, I view borders as embedded in social cultural and legal frameworks as opposed to as only geographically fixed entities. Further, I follow Gill Valentine (2007), McDowell (1992), and Mollett & Faria (2018) to explore the significance of space in subject formation, especially for women who have had to forcefully leave their countries of origin. Because the intersectionality of my participants is highly influenced not only by their gender but also by them being refugees, I stress the impact of internal borders and bordering processes on the subject formation. I address the following research questions:

> **What are the internal borders and bordering processes that refugee women experience in Switzerland, and how do these shape their lives?**

> **How do refugee women in Switzerland experience intersectionality?**

I argue that intersectionality plays a role in the asylum experience of my participants, both during the asylum procedure in Switzerland and in their lives after receiving a decision. Their experience of gender and being refugees as well as the changing legal, economic, social and cultural circumstances of their lives influence different identifications and disidentifications. They all applied for asylum in Switzerland and have been spatially and temporally detained and thus geographically and socially isolated. Further they have all had to, or still have to, live with a very limited set of rights. These, as well as other non-territorial bordering processes, shaped the spatial and temporal contexts in which my participants lived and experienced their subject positions in Switzerland, influencing the ways in which they invested in or rejected these positions. Therefore, I argue, that the intersection of different identity positions of refugee women translates into discrimination and practices of inclusion and exclusion.

1.1 Outline

This master's thesis is structured as follows. First the Common European asylum system (CEAS) will be introduced. I present the Schengen and Dublin Agreements as well as the Hotspot Approach and further discuss the increasing securitization of migration in Europe. This helps to better illustrate the embedding of Switzerland in the legal framework of the European Asylum Approach. After having introduced the CEAS along with some key elements, I focus on the Swiss Asylum System. The legislative framework of the Swiss Asylum System will be introduced as well as the asylum process. Further, I address the different residence permits asylum seekers receive after the asylum process. Afterward, the conceptualization of borders, borderlands and frontiers will be discussed. I attend to the way in which the conceptualization of borders and bordering has shifted from a territorial understanding of borders to a more cultural dimension of bordering. I then address the research gap by theoretically underpinning internal borders, intersectionality, sexual and gender based violence and gender roles. This leads me to my research questions. The next chapter of my research focuses on the methodology and design of my study. I will discuss the factors that influenced my approach and the limitations of my method. I will then present the results of my fieldwork, including a general overview of the specific bordering processes my research partners experienced and four narratives of intersectionality as lived experiences. In the discussion section, I will connect the results of my fieldwork to the scientific framework outlined in the previous chapters and address my research questions. Finally, I will summarize my findings, highlight their scientific contribution, and suggest potential areas for future research.

2 Context and Scientific Embedding

The following chapter provides a scientific embedding and therefore the contextual framework for the topic of this master's thesis in order to gain a better understanding of the research field. I will first give a short introduction to the European Asylum System in order to then highlight Switzerland's Asylum System as well as its special role within the European Union. I give an overview of the legal framework of the Swiss Asylum System, including the revision which came into force in March 2019. I go on to explain the asylum procedure in Switzerland and how it changed since the revision. Lastly, I introduce the different residence permits asylum seekers in Switzerland may receive based on their asylum decision.

2.1 The Common European Asylum System

The Common European Asylum System has been described and analysed into detail many times before (see e.g.: Fabini, 2017; Kreichauf, 2018; Kaufmann, 2021). However, I considered it to be beneficial for the understanding of this thesis to reiterate the main points regarding the Common European Asylum System and keywords, such as the Schengen and Dublin Agreements as well as the Hotspot Approach implemented in Europe after the so-called refugee crisis of 2015 (I will explain later why I refer to the refugee crisis as so-called). Further, for the later debate on internal borders in Switzerland, it is important to understand the increasingly securitised migration agenda in Europe and Switzerland.

The European Union features an extensive legal frame concerned with migration and asylum policies. Embedded in various agreements such as the Schengen and Dublin Agreements, the asylum system in the EU aims at guaranteeing a fair, non-violent asylum procedure. The Schengen Agreement involves the removal of internal borders within Europe, a unified visa policy for the region, and the use of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency Frontex to repressively protect the external borders of Europe (Schilliger, 2016). While 26 countries of the 27 states of the European Union have signed the Schengen agreement, 31 countries are part of the Dublin Agreement. The Dublin Agreement ensures the responsibility for the asylum application and the subsequent accommodation, care and integration of the asylum seeker to lie with the state that allowed the refugee to enter the Schengen Area for the first time (SEM,

2019f). Asylum seekers are only allowed to submit an application once within the EU or the associated countries and are therefore usually returned to the country of first asylum using a Dublin procedure (one chance rule/rule of first entry). This regulation is meant to prevent overburdening due to multiple asylum applications in different Schengen states. However, the Dublin regulation also puts a lot of pressure on countries located at the external borders of the Schengen Area such as Greece, Italy or Spain (Kasparek, 2016; Craig & Zwaan, 2019: 31).

The so-called "refugee/migrant crisis" has led to an increased focus on border security as a top priority on the EU's strategic agenda (Dempsey, 2020; Walters, 2006). While on the one hand, there is pressure for a globalised and most importantly borderless world, allowing it for capital and material goods as well as work force to flow uninhibited, on the other hand the securitization discourse and especially the rationalization of issues as security related threats is becoming more prominent (Papoutsi et al., 2019: 2206). Migration has been increasingly rationalised as a security problem, legitimizing harsh control regimes, legal detention of migrants and mechanisms of exclusion (Gilbert, 2009: 26-28). The year 2015 marks an important year for the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), as in 2015 Europe faced the so-called "refugee/migrant crisis", when 1.3 million first-time applications for international protection were submitted in the 28 EU member states (Wagner et al., 2016: 14). During the "refugee/migrant crisis", the CEAS was seriously challenged and the system proved to be rather inefficient for high migratory pressure. It became very visible how the system lacked a mechanism for the fair sharing of the responsibility of asylum claims among the European Member States. The term "refugee/migrant crisis" has been highly criticised. Scholars argue for the term to rather refer to a crisis of control of the European border and migration regime as to a migration crisis. Further, the term crisis indicates a temporal period, a time of instability, which however is suggested to settle in again (Hess & Kasparek, 2017).

In recent years, especially since 2015, additional measures were introduced in the Common European Asylum System, in order to deal with the refugee crisis. The Eurodac database and particularly the Hotspot Approach are two examples (Pollozek & Passoth, 2019). The Hotspot Approach was introduced in the European Agenda on Migration in May 2015. It was thought as a measure of alleviating migratory pressure on the EU due to the suddenly increasing number of refugees. It is a way of externalizing the European borders and European border control to the very geographical edges of the European Union. The aim is to control the permeability of

the exterior European borders of migration and mobility (Kourachanis, 2018; Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013). The Hotspot Approach greatly contributes to the concept of "Fortress Europe", which portrays an image of a fortress with borders that can be completely sealed off (Marino & Dawes, 2016). This creates the illusion of a clear cut between the inside and the outside (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013).

The Hotspot Approach was designed to entail control points where the decision of who belongs to the inside and who belongs to the outside can be clearly made. Hotspots are declared in so-called frontline EU member states, pressuring countries such as Greece, Italy or Spain (Papoutsi et al., 2019). After the EU declares an area a hotspot, the EASO, Frontex, Europol and Eurojust come and assist member states in identifying, registering and fingerprinting incoming migrants (Kourachanis, 2018). The Hotspot Approach aims to manage and monitor refugees, as well as collect certain personal information and biometric data, such as fingerprints. The personal information of migrants which is acquired in the hotspots of Europe is shared with all the member states. This personal data is then stored in different databases, allowing member states to access this data everywhere and at all times (Papoutsi et al., 2019: 2201-2204).

As Basaran (2008: 345-349) argues, this shows how borders are individualised and can be attached to an individual. These technologies ensure the identification of migrants and refugees throughout the entire Schengen Area, and therefore contribute to the internalization of the border (Papoutsi et al., 2019). Thus, the EU migration policy involves practices of border externalization (such as the increased border security and the involvement of Frontex at the external borders of the EU) and internalization. It also enables countries such as Switzerland to make use of the Dublin regulations. Having left fingerprints in another state as well as previous visa can lead to another Dublin state being responsible for the asylum request. Therefore, by checking the databases like Eurodac, a state can turn down asylum seekers on the grounds of the jurisdiction of another state (SFH, 2019).

2.2 The Swiss Asylum System

After having introduced the European Asylum System as well as the European border and migratory regime in the previous chapter, this subchapter will engage with the Swiss Asylum

System. While all member states of the CEAS and the Schengen and Dublin agreements oblige to the agreed upon standards, every state does have its own asylum policy. However, it is important to note that there are great discrepancies between the different asylum policies in Europe as Gill & Good (2019: 11-14) show. Though Switzerland is part of the Schengen Area and the Dublin Agreements, it is not part of the EU and is therefore not obliged to include all EU directives regarding asylum. However, also due to Switzerland being part of the Schengen Area and the Dublin Agreement, there are fully incorporated instruments into the Swiss Legal System. In Europe, various legal instruments are in place to address the treatment and protection of refugees, including the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, the directive on temporary protection, the Dublin Convention, the directive on minimum reception conditions, and the directive on common standards and procedures for returning undocumented immigrants. Switzerland works with the European Asylum Support Office to address these issues (Bader, 2018: 73).

The Swiss Asylum System is based upon the Swiss Asylum Act (AsylA) and the Federal Act on Foreign Nationals and Integration (FNIA), which also includes the Geneva refugee commission (Affolter, 2021: 149). In the last years, the Swiss Asylum System has undergone multiple changes and revisions. In the year 2012 the Embassy Asylum[1] has been abolished, making it only possible to apply for asylum on Swiss territory (Hanke et al., 2019: 1367). Since March 1st, 2019 the revision of the Swiss Asylum Law is in force. The revision's main goal is to accelerate asylum procedures including the deadlines for complaints. According to the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM, 2019b), the revision should enable the faster integration of persons in need of protection as well as the faster expulsion of persons not in need of protection. The revision should result in the minimization of overall costs, in increased efficiency of the entire system and in the relief of the accommodation situation. Further, the revision entails the replacement of reception and processing centres (Empfangs- und Verfahrenszentren) with decentralised federal asylum centres (Bundesasylzentren or BAZ). All responsible bodies are now located in the BAZ. These entail the officials of the SEM, interpreters, mandated legal representatives, social workers, psychologists as well as health and security staff (SFH, 2019).

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[1] The embassy asylum refers to the option to submit an asylum application at a Swiss embassy in another country (SFH, 2019)

The requirement for asylum and thus an asylum procedure is the asylum application. Any statement by a foreigner that indicates that they are seeking protection from persecution in Switzerland is considered an asylum application. Asylum applications can be submitted orally or in writing and are not subject to any formal criteria. They can be submitted either in a federal asylum centre, at the Swiss border or at an airport (SFH, 2019). After having submitted the application, asylum seekers who do not meet the Schengen entry criteria are detained in reception facilities (Arbogast, 2016). Accordinlgy, asylum seekers are assigned to a federal asylum centre with a procedural function (SEM, 2019c). Asylum applications that were submitted before March 1st 2019, are treated according to the previous asylum law. The revision of the asylum law splits the Swiss Asylum System into two different proceedings, either an accelerated procedure in the federal asylum centres (Beschleunigtes Verfahren im BAZ) or an advanced procedure in the canton (Erweitertes Verfahren im Kanton). The main difference is the duration of the procedure. The default procedure is the accelerated asylum procedure. After a hearing on the grounds for asylum, a decision is made as to whether the facts are sufficient. If so, the application remains in the accelerated procedure, which leads to an asylum decision within eight days. Otherwise, the advanced procedure is initiated, which will lead to further clarifications and to an asylum decision within two months. In the accelerated procedure, the possibility to appeal is limited to seven days, whereas in the advanced procedure it amounts to thirty days (SFH, 2019; SEM, 2019a, b, c).

From a migration policy view, Switzerland's geographical location is very favourable. All of Switzerland's neighbouring states are members of the Schengen Agreement. According to the Dublin Agreement, there should not be any refugees and migrants in Switzerland because there are no legal migration routes leading to Switzerland. Instead, all asylum seekers in Europe should be concentrated in countries located at the external European borders (Kasparek, 2019: 25; Schilliger, 2016: 22). Therefore, one of the first steps in the Swiss asylum procedure is the Dublin Interview. After an asylum request has been submitted, Switzerland checks if there are indications of the jurisdiction of other states. If the asylum application falls under the jurisdiction of another state, the application is judged inadmissible and a takeover application is issued (SEM, 2019d). If the asylum application does not fall under the jurisdiction of another state, Switzerland is responsible for its processing. Nonetheless, in 2021, 13'367 asylum requests were made in Switzerland. Of these 13'367 asylum requests, 4'755 requests were granted, 3'039 requests were denied, however the asylum seekers were provisionally admitted

and 2'387 requests were non-admittance decisions (Nichteintretensentscheide). Non-admittance decisions occur, when the responsibility for the asylum request lies at another Dublin state (SEM, 2021b).

However, many NGOs in the asylum sector, lawyers' association and volunteers are very critical towards the revision. It is argued, that the acceleration of the asylum procedure and the various steps of the asylum procedure leads to a qualitatively insufficient examination of asylum applications. Further, many worry that after a negative result, the short time frame given to appeal makes it impossible for applicants to appeal (SFH, 2020). The structure and the geographical location of the BAZ has also been subject to critique. It is argued that the federal asylum centres are geared too strongly to control and security and are therefore also largely isolated from the public. Additionally, asylum seekers are greatly restricted in their freedom of movement and access to health care is not always guaranteed (Amnesty International, 2020). Nonetheless, multiple NGO's (such as the SFH) support the revision as it leads to shorter periods of waiting and not-knowing for asylum seekers and to faster asylum decisions.

In Switzerland asylum is granted if the asylum seeker is able to prove that he or she is fleeing persecution in a manner relevant to asylum law and in accordance with the Geneva Refugee Convention. The assessment of asylum eligibility is based on the outcome of the asylum hearing (SEM, 2019b). Therefore, asylum seekers have to present themselves to either one or two asylum hearings, where they are interviewed on their grounds for asylum. Shuman and Bohmer (2012: 200) argue that asylum seekers' narratives are increasingly being scrutinised by responsible caseworkers with a «lens of suspicion». As a result, caseworkers strictly analyse whether or not the narratives about their past are true and whether or not they qualify for asylum (Fassin & Kobelinsky, 2012). However, as Kagan (2015) stresses it is often almost impossible for asylum seekers to "prove" whether or not their narratives are true as they are often left with only their narrative.

The outcome of the asylum procedure has a great impact on the applicant's live. In the event of a negative asylum decision, asylum seekers have to leave Switzerland. If there are obstacles to removal, the State Secretariat for Migration has to grant the asylum seeker provisional admission to Switzerland. In the event of a positive asylum decision or a provisional admission,

the migrants and refugees are assigned to a canton if they have not already been assigned to a canton as part of the advanced procedure (Jenner & Ramseier, 2022). As part of the Swiss federalism, the cantons are then responsible not only for the accommodation but also for the financialization, for the access to healthcare and the social integration (SEM, 2019a). The asylum procedure determines whether or not an applicant is eligible for a residence permit or not. However, there are multiple residence permits in Switzerland. For European citizens or EFTA nationals there are five different permits, mainly differing in the allowed duration of the stay. There are also special residence permits for foreigners with gainful employment as well as cross-border commuters. For third-state nationals there are eight different residence permits (SEM, 2022c). The outcome of the asylum procedure decides which of these permits will be issued for a specific applicant.

These permits are:

B: Residence permit

C: Settlement permit

Ci: Residence permit with gainful employment

G: cross-border commuter permit

L: Short-term residence permit

F: Provisionally admitted foreigners

N: Asylum-seekers

S: Permit for people in need of protection

2.2.1 Residence Permits in Switzerland

Of these residence permits, for migrants and refugees with countries of origin outside of the European Union, the F, N and B permits are the most important ones. These three permits and the rights they grant people as well as the restrictions these permits impose are now presented in detail.

N-permit

After applying for asylum, asylum seekers receive the N-permit, which entitles them to be resident in Switzerland during the asylum proceeding. According to Art. 43 AsylA, persons holding an N-permit are not allowed to work for the first three months after having applied for

asylum. After the three month period, asylum seekers have the possibility to apply for a work permit (SEM, 2017). Further, N-permit holders are not allowed to leave the country and have a very limited set of rights as well as approximately 40% lower social care than Swiss citizens (SFH, 2021a).

B-permit

If an asylum seeker was able to prove that in the country of origin she or he is being persecuted in a manner relevant to asylum law and in accordance with the Geneva Refugee Convention, they are recognised as a refugee and granted asylum, resulting in them receiving the B-permit (Bader, 2018). The B-permit allows refugees to work, travel and the entitlement to the same social care as Swiss citizens. The B-permit is limited to one year, but is usually extended as long as the reasons for the refugee status continue to exist (SEM, 2019e). Families usually are included in the asylum, provided the family was founded before fleeing and in the country of origin. Further, after five to ten years of living in Switzerland with the B-permit, refugees have the possibility to apply for a C-permit, changing their residence permit into a permanent residence permit. Under the refoulement ban, refugees with B-permit cannot be deported (SFH, 2021a). This is very different for provisionally admitted refugees holding an F-permit.

F-permit

Holders of an F-permit were not granted asylum (SFH, 2021b). There are two different F-permits. One is the permit for F-refugees, the other is the permit for F-foreigners. F-refugees are provisionally admitted refugees; "persons who qualify for the refugee status according to the Geneva Convention but not in the sense of the Swiss AsylA" (Bader, 2018: 72). Provisionally admitted refugees were ordered to leave Switzerland, but this order was not enforced if it was deemed unlawful, unreasonable, or impossible to do so (SEM, 2021a; SFH, 2021b). F-foreigners are foreigners who do not qualify for the refugee status but whose deportation falls under the human rights refoulement ban. The F-permit is valid for twelve months but it can be extended for further twelve months. F-permits entitles refugees to work as well as to the same social care as Swiss citizens. After three years a family reunion is possible, if the F-permit holder is independent from social assistance and lives in a suitable appartement. F-refugees are allowed to apply for a travel document enabling them to travel. However, F-foreigners are not allowed to travel and these persons further have to hand over their passports to the SEM. Nonetheless, both categories of F-permit holders have the

possibility to apply for a humanitarian B-permit after having lived in Switzerland for at least five years (SFH, 2021a; SFH, 2021b).

The provisional admittance of refugees and migrants (F-permit) is a special case only known in Switzerland. In the European context, only in Switzerland are civil war refugees not subject to protection (SFH, 2021b). Refugees of civil wars are not recognised as refugees under Swiss law, due to the high requirements for proof of targeted persecution. According to the Swiss refugee aid (SFH, 2021b) the term "provisional" is misleading and suggests a temporarily stay in Switzerland. Further, as the SFH (2021b) and Bertrand (2019) argue, the F-permit hinders employers in employing provisionally admitted refugees, due to their supposedly temporarily stay. According to the statistics of the State Secretariat for Migration, most provisionally admitted refugees come from Afghanistan, Eritrea[2], Syria and Somalia; all subject to brutal civil wars. In Afghanistan the war has been going on for 20 years, in Syria for 10 years and in Somalia for 30 years. Thus, the war is not a temporarily subject in these countries and thus it seems paradox that the F-permit is (SFH 2021b).

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[2] Previously, male Eritrean asylum seekers who had escaped the country without prior contact with military authorities for recruitment purposes were recognised as refugees (persons with refugee status) by the asylum authorities, even if they were not granted asylum. This recognition came in the form of provisional admission. However, in June 2016, the Federal Office for Migration (FOM) changed its practices, and male Eritrean asylum seekers who have never been called up for military or civilian national service, or whose claims of being called up have been deemed not credible, will no longer be recognised as refugees solely based on their illegal departure from Eritrea. (Refbejuso, 2017; Bader, 2018)

3 Research Gap and Research Questions

The previous chapter presented an introduction on the CEAS as well as the Swiss Asylum System. It has been shown how Schengen member states are part of the CEAS and are therefore bound to cooperate and apply with the CEAS' migration agenda. Especially the Swiss asylum procedure as well as the different residence permits, were thoroughly addressed. The following chapter will be dedicated to the conceptualization of borders as non-territorial, as not geographically fixed entities and therefore as not only located at the outer borders of a state but rather also within. For this purpose I will introduce and discuss the terms internal borders as well as bordering processes, indicating the fluid and subjective nature of bordering. Further, I will address sexual and gender based violence, shifting gender roles as well as the concept of intersectionality in order to understand more specific challenges faced by refugee women to address the identified research gap and the research questions.

