

**Are Estonians
ready to
integrate the
new refugee
situation in
their
imaginary?**
Analysis of the
factors that
hinder integration

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Abstract

The EU quota plan on distribution of refugees demands Estonia to host 550 asylum seekers by the end of this year. How is Estonia reacting towards this new situation? This article explores around the topic of integration of foreigners -in this case refugees- in a new environment as a two-sided phenomenon which needs the willingness of both the newcomers and the local population to be successful. The aim is not to treat integration as a big-picture phenomenon but to describe how are integration discourses and conceptions gestating already before the arrival of refugees. Interviews, observation, data analysis and theoretical work have been focused on finding which could be the reasons hindering the integration of refugees into Estonians' minds. Thus, our approach will be focused on Estonian society's integration to the refugee situation, not in refugees' integration to Estonia. The main obstacles for Estonians to integrate refugees into their conceptions of their country are (a) the lack of a clear picture of who refugees are, (b) the lack of experience in receiving immigration in general -and refugees in particular-, (c) a hesitating Government who does not act accordingly to the tempos of the situation, (d) a national mindset derived from a historical past stained with traumatic experience regarding people entering Estonia, and (e) an anti-foreigner sentiment spread from the reasons mentioned above. If we asked "Are Estonians ready to integrate the refugee situation in the imaginary of their country?" then the answer would be "So far, no".

Key Words

Refugee, Integration, Nation, EU, Estonian Government, Anti-foreigner sentiment

Introduction

There have been refugees in Estonia since 1998, after the country joined the United Nations Convention on the Status of Refugees. Since then, the applications have increased exponentially, but asylum seekers who have been granted asylum are a minority. Estonia's population had heard about the existence of refugees in the country, but this knowledge was conceived more a myth than a fact. No one had ever seen them.

In April 2015, the escalation of migrant boats arriving to the South European coast through the Mediterranean, led the European Union to reconsider their policies on borders and migrant processes. By the end of the month, the German chancellor Angela Merkel had released a quota system to distribute asylum seekers who were already in Greece and Italy, among other EU member states (to find out more about the resettlement quota program, see Annex 1). This quota plan demanded Estonia, a country that has historically had more emigrants than immigrants, to host 1.111 refugees, ten times more than the number of refugees they had at that time. After some negotiations, Estonia agreed to finally receive 550 (0'04% of Estonia's population); but one year later, still not one had arrived.

When the media started broadcasting not only that there were refugees in the country, but that these were living in a village called Vao, who not many had heard of (see Headline 1 in the Annex), and that there would be many more coming really soon, there was a remarkable social effervescence towards the topic.

Three months after the myth became a reality to Estonians, the Estonian motor-biker community organized a ride to Vao in order to give their support to local villagers, who apparently were troubled by the Refugee Centre. They claimed it was not a racist movement; neither a violent one. Leaving aside the question whether the noise of hundreds of motorbikes riding at the same time in front of a building is a violent act or not, or whether wearing t-shirts with the islamophobe murderer Behring Breivik's face on it is racist or not, the meeting between both groups never happened in the end. The motorbikers did go to Vao, but the State organized a last-minute activity to take all the asylum seekers outside of town (see different ways of approaching this event in Headlines 2, 3 and 4 in the Annex).

3rd September 2015: "Vao Refugee Centre set on fire in Estonia". That was the most impacting headline that morning. Fifty people were sleeping at the Centre that night -thirteen of whom were children- when someone, who has not been found yet, attempted to burn the building down.

Interviewee RE: *“Of course it was a big shock when local people put the fire on the house in Vao (...) I also read many really really nasty comments in internet from just like regular people and it’s kind of scary that there are so many people that are really thinking that we should kill the refugees, and burn their houses”*

After this event, a divisive slant started in Estonia: on the one hand, anti-refugee groups continued with loud protest against the quota plan; on the other hand, pro-refugee groups started an intellectual campaign of (a) awareness of the refugee situation and (b) criticism towards the intolerant and racist attitude of the former group. This study has interviewed people defending all the colors in this debate, but because almost all agree that the majority of Estonians are against the arrival of refugees, the main focus will go to the understanding of the possible reasons behind the anti-refugee sentiment, and to how these reasons make Estonia’s integration to the refugee situation a complex topic nowadays. Based on the belief that integration is not a one-piece phenomenon, but a two sided convoluted system which needs to work together in order to succeed, this research project tries to offer a new perspective to the topic of foreign integration in Estonia.

Estonia wants to continue being a member of the EU and thus continue rising to the challenges that this membership asks for. In the current situation, the acceptance of 550 asylum seekers is settled in the paper, but it does not seem to be settled in the mindsets, discourses and institutional systems. That is why this study will not approach the arrival of refugees to the country as people who must integrate in Estonia, but rather the arrival of refugees in the country as a fact that Estonian people should integrate to.

Methodology

Fieldwork was done between April 2015 and March 2016 -with two breaks in July and December-January- in Estonia. The times have been exactly those in between the emergence of the current refugee situation as a topic in Estonia, and the preparation for the first 7 refugees to arrive in the country. Theoretical work has been done in both Estonia and Barcelona; drafting has been done in the latter. The interview has been the central tool in this research. The outcomes hereby presented are drawn from a larger qualitative study exploring the main thoughts and conceptions around the refugee situation in Estonia of people

purposely sampled for maximum diversity (The profiles of the interviewees can be found in the Annex). This diversity was sought considering gender, age, level of education and social class. However, regarding the first and third variables, age and level of education, people above 65 years old or people with very low levels of education could not be included in the sample, because of a language obstacle; they did not speak English, and the interviewer did not speak Estonian or Russian.

The study is comprised of two phases. The first one, from July to November, 2015, in which the interviews were held rather informally in different social circumstances. All of them had in common the spontaneity and fluency that informality brings out, but also its weak side: they cannot be considered as such valuable resources for our analysis, precisely for the scarcity of empirical evidence. In this phase, much of the reading and bibliographic research was done. The second phase, from January to June, consists of data analysis, theoretical delimitations and formal interviews, divided into three types: 8 interviews face to face (from which 6 were recorded), 2 recorded interviews through Skype, and 13 written interviews (see Table 1 in Annex). That makes it a total of 23 interviews to Estonian people. To this number we should add 3 interviews to an Asylum Seeker, combined with correspondence, phone calls and observation in the Refugee Centre of Vao (Estonia).

As it was implied above, the language of the interviews has been English -except the interviews with the Asylum Seeker, which were held in Spanish-. If this research would continue in the future, it would be interesting to conduct interviews in Estonian, the mother tongue of most of the interviewees.

Theoretical Prologue

Who is a “refugee”? As way of background, a refugee is a person who leaves his or her home country because of persecution, violence, or fear of them, and therefore takes refuge in a foreign country. A priori, a refugee shall be considered as such if he or she is not yet self-sufficient in the country of asylum (see Annex 2). Nevertheless, “refugee” is not only a juridical status, contextually defined inside the borders of a concrete time and space; it is loaded with symbolic content that one can carry with oneself throughout life. Refugeehood is a matter of personal experience, and these differ considerably from one another (Hakovirta, 1993). Even if media insists to homogenize these experiences in order to create one community of refugees [what Brubaker (...) has called “groupism”: “*the tendency to treat various*

categories of people as if they were internally homogeneous, externally bounded groups, even unitary collective actors with common purposes” (Brubacker, 2009: 28)] the truth is that neither the refugees think themselves as all the same, nor the non-refugees conceive the barriers that create the “refugee identity”. For instance, the refugee that we had the chance to interview often emphasized how different she felt from the other people in the Refugee Center. It gave the feeling that she sometimes did not even remember being an asylum seeker at all.

Even if often vague or overlapping, there are several terms that distinguish “types” of refugees, like state-less people, transferees, exiles, asylum seekers, development-induced displaced, ecological refugees... In Estonia, we find that many people do not appreciate the difference between terms, for example between a refugee and a labor migrant, or simply a voluntary one. The coordinator of Johannes Mihkelsoni Keskus, the main NGO that works with refugees in Estonia, Juhan Sahharov, wrote a report of the refugee situation in Estonia in which he pointed out this issue, which he related with lack of awareness: *“In public discussions refugees are often confused with economic migrants, which in turn indicates a low level of awareness of the society regarding refugees”* (2012). One year later, Säär, one of the coordinators of the Estonian Center for Human Rights, wrote an article in which she added that the lack of awareness could be voluntary: *“Refugees are often confused with migrants, which refers to the society’s ignorance or lack of desire to be informed”* (2013: 6). I remember once hearing a conversation between Interviewee G and her mother-in-law in which she was telling him that she had seen in the news that refugees are arriving to the country, and he replied to her: *“Don’t call them refugees, they are not refugees, they are immigrants. I mean, it’s the same thing”*.

Poverty, or political instability can be, in some cases, equally threatening to a person’s life as warfare. In that case, refugees and labor migrants could be treated similarly. But one thing is to admit that migration is a complex topic with not so clear definition-boundaries, and another, very different, is to use this ambiguity in order to create social exclusion to the newcomers.

In the “who is and who is not” debate, both homogenization and *superheterogenization* are harmful to the term. Homogenization does not allow us to distinguish the different backgrounds, demands and needs of every particular person, which can contribute to negligent aid. Superheterogenization, though, can also be dangerous in the sense of time. Urgency is one of the most characteristic elements of refugee flows because of insalubrity and danger; border controls are sometimes too thorough in the allowance of people into the country. The term “refugee” is also polemic because of inherent contradictions. In the first

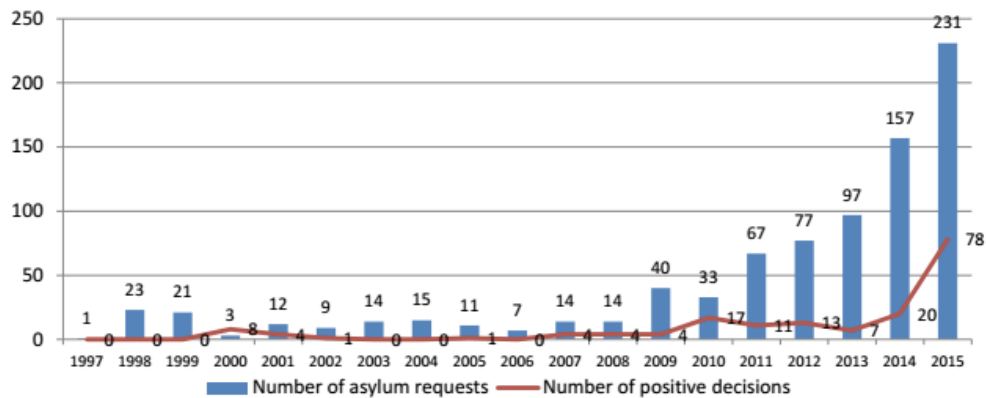
place, many people are considered refugees since the moment they flee, during the migration and the waiting time until they get -or not- the asylum. But that would not do justice to the term, which actually only involves those people who already are granted asylum. Secondly, “refugee” is still very much a term that changes depending on the particular Conventions in particular times, within particular international political and economic contexts (Black, 2001), and thus, the definition is susceptible of being used differently depending on the situations, the places, and mostly, the interests of the involved parties. However, the definition has been widening. Recent scientific works on refugees have a tendency to adopt broader interpretations of the term rather than the ones defined by international organizations (Ager, 1999); and the latter ones have also been broadening their interpretations over the decades (Black, 2001).