3.1 Territory and Borders

The concept and legitimization of asylum systems and the in/exclusion of migrants and refugees is based on the image of borders as dividing lines of national sovereignty. However, scholars such as Basaran (2008), Mezzadra & Neilson (2013) and Donnan & Wilson (1999) have argued for territory and borders to be much more than merely dividing lines of national sovereignty. New terminologies such as borderlands and frontiers have been introduced in recent years, expanding the concept of borders. Hence, this chapter will engage with the notion of borders, borderlands and frontiers.

The term "borders" includes a variety of concepts. The traditional understanding of borders entails the definition of borders as boundaries between two states, empowering each state with the absolute sovereignty over the by the border marked territory. But what is territory? In order to understand the purpose, impact and functioning of borders it is important to understand what territories are. According to Elden (2010: 810), "Territory is more than merely land, and goes beyond terrain". Just as with borders, there are many different definitions of what territory is and these definitions are all dependent from the point of view. The geopolitical definition of

territory reads territory as a space of influence and power, prone to violence from different actors trying to proliferate their power over that space (Allen, 2008: 96; Newman, 2003). A more sociologist definition, defines territory as a social construct, and a small-scale issue (Elden, 2010: Delaney, 2005). Following this sociologist definition, Delaney (2005: 9) notes "territory is commonly understood as a device for simplifying and clarifying something else, such as political authority, cultural identity, individual autonomy, or rights" whereas Elden (2010), defines territory from a more political perspective. He argues with political terms such as power and control and sees territory as a political technology.

When defining territory, the term space seems to be important. In order to understand territory, we therefore have to ask ourselves, what is space? And what is the difference between space and territory? According to Donnan & Wilson (1999: 9), space is "the general idea people have of where things should be in physical and cultural relation to each other". In other words, space is the conceptual map which orders social life. If we see space as the product (as well as construct) of interrelations, space is always subject to change and it is always under construction (Massey, 2005: 9). Space becomes territory, when assigned not only social but also political significance and power. Just as spaces, territories are subject to constant reproduction and therefore to change (Delaney, 2005). Territory is a political technology, it provides states and nations with techniques to measure land and control terrain (Elden, 2010: 799). In other words, territory provides states and nations with power. Thus, territory is the expression of power, and of how power is displayed. Therefore, in many cases the "most obvious effect of territory is to disempower others: to divide and conquer, to confine or immobilize, to exclude, to create dependencies, to dilute power, to fragment and isolate" (Delaney, 2005: 19). Accordingly, when studying territory and borders, the role of power is important.

The way in which the effects of territory mentioned by Delaney (2005: 19) are exercised or the ways in which they become evident is through borders. Borders act as a barrier, between territories and thus also as a barrier of power. While borders are fictive and hypothetical in nature, it does not make them any less real (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013: 4). Borders are experienced, faced and negotiated on a daily basis by different social and cultural groups. There are many different kinds of borders and individuals belonging to different social and cultural

groups experience, face and negotiate borders in different ways (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013) as will be shown throughout this master's thesis and in more detail in the next chapter.

3.2 Internal Borders and Bordering Processes

Multiple scholars have argued for bordering to not only be about walls, passports, checkpoints or fingerprints. As Brunet-Jailly (2011: 3) suggested, "borders are no longer only about territorially bounded authorities". In other words, borders and bordering processes include social, cultural, gendered and racialised dimensions and are not only encountered at the territorial borders of a nation state but rather also within a nation state (Pickering & Weber, 2006: 12, Basaran, 2008). The term "internal borders" has been mostly used to describe the national borders within the European Union. However, some scholars such as Donnan & Wilson (1999) used terms like "internal borderlands", "hidden borderlands" or "metaphorical borderlands" meaning borderlands which expand away from the territorial borderlines between states and into a state's territory. Tugba Basaran (2008) argues, internal borders to be situated within a nation state. Mezzadra & Neilson (2013: 17) correspondingly draw attention to social and cultural borders. Social and cultural borders can be seen as two components of internal borders as it is precisely in the cultural and social differences where internal borders become obvious. Therefore, internal borders are what migrants and refugees encounter after having already passed the territorial borders of a nation state.

The importance of borders as a technology to decide upon the inclusion and exclusion of certain populations has increased in recent years as a result of the "refugee crisis". Migration has been increasingly rationalised as a security problem. All European countries manage migration as a security issue by the implementation of what Fabini (2017: 47) and Kapoor & Narkowicz (2019: 663) call "crimmigration" laws. European countries have built discourses linking immigration to crime and portraying undocumented migrants as illegal persons, not entitled to the same political, social and cultural rights as citizens (Fabini, 2017: 47; Basaran, 2008). As a result, bordering processes which aim to control and limit the movement of unwanted populations as well as their rights have been implemented not only at the territorial borders but also within nation states. Gilbert (2009: 28) argues that the expansion of border politics to the interior is the result of municipal attempts to enforce immigration laws. She points out, that "mechanisms of exclusion, […], in the particular case of local politics of immigration, attempt

to keep migrants as outsiders inside the boundaries of a state/society" (Gilbert, 2009: 28). Hereby, local politics refers to bordering processes implemented on a local level and therefore not at the territorial borders of a nation state. Mezzadra & Neilson (2013: 13) argue for "border struggles to refer also to the set of everyday practices by which migrants continually come to terms with the pervasive effects of the border, subtracting themselves from them or negotiating them through the construction of networks and trans-national social spaces". Sanctuary city movements in the United States, such as the one described by De Genova (2002), offer an example of how border struggles can involve the construction of networks and trans-national social spaces by migrants (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013). It is therefore important to pay attention to the different ways in which internal borders and bordering processes are faced and experienced by different social and cultural groups.

Mezzadra & Neilson (2013: 151-157) draw attention to internal borders in an urban and metropolitan environment. Using the example of the French banlieues, they show how spatial segregation can act as an internal border, dividing locations that are situated geographically very close to each other, or even within each other, however deeply separated by a social abyss and permanent conflicts. Spatial segregation often impedes mobility, both social and geographical. The governance of populations living in spatially segregated or even isolated areas is often characterised by criminal law, police and administrative measures. Detention centres, refugee camps and asylum centres are often also subject to spatial segregation. Migrants and refugees living in these centres face internal borders on a daily basis. Paradoxically it is from the people living in these spatially segregated centres that the state excepts and demands social, cultural and economic integration (Mezzadra & Neilson, 2013: 155; Kreichauf, 2018: 4). While Mezzadra & Neilson's (2013) writings are important to consider, in this master's thesis I will adopt a rather more circumscribed definition of "internal borders" based on Basaran (2008).

As Basaran (2008: 339) argues, borders are strategically used to control and change the balance between security and liberties. The "doing" of borders occurs through the implementation of bordering processes. As mentioned, there has been a great variety of bordering processes introduced within Europe since the late 1990s and early 2000s, which have mainly focused on the securitization of borders. These bordering processes include detention, spatial segregation based upon race, poverty, residence permit or gender, forced deportation, racial profiling and

exclusion of migrants from certain "countries of origin" such as male Eritrean asylum seekers in Switzerland (Basaran, 2008; Pickering & Weber, 2006; Schilliger, 2020). According to Basaran (2008: 345), internal borders are produced by the state mainly through two technologies: spatial extension of border zones and the multiplication of border zones. In the European region, both technologies can be observed. Basaran (2008) argues that governments can at any time establish new borders within the territory in which bordering processes are implemented and fundamental rights are denied. These internal borders can be attached to an individual depriving said individual from fundamental rights and making it impossible for that individual to enter a state's territory while physically already have entered it. Consequently, legal exclusion is produced through legal means. Therefore, by the creation of fluid and individualised borders, spaces are created where ordinary law does not apply to all the population but rather specific parts of the population in specific areas (Basaran, 2008: 352).

3.2.1 Bordering Processes in Switzerland

There are various bordering processes implemented by the state in Switzerland. These bordering processes include economic, social, cultural, legal and educational mechanisms of control. As Cassidy, Yuval-Davis & Wemyss (2018) argue, borders are constructed within everyday life. For example, in Switzerland migrants and refugees who apply for asylum are not free to choose their living conditions. Even further, they are not free to choose in which part of Switzerland to settle, which could have a great impact on their lives, given the four national languages. Migrants and refugees arriving to Switzerland "illegally" are placed by the state in one of only fourteen state asylum centres (Bundesasylzentren) (SEM 2019c; Schilliger, 2016; Arbogast, 2016). Therefore a French speaking migrant or refugee might be involuntarily placed in the German speaking part. Bordering processes impinge also on social and cultural dimensions. An example for bordering processes in social dimensions are the implied shared norms and beliefs of the Swiss society and the expected subjugation of refugees and migrants to these norms and beliefs. Bordering processes thus enforce internal borders. It is in the spatial, temporal, social and cultural contexts in which bordering processes are faced and experienced and therefore it is there that internal borders become most evident.

Migrants and refugees in the asylum system deal with internal borders on a daily basis and in everyday spaces such as their homes, as well as in everyday practices such as childcare. As a

result, the border becomes a temporal life condition (Rygiel, 2011). The long waiting periods for an asylum decision asylum seekers faced before the revision in force since 2019, can be seen as bordering processes, as they lead to feelings of uncertainty and worries about the asylum seeker's futures (Jonzon et al., 2015). Another example for a bordering process faced by migrants in Switzerland, can be found in the liminal legal situation migrants and refugees in the asylum system. The different residence permits issued based on the asylum seeker's ability to prove his or her persecution (Kagan, 2015), further lead to a form of social stratification where refugees are categorised into different categories of foreigners as argued by Bauman (1998). Further, the dependency of social welfare and the struggles faced by asylum seekers and refugees to integrate in the Swiss labour market are other bordering processes asylum seekers and refugees encounter (Bertrand, 2019).

Internal borders are therefore much more than merely the national borderlines within the European nation. The concept describes the internalization of borderlines and the associated technologies of control and bordering processes as well as of inclusion and exclusion. Internal borders are not geographically fixed entities but are rather fluid and individualised in nature. Internal borders consist of social, cultural, legal and economic borders and serve as points of control where nation states continue to control and limit the movement of unwanted populations through bordering processes (Mezzadra & Nielson, 2013: 7). Internal borders and bordering processes are closely intertwined, as bordering processes can be found at the internal borders. Therefore, internal borders are not merely internalised lines, and they can be found everywhere where there are bordering processes and mechanisms of control.

3.3 Sexual and Gender Based Violence

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) against refugee women is a pervasive and underreported problem that is often inadequately considered as a bordering process (Freedman, 2016; Chossière, 2021). This subchapter aims to examine the ways in which SGBV against refugee women is insufficiently considered as a bordering processes, taking the perspective that SGBV is a form of violence that reinforces and is reinforced by border regimes.

At least 70'000 women who escaped from Syria in the year 2015 were pregnant when they fled (Oliver, 2017: 182). Many other refugee women were already mothers when they fled, either

taking their children with them or leaving them behind. Refugee women who give birth to their children in refugee camps, birth stateless children, leaving these children without any documentation and papers. Additionally, refugee women often find themselves with sole responsibility for their families and children after losing their husbands to either war, abandonment, separation or divorce. This results in them becoming the sole caregiver for their children and thus being responsible for the survival of their children. Further, single refugee mothers are the emotional support for their families, making them responsible for educating and transmitting culture to their children (Friedman, 1992: 66-76). Fear for their own children as well as death or disease among their children have a physical as well as psychological toll on women as well as on their children (Oliver, 2017: 181). The uncertainty refugee mothers experience during resettlement further impacts their psychological health, as they find themselves constantly worried about how to care for their children. The resettlement period further challenges refugee mother's previously defined gender roles as they find themselves trying to navigate between resettlement, providing for their children and maintaining culturally significant constructs of mothering (Pangas et al., 2019: 35, 41).

SGBV is often used as a weapon of war, and refugee women and girls are particularly vulnerable to such violence due to their disadvantaged social and economic status, as well as the power imbalances and gender inequalities that exist within their communities (Oliver, 2017; Asaf, 2017; Freedman, 2016). Freedman (2016: 20-23) identifies four forms of SGBV that refugee women may experience: war-related violence, violence experienced during the journey, family and conjugal violence, and inadequate accommodation as a source of insecurity. Women and girls fleeing conflict situations are subject to SGBV and exploitation by armed groups, smugglers, and other actors along the escape routes (Freedman, 2016: 20-23). SGBV can also include or be psychological violence amongst families, fear or the feeling of insecurity (Freedman, 2016: 22). SGBV can further take the form of harassment and humiliation (Asaf, 2017: 5; Charles & Denman, 2013: 107). Additionally, the violence refugee women may experience within the confines of their families and relationships, includes domestic/intimate partner violence and forced and early marriage. Furthermore, the inadequate provision of safe and secure accommodation for refugee women, including in refugee camps and other temporary shelters, can also expose them to violence and abuse (Pangas et al., 2019: 36; Oliver, 2017: 178). The multiple forms of SGBV faced by refugee women can have

physical, psychological, and social consequences for refugee women and their children (Friedman, 1992; Pangas et al., 2019).

Despite the fact that SGBV has been recognised as a human rights violation (Oliver, 2017), it is often insufficiently addressed by states and international organizations (Asaf, 2017; Charles & Denman, 2013), and survivors of such violence often face significant barriers to accessing justice and support services including language barriers, lack of awareness about their rights and available resources, and fear of reprisals (Pangas et al., 2019; Chossière, 2021: 132). As Chossière (2021) argues, the failure to adequately address SGBV against refugee women not only perpetuates the marginalization and exclusion of these women, but it also reinforces the border regime, as it serves to further restrict the mobility and agency of refugee women. Further, SGBV serves as a means of controlling and disciplining the movement and behavior of refugee women, as well as a tool of exclusion and othering. For example, the fear of SGBV can deter refugee women from seeking asylum or crossing certain borders, and it can also affect their decisions about where to seek refuge and how to move within the host country (Freedman, 2016: 22; Pangas et al., 2019: 37). Additionally, the lack of effective protection and support for refugee women who have experienced SGBV can further restrict their mobility and agency, as they may become more dependent on others and less able to pursue their own goals and aspirations (Chossière, 2021: 132; Pangas et al., 2019: 37).

3.4 Gender Roles and Refugee Women

Gender norms and roles play an important role in the portrayal of women in war zones as well as women refugees in the western media. For instance, women refugees are often put as equally vulnerable and defenceless as children refugees. As Oliver (2017: 185) argues, within the western imaginary "women and children have always been in need of rescue and protection by men". In western media, women refugee are often portrayed as vulnerable and as charity cases, while the men are perceived as criminals (Oliver, 2017: 190). Further, refugee women are frequently described as traditional and underdeveloped. As Olivius (2016: 282) shows, refugee women are often described in general terms as lacking education and being unfamiliar with interacting with authorities and are typically confined to domestic tasks. This portrayal of refugee women emphasizes their perceived passive and subordinated role. This subchapter

discusses gender roles, the impacts of gender roles on refugee women's experiences as well as the ways in which gender roles might shift as a result of being forcefully displaced.

Gender norms and gender roles significantly impact the lives of both women and men. Gender norms and roles govern the lives of the women living in a certain society. Gender norms are learned in childhood through socialisation and as gender norms are embedded in and reproduced through institutions, they are constantly reinforced and contested. Further, gender norms reflect, reinforce and contest power relations between the different genders (Cislaghi & Heise, 2020: 410). Often, gender norms in societies are so strong, that they are understood as granted and are therefore not or only rarely questioned. Gender roles and norms can be found in every social institution such as family structures, labour markets, health care systems and legal systems. While some gender norms appear to be universal, others are rather specific to a certain society (Oladeji, 2008: 133).

According to Habib (2018: 3), the norms associated with gender can vary based on factors such as religion, ethnicity, and location (rural versus urban). As Oladeji (2008: 133) states: "almost everywhere however, men and women differ substantially from each other in power, status and freedom. In virtually all societies' men have more power than women have". Along the same lines, Cislaghi & Heise (2020: 410) argue for gender norms being "deeply hierarchical" and privileging what is male over what is female. In the home countries of my interview partners, namely Syria, Afghanistan, Iran and Turkey, the prevailing gender roles attribute men with many powerful roles as brothers, husbands, fathers, policy-makers and as local or national leaders. According to Oladeji (2008: 133), men are typically the ones who make decisions regarding financial matters, sexual activity, fertility, contraceptive use, and the upbringing of children. These societies attribute women with many negative traits, women are seen as weak and suppressed, whereas men are attributed with positive traits such as being brave, generous and hard-working (Habib, 2018). As Habib (2018: 3) points out, very often oppression of females takes place in the family, based on customs and traditions.

However, gender norms and roles are not only of importance for refugee women's countries of origin. Women refugees are faced with (shifting) gender norms and roles even after leaving their home countries. While some of the previously prevailing gender norms retained their importance others were challenged by the resettlement (Asaf, 2017: 9). People from their home

societies expect refugee women to fulfil their traditional roles while people from the host society expect refugee women to abide by the "new" gender roles and norms prevailing in the host society (Asaf, 2017: 9; Pangas et al., 2019). Moreover, refugee men too face shifting and new gender roles and norms. However, as Charles & Denman (2013: 103) point out: "for many men this change has triggered hyper masculine associated codes of behaviour in an attempt to reassert normative gender roles". Unfortunately, the reasserting of these patriarchal norms and roles often results in violence toward women (Charles & Denman, 2013). It is within these processes of orienting oneself in a new society, negotiating shifting and new gender roles as well as living in a liminal context that refugee women reconstruct their identities. However, this is a challenging, fluid, individual and space and time dependent process (Pangas et al., 2019: 41).This results in feelings of "living in between cultures" and of liminality. The high expectations refugee women have to deal with regarding their roles as women leads to them being under a lot of pressure (Pangas et al., 2019: 35).

3.5 Intersectionality

A male bias can be identified in most research fields. As Caroline Criado Perez (2019) shows in her book, men were seen as the default to the structure of human society. This understanding started to be recognised and challenged with the rise of feminism in academia, particularly within the field of geography, which has sought to study and address power imbalances resulting from patriarchy, racism, and class exploitation. As a result, early feminist geography research criticised the discipline for its failure to consider women as subjects of study (Valentine, 2007). This led to feminist work adding women to geographical research, recognizing women's distinctive experiences and understanding them as different from men's experiences. Feminist geography has examined how gender relations are manifested and reinforced in the way public space is organised and used. This includes studying how different genders may experience and use public spaces differently, and how these differences may be shaped by societal expectations and norms related to gender. Feminist geographers recognised that public space is often organised in a way which privileges men at the expense of women and further that public space is not only gendered but also sexualised, impacting how safe women feel in public space (Rosewarne, 2005: 70; Criado Perez, 2019).

The feminist work in geography further led to the development of the theorization of patriarchy (Valentine, 2007: 3). Feminist geography is therefore relevant in helping us to understand women's distinctive experiences.

However, gender is not the only determinant for sharing similar experiences. It is widely recognised, that Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality in 1989 (e.g see Valentine, 2007 or Molett & Faria, 2018). Intersectionality seeks to challenge homogenizing and essentializing identities and experiences. The concept recognizes, that not all women share the same experiences. Women of colour have different experiences than white women, heterosexual women have different experiences than queer women (Valentine, 2007) and refugee women have different experiences than women who have not had to forcefully leave their home. In Rickie Sanders' article, published only one year after Crenshaw's article, Sanders (1990: 229) argues that feminist geography lacks of "explicit recognition of the interrelations between race, class and gender". The concept pursues the analyzation of identities and categories that are fluid and on multiple levels as well as time and context dependent. It further aims to explain how these categories intersect and create inequalities, disadvantages or at times even privileges.

Intersectionality has been theorised in different ways. Some scholars viewed intersectionality as additive, meaning they simply added a person's identities together in order to determine their oppression or privilege. This led to the belief that a person at the intersection of three systems of oppression would be more oppressed than a person at the intersection of only two systems of oppression (Valentine, 2007; Mollett & Faria, 2018). However, this understanding of intersectionality has been contested as essentialist, as it interprets identities as fixed and separate. It further assumes base identities; white, heterosexual, able-bodied, male and with legal and permanent citizenship. This additive concept of intersectionality has further been criticised as scholars have shown, that the experiences of a black woman cannot be understood by merely adding the experiences of a woman to being black (Valentine, 2007: 13). As Judith Butler (1990: 3) pointed out: "if one 'is' a woman, that is surely not all one is" and further, that gender intersects with "racial, class, ethnic, sexual and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities". Along similar lines, McCall (2005) suggested that intersectionality can generally be understood as anti-categorical or deconstructing, including viewing it as inter-categorical or intra-categorical. Inter-categorical refers to the analyzation of the relationships

between existing categories, while intra-categorical refers to the relationships that social categories represent (McCall, 2015, Taha, 2019). According to Butler (1990: 3) it is therefore impossible to separate "gender" from the political and cultural contexts, or as she calls them "intersections", in which it is produced and maintained. Therefore, identities are not to be understood as individually created but rather as results of the "interactivity and interrelationship between and among different social categories" (Arora, 2022: 331). West & Fenstermaker (1995: 9) define identities as "situated accomplishments". They argue that identities should be understood in terms of a doing and an undoing. They conceptualize intersectionality as a fluid and unstable coming together of eventualities. Therefore, intersectionality refers to the way in which an individual's intersecting identities, such as race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and more, shape their experiences and social standing. It acknowledges that these identities do not exist in isolation, but rather interact with and intersect with one another to create unique and complex experiences for each person (Valentine, 2007; Molett & Faria,2018).

Intersectionality is further key in understanding the development of inequalities as well as how positions of oppression and positions of privilege emerge and sustain themselves. The concept examines the emergence, nature and impact of systems of social inequality. Gill Valentine (2007: 18) reminds us of the role space plays in processes of identity formation and further that in particular spatial contexts "dominant spatial orderings" lead to exclusion and inclusion of particular social groups (Chossière, 2021). Valentine (2007: 19) further draws attention to "the ways that power operates in and through particular spaces to systematically (re)produce particular inequalities". Along the same lines, Mollett & Faria (2018) also argue for the importance of space when discussing intersectionality as well as power. Following these scholars, this thesis will investigate how identities are also spatially constructed and how power operates in the everyday lived experiences of my research participants.

3.6 Research Questions

This master's thesis aims to examine the intersectionality of refugee women, which has been under-researched, as well as the bordering processes encountered by people in need of protection in Switzerland. The focus lies on four refugee women who have already experienced the asylum procedure and received an asylum decisionIn this research, I plan to use a feminist

and critical border studies perspective to examine first-hand narratives from refugee women. Through this approach, I aim to understand how, where, and when refugee women have experienced and continue to experience intersectionality, or the ways in which their various identities and experiences intersect and affect their lives. By considering these issues through the lens of feminist and critical border studies, I hope to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of refugee women and the ways in which they are impacted by intersecting identities and the bordering processes they encounter. Following Gill Valentine's (2007) work, I will present four narratives as lived experiences. Studying intersectionality as lived experiences means paying attention to the importance given by individuals to certain identities and to the spatial and temporal contexts of subject formation. By focusing on women refugees, there are convergence points within their lived experiences of intersectionality that appear obvious. I therefore anticipated all of my research participants to experience a gendered identity position as well as a refugee identity position. Referring to the above presented literature this thesis will examine the inequalities shaped and reshaped by migration experience and the ambiguity of power related to these experiences. Keeping in mind the role of internal borders as barriers of power and the ways in which bordering processes lead to inclusion and discrimination, I further consider bordering processes and the impact of bordering processes on the social and temporal contexts in which the intersectionality of refugee women is being "done" or "undone".

There are already detailed insights into the situation of refugees and asylum seekers in Europe, the United States and Canada. And while there are some studies which have focused on the special plight of refugee women (Oliver, 2017; Asaf, 2017; Charles & Denman, 2013; Freedman, 2016; Arora, 2022; Chossière, 2021; Taha, 2019), only few have directly addressed the narratives of refugee women in Switzerland (Kiselev et al., 2020; Ostendarp, 2016). There are very few studies on intersectionality as lived experiences and even fewer on the intersectionality of refugee women. However, as Koirala & Esghavi (2017) have shown, using an intersectional lens, or considering the intersections of multiple identities and experiences, can help to reveal the systematic discrimination that may be present in refugee and migration policies. I present four narratives of refugee women as lived experiences in this thesis. By following my participant's life trajectories, I consider Valentine (2007) who stresses that identities are fluid and their intersections very complex. I further reflect Valentine's (2007) emphasis on the role of spatial and temporal contexts for the lived experience of

intersectionality and the emergence of subject positions. Further, I pay attention to the non-territorial bordering processes my participant's encountered.

The focus research interest for this thesis is therefore in these non-territorial bordering processes as well as in the intersectionality of refugee women in Switzerland. In this master's thesis I argue, that the intersection of different identity positions of refugee women translates into discrimination and processes of exclusion and inclusion. The experiences of refugee women in Switzerland are highly impacted by the bordering processes they encounter. As a result, the experience of intersectionality is closely connected with bordering processes and the experience of being a refugee. To address the identified research gap, I have formulated the following research questions:

What are the internal borders and bordering processes that refugee women experience in Switzerland, and how do these shape their lives?

How do refugee women in Switzerland experience intersectionality?

4 Methodology

In this chapter, the methodological approach that I have selected for this thesis will be introduced. In the first subchapter I will describe the research approach. After I will present the data collection process, by addressing how I accessed the field, my positionality, the informal interviews and the participant observation I conducted. I go on to present my approach to the ethnographic and formal interviews I had as well as ethical considerations. Finally I will discuss how I analysed my data and attend to limitations I faced with regard to the methodology.

4.1 Research Approach

From the very beginning it was clear to me that I will be doing qualitative rather than quantitative fieldwork. I chose to do so because I thought it most beneficial for the answering of my research questions and also because a quantitative research approach in this field would have exceeded the scope of this thesis. For these reasons I also decided to work with the ethnographic research approach. The ethnographic research approach is a qualitative research method, in which the researcher actively engages in the daily life and activities of the people or culture being studied in order to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences and perspectives (Hume & Mulcock, 2004). Ethnographic research is based on the idea of cultural relativism, which means that the researches must try to understand the culture being studied on its own terms, rather than imposing the researcher's own cultural biases. Typically, ethnographic research involves long-term fieldwork, including participant observation, interviews, and other forms of data collection (Marcus, 1995). I chose the ethnographic research approach, because it was important to me, to hear the asylum seekers and refugees and migrants' narratives of their experiences with the Swiss Asylum System rather than what people believe asylum seekers, refugees and migrants experience in Switzerland. As Luttrell (2000: 499) put it, "[…] we strive to listen and represent those we study on and in their own terms". Popivanov & Kovacheva (2019: 28) further state the importance of research attention towards the "concrete reality of migrants' integration in host societies, and particularly to the subjective meanings, strategies and experiences with which mobility is related".

According to Hume & Mulcock (2004) the ethnographic approach studies a particular cultural or social setting. This entails various techniques whereas the main aim as an outsider researcher is to acquire a better understanding of the insider point of view regarding that particular setting. According to Hume & Mulcock (2004), the ethnographic approach requires building up meaningful relationships and requires continuous negotiation of trust between participants and the researcher. This entails the researcher to have good interpersonal skills in order to build up meaningful relationships. The authors recognize participant observation, a method in which the researcher observes a particular cultural or social setting while also participating in it as much as possible, as central to the ethnographic approach. Along the same lines as Hume & Mulcock (2004), Gusterson (2008) also identifies participant observation as a central technique of ethnographic research, however by far not the only effective technique. Gusterson (2008) argues for participant observation to be especially helpful in building relationships of trust between the researcher and the research participants. Further he indicates that participant observation gives the researcher the possibility to see for oneself what people do in the research context and additionally helps to explore the difference between formal and informal.

With regard to my own research, I engaged in participant observation including many informal conversations but also had formal semi-structured interviews with seven individuals. Semi-structured interviews consist of a couple of lead questions but develop mostly spontaneous. The role of the researcher is mainly to listen and to sometimes inquire on a certain topic. Further, in semi-structured interviews, the researcher has to rely on his or her interpersonal skills in order to react or intervene appropriately and keep a natural conversation flow (Gusterson, 2008: 99-106). Having already established a relationship of trust before conducting a semi-structured interview is therefore very beneficial for the outcome of the interview. In the beginning my research was planned to consist of at least two meetings with my research partners. The idea was to interact with the participants first through informal and spontaneous conversations in order to build a relationship of trust and to see if there is availability for more formal interviews.

As part of this research I had the opportunity to spend some time and get to know five provisionally admitted refugees (F-permit), one asylum seeker (N-permit) and one admitted refugee (B-permit). At the end of my fieldwork one of my research partners was admitted as a refugee and therefore received a B-permit (see chapter 2.2.1). Additionally, I was introduced

to different non-governmental organizations and had the opportunity to participate at a variety of activities. In the following chapters I will first describe how I accessed the field. I go on to show how I collected my data and give an overview of the informal conversations, participant observation and formal interviews I engaged in. I will go on to discuss how I analysed my data as well as discuss my own positionality as well as the limitations of my research.

4.2 Accessing the Field

While I was nervous about accessing the field, it proved to not pose a problem. I started my fieldwork in April 2022. I contacted the Asylorganisation Zürich (AOZ), but unfortunately, the AOZ was not able to help me due to their large number of inquiries. I further contacted two non-governmental organizations, Students Across Borders (SAB) as well as Sportegration. I hoped that they could help me to connect with people interested in my research and keen to participate. For that purpose I summarised my intentions for my thesis and asked for assistance in the finding of possible research partners. Sportegration is an association which organises a range of different projects for refugees and asylum seekers in and around Zurich with the main focus of enjoying sports played together. I was introduced to Sportegration through a friend of mine who herself conducts an outdoor fitness training as part of Sportegration every Friday evening. Students Across Borders on the other hand has the main goal to connect people with a forced migration background with students. They offer tutoring programs as well as a tandem program and organise different events throughout the year. I have participated in the tandem program from 2018 to 2019.

The organisation Sportegration forwarded my request through the messenger application Whatsapp in their group(s) and shortly after I have had three persons reaching out to me. This solution of forwarding my request in their Whatsapp group(s) ensured that there would be no miscommunication on the voluntary participation in my research. From the organisation Students Across Borders the board president reached out directly to me and we scheduled a meeting together. Additionally I contacted close, personal friends of mine with a forced migration background. By the end of March I had scheduled the first meetings. Initially most of my research participants were young men. However, after the first month of my fieldwork I decided to focus on refugee women within the Swiss Asylum System. I formulated new research questions and was looking for more female research participants. As it became clear,

that I will be focusing on women with a forced migration background I further reached out to the Ort für Frauen (OFF) in June 2022. The manager of the OFF then introduced me to a young woman who was eager to talk to me about my thesis. I have been spending time and volunteered frequently at the OFF since June 2022. Table 1 offers an overview of my interview participants, their ages (when known), their residence permits as well as their estimated arrival in Switzerland. Further, the dates of the formal interviews are stated. As can be seen from the table, I had two formal interviews with two of my participants.

For this research I have engaged in different sampling methods. Since I also changed my focus for this research on women and then strategically reached out to women's organisations in Zurich, I used theoretical sampling. However, I also asked friends of mine, who I have already known for a long time. This sampling strategy is referred to as convenience sample. Additionally, some of my interview partners referred me to friends of them who were also interested in my research, resulting in a snowball sampling strategy (Marshall, 1996: 523; Naderifar et al. 2017).

4.3 Data Collection

For this master's thesis I engaged in different ethnographic research practices. Following Hume & Mulcock (2004), Gusterson (2008) and Sherman Heyl (2010), I engaged in participant observation, informal conversations and formal interviews. The benefits of engaging in these different ethnographic research practices have already been described. The data for this thesis was collected during seven months of ethnographic research in the canton of Zurich as well as in the canton of Aargau. In the following sections, I address these ethnographic research practices I engaged in as well as my positionality and important ethical considerations regarding my fieldwork.

4.3.1 Participant Observation and Informal Interviews

According to O'Reilly (2012), the strength of participant observation as a research method lies in its ability to combine participation (involvement) and observation (distancing) as one research method. By doing so, participant observation allows the researcher to gain more and different insights into the research topic by becoming him- or herself participant (Flick, 2009).

In December 2021, I participated in the campaign "Züri Schenkt". This is a campaign in which all asylum seekers and migrants in the canton of Zurich are to be given a Christmas present in the form of gloves, hats, scarves and a personal greeting card. On the one hand, this is intended to be a useful gift during the cold winter months in Switzerland and, on the other hand, to represent a gesture of welcome. I helped to check the presents, helped with the wrapping and also with the distribution to the different asylum centres. While we were not allowed to enter the centres, I was nevertheless able to gather information through various conversations with other volunteers, some of whom are involved in other refugee projects, and the few moments in the respective anterooms of the asylum centres.

Further, I engaged in participant observation as well as informal interviews at the OFF centre. I spend a couple of mornings and afternoons in the summer of 2022 at the OFF Centre as a volunteer. I went groceries shopping with the women, helped to prepare the daily lunch, gave some German lessons, played with the children and went along to a couple of day trips to the lake of Zurich or the Zurich Zoo. During that time I've had many informal conversations with different women who visit the OFF Centre. The topics of these conversation varied from what we will cook today to very intimate topics such as abusive parents or leaving loved ones behind. Further, the women told me about their everyday worries, about their frustrations with the Swiss Asylum System, about feeling homesick and also about their fears regarding the future. They opened up about feeling stuck in Switzerland and the struggles they face regarding finding work or an appartement. Some of these conversations were really emotional. The conversations were mostly not started by me and during these conversations I was mostly silent and only rarely intervened to ask something in order to not (unconsciously) steer the conversation too much. These conversations were spontaneous and not agreed upon beforehand which is why I did not record them. Additionally I had a lot of informal conversations with the manager of the OFF, where we talked about the OFF centre, its purpose, its benefits but also its limitations, how it can help the women who visit it, why men are not allowed as well as her views on the Swiss Asylum System and especially the different residence permits. Further, the manager of the OFF centre spends a lot of time with the women who visit the OFF centre and therefore she was able to tell me about common worries, struggles and difficulties these women face in their everyday lives.

I further engaged in multiple informal conversations with my official research participants. With some of my participants I had informal conversations before our formal interview however, with most of them I had informal conversations after having had a formal interview. I have known Emesa since her arrival in Switzerland and I have had many informal conversations with her. For example, as opposed to my other participants, I know a lot about Emesa's refugee story and about her life before leaving Syria. Through these conversations with her I learned about her way of thinking and gained a deep understanding of what makes her happy, what makes her angry and what worries her. Further, as a result of having known her for almost seven years, we have a strong and close relationship, with a high level of trust and understanding between us. Even though I have got to know Arja and Pari only in the context of this master's thesis, we did spend a lot of time together in which we got to know each other better and consequently had many informal conversations. I also met with Ali for a second time, after the formal interview. During this informal conversation he told me about many difficulties and struggles he was facing at the moment. While these were private struggles regarding mostly his family and wife, they were all related to the Swiss Asylum System and him being a refugee. These informal conversations gave me increasingly deeper insights into the difficulties and struggles they encountered as well as their perspective. Further, these informal conversations contributed to the building of a trusting relationship and the developing of a friendship.

The participant observations as well as the various informal conversations and interviews helped me to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of the Swiss Asylum System, of the everyday lives of refugees and their ways of thinking. Seeing multiple asylum centres, it further became clear to me how securitised and segregated asylum centres are. Through my conversations with the manager of the OFF centre, I gained a better understanding of the importance of places like the OFF in Zurich. Further, the conversations with the manager of the OFF centre helped me in identifying some common struggles and difficulties refugee women face in Switzerland. I benefited from this information particularly during the formal interviews, as I was able to ask more specific questions. The conversations I had with the women at the OFF centre helped me to understand what worries them and what they struggle with. Further, the conversations I had with Emesa, Arja and Pari helped in building relationships of trust which benefitted our formal interviews. Through all these various

interactions, I began to understand how refugee women experience borders and intersectionality in their everyday lives.

4.3.2 Formal Interviews

I met with seven individuals who have applied for asylum in Switzerland and who were open to have a formal interview about their experiences with the Swiss Asylum System with me. While my aim was to have a first informal get-to-know meeting, I quickly realised, that my interview partners expected and also were open to a formal interview setting even at our first meeting. Especially the men I met as part of my fieldwork expected a formal interview at our first meeting. This became clear for example by them asking if I wanted to record the interview.

With all of my interview partners I communicated beforehand via a messenger app (Whatsapp or Signal), which gave my research participants the opportunity to ask questions beforehand. One of my research partners even asked to see the questions I had prepared before our meeting. This written communication beforehand also gave me the opportunity to really explain the aim of my research and emphasize that their participation is voluntary. This kind of beforehand preparation of what my research entails was also beneficial for my research participants as they had time to think about my research aim and decide if they were interested. With research participants I was meeting for the first time, I made an effort regarding a relationship of trust by having an informal introduction, accompanied by small talk before I explained to my interview partners what my research is about. This often lasted for twenty to thirty minutes and gave both of us enough time to settle in and get comfortable with each other. With regard as when to start with the more formal part of an interview I relied on my interpersonal skills in order to determine a good time to direct the conversation to the topic of my thesis.

At the beginning of every interview I asked my participants if I could record the interview or if not, if I could take notes. Seven formal interviews were recorded. During the interviews which I did not record I frequently made notes of what was being said.

For these formal interviews I prepared an interview guideline with approximately twenty main questions. These questions were designed to be mostly open-ended questions meaning, they were not answerable with simply a yes or no. From conversations I have had with friends of

mine with a refugee background as well as the informal conversations I had as part of my participant observation, I had somewhat a basic conception of which themes could be interesting to my research. I also had an idea of what questions could be interesting to ask and I also already had rough sense of where internal borders could be faced. Therefore, I structured the interview guideline into six subchapters, namely; the participant's arrivals in Switzerland, their life during the asylum procedure, the enforcement of internal borders and bordering processes, their asylum hearing, the asylum decision and political status and the time after the asylum decision. This made it possible for me to provide enough room to my research participants and let them decide and steer in what direction the interviews should go. Further, it allowed my research participants to bring up topics which were not on my interview guideline and I was then able to inquire on said topics. This method also helped me to identify themes through an iterative process. However, this method required flexibility from my part. Because the conversations were so open, sometimes I found us starting to get off-topic. In these situations I had to use my interpersonal skills in order to find a natural way back to my questions.

All my interviews were held in German. My interview partners were free to choose either English, German or Italian as the language for the interview. Depending on different factors such as the time they have been in Switzerland and how intense and eager they have studied and learned the German language in that time, which on the other hand is dependent on the energy and stress level as well as their mental health, the German skills of my interview partners varied. Nonetheless, six of my interview partners had good German language skills. They were all able to understand my questions, ask their own questions as well as communicate and share their experiences in detail. If there were unclarities, they were able to inform me about these and I could rephrase a question or give an example of what I meant. With one of my interview participants we communicated using an online translation platform, where he was able to type in his answers in his native language and it would be translated to German. Because of this, the interview was much longer and it also did not make it possible for me to record the interview. However, it worked quite good and he was able to communicate his experiences well, and answer my questions. Nevertheless it is important to be aware, that interviews in a foreign language come with certain limitations, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

After the first interviews with my research partners I already started with the data analysis, which I will address later in this chapter. However, in the process of transcribing and analysing my data, I realised that I had some more questions and that there were topics I did not go into enough detail about in the first interview. That is why I reached out to my research partners and asked if they would be open for a second interview. While I did not meet all of my interview partners for a second meeting I did meet with two for a second interview (see Table 1). The aim of the second interview was mainly to talk more about the role of their gender for their experiences within the Swiss Asylum System. In the case of the quotes from the interviews included in this thesis, a one or a two in brackets indicates whether a quote comes from the first or second interview with the respective research participants.