But let us remember that definitions, even if influencing our mindsets, might not always influence the actions towards the topic. As Black (2001) points out, many brilliant ideas have gotten in contact with policymakers; but few have succeeded in translating themselves into significant policy impacts. And looking at the EU policies on the current migrant crisis, Black seems to be very right.

Contextual Framework: Refugee Situation in Estonia

Estonia started providing international protection in 1997, when joined the United Nations Convention on the Status of Refugees (to know more about it see Annex 3). The statistics of the last Annual Human Rights Report show that the number of applications in Estonia has been slowly but steadily rising, reaching the amount of 172 refugees and asylum seekers in 2015. However, there is a considerable gap between the number of applications and the number of those who finally get the political protection. Between 1997 and 2015 Estonia received 846 requests; from which 88 cases got asylum granted, and other 88 cases got subsidiary protection (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Number of asylum requests and number of positive decisions in 1997-2015



Source: Police and Border Guard Board; Estonian Refugee Council

The Ministry of Social Affairs and the Migration Policy Department have had to amplify their service to this increasing influx of asylum seekers creating networks that did not exist previously in the country. One of the main points of their plan was the construction of a Reception Centre Building. This Centre was first built in Jaama küla, a small town with almost no inhabitants in the forest-border of Russia, and later moved to Vao, a bigger but still small town in “the middle of nowhere”. Interviewee J wonders: *“I lack the knowledge in determining what is best for them or not. But for me the things they do in terms of integration might not be the best way to do it. Mostly the location where the refugees are taken, which is beyond my understanding, why do they have to be in the remotest parts of Estonia?”*

172 refugees in the capital, Tallinn, would go unnoticed, but 172 refugees in a village which previously had around 100 inhabitants, makes a substantial change. The refugee reception centre in Vao assists beneficiaries in accommodation and interactions with the local government and other administrative agencies; organizes interpretation services and provides Estonian language courses. However, Saharov and Säär (2012) highlight that there is scarce bus connection to the nearest town, language lessons are irregular, and medical services too seldom. These handicaps were confirmed in autumn 2015 during the fieldwork in Vao and the talks with some of the beneficiaries there. The self expression of the residents is also insufficient, due to an eclipsing language barrier that interpreters are not yet able to surpass. This leads the asylum seekers to confusion, and lack of understanding of their own situation: *“They are unaware of their future and the duration of their detention and are outside their habitual personal and cultural environment. All these circumstances may cause deterioration of the person’s mental health and facilitate depression, anxiety and bring on post traumatic stress”* (Säär, 2013: 2) Let us see an example

of it: Asylum Seeker Y had applied for asylum in Sweden, but for some reason she ignored why she had been living in the Reception Centre in Estonia for two years already. And it was in that moment, shortly before I met her, that she had understood the process she had been through.

Asylum Seeker Y: *“No. Nosotros cuando nos hacen todo el proceso, a nosotros nos dan el pasaporte, el billete de salida... Y ahora aquí, cuando estoy en este proceso es cuando me doy cuenta de todo. De que esa visa es de aquí de Estonia.”*

The lack of understanding has been also experienced by the local municipalities. It was in 2012 for the first time that the fifteen counties' governments that shape Estonia were informed and incorporated into the plan of integrating the beneficiaries of international protection. The ones who replied positive answers to the Ministry of Social Affairs were the minority, since most of the municipalities were reluctant to the idea of contributing in hosting them. However, as Saharov and Säär (2012) point out, some improvements have been done as well. Those are the increase of support people who provide information and create an environment of trust with the asylum seekers, and the annulment of the expenses that the refugees had to pay while being kept apart waiting for answers to their applications in the Reception Centre. The 2012 report concluded with the consensus that integration of refugees to the society need more investing into.

On January 2016, a new report, this time from National Audit Office, analyzed and provided its opinion on whether the state is prepared for the sudden increase in beneficiaries of protection (550 from resettlement and estimated 300 border asylum requests) and is able to meet all its obligations, to what they contested that the state is currently unable of doing so.

Political Framework: Estonian Governmental Position towards the Refugee Situation

“(...) for a long time, Estonia failed to understand the importance of the signals which indicated that the refugee problem cannot be avoided and that sooner or later the issue of distributing the refugee burden would have to be addressed. Late last spring, the society was suddenly hit by the realization that Estonia was not a lonely island in the middle of the Pacific, but a part of Europe and everything that comes with it”

(Letter from Auditor General Alar Karis to Estonian Government, 18th January, 2016, in Olgo et al., 2016: 1)

We had the chance to talk to Estonia's representative at The World Bank, Ivar Sikk, who stated that due to the urgency and the administration's capacity, Estonia does not have a particular policy on the refugee situation, but rather follows EU guidelines. "*The EU Member States have agreed on uniform principles for accepting asylum seekers and processing of asylum requests (so-called Dublin Regulation) but there is still no uniform EU policy on international protection*" (Olgo et al., 2016: 7) -to know more about Dublin Regulation see Annex 4. In this respect, Karis defends that Estonia should not only include the amendment of the Dublin procedure, but also take part in seeking solutions and contributing in the policy-making from the start. To do so, Estonia should first formulate its views in regards to the migration debate. So far, there are only two concerns that seem to be crystal clear. The first one is the will to achieve peace in the crisis spots so that the people who were forced to flee can return home. This perspective is also shared by some of the interviewees:

Interviewee OT: *I would like to see the governments trying to deal with the problem in Syria. Because at the moment I cannot see anything trying to stop the war by Europe or by The States.*

Interviewee MA: *So yeah, if the government could do something also with the places, then it would be good. For people, then they don't have to come away from their homes.*

The second concern is to offer a new home only to those who "*come in peace, wish to become a part of our society, and respect and uphold the Constitution of Estonia and its values, and local ways of life, and contribute to the development of our society and economy. Those not intending to do so have no reason to come to Estonia or stay here*" (Karis in Olgo et al., 2016: 2). In the Reception Centre, almost all the refugees sign up for the Estonian lectures, and the Estonian Refugee Council affirms that the asylum seekers do not usually want the state support if they can be economically autonomous; therefore they want to work. There is no clear way to validate this statement, but some of our interviewees fear the opposite. In general terms, the Estonians we have interviewed agree with Karis' letter, but some of them have taken it farther in the form of fear.

Interviewee SA: *“Let’s say if I quit my job, I’m unemployed, I get like shitty money. How much is it, 100€? (...) But I think these people get like more more money (...) And this kinda makes these people not want to work. Because why? I’m getting the money already, why should I find a job? I think refugees, it would be nice if they get a place to stay, a home, and food help, but there would be like limits if after a month, two, they haven’t even tried to find a job or learned the language, they need to move on to another place.”*

The Estonian Government is facing now both self-criticism for the passiveness and the slow policy making -which actually shows that they are trying to be *“as most restrictive as possible, within the EU norms”* (Interviewee G)- and criticism from the society, which feels unaware and/or anomic in front of the unclear position of the Government. Almost the entire sample of interviewees, plus many of the informal talks that I could experience in a year of living in Estonia showed that even if the topic is medially hot, there is a spread lack of understanding of the (a) Government’s position towards the quota plan and the (b) plans and policies related to the refugees who are still yet to arrive. As we said above, the Government has a position, which is to adequate to the EU guidelines, but so far this has not been done. This causes misreading, mistrust, and, in some cases, it can even increase the radicalism and divisiveness. We can perceive this confusion in the quotes below:

Interviewee LA: *“Many of the ministers seem to be at a loss with regards to this question. On the one hand, they attempt to take into account the hostile attitude of the vocal xenophobic part of the population, on the other hand they try to cultivate the European values of equal opportunities and tolerance. I think that there is too much guesswork and too little actual data and rational planning”*

Interviewee MA: *“I really can’t see what is the idea of government. Because they say that we need to take them, but they don’t have actually solutions how this works in real life. (...) They are not very clear, what they are talking about. It’s, like foggy. They say big words but they don’t have ideas behind these words, I think.”*

National Mindset

Individuals’ political values are very determinant in the conception of immigration. Usually, conservative citizens are much more likely to hold negative attitudes towards

immigrants than their liberal fellows. Also citizens in regions with nation-building projects exhibit stronger anti-foreigner sentiments than their peers from regions without such political aspirations (Zamora-Kapoor, Kovincic & Causey, 2013). “Nation” and “identity”, are one of the most read words in both the discourses and the political program of the Conservative Party in Estonia (Eest Konservatiivne Rahvaerakond, EKRE). We can appreciate it in the fragment below, which belongs to their Manifest:

“We invite all people to think along and join Estonian's highest political target, which is the preservation of the Estonian national identity, nation and people for sustainable development and ensuring the well-being of the real rise. Only the Estonian people themselves can achieve all of this, based on the freedom of its natural will to life and developing friendly cooperation with other nations.”

One of the secretaries of the party, Maria Kaljuste, contributed to this study by giving some data on the increase of support that the party is receiving in the past months. In the last elections, which were concluded shortly before the “refugee crisis topic” arose in the country, EKRE had 50.000 voters (representing 7% of the population). In early 2016 when the media had already made the arrival of refugees its hottest topic, and after the number was finally official (550 refugees would arrive to Estonia along the year), their affiliations started growing up to 14%, or even 19% nowadays (see Figures 1.1 and 1.2 in Annex). It is important to give attention to this data, since the fact that a party doubles its voters in less than half a year is quite a remarkable signal that helps us understand the position of Estonians towards the refugee situation. The policies of this party, related to the matter of our concern, are mainly not to accept refugee quotas and to invest that money -or part of it- on the struggle against the wars which produce refugees in the current moment.

Maria Kaljuste: *“We think that the system of helping should be based to the real possibilities ... and how the helping is most effective... there should be camps and even cities build closer to refugees we should send food, maybe constructable houses, pillows etc... instead of bringing them here...”*

But what are the reasons behind the border closeness? Why are many Estonians feeling threatened by the arrival of refugees? Let us see the historical past of Estonia.

Estonia is a country which has enjoyed its independence very briefly. Since the crusade by archbishopric of Riga to the area in the beginning of the 13th century, up until

the Russian occupation in the beginning of the 20th century - the history of Estonia has been one of occupation. Although occupations differed in their level of intrusiveness, they shared a common interpretation of Estonians as inferior people.

After the 2nd World War, when Estonia was left to Stalin by the Treaties of Tehran and Jalta, started the last and bloodiest occupation of them all. Intensive russification and genocide of estonians introduced new Russian ethnic groups to the strategical locations (coal mines, power plants, industrial sectors) of the country. There was never the idea to integrate the people that were moved to Estonia, because Estonia was considered part of the Soviet Union and thus part of the big communist family of workers.

When Estonia got its independence, they turned their face from Russia to start facing Europe, and that meant mainly replacing communism with capitalism. In ten years, with the effervescence of autonomy and the funding from the EU, Estonia developed its economy at the speed of light. Democracy felt like a blessing to the people who finally could choose their identity of being Estonians. And because the EU gave them the space to be so, it became the perfect partner. In the social sense, though, Estonia maintained -to a great extent- its values. Within all this transition process, Estonian population managed to empower their traditions in a compatible way with a strict capitalism. So they became selectively Western.

If we agree to accept a metaphor, we could say that Estonia, more than a young nation, is a teenage one. And as such, it seeks constant reaffirmation of its identity. *“Identity seems to be one of those things that is both invented and found. The relative balance between the two cannot be discussed at a theoretical level, but can only be dealt with in relation to specific historical instances. What seems evident is that, once it has been invented, identity gives the impression of being there, existing as a reality and not as a choice to be made.”* (Megill, 2011: 31).

But is “nation only narration” (Berger, 2011)? There is a sociopolitical backing as well. Some would assert that being nationalistic is the condition of our times (Eley & Rigor, 1996).

The EU quotas, as a distributive plan, can be perceived, in a way, as a communist policy, which is exactly what Estonians have been fleeing from. This interpretation should be developed deeper, but the current objective of this study is not to dig into this issue, but only to use it as a background to understanding the impact of a policy like this one, in a nation which shares, not only this collective memory, but also the collected memories from the people who remember communism from their own experiences. The past is still present.

Berger's theory of "transgenerational traumatization" (2011) refers to those moments in which the memory of events in the nation's past become central in the identification of generations that have no direct personal memory to those. Estonia has not reached this state yet, because the past is so recent that the people who tell these stories support them with direct personal memories. Interviewee EH believes Estonia's past is weighing too heavily on Estonians who have lived the soviet era, and the only way to be ready for integrating foreigners is to wait for the past to be more past: "*I think Estonian society is not ready for it but I also think that there is no other way to make our society more tolerant than to wait until there are no Estonians who have lived during the Soviet times...*"

Integration

If we observe history of human mobility, the migrant situation in the contemporary world is experiencing a totally new setting (see De Genova, 2002). As Chauvin & Garcés-Mascareñas present in their very well titled study *Becoming Less Illegal. Deservingness Frames and Undocumented Migrant Incorporation* (2014), currently the good candidate for asylum and integration has seemingly become the one who would have preferred not to migrate, but has done so due to exceptional circumstances associated with vulnerability. Until the 20th century, people were considered legitimate unless, or until, they would be explicitly declared undesirable. "*The degree of desirability did not depend as much on the persons' legal status as on their perceived capacity to work and sustain themselves and their (non)classification as politically subversive or ethnically incompatible*" (Chauvin & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2014: 2). Notwithstanding, the growing prominence of nation-state boundaries led to a more effective exclusion through the immigration law, which gave much more relevance to papers. Nowadays, the situation has turned upside-down in a way that immigrants are assumed illegal unless they are explicitly declared the opposite. *Illegality* is utilized as a tool for regularization and control, as well as to win time. But as Chauvin & Garcés-Mascareñas (2014) highlight, migrants' deservingness also has to be proven by demonstrating integration and contribution as residents. So in a context in which immigration law restricts mobility and *criminalizes* migration, the "good immigrant" is the one who did not want to migrate -commit a crime- in the first place, but also is able to rapidly adapt and contribute to the hosting society as a full resident.

If our analysis ended up here, it would seem that refugees have it easier -in terms of integration- than labor migrants. So far we have seen how the reasons of migration and the

attitude of the migrant in the current legislation influence the level of “deservingness” in a new society. But integration is not a one-sided phenomenon. *“What is of interest is not how migrants adapt to their new environment but how structural, particularly political and legal, constraints make permanent “integration” impossible. This issues are not ones of assimilation and acculturation but of enforced segregation through such “total” institutions as the compound and the labor camp and the corresponding persistence of race and ethnic differentiation.”* (Burawoy, 1976: 1051). Even if a newcomer absolutely wants to integrate, if the hosting institutions and society do not acknowledge this person as a citizen, the integration will never happen. Integration ends when both parts do it and feel it.

Interviewee S: *“a family who has lived in Estonia already... I think they are from Ukraine or somewhere, and they might have lived here already like 7, or 8 years. And they have like 3 kids. 2 of them are born here and I think all the kids, they talk Estonian language and also the father, but they don’t get (...) permission to live here forever even though they have a job and this is kind of sad, cause hey have made like an effort and their kids know Estonian language... So why can’t we accept them in this country? Why not?”*

It is not precisely seldom that *“increasing cultural diversity is seen to challenge social cohesion”* (Zamora-Kapoor, Kovincic & Causey, 2013: 1). As Weber (1978) pointed out, native’s opposition to a foreign ethnic group was conceived to be *“the primary and normal reaction”* (385). Weber’s quote looks totally understandable but taking it for granted would lead us nowhere. Zamora-Kapoor, Koviniv & Causey (2013) cluster the *anti-foreigner sentiment* into different causes.

1. Economic competition is one of the main apparent reasons why hostility towards foreigners increase. When facing unemployment, locals are prone to feel threatened by the appearance of competitive actors into the job hunting field. Hence, the low-skilled and unemployed are the social groups more likely to exhibit anti-foreigner sentiment. Also in a macro-level perspective, when citizens perceive the resource distribution as a zero-sum game, they tend to incriminate the existence of international labor flows.

One of EKRE’s and other anti-immigration groups’ central topics is the economic distribution. Some interviewees took that into consideration during the interviews as well:

Interviewee MA: *“if one third of Estonian children are living under the poverty limit, then they say that why our government should give money to refugees when they can’t help their own people”.*

Interviewee JO (EKRE voter): *“I think most of the people are against refugees because we have neighbors who done fucked up. Sweden is the rape capital of the EU because of the massive hordes of muslim dickheads. In Finland they live of social money, the Finns are paying for everything. So why the fuck should Estonians want that kind of thing.”*

The fear of unemployment has also been very recurrent in the conversations among Estonians this last year. Nevertheless, in Estonia, asylum seekers are not allowed to work for the first 6 months since the application has been handed in, and also while any legal process is being transacted. This means that they can easily spend 2 years until they enter the labor market, and that is not counting the time it can take to finally find a job.

Asylum seeker Y: *“No puedo trabajar porque dicen que si yo presento este nuevo proceso, tengo que esperar seis meses para trabajar. Entonces los meses que ya tuve anteriormente están perdidos. Y entonces sigo en las mismas. No, no, no veo nada a mi favor, ¿entiendes? Porque si estuviera trabajando digo “Bueno, estoy trabajando, estoy ganando algo...” y eso me tiene entretenida. Pero el estar sin hacer nada, la espera y que todos los días me despierto así, abrir el hotmail a ver qué tengo y es con mucha tensión. Mucha tensión y después de la noticia que me den, ¿qué hago? ¿cómo hago? Dónde puedo coger... No sé qué voy a hacer. No sé qué será de mi vida, qué será.”*

Moreover, we interviewed an economist (Interviewee VE) who stated that any economic fear is groundless, since there is still more people who leave Estonia than who arrive (10.000 people leave Estonia every year; 6.000 arrive) and there are many more jobs than workers nowadays. The following interviewee believes, though, that economic reasons are secondary, and the cultural-identity-based ones are the most relevant to understand the anti-foreigner sentiment. We will talk about this in the following chapter.

Interviewee R: *“There are economic reasons but I think mostly and deeply is still the identity and the cultural thing that we are a really small nation and we have had our... We are not so tolerant. I think everything is coming from the past of occupation. People are really related to the past and they don't have new experiences coming from nowadays world”*

2. Cultural affinity is a key point to take into consideration as well. Zamora-Kapoor, Kovinic & Causey agree that perceptions of immigration depend on the individual similarities with the members of the out-group, and their collective degree of inclusion/exclusion in the dominant group. Estonia is in the beginning of experiencing a first generation of immigration, and this one turns out to be very characterized by refugees. Although countries like France or the U.S. show that exclusion not necessarily diminishes after the second, or third generation of immigrants (Sayad, 1977; any speech from Trump, 2016), still the lack of immigrant background in Estonia could be one of the causes of hostility. As the Minister of the Migration Policy Department of Estonia, Ly Pärn, answered, *“Estonian policy about asylum seekers is quite conservative. Our main challenge is right now to implement relocation and resettlement decisions (we have not previously been involved in these processes). Currently we are making our first steps”* (April 2016). Säär agrees to that, and adds a positivism touch: *“Integration of refugees into the society continues to be problematic (...) it can be said that Estonian refugee law is still extremely young compared to law in there areas and that is why it is natural that there is room for improvement”* (2013: 1).

The importance of the cultural affinity can be perceived in the following quote:

Interviewee KR: *“I believe that people who for some unfortunate reasons have to leave their home and country will be more happy and integrate easier in the countries similar to their own culture and way of living. In that respect I would like to see Estonia welcoming refugees from Ukraine for example.”*

However, this theory might not always be true. The interviewees below talk about the integration of the 24% Russian-Estonian/Estonian-Russian population that lives in the country, who are in cultural terms quite similar to Estonians. Even if there is already a second generation of them, they are mostly living together in the “Russian areas” of Estonia, where Estonians are a minority.