(Assumed) Name	Age	Gender	Residence permit	1st Interview	2nd Interview	Arrival in Switzerland
Emesa	46	Female	F (later B)	13.04.2022		Late 2015
Mohammad		Male	F	25.04.2022		Mid 2020
Hassan		Male	F	26.04.2022		Early 2021
Ali		Male	N	27.04.2022		Late 2021
Arja	29	Female	B	04.05.2022	18.10.2022	Late 2016
Katia	37	Female	F	21.06.2022		Mid 2017
Pari	46	Female	F	28.06.2022	23.09.2022	Mid 2015

Table 1: Overview of my Research Participants and Interviews

4.3.3 Positionality

It is important to recognize the researcher's role in shaping the ethnographic encounter. As a researcher we listen and most importantly make sense of what we hear in a biased way. This depends on theoretical, personal and cultural frameworks and often also on unequal power relations (Luttrell, 2000: 499). As Gusterson (2008: 94) argues, "ethnographers are inevitably marked in the field by their race, class, gender, education level, nationality, and other characteristics. In some contexts, aspects of the researcher's own identity may play a

facilitating role; in others they may be crippling." The researcher's positionality influences the data collected which consequently affects the results of ethnographic research and thereby the production of knowledge (McDowell, 1992). In order to allow a debate regarding the researcher's position as well as to ensure the counter of overgeneralization and universalization of the results of the fieldwork it is important as a researcher to be aware of one's positionality as well as to openly communicate his or her own position (Mattingly & Falconer-Al-Hindi, 1995; Gilbert, 1994; Rose, 1997). Further, Rose (1997) suggests that being aware of one's positionality can help to expose the biases and power dynamics that shape mainstream academic discourses, and to challenge traditional notions of objectivity and universal truth. She also argues that acknowledging and incorporating diverse perspectives and experiences can lead to more nuanced and complex understandings of the world.

With regard to my fieldwork, my positionality is of great importance (Rose, 1997). An individual's social location can shape their perspective and understanding of the world, and this is particularly relevant for researchers. I am a Swiss citizen, and have lived in Zurich, Switzerland almost my entire life. I am therefore in a very privileged situation regarding not only my political rights but also considering my German language skills as well as my familiarity with the Swiss culture. As Haraway (1988) has pointed out, the concept of situated knowledge highlights the importance of recognizing the social and cultural context in which knowledge is produced. I was very familiar with the geographical environment of my fieldwork. This is opposed to ethnographical fieldwork in which the researcher leaves its familiar surroundings. However, my research partners were not always as familiar with the geographical surroundings of Zurich as most of my research partners do not live in Zurich but rather on the outskirts of the city. It was important to me that me being familiar with the geographical surroundings of Zurich would not shape my interviews by me deciding where we meet or what activities we did. This is why I made sure to leave the meeting place up to my research partners. Some meetings took place at my research partners favourite café, others at the University of Zurich and for another interview I visited my research partner at her home. However, for some of my research partners it was not easy to suggest a place to meet, as some did not know Zurich well enough. Consequently, for some interviews we met at the main station in Zurich and decided together where to go. Hence, while I was moving as an insider within geographically familiar surroundings, for some interviews I found myself in very unfamiliar environments and therefore took on the role of an outsider (Gusterson, 2008).

Further, while I was familiar with the broader geographical location of my fieldwork, I was rather unfamiliar with the social landscape of my research. In preparation for my research I did study the CEAS and the Swiss Asylum System in an attempt to gain more understanding for the legislature and the different residence permits. While I did have experience in volunteer work as well as have many friends with a forced migration background and have family members with a forced migration background, I do not have a refugee background and therefore can only to a certain amount understand what it means to forcefully leave a home. Therefore, I cannot compare a forceful migration to my own experiences.. During my interactions with my respondents I felt that my positionality, especially my family's forced migration background influenced how my participants saw me. As soon as my respondents learned of my family's forced migration background I felt as if they suddenly trusted me more With some participants I felt as if they perceived me as trustful and as somewhat understanding of what they have been through. As a result this influenced how they responded to my questions. In my perception, my participants answered my questions without hesitation and they actively participated and engaged in our conversations so that it was them who did most of the talking.

Other important aspects of my positionality regarding my fieldwork is my gender as well as my age (Rose, 1997; McDowell, 1992). I identify as a woman. For my research of refugees' experiences within the Swiss Asylum System it became clear that my being female facilitated my research with female research partners while it seemed to impede my research with male research participants. My gender influenced the conversations I had with men differently than the conversations I had with women. In the conversations with men, my gender led to them asking me more personal question about my marital status and whether or not I have children. Further, in these conversations we did not talk about any struggles and difficulties they might have faced due to their gender. Therefore, my gender played a deciding role as I decided to focus my research on refugee women within the Swiss Asylum System. In my interviews with my female research partners, my gender played an important role, as it affected the topics my research partners talked about (Rose, 1997). It was also often assumed by my female research partners, that I could somewhat understand or had similar experiences regarding feminist topics (McDowell, 1992). Me not having children and not being married further impacted the conversations I had with my research participants. As already mentioned, this influenced the

conversations I had with men. Regarding my female research participants, two of the women I talked to are approximately my age, which led to us having similar interests as well as us both standing at a similar point in life regarding our future. Two of the women I talked to are about the age of my parents, which led to us having a different relationship (Rose, 1997). The interviews with the two older women were less conversational as opposed to the interviews with the two younger women.

4.3.4 Ethical Considerations

According to Arifin (2018: 30) in all research study it is important to protect human subjects through the application of appropriate ethical principles. Arifin (2018: 30) further argues, that in a qualitative study, and especially when conducting face to face research, ethical considerations are particularly important, as qualitative studies entail a very in-depth study process. For my research I referred to the Ethics Committee's guideline questionnaire by the Human Geography division of the University of Zurich. Through completing this questionnaire, I have become more aware of the importance of ethical considerations in research. I based my research principles on the following ethical issues.

The most important ethical principle for my study was the principle of informed consent and voluntary participation. Therefore, my participants needed to be informed about my research, my research aim and their role in my research. It was very important to me, that my interview partners were further informed about their power of freedom of choice whether or not to participate in the research and that this freedom of choice was upheld throughout the entire research process. Therefore, my research partners were able to withdraw from my research even after the formal interview was already conducted. While I gave all this information already beforehand via messenger app, I always made sure to recapitulate the aim of my research as well as my interview partners' role when actually meeting with my interview partners. Explaining the aim of my research well was also important. It was significant, that my participants would not expect me to be able to do something in the Asylum system to better their case. Further I made sure that there were no open questions regarding the meeting and I asked for their consent to record the interview.

Other important ethical issues for my research were anonymity and confidentiality. At the beginning of each interview I explained that only I would have access to the recording of the interview and that I would anonymise the identity of my research participants while transcribing, even if they did not ask for that. I further explained, that all of my research participants were able to say things off the record if they felt the need for it (Arifin, 2018: 30-31). I gave all my participants a false name in order to conceal my participants identities. In order to avoid me "naming" my participants, I asked them what name they would like me to use for them in my thesis. Further I did not publish any specific geographical information in order to ensure my participant's anonymity. These are all important considerations in the research process. By following these steps, researchers can produce more accurate and reliable research findings, and can help to build trust and rapport with their research participants (Halilovic, 2013). I realize, that this thesis contains a lot of sensible information on my research partners. However, it was explicitly wished from all my research partners for me to publish my thesis, as they all expressed the wish for me to share their stories and to draw attention to the difficulties and challenges they faced in Switzerland.

It is important to apply ethical considerations even after the completion of scientific research. From the beginning it was clear to me that I will be building relationships of trust with my research participants and that these relationships are long-term. My research partners have shared very intimate details of their lives with me, influencing our relationship. I am aware, that I do not have a purely professional relationship with my research participants, whereas it is also not purely one of friendship. This expresses itself just through the fact, that I know a lot more about their lives than vice versa. Throughout my research, friendships have started to shape with some of my participants. I am aware, that these relationships and friendships will be long term and more two way than during my research. However, I see this as an enrichment rather than a burden.

4.4 Data Analysis

For this thesis I used the qualitative or hermeneutic content analysis. The qualitative content analysis refers to a systematic approach to analyse qualitative data. The qualitative content analysis relies on the identification of categories and themes (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Graneheim et al., 2017). However, it became clear, that my data analysis required both a

systematic and a flexible approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). While some themes were clear from the beginning, other themes emerged later on in my research. I already began with the analysis of my data during the collection of data, therefore following an iterative process. Since I focused on the lived experiences of individuals, I further made use of the interpretative phenomenological analysis. The interpretative phenomenological analysis focuses on "the subjective experience of individuals and the possibility to study developmental processes in detail" (Demuth & Mey, 2015: 673). The term "developmental processes" refers to the ways in which individuals or groups change or grow over time. Developmental processes refer to changes in physical, cognitive, social, emotional, or other aspects of an individual's or group's development. Further, they are influenced by a variety of factors, including environment, culture, experiences (Demuth & Mey, 2015). Accordingly, for my data analysis I made use of two different but not mutually exclusive analytical concepts. By combining the qualitative content analysis as well as the interpretative phenomenological analysis I was able to identify themes in my participant's narratives while also focussing on the subjective experience as well as developmental processes of my participants.

I transcribed my interviews using *happyscribe*, a webpage that allows you to upload your datafile and uses AI to transcribe. I did not smoothen my interviews while transcribing as it was not necessary for my analysis. Also, I did not correct any grammar. I chose to do so, as I wanted to ensure that the transcripts were as close as possible to what and how it was said in the interviews. This way I could also ensure to tell the stories of my participants in their own words. I only smoothened (deleted repetitions, loud thinking) the bits I cite in this thesis (Dresing & Pehl, 2015). I translated the quotes I incorporated in this thesis and the translations of each quote can be found in the footnotes. I translated all the quotes myself analogously. In the main text I left the original quotes. I chose to do so, in order to make sure to stay as close to my participant's narratives as possible.

After transcribing and in order to identify central themes, I read my interviews and took notes of important themes. For this purpose, I wrote logbook entries of all my interviews, summarizing them. This allowed me to establish a first overview of the topics that appeared from the interviews and informal conversations with my participants. I proceeded to colour code the emerging themes in the logbook entries. Subsequently, I summarised all gathered themes in multiple tables as well as mind maps. This helped me to have an overview of the

different emerging themes. The overview also helped me to visualize which themes I want to look at in more depth in the second interviews. I then used the tables to identify the main themes. I did include my fieldnotes from my volunteer work at "Züri Schenkt" and the OFF Centre in this process. Since I decided to present my data as lived experiences I then proceeded to write drafts of the lived experiences of my research participants. As a last step, I went over my data and marked particularly interesting and illustrative bits to then cite in my thesis.

4.5 Limitations

This research is subject to some limitations regarding the research design. I will address these limitations in this subchapter. The results of ethnographic research emerge from a very specific social and cultural setting and have to be analysed, interpreted and understood as such. It is important to not simply generalize the data collected through this approach to a large number of people or in my case to all refugee women in Switzerland (Quierós et al., 2017: 370-376). At the same time, an ethnographic approach allows researchers to gain a deep understanding of the culture, experiences, and perspectives of the group or individual being studied (Gusterson, 2008). Further, ethnographic research is highly flexible and allows researchers to adapt their research methods and approaches as they learn more about the subject being studied (Luttrell, 2000). Additionally, ethnographic research is participant-centred and focuses on the perspectives and experiences of these research participants (Mattingly & Falconer-Al-Hindi, 1995).

My sampling strategies are also subject to limitations. According to Bagheri and Saadati (2015), one potential risk of snowball sampling is that the sample will be largely composed of people from the social environment of the individual who is initially selected for the study. Therefore the entire sample might share similar life situations, have similar knowledge and consequently might have similar experiences. However, in order to minimize this problem, I followed different sampling strategies, including theoretical sampling, and convenience sampling.

For this research, only participants who speak either German, English or Italian could be interviewed. On the one hand this limited my sample size. On the other hand this assumes good enough language skills to understand the questions and to narrate their experiences in that

language. This is by no means evident. Misunderstandings cannot be completely ruled out. While I tried my best to ask my questions in a way my research participants understand and to always encourage them to inquire if there were any unclarities, misunderstandings are always possible. Further, I sometimes had unclarities regarding what my research participants said. However I always inquired when I did not fully understand a statement in an attempt to prevent misunderstandings.

Further, the sample for this research is significantly limited. The sample size is generally very small, making my findings and conclusions not representative. Further, I mainly spoke to women with similar backgrounds. They came to Switzerland from similar greater regions and fled for similar reasons. Further, all of my research participants come from an educated background. Two of the women I interviewed, divorced or separated from their ex-husbands after their arrival here in Switzerland. All of the women I interviewed have participated in different organisations, held speeches or given interviews before. For these reasons, my sample is not representative for refugee women in general and my findings and conclusions have to be interpreted and understood in the context of these women and as situated knowledge.

The complexity of the Swiss Asylum System poses a further limitation. In the last five years the Swiss Asylum System has changed significantly, which has affected my participant's lives greatly. They are confused about the rules and regulations of the Swiss Asylum System. Further, due to the federal system of Switzerland, policies vary from canton to canton. I conducted my research in the cantons of Zurich and Aargau. My findings are therefore geographically positioned. Additionally, over the course of my research it became clear, that policies and legal adaptations can fluctuate from case to case and are therefore inconsistent. These factors can shape the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees living in Switzerland. It is therefore important to understand this master's thesis as temporally as well as geographically situated.

With regards to the results it is important to be aware of the impact of the doing of my own identity as a researcher. As Valentine (2007:14) points out, this can lead to "unwittingly shape or limit the narratives we are told by contributing to the enactment of some identities/realities rather than others". In the case of this research, with some interviews my identity as a researcher led to my participant forming expectations regarding my role in their asylum claims.

Further, my gender and age as well as my family's forced migration background influenced the narratives I was told. Further, in the interviews with women, my gender contributed to the enactment of their gendered identities. This resulted in them raising feminist issues and expecting me to relate to some of their experiences because of my gender.

5 Exploring Internal Borders and Intersectionality in the Asylum Experience of Refugee Women

As already mentioned, this thesis focuses on the asylum experiences of refugee women in Switzerland. In the following chapter the results of my empirical work will be presented. First the challenges and difficulties experienced by refugee women, in Switzerland will be examined. Therefore, the general challenges or bordering processes experienced by refugee women with and within the Swiss Asylum System will be examined in order to provide a conceptual introduction to my empirical results. I will address five main internal borders and the ways in which they manifest as different bordering processes, my research participants faced in Switzerland. Afterwards I will present four narratives – Pari, Arja, Katia and Emesa – of lived experiences of intersectionality and bordering processes of refugee women in Switzerland. As will be seen, the intersection of different identity positions of refugee women translates into discrimination and practices of exclusion and inclusion.

5.1 Internal Borders in Switzerland

Referring to the literature presented in chapter 3.2 and 3.2.1, this subchapter aims to discuss and analyse the internal borders faced by refugee women in Switzerland. The bordering processes employed by states, aim, amongst other things, to control and limit the movement of unwanted populations (Basaran, 2008: 341). As already discussed, bordering has been argued to not only be about walls, passports, checkpoints or fingerprints. Consequently, multiple scholars have shown bordering to be done and experienced in social and cultural dimensions as well as within nation states rather than only at their territorial boundaries.

For this thesis I met and interviewed four refugee women – Pari, Arja, Katia and Emesa – who have been in Switzerland between seven and five years. Three of four women had to leave their home countries due to an ongoing violent conflict, and one woman had to leave her home country due to her political engagement in an organization critical of the government. All four women fled to Switzerland via the "Balkan route". In Switzerland, all four women have applied for asylum and by the time of our interviews have received an asylum decision. None of the four women had a Dublin procedure. They all live in the German speaking part of Switzerland,

two of them in the canton of Aargau, one lives in the canton of Zurich and one lives in the canton of Berne. All four women have lived in multiple asylum centres, varying in size as well as organisation and location. Further, since they all arrived before March 1st 2019, their asylum applications were processed according to the Swiss Asylum Act before the revision. This means, they all waited between one and three years before receiving their asylum decision. Three out of four women received a negative asylum decision, resulting in them obtaining an F-permit, and one woman received a positive asylum decision and therefore the B-permit.

5.1.1 Language

For all four women, the language in Switzerland posed an issue. Emesa and Arja were sufficiently fluent in English at the time of their arrival in Switzerland making it easier for them to make their asylum claim as well as to communicate with the state officials and social workers. However, Pari and Katia did not speak English well enough to use it to their advantage, which made it difficult for them to receive all the information. These women relied on other refugees at the asylum centre for the information regarding the asylum procedure as well as their forthcoming transfers. After submitting their asylum claims, all four women received transfers to a certain canton and to smaller asylum centres in which they all lived during their asylum procedure. Since they all had an N-permit, they were only entitled to a limited number of hours per week of official German courses during this period. This led to all of them attending non-official German courses, offered by churches, NGO's and other volunteer-based organisations. However, both, Emesa and Katia, lived in an asylum centre in a small town, where no German courses were offered. They both had to travel to different towns in order to attend both the official as well as non-official German courses.

> "Aber ich habe diese Transfer in [ein Asylzentrum]. Und hier es gibt keine Schulen.
> Ich habe keine Ahnung, und was auch dort in, in, in Asylheim hier hat eine Frau,
> sie hat mir gesagt, es gibt auch so ein Treffpunkt in [Schweizer Stadt]. Ich kann
> dort gehen und fragen und damals habe ich meine Deutsch verbessert und so, ich
> kann auch Kommunizieren und Fragen und dann dort bin ich gegangen und sie
> haben mir gesagt, es gibt eine Fortschritte Kurs in diese in der Schule auch

freiwillig Person macht unterrichtet uns eine Frau. Und so, ja nur die hier. Und dann Kanton hat mir auch einen Kurs gegeben, drei Mal pro Woche.»[3] (Emesa, 1)

This on the other hand interfered with their financial situations as they had to pay for the tickets for the public transportation. Since the non-official German courses were run by volunteers, the teachers were often different people. This led to redundancies in teaching and therefore slow progress for the students. However, all of the four women also recount, that the multiple and different German courses were a way for them to structure their days and weeks and gave them something to do while waiting for their asylum decision. Further, it was important to them to learn German in order to feel integrated as well as to make communicating with state officials as well as with Swiss citizens easier.

5.1.2 Social Workers and Social Welfare System

Since the acceptance of their asylum applications, all four women have interacted with social workers. The asylum system in Switzerland is organised federally. This means, that the organisation and management of the asylum centres lies within the competence of the cantons. Therefore, there are significant differences from canton to canton regarding the management and organisation of asylum centres. It is because of these differences between cantons, that some of the four women have had social workers assigned to their "case" shortly after learning that their asylum application will be processed. While others have had a single social workers assigned to all inhabitants of the asylum centre. All four women have recounted negative relationships with the social workers assigned to either their case or asylum centre. Emesa described the social worker in charge of the asylum centre she lived in as a mean person, doing everything in her power to make Emesa's life even more difficult.

«Wirklich und dann ich habe so eine so schlimme Betreuerin bekommen hier in [Asylzentrum]. Sie hat alles, alles Steine auf meinem Weg gelegt. Alle, alle Steine. Was sie kann sie hat gemacht. Ich halte sie für ein schlimme Person und nicht nur

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[3]«But I have this transfer in [an asylum center]. And here there are no schools. I have no idea, and what also there in, in, in the asylum home, a woman has here, she told me, there is also a meeting place in [Swiss city]. I can go there and ask and at that time I improved my German and so on, I can also communicate and ask questions and then I went there and they told me there is a progress course in the person who also does this voluntarily at school a woman teaches us. And so, yes only here. And then Kanton also gave me a course, three times a week» (Emesa, 1), (all following translations are my own)

mit mir. Mit alle. Alle Leute dort. Alle. Sie sind wirklich. Sie hat uns bis krank ins Spital gelandet. Ich habe auch Behandlung wegen Depression schon gehabt, weil ist es so schlimm, so schlimm!» [4] (Emesa, 1)

Arja described her relationship with the social worker assigned to her "case" similarly. Further, Arja recounted her social worker to have racialised as well as gendered prejudices against her. As a result, Arja was treated differently than male refugees and in a degrading manner, which negatively impacted her life.