Interviewee J: *“Estonia has never had until now a plan how to integrate people of different backgrounds. (...) It has been a topic since Estonian Government was formed in 1991. (...) And we have over 20% of Russians and the general consensus is that we have failed in integrating them to our society”*

Interviewee RA: *“We have a lot of people left from the soviet era, who still haven’t learned our language or culture. I think that Estonians are very skeptical and negative about refugees, because we can’t even integrate the Russians into our own culture. But at least our religious beliefs are whatnot the same, not like the muslim barbarians (not all of them).”*

Another topic to highlight in this section are the racist tactics in the ordinary language. The most recurrent form of doing so is by assigning degrading attributes to the newcomers (Aramburu, 2002). The quotes below depict this tactics in a very illustrative way:

Interviewee TA: *“Of course in the beginning you can help them, but at some point they will have to start taking care of themselves, work. In that case we can help them like if they, let’s say, work a bit, and then they can get a little bit more. But not just they come and sit down on their asses, smoking weed and waiting for money to come every month or something like that.”*

Interviewee JO: *“But like in London or Sweden shows. Its totally different. There are lot of slums. Muslims are on streets yelling Quran and being really arrogant. So their intention is not to integrate but making their own communities and growing bigger so.”*

Putting in the same sentence this rhetoric juxtaposition of “refugees” and “weed” or “muslims” -which is the main religion of the newcomers that are about to arrive to Estonia- and “laziness”, or “arrogance”, achieves the effect of constructing the “refugees” as a degrading category (Aramburu, 2002).

Until the seventies, the main and perhaps only form of integration in the Western world was by assimilation. That meant that for newcomers to deserve citizenship they had to prove their will of becoming to that culture. After the seventies, though, a new model of integration appeared: its name was multiculturalism (see Taylor et al., 1994; Kymlicka, 1995). This model acknowledged the ethnic and cultural differences in a way that they would not be reason for discrimination or less deservingness to citizenship. Estonia has met the requirement of adopting an integration policy when these two kinds of policies existed already, and examples of them both could be found in different countries. Being Estonian integration policy still under construction, it looks like it is adopting an assimilation-kind one. As

Interviewee J criticizes, “(...) *the plan in integration that they have written down what they need to do, that the refugees have to learn Estonian and so on. Like the bullet points of how to make a person Estonian, basically. Yeah... And I think that’s one of the interesting parts. (...) of the refugee situation that we are trying to turn them into Estonians. We are not willing to accept them as Syrians or Afghans or whatever. They are here, so if they want to stay they have to become Estonians.*”

In the interview, Juhan Saharov approached this topic from the other side, not pointing out assimilation, but pointing out how far Estonia is from multiculturalism: “*Estonians are not used to see a, you know, Afroamerican person, black men and women. (...) The problem with Estonia is that we haven’t had contacts, we haven’t had relations. People don’t have friends among the Muslims, or from Africa. (...) It’s completely lacking in Estonia this kind of multiculturalism in intimate relations. And of course we have very strong Russian mixed families and so on, but mixed families with Africans or Asians is quite rare.*”

3. The lack of social ties between locals and newcomers must be highlighted as well. Following Zamora-Kapoor, Kovinic & Causey (2013), the openness between both groups comes by increasing: (a) contact with foreigners and (b) trust. Trust is harder to build the farther one is from the object that one wants to trust, so that makes the second one be a product of the first one. “*Governmental regulations are likely to affect attitudinal outcomes by establishing the institutional environment in which natives and foreigners coexist*” (Zamora-Kapoor, Kovinic & Causey, 2013: 7). In Estonia, the contact between locals and foreigners is deeply influenced by two factors. The first one is the lack of shared spaces. As we said above, the Refugee Centre of Vao has been built in a relatively isolated place, where there is not much contact with Estonians other than villagers. Some of the interviewees did not agree with this institutional decision, and believe it is obstructing integration.

Interviewee M: “*The integration of the refugees is possible if they’re brought in contact with the locals, allowed a job and language courses. The biggest mistake would be the development of the refugee "ghettos", not offering them jobs or language courses.*”

Interviewee VE: “*Just make them part of the everyday life. It’s both ways, they have to go out, they have to work, they have to go to school, meet people... and every time they meet someone in the street they will also be*

more welcome. It takes one black person, one asian person, one muslim people... to accept all of them. So I think they have to be just part of the society, not sitting in Vao or whatever possibilities are."

The lack of spaces where locals and refugees coexist, or share, has a great misunderstanding potential because it narrows the socialization of the groups uniquely through the media. That brings us to the second factor that influences the integration of Estonians to the current situation: the role of the media.

In Estonia, there are five daily newspapers (4 in Estonian; 1 in Russian), eight weeklies (5 in Estonian; 3 in Russian) and 23 independent regional papers (18 in Estonian; 5 in Russian). Nine domestic television channels serve the 1.36 million population, and over 20 radio stations are available within the 45,000 square km of the country. Dunaway, Branton & Abrajano (2010) reveal that the volume of coverage about immigration in border states is much higher than in non-border states, and therefore it has led to problematizing immigration more in the former than in the latter. In Estonia, the refugee topic has become the hottest topic of 2016, so far. This would make sense regarding Dunaway, Branton & Abrajano's theory, because Estonia is not only a border state, but the border state of Russia, which has become again the biggest threat after the war in Ukraine. However, it has caught our attention that the majority of participants hinted that their level of awareness on the topic is limited by the few sources that talk about it. As interviewee LA said: *"I am as aware as the national media coverage allows me to be"*.

Be it too little or too much, the information that Estonian media offers, we believe that configuring the image and representation of the refugees only through the media can be dangerous and biased.

Conclusions

These lines have tried to elaborate on the idea of integration of Estonia to the refugee situation, focusing mainly in the aspects that make this integration difficult to accomplish.

In the theoretical prologue, I tried to expose a substantial obstacle for a successful integration, which is the lack of actual knowledge of who the refugees really are, and why is integrating them a different scenario than the integration of other migrants. As mentioned above, and as many of the professionals who work on the topic assert, many Estonians still do not see the difference between refugees or other migrants. This is an important feature to

consider because the openness of receiving refugees rather than other migrants is often derived from the understanding of who they are, where they come from and what they need. As Säär, Sahharov or Pärn recommend, there should be a bigger campaign for raising the awareness of Estonians on international forced migration.

The contextual framework highlights the lack of experience on immigration that the country has had. In general terms, Estonia has received immigration -not occupation- since 1992. Concretely refugees, since 1998, but the quota plan asks Estonia to host more refugees in one year than in their past 19 years, so as all “new” situations, they need time to build their proper system, and to finally settle.

The political context towards the refugee situation nowadays is fuzzy. The Government has accepted EU quotas -with a strong opposition against it- but has not yet elaborated a concrete feasible plan to do so. The system is still not completely designed, nor the infrastructure, nor the common spaces for locals and foreigners to share. Therefore, there is still a grey area that awakes skepticism on the readiness of the country to meet the quota plan.

The national mindset is on the back of the minds of many Estonians. And this one has been built as a reaction from a long forced subordination in the past. The history of Estonia shows that the majority of people that have entered the country during their past have been mainly intrusive. In comparative terms, the arrival of “others” into their country has brought more bad experiences than good ones. As some of the interviewees uttered, more time is needed, as well as new experiences to replace the memories from the traumatic past. It is necessary not to see the arrival of refugees as a threat.

To conclude, it would be interesting to highlight something already subtly displayed on the methodology, in regard to this study’s sample of interviewees. Although having sought maximum diversity within our interviewees, the sample has been limited by the inevitable limitations that the researcher carried with herself; mainly considering language. Usually, people who speak English in a non-native English speakers’ country are the ones who are more highly educated, who are in contact with internationality in more social levels, and who probably have had the opportunity to travel abroad. This is prone to entail a greater openness towards immigration in general. The emotions of our interviewees that have been exposed above have shown different ways of approaching the refugee situation, and our main focus has always been to understand those factors that act as obstacles. Nevertheless, we should

acknowledge that all these feelings come from people who speak fluent English, and thus belong to this highly educated group, with international connections and opportunities of traveling. For this research to be absolutely representative of Estonian population, it would require an interviewer who spoke Estonian -fact that will be definitely considered in the future development of the study.

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ANNEX

Ordered following the narration. All titled and numbered.

HEADLINE 1

news.err.ee
ESTONIAN PUBLIC BROADCASTING

NATIONAL ▾ ECONOMY DEFENSE SCI-TECH ENTERTAINMENT & ARTS ▾ SPORTS

Vao – the small village most Estonians had never heard of until refugee crisis (6)



HEADLINE 2

◀ Back Text size AAA Print 

Estonian bikers get involved in refugee issue

19.06.2015, 16:14

About five hundred people are supporting on Facebook an initiative by Estonian bikers who wish to drive to the Vao village as a sign of support to locals who are opposing expansion of the accommodation centre of asylum seekers, reported Eesti Päevaleht.

While this does not necessarily mean that all 500 were to get on their bikes and drive to Vao, it is likely that the roadtrip could still include hundreds of bikers and supporters.

The state wants to expand the Vao accommodation centre of asylum seekers which was built for 35, but currently houses about 90.

HEADLINE 3

ESTONIAN NEWS » LOCAL NEWS

Bikers rally turns out calm and quiet



Nele-Mai Olup, reporter

6. July 2015 12:41



Foto: Kasper Mäe

This Saturday, the tiny village of Vao, in Väike-Maarja Parish of Lääne-Viru County was stirred while waiting for arrival of bikers riding to voice support. On that day of historic crowds for the place, refugees went missing.

At midday, fifty bikers rolled in as early birds, the main group catching up by one o'clock. As the people stood clapping and waving, a villager called Rein drew parallels to the very Song Celebrations.

HEADLINE 4

Estonia's Government Has Evacuated Refugee Camp

By eurotopics - July 12, 2015

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Biker Scum of Vao village. PHOTO: Rauno Volmar

In the city of Vao in northeast Estonia the municipal authorities evacuated a refugee camp on Saturday because of a protest ride by around 360 bikers against enlargements to the camp

HEADLINE 5

news.err.ee
ESTONIAN PUBLIC BROADCASTING

NATIONAL ▾ ECONOMY DEFENSE SCI-TECH ENTERTAINMENT & ARTS ▾ SPORTS

Immigration center set on fire (86)



Asylum seekers center in Vao, Lääne-Viru county (Police and Border Guard Board)

9/3/2015 10:31 AM
Category: [Politics](#)

The external wall of the center for asylum seekers in Vao village, Lääne-Viru County, was set on fire in the early hours of today. No one was hurt in the incident. Police has launched a criminal investigation.