«Eine Sozialarbeiterin war für mich zuständig und ich wusste nicht, ob ihre Arbeit mein Leben schwieriger zu machen war. Die Idee ist, dass ich als kurdische Frau heiraten, Kinder kriegen und zu Hause bleiben werde. Und dadurch, dass sie diese Überlegung in ihrem Kopf hat und dass sie es auch so bei der Arbeit als Orientierung nutzt, macht sie es unmöglich, umso schwerer, dass du aus dieser Rolle rauskommst.»[5] (Arja, 1)

Katia and Pari both also recount negative and even harmful relationships with their social workers as well as being treated in a racialised manner. Pari recounted what one of her social workers told her, during our interview:

«Sie [die Sozialarbeiterin] hat mir ab und zu immer gesagt es ist nicht dein Land, das ist mein Land. Dein Land, mein Land, das habe ich von ihr gelernt. Sie hat mir gesagt, Sie sind einfach nur für ein paar Tage hier und sie werden zurück geschickt. Und Sie müssen einfach dankbar sein für das Leben das Sie kriegen. Einfach dankbar sein für die Matratze, dass Sie zum Schlafen bekommen.» [6] (Pari, 2)

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[4] «Really, and then I got such a bad caseworker here in the [asylum center]. She laid all, all stones on my way. All, all stones. She did what she could [to make my life miserable]. I consider her a bad person and not just only with me. With everyone. All people there. All. They were really. She made us sick, until we landed in the hospital.. I've also had treatment for depression because it's so bad, so bad!» (Emesa, 1)

[5] «A social worker was responsible for me and I didn't know if her work was to make my life more difficult. The idea is that as a Kurdish woman I will get married, have children and stay at home. And by having that thought in her head and using it as a guide at work, she makes it impossible, all the more difficult, for you to get out of that role.» (Arja, 1)

[6] «She [the social worker] used to tell me from time to time it's not your country, it's my country. Your country, my country, I learned that from her. She told me you are just here for a few days and you're being sent back. And you just have to be thankful for the life you get. Just be thankful for the mattress you get to sleep on.» (Pari, 2)

While waiting for their asylum decision, all four women were financially dependent from social care. The level of social assistance depends on the different cantons as well as the permit. Therefore, a person with a B-permit is entitled to more social assistance than a person with an N-permit. The differences between the cantons regarding the social care for persons with an N-permit vary from eight francs per adult person and day in the canton of Aargau to eighteen francs per adult person and day in the canton of Basel Stadt. In some cantons, parents of children receive between three and eight francs per day per child, depending on the child's age as well as on the number of children in the family (SODK, 2021). All four women recalled the time living in the asylum centre as a very difficult time, also because of their financial situations. Emesa reported in our interview, that in the asylum centre she lived they received their weekly money every Wednesday. If for any reason a resident of the asylum centre could not be present on Wednesday morning, he or she did not receive the money for that week.

Three of four women, Emesa, Katia and Arja are now no longer dependent from social care, as they were able to find employment. Pari however, is still dependent on social care. Pari described being dependent from social care, even after receiving her asylum decision to mean living with the bare minimum. In our interview, she described the limitations she and her daughter face in their everyday life as well as the controlling mechanisms implemented by the social welfare bureaucracy in her municipality. Being dependent from social care for her means to be constantly aware of her spending, not being able to move to a bigger or better located appartement, not being able to pay for her dental care, being exposed to control mechanisms such as having to provide an in-depth overview of all her spending each month, as well as not having the possibility to apply for a B-permit.

5.1.3 Residence Permits

All four women applied for asylum in Switzerland. As mentioned before, because they did so before March 1st 2019, their asylum claims were treated according to the asylum law before the revision. This means, that they all waited between one and three years before receiving an asylum decision. This long period of waiting and the uncertainty about their future was difficult for them.

«Weisst du am schlimmsten dieses lange Warten. Diese, lange, lange Warten. Es ist vorbei die Zeit. Für Schweiz auch nicht gut weil die Leute sie können nichts machen. Ich habe wirklich viel gekämpft und Deutsch gelernt. Aber es gibt Leute sie sind nur in Asylheim geblieben.» [7] (Emesa, 1)

Similarly as Emesa, Arja found it very difficult having to wait for her asylum decision and the uncertainty the waiting brought, that she felt it best to be as active as possible. In her case that meant, learning as much German as possible and being as socially active as possible.

As mentioned above, three of four women received a negative asylum decision, resulting in an F status. Only Arja received a B-permit. The receipt of a permit which comes with only limited rights impacted all four women. Arja, recounted a feeling of shame when having to show her permit, as it says "refugee" very prominently on her B-permit. However, Arja further stated to feel grateful to "at least" having received the B-permit and not the F-permit. Katia, Emesa and Pari have to live in Switzerland as provisionally admitted foreigners, and were not recognised as refugees, despite their background. Having "F" makes all three of them feel unsafe. In our interview, Katia recalled the difficulties she faced looking for a job with the F-permit. She applied for multiple jobs, however, she was rejected due to her permit as the employers feared that Katia will be sent back/away soon. Emesa recounted similar experiences. While she was lucky enough to find an employment, she does not feel equal to the other workers. Therefore, she does not feel safe enough to speak up, state her opinion or contest her wage as she is afraid that with F no one else will employ her.

«Weisst du ich brauche nur Papier um mich zu bewegen oder bessere Arbeit zu finden oder Freiheit zu haben, weil ich möchte wirklich frei sein. Ich darf an anderer Stelle mich bewerben. Aber so oder so, mit F niemand nimmt mich.» [8] (Emesa, 1)

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[7] «You know the worst part is this long wait. This, long, long wait. That time is gone. Not good for Switzerland either because the people can't do anything. I really fought a lot and learned German. But there are people who just stayed in asylum centers.» (Emesa, 1)

[8] «You know I just need papers to move or to find a better job or to have freedom because I really want to be free. I am allowed to apply elsewhere. But either way, with F nobody takes me.» (Emesa, 1)

Pari feels similarly about her F-permit. While she has had some (unpaid) internships, she did not find employment yet. In our interview, Pari stated that she feels as if locked up in a cage due to her F-permit. For her it feels as if she is being punished with the F-permit, while she is unsure for what. Pari further feels guilt towards her daughter, as she also has an F-permit, despite being born in Switzerland. Pari recounted it being especially difficult for her as she feels responsible for the limitations the F-permit has not only on her life, but on her daughter's life as well.

In the early year of 2022, Emesa applied for a B-permit. She was able to do so as she has been financially independent for over two years and speaks well enough German. After waiting for over six months, Emesa received her confirmation letter for her B-permit in August 2022. However, it was not until Mid-October that she physically received her papers. In the two-and-a-half months between confirmation letter and permit her F-permit expired, leaving her with no form of identification. This led to her living in a constant state of fear of being stopped and controlled by the police or of losing her job due to her being "illegal" and undocumented for that period of time. It further impacted her everyday life, as she was unable to buy her daughter a new SIM card, or obtain a license plate for her newly bought car, due to the lack of papers. Upon receiving her B-permit papers she had to realize that the date of issue was in August and the expiration date was therefore in August of the next year. Consequently she had to pay the price for an entire year, whereas she will not have her papers for an entire year. She stated to always thinking things will finally get better, but ends up being disappointed again.

> «Weisst du, jedes Mal ich denke jetzt wird es besser, wir haben es endlich geschafft. Immer werde ich enttäuscht. Besser ich hoffe nicht mehr, dann ist es nicht so schmerzhaft.» [9] (Emesa, 1)

5.1.4 Living Situation

My research participant's experience with the living situation in Switzerland were not positive. All of my research participants lived in asylum centres. They had to spend a large amount of time in very small spaces with no privacy. Some of my interview partners also did not feel safe

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[9] «You know, every time I think now it's getting better, we've finally made it. I'm always disappointed. Better I hope not anymore, then it's not so painful.» (Emesa, 1)

in their accommodation. Further, in the asylum centres they faced harsh rules and were not able to decide upon basic everyday activities such as when, where and what to eat. They faced further bordering processes such as having to share bathroom facilities, not being allowed to leave the centres after a certain hour and having to "prove" they paid for food they wanted to bring into their rooms.

> «Im [Asylzentrum] wir waren wie im Gefängnis. Es ist fast gleich, wir haben eine Pause, nach Mittagessen du darfst zwei Stunde draussen.»[10] (Emesa, 1)

Whenever the women I spoke to tried to change their living situation they were faced with great difficulties. However, all of the women I spoke to managed to find other living solutions at some point. Yet, how they did that varies greatly. Emesa managed to find an inexpensive appartement through her boss. Katia worked two fulltime jobs in order to pay for her own appartement. Arja found a room in a shared appartement, and Pari received an appartement through social services. However the difficulties did not become less for my interview partners, even when living in their "own" appartements. For example, having her boss renting her an appartement resulted in the rent not being disclosed and being directly deducted from her salary. Emesa did not feel like she could complain as she felt like she has to be grateful and feared to lose her job if she complained. Further, having to work two jobs in order to be able to pay for one's rent is very straining. Living in a shared appartement can be quite challenging when the roommates do not get along. Unfortunately, this was the case for Arja. She found herself living with a racist person, making her life so miserable that she decided to move back to the asylum centre. For Pari, receiving an appartement facilitated her life with a young child but at the same time put her in danger as she was living with her abusive husband. Before, in the asylum centre both were under constant social control by the other inhabitants of that asylum centre. Therefore she experienced less physical violence there, which then drastically increased as soon as they received an appartement.

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[10] «In the [asylum center] we were like in prison. It's almost the same, we have one break, after lunch you can go outside for two hours.» (Emesa, 1)

5.1.5 Childcare

Women refugees with children further face other difficulties than women refugees without any children. Of the four women I spoke with, Emesa and Pari both have children. Emesa and Pari both feel a lot of pressure and responsibility for their children and at the same time they feel alone and overwhelmed. Both Emesa and Pari are the primary caregivers for their children, as they are both either divorced or separated from their husbands. Despite having experienced a lot of trauma in their lives, Emesa and Pari learned to put their needs behind. In our interviews they both recounted to feel pressured by the people around them to always stay strong, keep fighting and to not quit. Whenever either Emesa or Pari sought help from their social environment, they were told to stay strong for their children. This led to them feeling a high responsibility in the sense of putting their own needs and their own (mental) health in the background. They also both suffer from a guilty conscience as Pari put it:

> «Sie [meint ihre Tochter] muss so leben wegen mich. Sie hat nicht diese Leben gewählt.»[11] (Pari, 2)

Both women suffered trauma and were in need of medical care, however they did not feel like they could get help, due to their feeling of pressure, responsibility and guilt towards their children and therefore a lot of time passed before they received it.

As seen in this subchapter, all four women faced similar challenges and internal borders regarding various aspects of their lives, in relation to their gender and them being refugees in Switzerland. Further, it became clear that different challenges had to be overcome depending on the circumstances of each woman's life. Therefore, while all women were affected by their residence permits, only the mothers I spoke to, faced the additional challenges of childcare. The challenges described in this subchapter relate to the internal borders and bordering processes, that the four women encountered, faced and overcame in the context of the Swiss Asylum System. Further, the examples of internal borders discussed in this subchapter draw attention to the hidden, fluid and subjective nature of bordering and internal borders. Internal borders are therefore experienced subjectively. The results presented in this chapter

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[11] «She [means her daughter] has to live like this because of me. She did not choose this life.» (Pari, 2)

additionally illustrate how internal borders are overlapping and cannot be clearly pinpointed or separated from each other. For example, the internal borders my research participants faced regarding social welfare have an impact on their living situation as well as their access to German courses. Internal borders are therefore intersecting and impact multiple and different life aspects of refugee women.

5.2 Intersectionality as Lived Experiences – Four Narratives

In the next section four narratives of intersectionality as lived experiences will be presented, following the example set by Gill Valentine (2007). The four narratives are written as stories and I adopted a narrative writing style. I chose to do so in order to put the actual experiences of my research partners in the forefront. With the aim to put my interview partner's stories at the centre and thus to stay true to their narrations, I will rely on direct quotes from the interviews. This allows me to go into further detail about the lived intersectionality as well as the bordering processes encountered by the four women. The four narratives are themselves narrated in a series of short stories and passages. This allows me to highlight the specific spatial, temporal and social contexts where intersectionality is lived and further to emphasize the specific identifications and disidentifications that emerge for my interview partners (Valentine, 2007). This structuring of the narratives into smaller stories further benefits to pinpoint where and how identity is being done and undone. Some stories are longer and more in depth than others, which by no means reflects the importance of each story. The order of the four narratives does not reflect a particular hierarchy. Further, the individual stories are not narrated chronically. Throughout the four narratives I will address bordering processes encountered by my interview partners in Switzerland as well as show where my interview partners experienced intersectionality.

5.2.1 Pari

First story

In this section, the focus will be on Pari's **gendered identity** position. Pari is a young woman in her thirties who was raised in Iran. She has multiple older brothers and as a child lived in a social context where decisions regarding her life were made by either her father or her brothers

and later by her husband. Living in a male-dominated household, Pari took on a strongly gendered role as well as a very passive role, learning as a child that not she herself is in charge or her life. Her, along with her mother and sisters did not have the right to speak their minds and make decisions regarding their lives. Pari was strongly emotionally invested in this identity position.

> «Ich habe nicht das Recht gehabt, alleine etwas zu bestimmen. So lange, als ich ein Kind oder mit meine Eltern war. Mein Vater und mein Bruder haben das gemacht. Ich bin einfach so erzogen und so, lange, dass ich geheiratet war er [der Ehemann] hat das gestimmt und ich habe kein Recht etwas zu sagen. Und auch ab und zu, wenn ich etwas dagegen gesagt habe, dann Fäuste und Ohrfeige sind sie zu mir gekommen.»[12] (Pari, 2)

Pari further recalls:

> «Ich weiss nicht, wie war das vor dem Krieg, aber während dem Krieg ist einfach so, dass die Frauen und Kinder müssen unter Druck sein. Müssen machen was die Männern wollen und draußen hat man keine Sicherheit, keinen Schutz. Dann muss man durchhalten, muss man einfach das machen, was die Männer sagen.»[13] (Pari, 2)

In this spatial context, her home rules as well as the prevailing gender norms and roles of her home society emphasised her gender identity. Further by the use of domestic violence, Pari became aware of her subjugated identity position.

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[12] «I didn't have the right to decide anything on my own. As long as I was a kid or with my parents. My father and my brother did that. I was just brought up that way and that, for a long time, that I was married, he [the husband] determined that and I have no right to say anything. And every now and then, when I said something against it, I got fists and slaps in the face.» (Pari, 2)

[13] «I don't know how it was before the war, but during the war it's just that women and children have to be under pressure. Have to do what the men want and outside you have no security, no protection. Then you have to persevere, you just have to do what the men say.» (Pari, 2)

Second Story

When Pari got pregnant, her identity position shifted, and her **mothered identity** became most significant to her. Pari was in her early twenties when she fled to Switzerland. She fled together with her husband. Shortly after arriving and while still living in an asylum centre, Pari got pregnant. She and her husband first lived in an asylum centre in the suburbs of Zurich, which consisted of little wooden containers, and were later relocated to another asylum centre in a small town in the canton of Zurich where they lived in a big, old building repurposed as an asylum centre. In both centres, Pari and her husband were separated from one another, meaning that Pari lived with all the other women in big community rooms and with only one lavatory. One time she slipped in the Kitchen and fell, leading to her losing a lot of blood and thus endangering her pregnancy. Upon complaining with her social worker on the conditions in which she as a pregnant woman had to live, she was told that she is not the only pregnant woman, despite her being exactly that.

> «Die Betten waren eng nebeneinander und 20 Betten nebeneinander, ohne Abstand, ohne einen Zentimeter Abstand. Und da war ich hochschwanger. Ich war in sechste Monat von Schwangerschaft. Ich konnte nicht selber aussuchen wo will ich schlafen.»[14] (Pari, 2)

This identity of the soon-to-be mother was so strong, that Pari preferred to live with her abusive husband in a small appartement rather than in the asylum centre and under the controlling eyes of everyone else. In her eyes it was better for the pregnancy to live with her violent and abusive husband than in the asylum centre. She complained with her social worker so many times until she decided to give Pari and her husband a small apartment.

> «Mit mein Exmann ich war weniger im Stress wegen andere Leute, aber es war auch ein andere Stress, weil er war mit mir allein und dann konnte er machen, was er wollte. Er hat mir so viel geschlagen, immer bedroht wegen Ausweis, dass ich nicht das gut gemacht habe, dass es nur mein Schuld ist, dass wir kein Status bekommen haben und die andere, wir haben immer gehört, diese Familie hat B

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[14] «The beds were close together and 20 beds next to each other, without a gap, not a centimeter apart. And at that point I was heavily pregnant. I was in the sixth month of pregnancy. I couldn't choose where I wanted to sleep.» (Pari, 2)

bekommen, diese Familie haben F bekommen, diese Familie das, diese das und die durften in den Deutschkurs gehen und wir nicht weil wir haben N gehabt.»[15] (Pari, 2)

In the specific context of the asylum centres and later her own appartement, parts of her subordinate gender identity were being undone by her gendered identity of becoming a mother. This is reflected in the fact that she changes her living situation in a self-determined manner and is committed to deciding for herself how and where she wants to sleep. During that time her role as soon-to-be-mother that became very emotionally prominent to her. Further, not only was her subjugated gender identity being undone, it was further situated within everyday bordering and power exerting processes.

Third Story

As a result of not only her escape but also the processes of the Swiss Asylum System, Pari's self-identity was undone and reshaped in the form of a **victimised**, **migrant identity** position. Regarding the asylum interview Pari was highly pressured by her husband to lie about her family and her identity. He told her that in order to receive asylum they would have to tell a story made up by him. Pari's interview took eleven hours. She had many inconsistencies in her story and did not feel comfortable lying. When they received a negative asylum decision, Pari's husband made her responsible for that.

> «Und wie viel Mal er mich geschlagen hat, weil wir keinen Status bekommen haben. Weil wir negative bekommen haben und… es war eine Katastrophe. Ich bin mehrmals bedroht, ich bin mehrmals Gewürgt, so beleidigt, nur weil ich nicht gut angelogen habe. Weil nur ich nicht gut bei diesem Interview mich erinnern konnte, was er mir erzählt hat. Einfach das so viel wie möglich verstecken wer mein Vater ist, wer bin ich eigentlich.»[16] (Pari, 2)

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[15] «With my ex-husband I was less stressed about other people, but it was also a different kind of stress because he was alone with me and then he could do whatever he wanted. He hit me so much, always threatened about permit that I didn't do well that it's only my fault we didn't get status and, we always heard this family got B, this family got F, this family this, this this and they were allowed to go to the German course and we weren't because we had N.» (Pari, 2)

[16] «And how many times he hit me because we didn't get permit. Because we got negative ones and… it was a disaster. I've been threatened several times, I've been choked several times, so offended just because I didn't lie

Pari's self-identity as daughter of her parents was therefore shaken, as she felt threatened and pressured to abandon her family and her notion of herself. Rather a new identity, the one of the victim migrant without asylum was being done.

> «Das war einfach meine Schuld, ganze Zeit. Er hat mir immer einfach das so gesagt, ist meine Schuld, stell dir vor, wenn man das jeden Tag mehrmals hört, dann ich habe das auch diese Gefühle gehabt. Ich war nicht eine gute Lügnerin. Ich habe das falsch gemacht, das ist nur mein Schuld.»[17] (Pari, 2)

The violence and abuse Pari experienced from her husband led to her believing what he told her. She started viewing herself as the problem and as guilty for not having received a positive asylum decision.

Fourth Story

As a result of her domestic situation emphasizing her gendered identity position, as well as the realization of the limited rights the N-permit grants her, Pari formed a **gendered refugee identity**. After her daughter was born, Pari's husband became increasingly violent. He was hoping Pari would give birth to a boy and not a girl. Fearing to lose her right for asylum if seeking help about her domestic situation, Pari focused on playing the role of the good and perfect wife. Being a migrant with Status N, Pari did not have the right to work, nor for an official German course. Moreover, Pari's daughter was still a baby. This led to Pari spending most of her time at home. The only hideaway from her husband Pari had, were non-governmental German classes in a nearby church. Out of fear she would always bring her baby and never leave her alone at home with her husband.