1. Resettlement Program

The distribution key will be based on objective, quantifiable and verifiable criteria that reflect the capacity of the Member States to absorb and integrate refugees, with appropriate weighting factors reflecting the relative importance of such criteria. This key will be based on the following elements:

- a) the size of the population (40%) as it reflects the capacity to absorb a certain number of refugees;
- b) total GDP⁵² (40%) as it reflects the absolute wealth of a country and is thus indicative for the capacity of an economy to absorb and integrate refugees;
- c) average number of spontaneous asylum applications and the number of resettled refugees per 1 million inhabitants over the period 2010-2014 (10%) as it reflects the efforts made by Member States in the recent past;
- d) unemployment rate (10%) as an indicator reflecting the capacity to integrate refugees. Actual numbers to be relocated to each Member State will depend on the total number of persons to be relocated and will be included in the legislative proposal.

The receiving Member State will be responsible for the examination of the asylum applications in accordance with established rules and guarantees. Each Member State will remain responsible for individual admission decisions. The Commission is aware of the risk of spontaneous secondary movement of resettled persons. This will be addressed by making resettlement conditional upon agreement of the resettled person to remain in the resettling State for a period of at least 5 years, informing them of the consequence of onward movement within the EU and the fact that it will not be possible to acquire legal status in another Member State or gain access to social rights.

Source: Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee of the Regions (2015): “European schemes for relocation and resettlement”, Annex in the *A European Agenda on Migration*. Brussels.

TABLE 1: PROFILES OF THE INTERVIEWEES

	Age	Nationality	Residence	Profession	Interview-Type
1. Asylum Seeker Y	47	Cuba	Estonia	Dancer	3 interviews. Face to Face. Recorded and not-recorded.
2. MA & OT	27	Estonian	Estonia	Journalist & Football Coach	Skype. Recorded.
3. LI	23	Estonian	Estonia	Student and Waitress	Face to face, not recorded. Also written
4. RE	25	Estonian	Estonia	Theater Company Manager	Skype. Recorded.
5. V	35	Estonian	Estonia	Economist	Face to face. Recorded.
6. S	26	Estonian	Barcelona	Unemployed	Face to face. Recorded.
7. RO	27	French	Estonia	Engineer	Face to face. Recorded.
8. T	34	Estonian	Estonia	IT	Face to face. Recorded.
9. J	24	Estonian	Estonia	Ecologist	Face to face. Recorded.
10. Juhan Sahharov	45	Estonian	Estonia	Coordinator of the NGO that works with Refugees in Estonia, Johannes Mihkelsoni Keskus	Face to face. Recorded.
11. G	65	Swede	Estonia	Retired	Written
12. LA	25	Estonian	Estonia	Anthropologist	Written
13. EH	19	Estonian	Estonia	Violin Player	Written
14. E	24	Estonian	Estonia	Student	Written
15. KR	51	Estonian	Estonia	Secretary	Written
16. N	26	Estonian	Germany	Student	Written
17. M	50	Estonian	Estonia	Bus Driver	Written
18. K	47	Estonian	Estonia	Event Distributor	Written
19. Ly Pärn	60	Estonian	Estonia	Minister of the Migration Policy Department	Written

2. *‘Asylum can be granted to a citizen of a foreign country who has reasons to fear persecution in his*

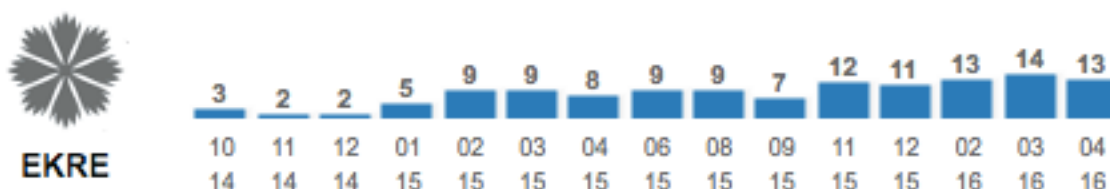
20. RA	28	Estonian	Estonia	Bartender	Written
21. JO	24	Estonian	Estonia	Baker	Written
22. Ivar Sikk	52	Estonian	Washington	Representative of Estonia in The World Bank	Face to face, not recorded. Also written
23. Maria Kaljuste	44	Estonian	Estonia	Secretary of the Conservative Party EKRE Erakond	Written
24. F	35	Estonian	Estonia	In "Maternal Leave"	Written

or her country of nationality or country of permanent residence for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, who is unable, or owing to such fear is unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of his or her country of nationality or country of permanent residence (...)" (pp. 3-4) . Definition extracted from the Brochure for Asylum Seekers in Estonia.

3. This Convention was written in 1951, and was addressed to people fleeing from or before the Second World War, and within European territory. In 1967, the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees became geographically and temporarily limitless, broadening its scope to universal coverage.

4. Dublin Regulation: *"The basic rule of the Dublin procedure is that an individual's request for international protection should be reviewed by the Member State through which the individual entered the territory of the Member States party to the Dublin procedure (EU Member States plus Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein). If it is proven that before arriving in a Member State the person requesting international protection has stayed in another Member State (using that state as a transit country), that person should be returned there, and the Member State responsible will review his asylum request. According to the Dublin Regulation, such other Member State should be responsible for reviewing the request for international protection even if the person holds a valid residence permit/visa of another Member State."* (Report of the National Audit Office to Riigikogu, Tallinn, 18 January 2016)

FIGURES 1.1 and 1.2.





<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>
10	11	12	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12
13	13	13	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14

Field Diary

10/8

Vao és un poble al nord est d'Estònia on hi viuen 150 persones. Mai ha sigut un lloc d'interès a Estònia, però té un castell del segle XIV i, des de fa 2 anys, també té l'única residència de refugiats al país. Miro bé el mapa des del cotxe per no perdre'm. Estònia és petit, però les carreteres són força lentes. Hi ha tres Vaos a Estònia. He d'anar al Vao que està aprop de Vaike-Maarja. Quan passo per Vaike-Marjaa paro a menjar alguna una sopa. És dolentíssima així que segueixo camí amb l'estómac mig buit. De cop, a la dreta "Vao 0'5km. —>". Sento nervis. Observo els camps verds i ja hi sóc. Hi ha sis adolescents jugant a futbol. A partir de la informació que tinc, dedueixo que són de Sudan. A Sudan hi ha més de 600 grups ètnics i es parlen més de 400 llengües. Tot baixant del cotxe, em pregunto si és massa agosarat veure'ls semblants des d'aquesta perspectiva, tots jugant a futbol. No m'aturo més d'un segon en aquest pensament perquè m'estic sentint una mica malament. M'impacta el que veig. La seva idea per integrar-los és portar-los a aquest poble ínfim de 150 habitants on no hi ha gairebé res a fer? A Tallinn 100 refugiats passarien desaparebuts, aquí són més visibles que els locals.

Havia portat la càmera amb mi; volia fer fotos... però això sí que seria agosarat. La deixo al cotxe. Em poso a caminar. Reconec l'edifici de la meva esquerra, és la residència principal on viuen. És un edifici força nou. Tot i així, veig sortir dues famílies de refugiats de l'edifici del davant, que és molt més vell i decadent. Després de caminar 100 metres veig un full propagandístic on es convida a tots els "Estimats ciutadans de Vao" a participar de la

reunió que es celebrarà en un parell de dies amb el títol de “Asylum Seekers’ Center of the village of Vao”. Torno al cotxe a buscar la càmera, necessito fer una foto d’aquest full. Procuo que ningú vegi que la duc. A la dreta, un parc on hi ha uns nens petits jugant. També un nen amb un tronc que em recorda als contes d’Enyd Blyton. En general, tothom que veig està somrient, tant locals com nouvinguts. Sento que només per l’aparença puc distingir un estoni d’un no-estoni.

Camino per tot el poble i descobreixo edificis molt interessants. També antigues fàbriques soviètiques abandonades, fins i tot un palau a 1,8km. El palau em recorda al Schönbrun de Viena i als Habsburg. Probablement va estar construït per algun bàltic alemany ric.



“Estonia has provided international protection since 1997 when we joined the UN Convention on the Status of Refugees (1951) and the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (1967).[1] 349 applications for asylum were submitted to Estonia in the period of 1997–2012, international protection was provided to a total of 83 persons (including family reunions). In 2010 30 applications were submitted to Estonia, in 2011 there were 66 applications, but in 2012 there were 77 applications made (the largest number so far), of which 13 were granted (8 persons received refugee status and 5 persons received subsidiary protection). In addition to them 10 persons were granted residence permit in Estonia in 2012 through reunification of families”



Jo a

Vao, Agost 2015

12/8

Avui vaig a la biblioteca a trobar llibres sobre refugees i asylum seekers. De moment els més interessants són en estoni, o de la facultat de dret. No sé quanta disponibilitat de llibres que enfoquin el tema des d'un punt de vista antropològic o sociològic en anglès puc trobar a Tartu.

He trobat el "Brochure for Asylum Seekers in Estonia", molt útil! Però també un altre sobre refugiats a Suècia que no em serveix. Es centra massa en la recerca de feina. No el llegiré.

Els quatre enfocaments del treball que més m'interessen (en anglès):

- Myths around the Refugee Matter. How do Estonians see/feel the issue? How is this conception constructed? By the media? The politicians? The recent Estonian Past? Are refugees seen as a threat? As a "Trojan Horse"? Estonians have not actually seen them, nor talked to them... so is this fear of the unknown creating prejudices? Which ones?

- 1944*-2015 Historical Comparison: Remembering/Forgetting the past.

"Why Estonians would not want to accept refugees having been themselves refugees less than a century ago, and therefore having the sensitivity and understanding for the vulnerable situation of the people who have to escape from their homelands because of war terror?"

How present the past is? Is there a use (or abuse) of the past, for some purposes but not for others?

- What does Estonian Government and Institutions prioritize in order to integrate the asylum seekers and the refugees? The multiperspectivism of the matter: Education, Language, Culture, Values, Faith, Rituality, Familiar Structures, Habits... Vao: Integration or Ghettification?

- Experiences of the refugees. How do they feel? How do they conceive Estonia? Do they feel socially accepted? Isolated? What is their will of adaptation? Do they want to learn the language? Find a job? or they just conceive their staying in Estonia as a temporary one? (The case of the Double Migration: them not finding cultural communities where they feel identified or "at home" in Estonia and migrating again to Sweden, Germany... What do this countries have that Estonia doesn't? And is Estonia willing to have it?).

*1944 --> és quan molts estonis van ser deportats a sibèria i molts altres van escapar. la població estònia va perdre un volum considerable de gent que no va tornar. suècia va ser la principal receptora de refugiats estonis. per això la pregunta de la seva sensibilitat al respecte. perquè fa menys d'un segle eren ells els que necessitaven refugi.

15/8

Li he escrit un correu electrònic a la Y, proposant-li de quedar. Tinc certa seguretat de què em dirà que sí, ja que el Juhan li ha preguntat si em podia donar el seu contacte i ella ha accedit. Tot i així, el correu que li he escrit té certs errors. Hi he pensat després i m'he posat nerviosa, però ja està fet així que ara toca esperar.

16/8

M'ha contestat! Quedem demà!

Sí!

17/8

He agafat l'autobús de les 12.30, per arribar a Vao a les 15.30. En realitat són 100km. però Estònia és així. L'autobús m'ha deixat enmig del no res i he hagut de caminar 1 hora travessant el bosc. Ha sigut meravellós. He pogut pensar en el que vindria i també he fet un projecte de fotografia que vaig dissenyar mentalment fa temps. Crec que el presentaré junt amb el projecte de recerca.

Abans d'arribar he agafat un camí que no era i he arribat a una fàbrica de fusta. Un noi m'ha indicat bé el camí i en 20 minuts m'he plantat a Vao. He trucat la Y i he sentit la seva veu per primera vegada. M'ha semblat dolça i propera.

Quan l'he vista de lluny m'he trobat en una d'aquelles situacions en què sento una mena de nervis que em fan creure que estic caminant de forma estranya. Ens hem reconegut a 50 metres de distància, així que bàsicament he hagut de caminar 50 metres fins a arribar a ella, que no em treia la mirada de sobre. És com quan algú t'espera des d'un banc, o un portal, i saps que t'està mirant com camines cap a ell o ella, i de cop un moviment tan senzill com posar un peu davant de l'altre et resulta més complicat del que et pensaves.

L'he saludada donant la mà -crec que ella esperava una abraçada càlida del sud- i tot seguit m'ha demanat que la segueixi fins a la seva habitació. Comparteix habitació amb una altra dona de mitjana edat, la K, d'Ucraïna. El pis és compartit entre 6 persones: la Y, la K i una família de Kazakhstan composta per un home, una dona i dos fills petits. Tots quatre viuen a la mateixa habitació. Són musulmans.

Hem seguit a la cuina i m'ha ofert menjar i beguda. Tenia força gana però només he acceptat un got d'aigua. Una de les primeres coses que m'ha dit és que no esperava que fos tan jove, que tinc la cara molt "jovencita". M'ha començat a explicar la seva història sense necessitat de moltes preguntes. Feia molt de temps que no parlava en castellà amb algú sense una pantalla entremig. En realitat en això estem en una situació similar, ja que jo tampoc parlo castellà amb ningú sense una pantalla de per mig. Però no vull comparar.

Molts detalls de la seva narració no acabaven de quadrar-me. Em semblava que tampoc ella els tenia clars. Hi havia certes coses que emfatitzava molt, com ara la seva rebuda a

l'aeroport, o com era el primer poble a la qual la van enviar. Però la seva descripció dels tràmits burocràtics i la correlació d'esdeveniments eren una mica difosos.

En qualsevol cas, i això també li vaig dir a ella, no pretenia que la nostra primera trobada fos en "mode entrevista". Volia presentar-me i tenir un primer contacte amb ella; volia explicar-li el que vull i que ella em digui si hi està d'acord; volia donar un temps de marge a tot plegat. Suposo que els tempos estonis han tingut un efecte en mi després d'aquests vuit mesos, i ja no tinc tanta pressa.

Vam estar juntes dues hores. Vam parlar molt i es va obrir molt a l'hora d'explicar-me detalls íntims de la seva vida, o pensaments que ha tingut en aquests últims dos anys -quan tot plegat va començar. També s'ha interessat una mica per mi i tot i que he tingut cura a l'hora d'explicar, suposo que simplement no trobo just saber molt d'algú sense que l'altra persona sàpiga una mica de mi, quan és una trobada que jo he proposat.

Un detall rellevant és que m'ha confessat que odia als periodistes que van constantment a Vao buscant entrevistes. Però "amb mi era diferent". Li he agraït l'oportunitat que m'ha donat.

"All in all", les dues ens volem tornar a veure, i fins i tot m'ha dit que podria venir a Tartu. He de pensar com de bo o de dolent pot ser això pel treball. He de pensar en general com vull enfocar aquesta relació amb ella. Li ha fet molta il·lusió tot plegat: conèixer-me, que tingui família cubana, que parli castellà, que sigui dona... i a mi també. Però amb precaució. Penso que he de prioritzar el treball, però estic parlant d'una persona, no una planta que no entén ni pateix. És a dir, que potser seria menys antropològic apropar-me a ella, però potser també seria més humà. No sé. No serà fàcil. Els límits: quin gran tema.

He decidit tornar en el tren que sortia a les 19h. de Kiltsi. Tot i que m'havia dit que li feia por caminar sola per la zona, m'ha acompanyat 1 kilòmetre i mig per la carretera, i ens hem acomiadat amb una abraçada.

A la nit m'ha trucat per saber si havia arribat bé a casa.

19/8

Demano al Museu de la Ciutat de Tartu la gravadora. Me la donen. Sento molta llibertat ara per anar a Vao i entrevistar la Y.

25/8

Arribo a Estònia després d'haver estat uns dies a Barcelona i quan obro el meu mòbil estoni veig una trucada de la Y. Li truco i em diu que havia estat el cap de setmana a Tartu, que m'havia trucat per trobar-nos i passejar per la ciutat. Li dic que sento molt no haver contestat abans, però que he estat a Barcelona per un problema familiar. Li explico que al meu germà l'han apallissat i està a l'hospital. M'envia molts ànims i diu que pensarà en ell. Quedem en seguir en contacte a partir de Setembre.

8/9

Des de Barcelona em plantejo si deixar-me portar per la premsa: articles de revista, notícies de diari, ràdio i televisió a l'hora d'enfocar el meu treball o no. Vaig a la biblioteca i agafo 3 llibres antropològics/sociològics, però després vaig a casa i llegeixo 10 notícies. És un tipus d'informació molt diferent. Hauré de parlar-ho amb el meu tutor. PERÒ, fins octubre no sabré qui és. No vull esperar. Estic massa motivada com per deixar de fer recerca ara. Ai... tràmits burocràtics per què existiu? i per a qui?

12/9

Segona Trobada amb la Y. Primera entrevista enregistrada. No he preparat les preguntes, vull que sigui "lliure". La idea és preguntar-li que m'expliqui la seva història des que va marxar de Cuba fins que va arribar a Estònia.

Quan arribo, ella està esperant-me a la porta del centre. Em diu que té molt fred i pugem a casa seva. Em fa tocar-li les mans. Les té gelades. Quan entrem a la cuina, té preparat el dinar. Només falta preparar l'amanida, que consisteix en dos tomàquets amb oli i sal. Està tot boníssim. M'explica com ho ha fet. Parlem tranquil·lament i me n'adono d'una cosa molt rellevant: no ens incomoda els silencis. Tampoc n'hi ha masses, però m'aventuraria a dir que no sentim pressa per omplir els silencis amb paraules. Ens trobem còmodes juntes. Li explico en què consistirà l'entrevista i hi està d'acord. Intento deixar clar que no m'ha d'explicar res amb què no es senti còmoda que aparegui al treball.

Em pregunto si he de dividir-me en dos, i si he de tractar així la informació. És a dir, només analitzar la informació que em doni quan estigui gravant, i ometre el què m'explica

quan estem parlant “més enllà del projecte”. Però, hi ha un “més enllà del projecte” per mi? No he decidit encara sobre la divisió. Hi he de pensar més.

Just abans de sortir al carrer, ja que decidim fer l’entrevista a fora per aprofitar el Sol, un esdeveniment força divertit! Mentre va al lavabo, vaig a la seva habitació a agafar la meva motxilla i em costa obrir la porta. Sembla com si hi hagués algun moble bloquejant el pas. Des de dins se sent “Y?”, i dic, “No, it’s me”. Em contesta: “Oh, come in, come in”. Entro amb dificultat a través d’una porta que no acaba d’obrir-se i em trobo un armari de més de 2 metres d’alt i més d’1 d’ample tirat al terre. La K, la companya d’habitació de la Y, em comença a parlar en rus i li contesto, en rus, que jo el rus el parlo molt poc, i no la puc comprendre. A partir d’aquest moment ens comuniquem amb mímica. Intentem aixecar l’armari del terre però pesa massa. Quan arriba la Y i veu el que ha passat, ràpidament crida a dos companys del centre. Venen i aixequen l’armari gairebé sense dificultat. Són joves, com de la meva edat. Es presenten; em presento, i ens donem les mans. Són de Sudan però un d’ells fa broma dient que és de Cuba i parla espanyol. Tots riem. Menys la K, que es toca la galta i ens adonem que en caure l’armari, l’ha colpejada a la cara. Ens preocupem però ella diu que no passa res. La Y i jo sortim al carrer i donem una volta, en la qual ens trobem molta gent i ella m’introdueix com la “seva amiga”. Però també explica sobre el meu projecte i l’entrevista. Quan els seus companys senten “entrevista”, em miren desconfiadament. Però quan la Y especifica que sóc estudiant, les faccions facials es relaxen. També conec la família que porta més temps al centre. Són 5, d’Albània. La més petita té 1 any i mig. Això em fa pensar que la mare ha parit a Estònia. M’agradaria entrevistar-los. No parlen anglès, sinó italià. Però crec que podria entendre bé. No sé com s’ho prendria la Y que fes entrevistes a altre gent. La Y em demana que li fagi de traductora a la propera reunió que té amb les entitats legals que porten el seu procés de reunificació familiar. Ella ho d’óna per segur, sense preguntar-m’ho. La reunió serà a Tallinn -a dues hores i mitja d’on visc jo- i hi hauré d’anar. També perquè vull anar-hi. Quan marxo ens abracem i ens acomiadem amb un “fins aviat”.