> «Und bin ich einfach in einem Sprachkurs gegangen und das war das einzige Hilfe oder so Schutzort für mich. Weil da waren so viele Leute und ich konnte mich

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well. Because only I couldn't remember very well what he told me during this interview. Just hide as much as possible who my father is, who am I really.» (Pari, 2)

[17] «It was just my fault, all along. He always just said that to me, it's my fault, imagine, if you hear that several times a day, then I also had these feelings. I wasn't a good liar. I did it wrong, it's all my fault.» (Pari, 2)

einfach verstecken oder ich konnte einfach dort hingehen und dann konnte er nicht seine böse Gesicht zeigen.»[18] (Pari, 2)

Spending most of her time at home, caring for her baby and living in constant fear from her husband led to the doing of a gendered identity of being a mother and a wife. Additionally, her identity as a refugee woman became emotionally most salient.

«Da habe ich ein Jahr durchgehalten, weil ich habe immer Angst. Ich habe N, wenn ich mich beschwere, dann wo bekomme ich Schutz. Ich konnte fast kein Deutsch. Ich habe keinen Sprachkurse gehabt. Und so einmal pro Woche dürften wir in eine Kirche gehen. Und es war auch so organisiert vom Sozialamt. Sonst nie. Ich wusste nicht wo soll ich Hilfe holen? Einmal habe ich beim Sprachkurs eine [...] Freiwillige. Ja, ich habe die erzählt und habe meine blauen Flecken gezeigt. Habe gesagt, er bedroht mich so mit Messern und das, das. Sie hat mir gesagt, ich soll niemandem das erzählen.»[19] (Pari, 2)

Pari's fears were reinforced by the volunteer at the German course, telling her not to tell anyone about her domestic situation. This led to Pari becoming very aware of her limited rights as a refugee but also as a woman. In this spatial and temporal context the identity positions of a person with a limited set of rights and as a refugee woman were being done.

Fifth Story

When Pari and her husband received a negative asylum decision resulting in them receiving the F-permit, her husband became increasingly violent. As a result, Pari separated from her husband, resulting in the doing of a **divorced identity** position. Pari found herself in an emergency situation. When her husband started beating their one year old child, Pari knew she needed help. One day at the German class, Pari sought help with another volunteer. Pari was

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[18] «And I just went to a language course and that was the only help or shelter for me. Because there were so many people and I could just hide or I could just go there and then he couldn't hide his evil face.» (Pari, 2)

[19] «I stuck it out for a year because I'm always scared. I have N if I complain then where do I get protection. I could hardly speak any German. I haven't had any language courses. And like once a week we are allowed to go to a church. And it was also organised by the social welfare office. Otherwise never. I didn't know where to get help? Once I have a volunteer at the language [...] course. I told them and showed my bruises. Said he was threatening me with knives like that and that, that. She told me not to tell anyone.» (Pari, 2)

still very scared of the impact on her political rights and private life a divorce would have. The volunteer at the German class assured Pari that she would not be sent back if she filed for divorce and further found her a place in a nearby women's shelter. The volunteer bought Pari a Ticket and explained her exactly where to go. Pari went directly from the German course to the women's shelter. From that moment on, Pari did as she was told. The workers at the women's shelter brought her to the police in order for her to file charges against her husband and they brought her to the doctor, who examined her. During this time, Pari did not think about her future. Even though she left her husband physically it still seemed impossible for her to get a divorce. However, she filed charges, she appeared before a court and started looking for her own appartement. In that time, living alone for the first time in her life, receiving much previously unknown information about her rights, she felt lost and estranged from herself. Her understanding of the world and of her role in this world were deeply disassembled in that time. In that situated context of living in the woman's shelter, her gendered identity of a wife was slowly being undone and her divorced identity position was being done.

«Habe ich dieses Recht? Darf ich? Vielleicht als ich nach Frauenhaus gegangen bin, ich war einfach in diesem Weg zur Scheidung. Ich wusste nicht, ob ich das machen kann oder nicht. Ich war nicht so mutig. Aber die [vom Frauenhaus] haben mir diese Mut gegeben. Du kannst schon ohne Mann Leben. Und du kannst schon, dich trennen. Du kannst schon dein Kind erziehen, trotz Scheidung. Aber bei uns wenn man sich scheiden lässt verliert man das Kind, der Mann nimmt das Kind und du siehst das Kind nie mehr»[20] (Pari, 2)

Sixth Story

After leaving her husband, Pari gained a lot of rights, leading to the undoing of her subjugated identity position while also resulting in the emergence of a non-belonging, **alienated** or **estranged identity** position. It was also in this time, after having left her husband that Pari's understanding of her role as a woman changed a lot. She learned about her rights. While her as a refugee did still only have access to a limited set of rights, she suddenly had more rights than

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[20] «Do I have that right? Am I allowed? Maybe when I went to the women's shelter, I was just on that path to divorce. I didn't know if I could do this or not. I wasn't that brave. But they [at the women's shelter] gave me that courage. You can live without a man. And you can break up. You can raise your child, despite the divorce. But with us, if you get divorced, you lose the child, the man takes the child and you never see the child again.» (Pari, 2)

ever before in her life. This grant and awareness of rights undid the identity of the beaten, guilty and passive woman and further undid her gendered wife identity. She started leading a self-determined life. However, she felt very overwhelmed with her new identity as a self-determined woman. She started feeling self-conscious and dumb about her past and was still subject to fear and feelings of uncertainty. Further, she started to feel alienated by her family as well as other persons from her home society. Her family was ashamed of her actions and as a result cut off every contact to her. At the same time her identity as a foreigner in Switzerland became prominent again. After acknowledging her rights and leaving her husband she now struggles with her identity. She does not prescribe herself to her home culture nor to the Swiss culture, she feels lost in between these two.

«Ich weiß nicht woher komme ich? Oder wo ist meine Heimat? Oder an welche Gruppe gehöre ich eigentlich? Von meinem Heimat oder meiner Kultur bin ich einfach... die nennen mich einfach Verlorene. Und hier ich bin eine Ausländerin. Die schieben mir an diese Kultur und die andere schieben mich da hin und sagen nein das ist nicht in Ordnung. Ich bin irgendwie zwischen, die beiden Kulturen zwischen die beide Gesellschaft versuche einfach mich integrieren. [...] Das Einzige, Glück das ich gehabt habe damals, war meine Tochter.»[21] (Pari, 2)

Her self-identity is being undone as she is trying to find her place in-between her home and host society. As a result, the identity position of non-belonging, feeling in-between, alienated or as estranged emerged.

Pari's narrative describes her lived experience of intersectionality as well as of bordering processes since arriving in Switzerland. Throughout the six stories, the constant movement and fluidity of her different identity positions is highlighted. Further, the different axes of intersectionality become evident in different social, cultural and spatial contexts. Pari grew up in a society and domestic situation, where a strongly gendered identity was formed and after her arrival in Switzerland Pari was confronted with shifting gender roles and the emergence of new identity positions. Residing in different asylum centres, getting pregnant and living in a

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[21] «I don't know where am I from? Or where is my home? Or which group do I actually belong to? From my homeland or my culture I am simply…they just call me lost. And here I am a foreigner. They push me into this culture and the others push me there and say no, that's not okay. I'm kind of in between, the two cultures between the two societies just trying to integrate myself. [...] The only luck I had back then was my daughter.» (Pari, 2)

violent domestic situation, shaped old identities and led to the doing of new identity positions. Pari's narrative shows the ways she experienced the intersection of different identity positions, such as gender and refugee. Pari does not have a fixed sense of identification or disidentification but instead finds herself in a "constant and unpredictable process of becoming" (Valentine, 2007: 18). Further, the internal borders or bordering processes Pari faced, often acted as spatial and social context for the doing and undoing of particular identity positions. Depending on the spatial, temporal and social context Pari refused particular identity positions or (re)invested in other identity positions. Moreover, Pari encountered clashes between the social beliefs and norms of her "home" society and the "host" society. She describes the emergence of a victimised identity position, as well as facing new gender and racial norms that translated into discrimination and practices of exclusion and inclusion; whether from her "home" or the "host" society. Her emotional investment in different subject positions varied and depended on the temporal, spatial and social context. At different times since her arrival in Switzerland, Pari's identity positions have overshadowed, reinforced or weakened one another. In the specific context of leaving her husband and losing her standing within her family and "home" society, Pari describes the emergence of an identity crisis, the feeling of being alienated or estranged, strengthening her refugee identity position while overshadowing her gendered identity position of mother. Additionally, when "becoming" a refugee by leaving her country of origin, receiving her F-permit, as well as acknowledging new rights and possibilities, new identity positions emerged such as a gendered refugee identity, an estranged identity position or the particular identity position of a lower class foreigner. Pari's narrative therefore not only describes the constant movement and fluidity of different identity positions but also the impact of different bordering processes on particular subject positions.

5.2.2 Katia

First Story

Upon Katia's arrival in Switzerland, she separated from her Fiancé. This led to Katia reinvesting in her **gendered identity** position as a single woman. When Katia arrived in Switzerland she was engaged. However, Katia and her now ex- Fiancé broke up because of the difficulties they faced while living in the asylum centres. Her ex- Fiancé was living in an

asylum centre in Fribourg, while Katia herself was living in an asylum centre in the canton of Aargau. They were not allowed to spend the night together. The reason why Katia came to Switzerland was for her now ex- Fiancé. However, since they were not able to live close to one another and could not spend the night they ended up fighting a lot. This then led to them splitting up. Therefore, in the spatial and temporal context of Katia's arrival in Switzerland and her asylum centre, her identity as an engaged woman or soon-to-be wife was undone. Katia reinvested in the particular identity position of a single refugee woman.

Second Story

Facing bordering processes regarding her financial situation, Katia became very aware of her **refugee identity** position. In Syria Katia felt free, as she was allowed to work and earn her own money. Whereas in Switzerland, living in the asylum centre she received sixty francs a week. Every Wednesday she had to be in the centre in order to collect her money. If she was not there on Wednesday, she would not receive the money. The asylum centre where Katia spend most of the time waiting for an asylum decision is located on the outskirts of a very small town, on top of a hill, in the canton of Aargau. In order to go groceries shopping, Katia had to take a bus or a train. Each bus or train ride cost her five francs.

After one year, Katia managed to get an internship. She was paid 700 francs a month. Because she earned money then, Katia lost her right for the sixty francs every week. Additionally, Katia had to pay rent for her room in the asylum centre as well as for her health care.

> «Ja. Und war eine Frau mit mir auch. Und ich zahle diese Zimmer. Und sie nicht. Sie hat nicht gearbeitet. Sie hat keine Arbeit, ich arbeite nur. Und aus diesem Grund ich muss zahlen diese Zimmer. Ganze Zimmer! Krankenkasse auch ich zahle.»[22] (Katia, 1)

While the financial limitations faced by Katia in her everyday life pose important bordering processes employed by Swiss asylum system over years, it further impacted Katia's identity

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[22] «Yes. And there was a woman with me too. And I pay for this room. And she doesn't. She didn't work. She doesn't have a job, only I work. And because of that I have to pay for this room. The whole room! I also pay for health insurance.» (Katia, 1)

position. By living constantly at the bear minimum, and being told how to spend her self-earned money, Katia's refugee identity position became prominent to her.

Third Story

Receiving the F-permit weighted the importance of Katia's **lower-class refugee identity**. Because Katia did not remember all of the birth dates of her nine siblings during her asylum hearing, her story was deemed not credible and she received the F-permit. Having the Swiss state not believing her life story was difficult for Katia. She felt overlooked and mistreated. Katia has two sisters living in two different European countries but with an F-permit she is not allowed to travel and was therefore not able to visit them. Further, after having received the F-permit Katia was told multiple times that she will soon be sent back. She applied for multiple jobs, which she did not get because the employers feared that she would be sent back soon. In this spatial context, the legal circumstances, her story being deemed as implausible, as well as the comparison to migrants who received the B-permit led to the emergence of a new identity; the one of a lower-class refugee.

> «Ich kann nicht andere Land. Beispiel, Ich habe zwei Schwester, eine in [Europäisches Land] eine in [Europäisches Land]. Ich kann nicht gehen... oder in Iran und andere Land Beispiel. Ich kann nicht. Und hier auch mit F immer Leute sage ah vielleicht ich gehe zurück.»[23] (Katia, 1)

Similarly to Pari's narrative, Katia's narrative shows how Katia experiences the intersection of the categories gender, refugee, single and lower-class foreigner. The intersection and experience of these categories is closely linked to the bordering processes Katia faced such as living in the asylum centre, the financial regulations she has to deal with as well as her negative asylum decision. It can be said, that the intersecting identities Katia describes in this narrative are about the bordering processes she encountered, as they are about inclusion and exclusion. Katia's narrative demonstrates the ways in which she refused particular identity positions, depending on the spatial, social and temporal context. Thus, the identity position of engaged was undone during her time living in the asylum centre. Further, Katia's narrative helps us to

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[23] «I can not go other country. Example, I have two sisters, one in [European country] one in [European country]. I can't go... or in Iran and other countries. I can not. And here, too, with F, people always say, ah, maybe I'll go back.» (Katia, 1)

understand the fluidity in the ways identities are done and undone, shaped, refused, destabilised and reinforced.

5.2.3 Arja

First Story

Arja is a **young Kurdish** woman, who fled as a political refugee from Turkey. She grew up in Northern Kurdistan (Turkey). Her rights in Turkey as a Kurdish woman were restricted and she was often faced with racist and discriminatory situations. In her early twenties, Arja campaigned politically for women's and Kurdish rights. This made her a target for the Turkish government, who viewed her as a Turkish enemy of the state. As a result of her political engagement and the response her engagement received, Arja identified as a Kurdish woman and she deeply invested emotionally in this identity position during her time in Turkey.

Second Story

Arja faced and experienced multiple bordering processes in Switzerland, which contributed to the shaping of Arja's **migrant identity**. It is difficult to pinpoint when Arja's identity as a migrant and especially as a person with a limited set of rights started to be done. However, it can be said, that it was being done when she was living in the various asylum centres. In the asylum centre, the inhabitants had their most basic needs being regularly controlled – and often so with prejudices in mind and following a racist and criminalizing narrative. In one asylum centre for example, they were not allowed to bring any food inside without showing the bill in order to make sure the groceries were actually bought and not stolen.

> «Also bei uns in [Schweizer Stadt], also eben im ersten Asylzentrum, wir durften keine Früchte oder so mitnehmen also nichts mitnehmen ohne Quittung. Damit Sie sicher sind, dass wir nicht stehlen. Weißt du? Und wenn man Mal, wenn man die Quittung mal verloren hat, dann alles in den Abfall.»[24] (Arja, 1)

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[24] «So here in [Swiss city], in the first asylum center, we weren't allowed to take any fruit or anything with us, so we couldn't take anything with us without a receipt. To make sure we don't steal. You know? And if you ever lose the receipt, then everything in the trash.» (Arja, 1)

While this example highlights a common bordering process in Switzerland it was further crucial in the shaping of Arja's identity as a migrant and as a person with a limited set of rights.

Third Story

Arja invested in her **gendered identity** position when facing similar problems as other women. While waiting for her asylum decision, Arja lived in a Durchgangszentrum in a bigger Swiss city. The Durchgangszentrum was an old Fire station and there was only one lavatory. This posed an issue, as the centre housed men and women. However, there were many more men living in that accommodation than women. Therefore, it was regulated in such way that, the lavatory was reserved for the women during four hours a day, while the rest of the time the lavatory was reserved for the men. This led to conflicts. While many women did not feel comfortable washing themselves while other strange women were present, the short time span for women led to a concentration of many women the lavatory. This led some men in the centre to try and enter the lavatory during the women's time. Arja was in the lavatory, when a man managed to open the door and tried to enter the lavatory and to tear away a woman's veil. She started to scream at the man entering the lavatory and proceeded to lock all the doors. Later, she talked to the manager of the accommodation, leading to a suspension of that man from the centre for three nights. In this situated context, as one of only a few women living in that centre, Arja identified with the other women. She found herself facing similar problems as the other women regarding safety and privacy matters and therefore strongly invested in her gendered identity.

> «Dann haben wir alle Türen abgeschlossen. Und dann hat sie [befreundete Bewohnerin des Durchgangszentrums] gesagt: Ja, er wollte mein Kopftuch wegnehmen [...]Und dann eben nach der Dusche bin ich raus und es gab so ein Korridor. Alle waren am Lachen. Alle Männer lachen. [...] Und dann ist dieser Arbeiter zu mir gekommen und er hat gefragt was ist passiert? Geht es dir gut? Er war für mich da. Also nicht nur für mich, aber für uns alle Frauen.»[25] (Arja, 1)

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[25] «Then we locked all the doors. And then she [a friend of hers from the transit center] said: Yes, he wanted to take my headscarf away [...]. And then just after the shower I went out and there was a corridor. Everyone was laughing. All the men were laughing. [...] And then this social worker came to me and he asked what happened? Are you all right? He was there for me. So not just for me, but for all of us women.» (Arja, 1)

Fourth Story

As a migrant with the N status, Arja was often confronted with being reduced to her **gendered refugee identity**. She made the experience that if you bring a Swiss person to a meeting with your social worker, the chances you get what you want become much higher. As all migrants in Switzerland depending from social welfare, Arja has had multiple social workers in charge of her case. Her relationships with these individual social workers varied, however they were all complicated and Arja lived them as negative. One social worker in particular made her life difficult as she did not treat Arja at eye level. This social worker would not write a funding application for a German course for Arja. She did so with the reason that a traditional, Kurdish woman like Arja will bear children and then stay at home. She was told by her social worker, that therefore her learning German would be an "empty investment". The social worker did not see any reason for Arja to obtain a good level of German. Arja felt dependent and at mercy of her social worker's goodwill.

> «Das ist ja normal, dass ich – ich bin eine einfache Asylsuchende weißt du. Sie haben von mir Tausende. Ich brauche sie. Sie mich nicht.»[26] (Arja, 1)

Arja experienced, that often her counterpart perceived her as "traditional" and in need of help. During our interview Arja stated, that she feels not being taken seriously, of being treated as if not having any knowledge or life experience. This manifested in different situations and spatial contexts. One time Arja had to go the hospital because of excruciating pain in her lower abdomen and was met with disbelief by the doctors, asking her if she is acting as if in pain in order to spend the night in a warm hospital bed. Arja recalls another time, where she received an official letter confirming the receipt of a certain document. However, in the same letter Arja was asked to turn in that same document. To make sure whether or not she had to send said document a second time, Arja called the migration office. But she encountered prejudice on the phone, as she wasn't believed and she wasn't treated as an equal.

> «Dann rufe ich an, um sicherzugehen. Was sagt sie mir? Wenn es dort angekreuzt ist, müssen Sie schicken. Und ich sage, ich habe schon geschickt. Und deshalb habe

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[26] «This is normal, that I – I'm just a simple asylum seeker, you know. They got thousands from me. I need them. They do not need me.» (Arja, 1)

ich den Brief bekommen. Nein, verstehen Sie nicht? So, Sie sagen mir so, wir haben nichts bekommen. Und ich sage, ich habe den Brief bekommen, weil Sie mein Dokument bekommen haben, und es steht auch im Brief. Und erst dann sagt sie Oh, jetzt sehe ich.»[27] (Arja, 1)

Fifth Story

Arja's **victimised and subjugated identity** position shaped, when she experienced the same disbelief when she brought charges against a doctor, who sexually assaulted her. She was not allocated the resources for more hours of psychotherapy because the responsible office did not believe her case. Further, the case was dropped because it was her statement against the statement of the doctor. Despite knowing of the charges, her social worker did not make sure that Arja's next doctor would be female.

«Ich habe wieder einen Mann bekommen. Sie [die Sozialarbeiterin] hat den ersten Arzt gefunden. Und sie hat den zweiten Arzt gefunden. Aber das ist immer dasselbe Problem, finde ich. Weil sie sieht mich ja, als eine traditionelle Frau an oder? Und weil wir jetzt in der Schweiz sind, muss sie mir zeigen, wie eine moderne Gesellschaft läuft, funktioniert. Deshalb kann eine Frau zu einem männlichen Arzt gehen. Das muss sie mir irgendwie zeigen, oder? Weil ich so konservativ und traditionell bin, möchte ich nicht zu einem Mann gehen.»[28] (Arja, 2)

As this quote shows, Arja stated to feel as if the people in Switzerland are of the opinion, that because she is a woman refugee, they need to teach her how life works. While the social and cultural prejudices Arja faced are not only another bordering process, this specific social context further led to the doing of a victimised/ subjugated identity position.