27/9

El meu company de pis em pregunta si vull anar a Tallinn amb ell, ja que li han deixat un cotxe i aprofitarà per anar-hi uns dies. A Tallinn no hi vull anar, però li demano si em pot

acostar a Vao. Quan pugem al cotxe em pregunta si vull conduir. Li dic que sí, però que des de Jõgeva -un poble a mig camí de Tartu i Vao- necessitaré indicacions. Em comença a indicar i passada una llarga estona em diu: “En principi, això és Vao”. Miro al voltant i no em sona res. Torno a mirar quina direcció ha buscat al GPS i sí, estàvem a Vao, però a un altre Vao. Encara em fascina com poden haver-hi tres pobles amb el mateix nom. El meu company de pis ha de seguir cap a Tallinn, i s’estan fent les4 de la tarda, és a dir que comença a perillar la meva tornada en tren o autobús. A més, estic a 1 hora lluny del “meu” Vao. Truco la Y i li dic que em sap molt greu, però que no podré trobar-me amb ella. Em diu que és una pena, ja que m’havia preparat dinar, però que ja ens veurem un altre dia. El meu company de pis em deixa a una gasolinera i torno fent auto-stop. Quin dia de treball de camp més productiu!

30/9

Hi ha hagut un debat sobre refugiats a Tartu. Llàstima que és en Estoni. Aquí està el link per escoltar la gravació: <https://soundcloud.com/genklubi/pagulasdebatt-30915-genialistide-klubis>

7/10

Estic estancada. Vull treballar, llegir i escriure molt però necessito guia per part d’un tutor o tutora. Li vaig demanar a un professor si podia tutoritzar-me però em va dir que “de cap manera tutoritza a distància”. Després vaig demanar-ho a una altre professora, qui em va contestar que no tutoritza aquest any. Finalment he fet la petició de tutor oficial, però encara no sé qui serà. Esperar. La Y em va trucar ahir preguntant com estic. Diu que fa més d’una setmana que no ha sentit res de mi i vol saver si tot va bé, com em va la feina, i quan ens tornarem a trobar.. Espero que aviat, però anar a Vao no és tan fàcil.

6/11

Fa un mes que no escric. Han passat moltes coses. Tinc tutor! M’ha anat molt bé posar-me en contacte amb ell, ja que m’ha motivat a avançar. Respecte a les lectures, no he llegit

molta cosa nova. He estat acompanyada d'una novel·la molt interessant que no m'ha deixat llegir res més. Però l'he acabada, així que espero posar-m'hi de nou aviat. No he tornat a veure la Y, tot i que ens hem escrit força. Una dona del Ministeri d'Interior que treballa al Departament de Polítiques sobre Migració m'ha concedit una entrevista per escrit. Ja li he enviat les preguntes. Estic expectant per les respostes!

Són aquestes:

1) Estonian position to the massive influx of refugees, and proposals of hosting regarding the EU quotes. How would you define the Estonian Policy about Asylees? (maybe also in comparison with other neighbor countries). How would you evaluate its performance? Would you highlight any problem? If yes, which solutions have been thought out? If not, then, would you consider that its performance is successful?

2) Asylum granting: Which are the main reasons to reject petitions? Is it possible to clearly distinguish the economical motivations from the sociopolitical ones of the asylum seekers?

3) Profiles of the refugees. Which is the most common one? Have they been changing throughout history? Are there profiles that present a better or worse forecast of integration?

4) How and when it is considered that an asylum seeker has been integrated satisfactorily? Is there any tracking process to follow the refugees after they have been accepted as "asylees"?

5) How are the relations between Estonian population and the refugees? Which attitudes and beliefs they manifest?

6) Regarding next year's elections in Estonia, do you predict many changes in the refugee matter?

15/11

La pluja s'introdueix a l'habitació refredant tota superfície que toca. Un vent fred, suau però inacabable, em desperta i em porta de nou del meu somni al meu llit. Aquesta nit m'han trencat el cor i m'he tancat en mi. En tres hores marxo d'aquest país amb la devastada sensació de què no sé quan hi tornaré. Estic segura que tot això afectarà aquest projecte. Potser escriure això al diari em redimeix. O potser només escric perquè em sento sola.

29/11

Tenia idees. Tot aquest temps he tingut idees, però no he trobat el moment de compartir-te-les. Per fi em retrobo amb tu. La setmana passada vaig haver de presentar el

meu tema de recerca, metodologia i cronograma davant els meus companys de Taller Seminari. Va anar bé. Bons feedbacks, i sobretot, una bona pràctica per la presentació de juny. Vaig superar el meu pànic escènic i les paraules no van amagar-se sota una tabula rasa.

Dos detalls que he de solventar aviat:

- 1) L'idioma del TFG. Anglès, català o castellà?
- 2) El títol. Original i arriscat o segur i avorrit?

He llegit un article súper útil per l'ànlisi del sentiment anti-refugiats. Vull centrar-me en la construcció de discursos i mites al voltant de refugiats. Les meves quatre perspectives inicials eren massa extenses i no podria abarcar-les totes. Així que la creació de discursos i mites em sembla la més interessant, tot i que m'agradaria donar una perspectiva històrica. El meu tutor aquí va afegir “en la mesura del possible”. Té raó.

8/12

Sóc a Argentina. L'idioma del TFG serà l'anglès. No pensaré en un temps i no em criminalitzaré per no fer-ho.

Sento dolor. El meu cor és un terratrèmol i el meu cap és un fong. Com no em preguntes què ha passat, tampoc t'ho explicaré. No deus entendre res. Tampoc cal.

Vull ser bona antropòloga però per això hauria de, en primer lloc, ser-ho.

29/2/16

El Taller Seminari aquest semestre és amb un altre professor, i estic força descontenta. El primer dia de classe va parlar sobre la manca de temps que tindríem aquest semestre, adreçant al tema amb cert cinisme cap al pla d'estudis, i cap a l'organització de la universitat. A mi ja em cansen una mica aquests comentaris. Hi ha el que hi ha. I no sóc precisament una persona conformista. Però mentre ell es queixava passaven els minuts i encara ens mancava més temps.

Ens va prometre que aquesta classe la fariem entre tots, de forma “assembleària”, però als dos únics suggeriments que vam fer (en els quals hi estàvem tots d'acord) va donar una resposta negativa. Si no estava obert al canvi, per què ens pregunta res? A veure si li sortia bé i ningú deia res. Doncs no va tenir sort, i va quedar exposat.

La setmana següent em tocava presentar. Vaig preparar la presentació de 10 minuts, com ell ens havia dit el dia anterior, i al final resulta que havia de parlar-ne 30. Disposada a fer-ho, vaig donar un moment als meus companys per si volien preguntar-me alguna cosa, però el professor va interrompre i va començar a parlar d'un aparent tsunami que ens enxamparia. Va dir, literalment, que *la setmana vinent és Març i que pam, pam, pam, ja estem al Juny*. I davant del tribunal no podeu fer aquestes coses. Aquestes coses? Suposo que es referia a la meva exposició, ja que era l'única que havia exposat.

Em va fer moltes correccions. Algunes de molt útils. Davant el meu silenci es va incomodar i em va començar a preguntar "ja t'enrecordaràs de tot això?", "per què estàs tan sèria?". Un company de classe va trencar la llança en el meu favor: "déjala a la muchacha, que ella es así". "A sí?"-contesta el professor- "Sempre és així de sèria?".

Tenia ganes de dir-li que la paraula "sèria" no existeix, ell que pretén parlar el català tan bé. Doncs la paraula correcta és "seriosa" i saps per què no la utilitzes, professor? Perquè sona fatal. I no passa res.

Però parlant de seriositat, és cert que m'he tornat més seriosa amb el temps... La veritat és que, per molt odiosa que la classe fos als meus ulls, els cataclismes sempre porten creació.

Encara t'hauré de donar gràcies, professor.

5/3

No vaig poder continuar en aquell moment i ara tampoc tinc masses ganes de d'escriure quines són les correccions que em va fer i altres anècdotes d'aquest professor que m'ha acabat ocupant més temps mental del que em pensava.

14/3

He estat deu dies a Estònia. El primer cap de setmana va ser per a mi. Vaig anar a una illa que es diu Saaremaa i, tot i el fred, no vaig passar fred. Quan vaig arribar a Tartu, vaig anar directament a jugar a futbol. Em va tocar jugar a l'equip dels Georgians, cosa que em va fer força mandra. Algunes vegades que havia jugat amb ells no em passaven la pilota i em feien comentaris respecte a ser dona. Però sorprenentment, va ser molt divertit, ens vam entendre al camp i vaig anar cap a casa amb força energia.

L'energia, però, va durar molt poc.

En quant vaig creuar la porta de la casa, cada esglaó que pujava era un centímetre més de buidor dins el meu estómac. Al arribar al pis de dalt, la caiguda era imminent.

No vaig dormir aquella nit, ni la següent.

“El dolor s’ha de travessar”, em va dir a Argentina la meva tieta Ana. A vegades recordo aquesta frase per alçar-me del terre. No m’alço d’enlloc, realment, però li dono cert sentit al fet de ser al terre. Sóc al terre però perquè estic travessant el dolor. El dolor que hagi travessat ja no me’l trobaré, perquè l’hauré deixat enrere (al terre).

Volia fer moltes entrevistes però no em veia capaç de parlar amb ningú. Tot i així vaig poder fer-ne dues. La segona va ser al J.S., el coordinador de la organització que treballa amb refugiats a Estònia. L’entrevista va anar molt bé, però és allò que va venir després que em va impactar: *“No hi ha cap estudi antropològic de la situació de refugiats aquí, i de cop vens tu, una noia de Barcelona, que està fent allò que cap de nosaltres és capaç de fer”*.

Em va proposar trobar-nos regularment i intercanviar informació. Ell està molt interessat en les entrevistes, i jo en les dades estadístiques de les quals ell disposa.

En tres mesos hauran d’entregar el “report” de l’any passat a l’UNHCR, dels qual reben les subvencions. Aquest report és en anglès i d’alguna manera, el J.S. m’estava incloent en l’equip. T’ho pots creure? Jo no.

Però el més rellevant va arribar unes hores més tard. Però anant cronològicament, quan va acabar aquesta trobada, vam prometre’ns seguir en contacte i vaig anar pitant a trobar-me amb una antropòloga a la qual li havia de fer una altre entrevista. Havíem de quedar el dia abans però em va deixar plantada i ho vam postposar al dia següent. El dia següent va passar el mateix i encara no sé per quina raó no va presentar-se.