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[27] «Then I call them to make sure. What does she tell me? If it is ticked there, you must send. And I say I've already sent. And that's why I got the letter. No, don't you understand? So they tell me, uh, we didn't get anything. And I say I got the letter because you got my document and it's in the letter too. And only then does she say Oh, now I see.» (Arja, 1)

[28] «I got another man. She [the social worker] found the first doctor. And she found the second doctor. But that's always the same problem, I think. Because she sees me as a traditional woman, doesn't she? And because we are in Switzerland now, she has to show me how modern society works. That's why a woman can go to a male doctor. She has to show me that somehow, doesn't she? Because I'm so conservative and traditional, I don't want to go to a man.» (Arja, 2)

Sixth Story

Arja's experiences of being stereotyped by the Swiss society and bureaucracy shaped her **gendered refugee identity** position and further emphasised her subjugation. Arja has made the experience, that people want a person with a refugee background to be in need of help rather than support. People expect this helplessness and inexperience to be a given, and when they do help they expect nothing but gratefulness.

> «Oder die Rolle von hilfsbedürftige Personen. Sie haben es so gerne. Sie haben es lieber, dass du Hilfe brauchst. Hilfe! Ich betone das Wort Hilfe. Nicht Unterstützung. Nicht auf der Augenhöhe, sondern du brauchst etwas. Und sie können dir das geben. Nur sie. Zum Beispiel bekommst du dann Dinge von Leuten, die dir helfen möchten, gratis. Und wenn du etwas nicht möchtest, dann bist du undankbar. Also, vielleicht gefällt es dir nicht oder so, aber daran denken die Leute nicht.»[29] (Arja, 2)

In these spatial contexts, and as a result of the various bordering processes, she felt reduced to her identity as a refugee woman. Additionally, the identity of being subordinate and of being a person with a limited set of rights was being done. Arja felt especially stereotyped by her social worker. That bothered her because she did not expect this from a social worker, someone who is supposed to be educated specifically for the work with migrants and refugees. When Arja's social worker learned of Arja's relationship with a Swiss man, the social worker pointed out, that marriage of convenience is illegal in Switzerland. For Arja, it was impossible to escape the stereotypical prejudices her social worker had. This further contributed to her identity as a young refugee woman and became most salient to her in that social and temporal context.

> «Sie hatte die Grenzen gezeigt. Sie hatte meine Grenzen bestimmt. Aber die ganze Beziehung [mit der Sozialarbeiterin] von Anfang an? Ich wurde nie auf Augenhöhe behandelt. Ich habe ihr gesagt. Ich möchte C1 Prüfung machen. Ich möchte in der Zukunft studieren. Und Sie hat gefragt; Aber wäre eine Lehre nicht besser? Für sie war es so, dass ich als kurdische Frau heiraten, Kinder kriegen und zu Hause

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[29] «Or the role of people in need. They love it so much. They prefer that you need help. Help! I emphasize the word help. Not support. Not at eye level, but you need something. And they can give you that. Only they. For example, you get things for free from people who want to help you. And if you don't want something, then you're ungrateful. So maybe you don't like it or something, but people don't think about that.» (Arja, 2)

bleiben werde. Und dadurch, dass sie diese Überlegung in ihrem Kopf hat und dass sie es auch so bei der Arbeit als Orientierung nutzt, macht sie es unmöglich, umso schwerer, dass du aus dieser Rolle rauskommst. Diese Überlegung ist von einer Position von einer Machtposition. Das ist ganz gefährlich. »[30] (Arja, 1)

The bordering processes Arja was subject to in the context of her relationship with her social worker influenced Arja's identity position. It impacted Arja's **gendered refugee identity** and as a person with a limited set of rights. These identity positions were further impacted by her asylum hearing. During the asylum hearing Arja realised how vulnerable her position truly is. The translator that was assigned to Arja's case did not translate everything correctly.

«Ich musste zweimal streiten mit der Übersetzerin. Einmal hat sie das Wort Ereignis benutzt, obwohl ich Massaker gesagt habe. Und ich habe ihr gesagt; Ich möchte, dass sie sich korrigiert auf Türkisch. Und dann hat sie mir gesagt Sie [die Beamtin] weiss sowieso nicht, was da passiert ist. Und ich habe ihr gesagt; es interessiert mich nicht, ob Sie es wissen oder nicht, Sie müssen es richtig übersetzen. Ja, und dann wurde es korrigiert.»[31] (Arja, 1)

Fortunately, Arja's German was good enough to understand when the translator left certain things out. Arja was also able to recount what the translator left out in German. In Arja's opinion, her being able to intervene in German saved her from a negative asylum decision. When Arja was asked about her reasons to leave Turkey, the translator did not translate correctly, in a way that would have had a negative impact on the asylum decision, if Arja did not intervene.

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[30] «She showed me the borders. She had set my borders. But the whole relationship [with the social worker] from the start? I have never been treated as equals. I told her. I want to do C1 exam. I would like to study in the future. And she asked; But wouldn't an apprenticeship be better? For her, as a Kurdish woman, I would marry, have children and stay at home. And by having that thought in her head and using it as a guide at work, she makes it impossible, all the more difficult, for you to get out of that role. This consideration is from a position of power. That's very dangerous. » (Arja, 1)

[31] «I had to argue twice with the translator. Once she used the word event when I said massacre. And I told her; I want her to correct herself in Turkish. And then she told me, she [the officer] doesn't know what happened anyway. And I told her; I don't care if they know it or not, you have to translate it correctly. Yes, and then it was corrected.» (Arja, 1)

«Also die Frage war, warum wurden diese Prozesse gegen mich eröffnet und nicht gegen eine andere Person, die dort war? Und ich habe gesagt, ich war Präsidentin dieser Organisation die eben gegen die Regierung war. Weißt du, wie ich übersetzt wurde? Ich habe dann nicht in dem Moment nicht aufgepasst und dann sehe ich, irgendetwas stimmte nicht. Im Zimmer gab es Stille. Und ich dachte, etwas ist komisch. Dann schaue ich den Computer am Bildschirm. Es steht, weil ich Präsidentin der terroristischen Organisation war. Und ich habe dann dieses Mal auf Deutsch reagiert. Ich habe gesagt so was habe ich nicht gesagt. Und dann gab es wieder normalere Stimmung weisst du dann habe ich es korrigiert.»[32] (Arja, 1)

During the spatial context of the asylum hearing Arja's identity as a person with a very limited set of rights was being done, and her subjugation to the system became obvious.

Even after having received her B-permit, Arja experienced multiple bordering processes in her daily life. This further impacted her gendered refugee identity. Due to the B-permit Arja is allowed to travel and visit her parents, who live in another European country. However, Arja was controlled by the border police on the train multiple times, having to show her luggage as well as her papers and permit. Interestingly enough, after Arja had cut her hair short she was no longer controlled by the border police, while other women were.

«Ich war mal in [Europäisches Land]. Ich hatte lange Haare. Und dann, beim Rückweg haben sie mich kontrolliert im Zug an der Grenze. Sie haben meine Sachen kontrolliert, auch mein Ausweis, Bewilligung. Nachdem ich mir die Haare geschnitten habe, war ich wieder im Zug von [Europäisches Land] zurück. Ich war im Zug, ich hatte wirklich einen Koffer dabei, und neben mir sassen zwei Frauen. Sie haben miteinander türkisch geredet, sie hatten kleine Handtaschen dabei. Grenzwache ist gekommen, und sie haben mich angeschaut, nix gemacht. [..] und

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[32] «So the question was, why were these trials opened against me and not against another person who was there? And I said I was president of this organization that was against the government. Do you know how I was translated? I wasn't paying attention at that moment and then I see something was wrong. There was silence in the room. And I thought something is weird. Then I look at the computer on the screen. There it says I was president of the terrorist organization. And then this time I responded in German. I said I didn't say anything like that. And then there was a more normal mood, you know, then I corrected it.» (Arja, 1)

sie haben diese zwei Frauen kontrolliert weißt du ich war so muss ich jetzt lachen?

Sie haben mir nicht mal den Reisepass gefragt.»[33] (Arja, 1)

In the spatial and temporal context of travelling "legally" in Europe, Arja experienced gendered and racialised bordering processes. Being controlled by the border police, and then after cutting her hair no longer being controlled had an impact on Arja's identity position. Being not only racially profiled but also gender-stereotypically profiled further contributed to her gendered refugee identity.

Seventh Story

Receiving the B-permit altered Arja's subject position. Obtaining the B-permit gave Arja security but also pressured her and thus further impacted the doing of her refugee identity . While she still had only a limited set of rights, suddenly she was granted rights she did not have before. Further, she was officially recognised as a refugee in Switzerland and thus granted protection. However, Arja felt pressured of having to live up to certain expectations. Especially in the spatial context of the University, Arja feels a lot of pressure due to her legal status and her background.

«Und ich hatte auch mega Leistungsdruck, weil ich gegen so vieles gekämpft habe, für das Studium und für die Sprache. Und ich hatte auch das Gefühl, ich muss mich beweisen. Ich muss alles so gut machen wie möglich, weil ich eben das Ganze hinter mir habe. Für mich ist es sowieso schwieriger, weil ich mich wegen meiner Hautfarbe und wegen meines Status auch beweisen muss.»[34] (Arja, 1)

This narrative highlights the fluidity Arja experienced between different identity positions as well as the multiple bordering processes Arja faced in Switzerland. As with Pari's narrative, in

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[33] «I was in [European country] once. I had long hair. And then, on the way back, they checked me on the train at the border. They checked my things, including my ID and permit. After I cut my hair, I was again on the train from [European country] back. I was on the train, and I had a suitcase with me, and there were two women sitting next to me. They spoke Turkish to each other, they had small handbags with them. Border guard came and they looked at me, didn't do anything. [..] and they checked these two women you know I was like do I laugh now or? They didn't even ask me for my passport.» (Arja, 1)

[34] «And I also had a lot of pressure to perform because I fought against so many things, for my studies and for the language. And I also felt like I had to prove myself. I have to do everything as well as possible because it's all behind me. It's more difficult for me anyway because I have to prove myself because of the color of my skin and because of my status.» (Arja, 1)

this narrative the different intersections, located in the various spatial, temporal, social and cultural contexts, between the various subject positions become evident. Similarly as Pari, Arja does not have a fixed sense of identification or disidentification, but rather is constantly negotiating between different subject positions (Valentine, 2007). In the specific case of Arja, her narrative shows how she experiences the intersection of categories such as, gender, refugee, racialization, Kurdish, stereotyping, young, victimised and subjugated. The different situations described in this narrative show the ways in which Arja experiences intersectionality as well as bordering processes. Arja's intersecting identities are about the bordering processes and the constant negotiation between inclusion and exclusion, which she faced. While her gendered refugee identity position seems to be more prominent than others, depending on the spatial, temporal and social context particular categories have overshadowed this identity position. In other words, the bordering processes faced by Arja were not always only about her gendered identity position but rather also about racial prejudices. In more than one situation, for instance the bathroom incident or her encounters with different social workers, Arja was faced with gendered and orientalising ideas about people with her background. She was confronted with racialised gender norms by her social workers and further had to negotiate the gendered and racialised expectations of the receiving society. Arja's narrative highlights, the ways in which racialised gender norms are part of the effective and emotional bordering processes. In the specific context of her arrival in Switzerland, Arja was confronted with racialised and criminalised bordering processes, shaping her identity as a refugee with very limited rights. In the specific context of her asylum hearing, Arja experienced defencelessness contributing to the doing of her gendered refugee identity position. In the specific context of pressing charges against her doctor because of sexual assault, Arja's victimised and subjugated identity position was strengthened while her refugee identity position became less salient. Arja's narrative further shows us the ways in which identity positions emerge from the interactions with different persons and within specific spatial, temporal, social and cultural contexts.

5.2.4 Emesa

First Story

Upon her arrival in Switzerland, Emesa's **minority identity** position was emotionally salient to her, especially in the context of the civil war in Syria. Emesa is a middle aged Syrian refugee.

She is the mother of two teenage daughters. She grew up close to the town of Homs in a Christian family, making them a minority within Syria. Emesa got married and had two daughters. Her husband was in charge of the family's financial situation as well as of most important decisions. As a result, Emesa took on a very traditional, gendered role, leaving her in charge of the household and the children. Her being Christian and therefore belonging to a very small minority was also substantial in Emesa's self-identification.

Second Story

Emesa's **Christian identity** position was strengthened during her escape. In 2015, as a result of the increasingly violent civil war, she fled from Syria. She fled alone with only her youngest daughter who at that time was eight years old. This meant, that Emesa left behind her oldest daughter, at that time fourteen years old, as well as her husband. As a result, Emesa was suddenly alone in charge of her and her daughter's life. She had to make difficult, life-threatening decisions and was in charge of their financial situation. Their time fleeing also changed the relationship between Emesa and her daughter. During her escape, Emesa's role changed. Her gendered identity was slowly being undone and the identity of a migrant took shape. Further, her Christian identity was strengthened as a result of Emesa's experiences with Muslim refugees.

Third Story

During her time living in multiple asylum centres, Emesa's **gendered identity** as a mother and as a woman refugee became salient to her. Emesa and her daughter arrived in Switzerland at the end of 2015. Between 2015 and 2019 they lived in multiple asylum centres throughout Switzerland. During that time Emesa's identity of a woman refugee was strengthened and together with her mothered identity became most salient to her. Because Emesa arrived in Switzerland without her husband, she was always accommodated with other women. In a very big federal asylum centre close to the Swiss border to Germany, men and women were separated during the meal times. All of the women ate together and then all of the men ate together. Further, because of the size of that federal asylum centre, Emesa was glad for the security there as otherwise she, as a woman, would not feel safe.

> «Wir haben Security, überall es gibt viel, viel Leute. Sie brauchen Security unter
> uns, weil es wirklich viel... ein Zimmer sie ist wie die hier [bezieht sich auf ein

Zimmer von ungefähr 22m²], und es gibt dort so ja mehr als 20 Frauen in gleiche Zimmer. Ja, die, Bett nebeneinander und auch zwei Bett, zwei Stockbetten und die Männer allein, Frauen allein. Und dann Mittagessen ist separat. Er hat Zeit, zwei Uhr, zwölf Uhr und du musst in der Schlange stehen, bis du bekommst etwas. Ja, das war es ist nicht angenehm, weißt du, es ist. Weil für mich war ich dankbar, weil ich habe diese Sicherheit.»[35] (Emesa, 1)

There was a reason why Emesa and her then husband decided not to take the oldest daughter. First, they only had enough money for two out of the family. Further, they were worried that, as the oldest daughter was already fourteen years old and her body started to look more like the body of a woman rather than a girl, they would put her at risk of sexual and gender based violence on the escape to Europe. They therefore decided to take the youngest girl. After learning, that their asylum claim was accepted and thus being processed, Emesa's first priority was to get her oldest daughter to Switzerland. This was also time sensitive, as in order for a family reunification she had to be under the age of eighteen. However, her first request for a family reunification was denied.

«Du musst warten. Viele Leute, viele Flüchtlinge. Wir können nicht. Und so weiter. Aber meine Tochter sie wird älter. Und das ist schwierig. Sie ist im Krieg. Sie ist nicht her. Sie ist dort und ich bin hier. dann habe ich gewartet und gewartet und gewartet und dann endlich bekomme ich ein Nein; abgewiesen. Meine Tochter darf nicht kommen. Dann natürlich noch mit meinem Exmann. Und dann ja, ich war wirklich fast kaputt.»[36] (Emesa, 1)

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[35] «We have security, there are lots and lots of people everywhere. They need security between us, because it's really a lot.... a room like this one [refers to a room of about 22m²], and there are more than 20 women in the same room. Yes, the bed next to each other and also two beds, two bunk beds and the men alone, women alone. And then lunch is separate. He has time, two o'clock, twelve o'clock and you have to wait in line until you get something. Yes, it was, it's not pleasant, you know, it is. Because for me I was grateful, because I have this security.» (Emesa, 1)

[36] «You have to wait. Lots of people, lots of refugees. We can not. And so forth. But my daughter she is getting older. And that's difficult. She is at war. She's not here. She is there and I am here. then I waited and waited and waited and then finally I get a no; rejected. My daughter is not allowed to come. Then of course with my ex-husband. And then yes, I was really almost broken.» (Emesa, 1)

However, she appealed and was then able to get a humanitarian visa for her daughter as well as her then husband. During that time while a gendered refugee identity was being done, her gendered identity as a mother became again most prominent to Emesa.

Fourth Story

From the moment Emesa left Syria her **married identity** started to be undone and a new identity position was shaped; the identity position of separated. All this time alone, as well as the fact of now being in charge of her own as well as her daughter's life changed her relationship to her now ex-Husband. While she was trying to build up a life in Switzerland and trying to bring her daughter as well as her husband to Switzerland, he had relationships with other women. Additionally, Emesa had different rights in Switzerland and different social rules and roles. When her husband arrived in Switzerland, they were already separated. Nonetheless, they had to live together in the asylum centre until Emesa found an appartement. Since Emesa moved out of the asylum centre, they have not had much contact.

> «Wir sind alle vier Personen in ein Zimmer und sie haben uns eine kleine Zimmer zusätzlich einen kleinen Zimmer gegeben. Aber das ist kein Leben nach drei Jahre getrennt in eine Asylheim mit viele Leute und gemischt.»[37] (Emesa, 1)

In the three years in which Emesa and her now ex-Husband were physically separated, Emesa's identity as a married woman was undone. When her ex-Husband arrived in Switzerland, they were already separated. While they did not officially file for divorce, they have not lived together since the asylum centre and have not had much contact. Thus, Emesa invested in the specific identity position of divorced and sees herself as divorced. Further, in Syrian circles within Switzerland, Emesa does not have a very good social standing and neither does her ex-Husband, because of their separation. As a result, Emesa disconnected herself from Syrian circles in Switzerland which contributed to the forming of a Swiss identity.

Fifth Story

While Emesa's woman refugee as well as gendered identities were being done and undone in the spatial context of Switzerland and the different asylum centres, a somewhat **Swiss identity**

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[37] «We are all four people in one room and they gave us a small room in addition to a small room. But that's not life after three years separated in an asylum home with many people and mixed.» (Emesa, 1)

was being shaped as well. Upon asking Emesa if she feels integrated in Switzerland, she told me that she really does.

> «Ich bin wirklich ganz, ganz, ich kann sagen voll integriert. Ich fühle mich nie, nie fremd.»[38] (Emesa, 1)

Emesa was very active during the time between asylum claim and asylum decision and frequented a lot of different networks for migrants and refugees. She was very eager to learn German and further it was important to her to always remain active in order to integrate fast and also to keep busy in that long period of uncertainness. Further she actively did not frequent Syrian church masses and did not seek contacts to other Syrians. She feels accepted by the Swiss society, which gave her strength to deal with Swiss officials. In this spatial context, while living in asylum centres but spending as much time as possible getting acquainted with the Swiss society, Emesa invested in the particular position of Swiss.

> «Sie [Schweizer und Schweizerinnen] haben in mein Herz eine Heimat gepflanzt, weisst du weil kleine Heimat ist wirklich aufgewachsen, weil sind sehr nett zu mir und das ist, dass es da darum für mich scheiss egal was Behörde machen. Die Leute haben mich akzeptiert und das ist genug.»[39] (Emesa, 1)

Sixth Story

Having to live with an F-permit led to the forming of a **lower-class foreigner identity**. After three years of waiting for her asylum decision, Emesa, as well as her family, received the F-permit. While she had hoped for a B-permit, she was still relieved to finally have a decision. Nonetheless, as F means not recognised and Emesa was scared she would not find employment due to her permit. The F-permit meant insecurity, that she might get sent back. The F-permit further meant she does not have the right to leave Switzerland.

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[38] « I'm really, really, I can say fully integrated. I never, ever feel strange.» (Emesa, 1)

[39] «They [Swiss people] planted a home in my heart, you know, because small home really emerged, because they are very nice to me and that's why I don't care what authorities do. People accepted me and that's enough.» (Emesa, 1)

> «Unsicher weisst du, jederzeit sie sagen vielleicht. Seit drei Jahren arbeite ich. Vielleicht sie sagen ja, zurück. Ich kann nicht zurück. Ich habe [...] mein, die Stadt sie hat mein Lohn, nicht ich, weißt du, ich habe keine Arbeit, keine Rente kein Haus, kein und auch kein Gesellschaft, die mich akzeptiert und fertig was, was kann ich dort machen? Das ist unsicher, dass ist Alptraum. Ist das wirklich gut Gefühl, dass Sie diese Leute unsicher geben oder so? Ich weiß nicht. Vielleicht, dass ist das Ziel. Die Leute nur leiden. Keine Ahnung.»[40] (Emesa, 1)

Here Emesa asks herself if the F-permit is a tool designed by the Swiss government with the sole purpose to hurt migrants and refugees. The F-permit differentiated her from other refugees, from those who were believed by the Swiss state to be "real refugees". It gave her less rights than persons with a B-permit.

> «Ich verstehe nicht, warum eine Person mit B darf reisen und ich nicht? Weil er ist, zum Beispiel du hast ihn aufgenommen, weil er hat Probleme, er ist gefährlich oder für ihn [ist es] gefährlich zu reisen. Aber für mich, du hast mich nicht anerkannt. Dann bin ich nicht gefährlich und für mich nicht gefährlich ein Reise»[41] (Emesa, 1)

Receiving the F-permit marked the emergence of a new identity; the one of a lower-class foreigner, while still further enforcing her woman refugee identity.

In the same way as Pari's and Arja's stories, Emesa's narrative describes the ways in which her different identity positions are subject to constant movement and fluidity. Further, Emesa's subject positions were highly influenced by the spatial and temporal context, as can be clearly seen regarding her divorced identity position. Depending on the context, Emesa invested more or less in a particular identity position. While trying to bring her older daughter to Switzerland,

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[40] «Uncertain you know, at any time they might say. I've been working for three years. Maybe they say yes, back. I can't go back I have (...) my, the city has my wages, not me, you know, I have no job, no pension, no house, no and no society that accepts me and that's it, what can I do do there? That's uncertain, that's a nightmare. Is that really good feeling that they give these people insecurity or something? I do not know. Maybe that's the goal. That people just suffer. No idea.» (Emesa, 1)

[41] «I don't understand why a person with B can travel and I can't? Because he is, for example you took him in, because he has problems, he is dangerous or for him [it is] dangerous to travel. But for me, you didn't recognize me. Then I am not dangerous and not dangerous for me a trip» (Emesa, 1)

Emesa's mothered identity was the most emotionally salient to her while her refugee identity was overshadowed in that specific context. Emesa's narrative further shows the ways in which her self-identification depends on the interactions within specific spatial, temporal and social contexts. In the specific social context of Emesa's interactions with Swiss people, Emesa emotionally invested in the particular identity of Swiss. The passages chosen from my interview with Emesa displays the ways in which Emesa experiences the intersection of categories such as gender, refugee, motherhood, marriage, Swiss and lower-class foreigner. As became evident with Pari's and Arja's narratives, the fluidity, doing, undoing, reinforcing or destabilizing of Emesa's subject positions were influenced by bordering processes Emesa faced in Switzerland. For instance, her negative asylum decision shaped Emesa's lower-class foreigner identity position.

6 Discussion

In the previous chapter I presented the different bordering processes faced by refugee women as well as the dimensions of intersectionality in refugee women, by presenting the narratives of my participants. This chapter discusses these narratives in the context of the literature introduced in order to address my research questions. First I will discuss the bordering processes faced by my participants in Switzerland by also paying attention to the spatial and temporal contexts of these bordering processes. Then, I will respond to my second research question, by discussing the experience of intersectionality of my participants in Switzerland. Thereby, I especially want to discuss how the intersection of different subject positions of refugee women translates into practices of exclusion and inclusion as well as into discrimination.

6.1 The Daily Incorporation of Bordering Processes

Switzerland's asylum system is influenced by both its membership in the Schengen Agreement and the application of the Dublin Regulation. As shown in chapter 2.2, Switzerland greatly benefits from both, the Schengen and the Dublin Agreement regarding the governing of the mobile population. As Schilliger (2020: 533) points out, the borders have shifted to the interior of Switzerland, especially since the country signed the Schengen Agreement. Further, in line with other Schengen and Dublin states, the migration discourse in Switzerland has been rationalised as a security problem (Gilbert, 2009: 26-28, also Pickering & Weber, 2006).

The four women I spoke to had to forcefully leave their countries of origin because of unstable and unpredictable political situations such as in Afghanistan, or the war in Syria and because of personal persecution by governments. My participants were considered illegal foreigners in Switzerland, as they did not meet the Schengen entry criteria (Schilliger, 2016; Arbogast, 2016). My research participants decided to apply for asylum in Switzerland, either because they knew other people in Switzerland or by chance. However, all four women did so in the search of a better and safer life for themselves and their children.

Since they all arrived in Switzerland before March 1st 2019, their asylum applications were processed according to the Swiss Asylum Act before the revision. Therefore, all four women have had very long asylum processes. In line with Rygiel (2011: 5) the narratives of my participants show how the border turns into a temporal life condition. As Emesa said, it would be easier for her to receive a negative asylum decision and having to leave Switzerland right away than having to wait and live with so few rights for such a long time. This experience of "involuntary immobility" is in accordance with Pickering & Weber (2006: 7, see also Carling, 2002).

An essential characteristic of being an asylum seeking refugee woman in Switzerland is a constant feeling of insecurity and uncertainty about the future, that begins with having to forcefully migrate and continues during the asylum process and their lives afterwards. During their asylum process, all four women experienced and negotiated multiple bordering processes. In line with Basaran (2008) the narratives of my participants illustrate how state practices aim to the control of unwanted populations. Applying for asylum in Switzerland meant being assigned a limited set of rights during the asylum procedure, which in the case of my participants lasted between one and three years. Further, during this period of waiting there was no security of being granted asylum for my participants. As Emesa's narrative shows, the uncertainty about her future as well as the long waiting period triggered psychological health issues or exacerbated existing ones, which is similar to the findings of Kiselev et al. (2020) and Jonzon et al. (2015).

The portrayal of migration as a security problem legitimises the implementation of increasingly harsher control regimes, such as "legal" detention of asylum seekers. Since my participants were in Switzerland "illegally", they were detained not only in the asylum process but further in asylum centres throughout Switzerland and denied the freedom of choosing where to sleep, what and when to eat as well as the freedom of movement. As Arja's and Emesa's narratives show, they were not allowed to leave certain asylum centres after 10pm or bring their own food into the centre. Often times the asylum centres were located in remote places, segregating them spatially as well as socially. The spatial seclusion of their living situations results insofar in discrimination, as my participants were further excluded from the society. This is in line with Mezzadra & Neilson's (2013) findings.

My research participants had to live with a very small amount of money, which further depended on the canton they were currently living in. Especially Katia's narrative shows the difficulties she faced due to her financial situation as an asylum seeker. As asylum seekers, holding an N-permit, they were not allowed to work for a period between three to six months. In accordance with Bertrand (2019), due to Emesa's N-permit as well as low German skills it was very difficult if not impossible for her to find employment. Further my participants were not allowed to travel outside of Switzerland until their asylum decision, which resulted in involuntary immobility (Carling, 2002).

Depending on the canton, asylum seekers had limited access to official German courses. As the narratives of Pari and Emesa show, they highly depended on private German courses, offered by NGO's or churches. My participant's narratives also show how borders regarding their financial situations, their permits and the access to German courses and the spatial segregation they lived with reinforced themselves. As Emesa's story demonstrates, the asylum centre in which she spent most of her time waiting for her asylum decision was spatially very secluded. In order to get to the various German courses she frequented, Emesa was dependent on public transportation, which of course affected her financial situation. Having to live with a limited amount of money results in further discrimination, excluding my participants further from society.

The Swiss asylum system is constituted in a way that it only grants asylum to persons who are able to convincingly proof their persecution. In accordance with Shuman & Bohmer (2012) my participants' narratives show the mistrustful, judgmental and critical lens through which they were seen and accordingly treated by their caseworkers. Especially during the asylum hearing my participants felt judged, mistrusted and having their credibility questioned. As Oliver (2017: 186) describes, cultural differences, misinterpretation as well as translation problems during asylum hearings pose dangers in the determination of refugee status. Katia's narrative that she was denied asylum because she could not remember the birth dates of her nine siblings, illustrates this. This example illustrates how the credibility of my participants' narratives was dependent on their caseworker, which is similar to Shuman & Bohmer (2012) writings. As Pari's narrative shows, during the interview she felt a lot of pressure of needing to prove being a worthy or real refugee in front of the Swiss government. Arja had an especially bad experience during her asylum hearing with her translator who would not translate correctly for

her, due to the translator's own political views. Her narrative shows, how vulnerable she was at that moment.

As Walters (2006) and Wonders (2006) describe, borders are becoming more and more selective as tools for deciding who qualifies for asylum and who does not. Schilliger (2016) further points out the exclusionary citizenship practices embedded in the Swiss Asylum System. This is in line with my participant's narratives. While Arja received a positive asylum decision, resulting in a B-permit, Emesa, Pari and Katia were denied asylum but due to the politically unstable situations in their countries of origin were granted the F-permit. As their narratives show, for Emesa, Katia and Pari having their asylum claim rejected was very disappointing. Receiving again a (new) set of restricted rights, with only limited social welfare was upsetting to them and further re-enforced their worries about their own, and their children's futures. In line with Baumann (1998), Emesa, Katia and Pari experienced their F-status as a form of social stratification, of being inferior refugees compared to those who received a B-permit. These experiences are further in accordance with Bertrand (2019), who describes the additional hierarchy based on the residence permits, created by Switzerland's legislation resulting in a widening of inequalities. Further in line with Bertrand (2019) my participant's narratives show the difficulties they faced when trying to enter the labour market.

Similar to the findings of Chossière (2021), my participants also experience being refugees in everyday public space. Whether it is the feeling of non-belonging, the feeling of being unable to plan for a future or the feeling of illegitimacy illustrate this reality. Comparable to the findings of Paz & Kook (2021), my participants recount the stereotypes they faced in Swiss society and the discrimination they must endure due to their refugee status. Refugee women in Switzerland face two types of discrimination. On the one hand they are discriminated against because of their refugee status. On the other hand they face discrimination because of their gender identity. Arja's narrative shows, how she is exposed to stereotypical prejudices by her caseworker because of being a refugee woman. Also, Pari's narrative of when she was pregnant shows the ways in which gender and refugee intersect. As recognised by Asaf (2017) as well as Oliver (2017), women refugees are frequently portrayed as powerless victims of war and in need of (humanitarian) aid. This is further in line with my participant's narratives.

Pari not reporting the violence she was exposed to is in line with Oliver's (2017) findings. As Pari said, she did not have a social support system and did not know of the institutional support systems in Switzerland. Further, she was worried of the impact her reporting the abuse would have on her legal situation as well as her social situation. However, as opposed to Pari, Arja did report being sexually assaulted. In accordance with Oliver (2017), Arja was not believed by her caseworker and the case was closed. Similar to the findings of Asaf (2017: 8), Pari's experience shows the "unexpected side effect of her life as a refugee – freedom and empowerment". As a result of leaving her abusive husband, Pari was faced with new economic, legal, social and parental circumstances, forcing her to take on new responsibilities. Suddenly, her life was about understanding her new rights and as a result providing solely for herself and her daughter. She was suddenly responsible for her financial situation, her living accommodation, and she was in charge of all the decisions regarding her own as well as her daughter's life. Thus, Pari experienced a shift in gender roles as a result of her being a refugee. Pari's narrative of having a guilty conscience towards her daughter, because of their F status and the limited rights this entails, is further in line with Oliver's (2017) writings.

6.2 Intersectionality: Doing and Undoing of Identities

In accordance with Valentine (2007), the narratives presented in this thesis demonstrate how multiple identifications and disidentifications are experienced by refugee women in Switzerland. Thus, my participant's narratives not only show how they experienced being refugees and women but also the ways in which different subject positions were made and unmade as well as the fluidity in the ways their identities were done or undone. As is visible from the presented narratives, my participants experienced subject positions such as refugee, woman, mother, married, divorced, victimised, young, as lower-class refugee and as non-belonging. In line with Valentine (2007), my participants experienced these identifications and disidentifications simultaneously, meaning that their subject positions of e.g. mother and refugee were experienced at the same time.

Further, the influence of the spatial, temporal and social surroundings on the ways in which different identities are done and undone becomes clear from their narratives. As Mollett & Faria (2018) as well as Valentine (2007) describe, intersectionality is a deeply spatial concept, meaning that identities are spatially situated accomplishments. My participant's narratives

show how they have seen themselves differently in different spaces. As Pari stated, while she was living with her abusive husband she started believing the bad things he said about her, resulting in her altering her self-identification. Similarly, Arja's narrative shows how her gendered refugee identity became most salient to her in the context of one of her roommates being assaulted in the asylum centre.

In accordance with Mollett & Faira (2018), Valentine (2007) and West & Fenstermaker (1995), my participants narratives further indicate the ways in which power, privilege and systems of inequalities are organised around intersecting categories of identity. By applying for asylum in Switzerland these women experienced systems of inequalities as well as legal, social and economic oppression. Being considered illegal, having to undergo a long and straining asylum process as well as having to live with a limited set of rights and very little money significantly made them aware of their subjugated position. Thus, I agree with Cassidy, Yuval-Davis & Wemyss (2018) in viewing borders as constructed within everyday life and that in order to do so we must pay attention to social inequalities and the ways in which these are embedded in hierarchies of power.

In line with Valentine (2007: 19), Arja's, Emesa's, Pari's and Katia's experience of intersectionality in Switzerland is on the one hand characterised by the fluidity and complexity of identities and on the other hand by spaces in which dominant spatial orderings produce inclusion or rather exclusion for particular social groups. These dominant spatial orderings leading to the exclusion and discrimination of my participants translate into the internal borders and bordering processes they face on an everyday basis. As the empirical material in the previous section clearly illustrates, this results in experiences of non-belonging, of social and economic pressure, of being a lower-class refugee, of guilt towards their children, of uncertainty and of being defencelessly dependent. These experiences shape the doing and undoing of my participant's identities. Therefore, in line with Donnan & Wilson (1999) my participant's narratives show, how borders are institutions, processes and markers of identity. Further, from my participant's narratives it becomes clear, that within all these experiences and the done and undone identities by my participants, there is always the aspect of them being refugees and women present. Moreover, the narratives presented illustrate how my participants' intersectionality is highly shaped by the internal borders as well as the bordering processes they encounter in their everyday lives in Switzerland.

7 Conclusive Thoughts

This master's thesis engaged with the lived experiences of bordering processes and intersectionality of refugee women in Switzerland.

First, in order to give an overview of the geographical and legal embedding of Switzerland, the Common European Asylum System as well as the Schengen and Dublin Agreements were introduced. In the context of the increasing securitization of migration in Europe I further addressed the Hotspot Approach. Moving on to the Swiss asylum system, the legislative framework of the Swiss asylum system, the asylum process as well as the different Swiss residence permits were introduced. I then addressed the way in which the conceptualization of borders and bordering has shifted away from a territorial understanding of borders. I identified a research gap in the under-researched field of internal borders, bordering processes and intersectionality in refugee women. Especially studying these concepts as lived experiences is under-researched. Based on the concept of intersectionality as lived experience introduced by Gill Valentine (2007), I explored how refugee women experience intersectionality in Switzerland as well as the role of spatial, temporal and social contexts in subject formation. Through the lens of feminist and critical border studies, I looked at how refugee women in Switzerland experienced intersectionality as well as internal borders and bordering processes.

In this master's thesis the focus was on the lived experience of refugee women in Switzerland. I presented four narratives by refugee women who have been in Switzerland between seven and five years. The four women I spoke to were forced to leave their countries of origin because of unstable political situations such as in Afghanistan, or the war in Syria and because of personal persecution by governments.

The experiences of my participants illustrate the ways in which the border impacts their daily lives in Switzerland. They are confronted with internal borders and bordering processes throughout their entire life trajectories in Switzerland. They become or are made aware of this incorporation through the disadvantaged social position they have to live in. The experience of borders and bordering processes on an everyday basis results in it being incorporated in the different disidentifications and identifications of my participants. Hence, my participant's

narratives show how the border becomes a marker of identity. The narratives of my participants further give us insights on the ways in which identities are unmade as well as made and on how they simultaneously experience disidentifications and identifications in specific spatial, temporal and social contexts. Moreover, the importance of how power operates in and through space(s) and thus generates dominant spatial orderings which in turn create dimensions of exclusion and inclusion for particular social groups was seen. Hence, the different identities my participants invest in or which they disinvest in are influenced and shaped by the bordering processes they face.

I thus agree with critical bordering studies in distancing ourselves from a merely territorial understanding of borders and to rather understand borders and bordering processes as socially, temporally and spatially embedded in the everyday lives of people. Further, I assent with feminist geographers that the concept of intersectionality is insightful when wanting to understand not only the fluidity and complexity that lies behind subject identification and disidentification but is further helpful to comprehend the ways in which power operates through space.

This master's thesis showed, that the intersection of different identity positions of refugee women translates into discrimination and practices of exclusion and inclusion. I therefore come to the conclusion, that dominant spatial orderings manifest in the internal borders and bordering processes refugee women face on a daily basis, making the border a temporal life condition. This has an impact on the lived experiences of intersectionality.

8 Further Research

The themes raised in this master's thesis are relevant because there have always been, and will always be, refugees. And since there will also always be women, there will therefore always be refugee women. Hence, there is an ongoing importance of studying the specific experiences of refugee women. Refugee women have been underrepresented in scientific research, so there is a need to examine their unique experiences and knowledge in order to better understand and address their challenges and difficulties. While my research and my methodological approach are subject to limitations, I believe this master's thesis and the results it generated are promising for future research to build upon the work I have done so far.

While the scope of this master's thesis was temporally limited and while it did not allow to engage in quantitative research, I believe the results of this master's thesis to nonetheless be very insightful regarding the lived experiences of refugee women in Switzerland. As my research sample is quite small, it is central to generate more data in order to analyse the individual experiences of refugee women in Switzerland. While some of my participant's experiences are unique to their narrative, other themes and points were raised by all four women. Therefore, a bigger research sample could be helpful in identifying parallels and differences in the experiences of refugee women in Switzerland. It is important to study not only the experiences specific to refugee women but also to survey the experiences of refugee men in order to detect difficulties and challenges unique to the experiences of refugee women.

More research on internal borders and bordering processes is further needed. While presenting an important and insightful concept, the concept of internal borders is still under-researched and only superficially defined. The field of human geography would greatly benefit by focusing more on internal borders and the coherent bordering processes. Especially the ways in which bordering processes influence the specific experiences of refugee women and men appears promising.

This master's thesis studied the situated knowledge of four refugee women. Situated knowledge is important to consider in research because it can influence how people perceive and understand the world around them, and it can also shape their responses to research

questions. Because situated knowledge is specific to a particular context, it can be difficult to generalize findings based on situated knowledge to other contexts. Thus, it is important to also interview refugee women who do not speak German. Keeping in mind the federalist organization of the Swiss asylum system, it is further important to survey the experiences of refugee women in the French-, Italian-, and Romansh-, speaking parts of Switzerland.

Studying the impact of the revised asylum law on the experiences of asylum seekers in Switzerland would be favourable and beneficial, as none of the women who were interviewed had gone through the new procedure. By interviewing refugee women who arrived after March 1st, 2019 and experienced the new law and procedure, it would be possible to assess their experiences with intersectionality and different bordering processes in more detail, especially given the shorter waiting periods for an asylum decision under the revised law.

Further, two of the four women interviewed for this master's thesis are mothers. Studying the experiences of refugee mothers could also provide insight into the broader effects of displacement and migration on families and children. It could help to identify how different policies and interventions can support healthy and positive relationships between refugee mothers and their children.

And finally, I identify the ways in which the intersectionality of refugee women translates into discrimination and practices of inclusion and exclusion as a further research area. The results of this master's thesis give a first insight, however much more research is needed. This includes examining the unique experiences of refugee women across different countries and contexts. Understanding these intersectional dynamics can help develop more inclusive and effective policies and practices that address the challenges faced by refugee women.

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10 Personal Declaration

I hereby declare that the submitted thesis is the result of my own, independent work. All external sources are explicitly acknowledged in the thesis.