El cas és que, una mica frustrada per la poca quantitat d’entrevistes que havia fet, i sent aquella la meva última nit a Tartu, vaig decidir trobar-me amb dos amics al bar del costat de casa per beure vi i xerrar. La M-L va començar a fer-me preguntes sobre el TFG, interessant-se sobretot en com enfocava jo el tema, en què em centrava quan feia entrevistes i quin era el meu interès. Vaig intentar evitar parlar del tema, encara arrossegava la frustració de no haver treballat tant com volia, i tenia ganes de desconnectar després del segon “plantón” que m’havia donat l’antropòloga. Ella va insistir, i li vaig dir directament que parléssim d’alguna altra cosa, però aleshores ella va dir que era molt important que parléssim d’aquest tema, perquè en realitat havia de dir-me una cosa. Intrigada, vaig mirar-la als ulls, esperant el que vingués.



Al novembre la van ascendir a la feina quan feia tot just un mes que havia començat. Treballa a un grup de recerca dins del departament d'educació de la universitat de Tartu. Poc després de començar, els seus caps van valorar molt la seva feina i la seva visió a l'hora de parlar amb la gent. La veritat és que és molt bona oradora, i aconsegueix establir bones converses amb la gent, *as much as I have seen her*. El cas és que la van nomenar coordinadora d'un projecte d'integració dels nens refugiats a les escoles d'Estònia. això voldria dir treballar amb professors, pares, alumnes i nens refugiats i fer una mena de transició cultural entre uns i



altres. Per construir el respecte mutu i fer de la incorporació d'aquests nousvinguts a les escoles una situació natural i gradual.

Per a dur a terme aquest projecte necessitava un equip de treballadors tant amb els nens com investigadors que escrivissin sobre tot el procés... i va pensar en mi. Però al novembre jo

just marxava, en una situació, com saps, o com si més no intueixes, no gaire plaent, i m'hi anava a estar un mes a l'Argentina, així que va decidir no ficar-me coses al cap.

Però ara, reconeixent que finalment no va contractar ningú, i que a qui vol és a mi, em va insistir a mudar-me a Estònia i treballar amb ella.

Imagines les preguntes que van conquerir el meu pensament? Força existencials, em van fer plantejar-me deixar la universitat, incorporar-me a la feina immediatament, o el contrari: acabar el cicle vital universitari, i arriscar-me a perdre aquesta oportunitat per allò d'acabar allò que he començat.

Li he escrit un correu, t'informo quan em contesti. De moment he intentat posar en standby aquesta idea. Res és veritat però tot és possible, diuen.

16/3

No vaig recordar-me d'explicar-te que vaig anar a Vao. L'endemà d'aquella conversa vaig anar a Vao, i va ser genial. No vaig parlar amb ningú d'allà, però vaig pensar en la Y (que per cert, segueix escapada a Moscú, i tal com em va dir el J.S., és totalment il·legal el que ha fet...) i vaig fer algunes fotos. Les posaré al TFG, així que aquí només pujo un parell, tot donant-li un caire cíclic a aquest diari, fet que les altres fotos eren de l'estiu, i aquestes de l'hivern.

“Vao Valge” significa “Vao Blanc”. És una nova marca de Vodka, però se'ls ha criticat de tenir un missatge amagat racista. No sé jo si està tan amagat, si fins i tot han posat aquest gran anunci al poble de Vao. Es creu que no és una coincidència.

8/4

Jo a Vao, Març 2016

Finalment presentaré el TFG al Juny. Em fa por, molta. Perquè tinc entregues de cinc assignatures més, perquè treballo més hores de les que voldria, i perquè m'agradaria fer el triple d'entrevistes i de treball de camp del que he fet. Però espero fer-

8/5

Ahir nit em vaig assabentar que l'entrega del TFG no és al Juny, com em pensava, sinó el 29 de Maig. vaig entrar en pànic i bla bla bla, però ara, 18 hores més tard, he aconseguit posar-me a treballar. He escrit moltes coses “meves” i em dóna inseguretad. No perquè no cregui en allò què he escrit, sinó perquè no estic acostumada. Normalment a la universitat sempre ens diuen que fem servir bibliografia i que “no ens pensem que a quart de carrera som capaços de descobrir res”. Anyway, aquest és EL projecte de la carrera, el que més m'ha fascinat i en el qual més hores he invertit, així que vull gaudir-lo fins a l'últim moment. I crec en mi mateixa i en el treball de camp que he fet. Torno a la feina.

6/6

Vaig tornar a la feina fins a dia d'avui, fins aquest precís instant en el qual he escrit l'última frase del TFG... i m'he posat a ballar!

INTERVIEWS' TRANSCRIPTIONS:

1. INTERVIEW ASSYLUM SEEKER Y

Date: 12 de Septiembre de 2015

Time: 17.10

Place: Vao

Format: Face to face. Partly recorded.

Duration of the recording: 22' 23"

Observations: When I arrived, she greeted me with a warm hug. She invited me to have lunch with her, we talked, she introduced me to her centre mates and we went for a walk. The interview was conducted on that walk, when we sat down on a bench. We both needed the Sun.

Pues Yohaima, por favor, me puedes contar tu historia desde que dejaste Cuba, y las expectativas, y los planes, y todo, hasta el día de hoy?

Sí. Mira, yo salí de Cuba el 12 de Marzo del 2013 a una gira de trabajo. Trabajar en un crucero en la Compañía Tallink. Ahí tomé un avión en la Habana con destino a Rusia y Rusia otro avión hasta Riga, Latvia. En Riga, Latvia, dormí una noche en un hotel y al día siguiente me llevaron para el barco. Ahí estuve trabajando tres meses, diario hacía recorrido Riga-Estocolmo, Estocolmo-Riga. Luego, eh... el primero de Junio, eh... como ya se me vencía el contrato de trabajo, terminé mi trabajo y deserté [niños y niñas en bicicleta nos saludan "Tere!" (Hola, en estonio). Contestamos "Tere!"] en Suecia con amigos que tengo de allá y me encontré con un amigo que fue mi novio en la, en la... adolescencia. Entonces ellos me dieron casa, comida y ya decidí quedarme. En el tiempo que estuve ahí, fueron cuatro meses que estuve en Suecia, me presenté para legalizarme en Inmigración pero no sabía que... Yo salí de Cuba con una Visa Schengen limitada. Que me entero después que era limitada. Pero la segunda Visa que me ponen en mi pasaporte es de aquí, de Estonia. Entonces en Suecia me hablan de este reglamento Dublin, que después te lo tengo que enseñar que la otra vez te lo dije.

Mhmmh.

Este reglamento dice de pedir asilo en el último país donde se tenga visado, entonces por eso Suecia no me hace mi proceso de asilo. Eh... yo por un problema de que quería legalizar mi estado, vengo para acá para Estonia. Digo, ok, yo voy para Estonia porque lo que quiero es legalizarme. Y el día 7 de septiembre vine para acá para Estonia. Ahí me llevaron para Jaama Küla. Estuvimos ahí como cuatro meses porque en enero se trasladó el centro para aquí para Vao. Y hasta ahora estoy aquí. Terminé el primer proceso que estaba haciendo, todo mi proceso ha sido negado. La entrevista... me hicieron dos

entrevistas porque la primera señora que me entrevistó se fue de aquí, de Estonia. Según me dijeron. Y entonces me pusieron otra que se llama Barbara Orlov, que fue la que me hizo la segunda entrevista y ella me negó. Apelé a esa negativa y me negaron. Volví a apelar a esa negativa, me pusieron un abogado, abogado que no hizo nada, nada por mí. Y sí lo sé porque la primera apelación mía no fue escrita porque te dicen que tu puedes ir a juicio a hacerlo escrito o oral. Y en la primera la hice oral, o sea yo fui y nada, negada. La segunda este señor ni me citó. Él sólo fue e hizo la entrevista escrita, según tengo entendido y sólo me mandó a decir cuando me negaron otra vez. Luego la tercera me la vuelven a negar. Entonces, ya estaba pasada de tiempo y hablo con la muchacha de Derechos Humanos, que ella habla español, Anni Säär. Ella ya no trabaja porque todo esto aquí de Inmigración está cambiado y ya ella no trabaja directamente con nosotros. Pero es la que más me guía porque ella habla español. Y entonces es la que me dijo que yo le digo "Mira yo tengo esta ley que en Cuba dice que si tu te pasas de los 24 meses, eres emigrado. Emigraste a otro país, es decir que en Cuba estás ilegal". Me dice, "perfecto", vamos a presentar la ley y tienes que ir a la policía con tu pasaporte. Porque el pasaporte me lo dieron. Ahora en este nuevo proceso me llega una carta de la policía de inmigración y me dicen que por esta ley que yo presento, ellos no me van a reexaminar mi caso, porque me dicen que yo no pierdo mis... mis... cómo sería la palabra... yo no pierdo... ay, se me olvidó la palabra, esperate, como que yo no pierdo mis bienes en Cuba. Entonces me dieron la oportunidad de argumentar y de opinar con respecto a eso que me dicen ellos y es lo que yo hice ahora. Argumentarte que no estoy de acuerdo porque si hay una ley y es una gaceta oficial que salió que Raul castro la abrió en el 2012 es porque lo dice, es una ley. Para Cuba yo ya estoy ilegal porque yo ya no me he presentado más nunca en consulado cubano ni he hecho más nada con respecto a Cuba. Entonces, eso, lo que estoy esperando, que me den una respuesta de si me van a hacer el proceso nuevamente. O si no, como dicen ellos, que la resolución de deportación está abierta para enviarme para Cuba. Y eso es lo que yo, llevo dos años ya exactamente, los cumplí el día 7, aquí en Estonia, y es lo que estoy esperando. Que me acepten el proceso para... porque no me puedo volver a Cuba! Yo ya llevo dos años fuera, aquí en estonia y completamente desde que salí en el 12 de marzo, llevo dos años y... ocho meses, no? A ver, abril, mayo, junio, julio, agosto, septiembre. Seis meses. Dos años y seis meses fuera de Cuba. Entonces eh... eso sí me tiene preocupada, porque una deportación no es nada bueno. Porque la situación en Cuba, todo el mundo sabe que el Comunismo, el Socialismo no es una Democracia. Y me puede afectar mucho. Me puede afectar mucho. Eso a mi me preocupa. Yo digo que yo para Cuba no me puedo regresar. Que no puedo. No puedo. Porque regresar aCuba significa un problema muy grande, entiendes? Además, todo el tiempo

que yo ya llevo aquí, por todas las cosas que he pasado, yo no puedo rendirme así "Ah, ok, me regreso a Cuba", y todo este tiempo. Ok, no me aceptan... sigo luchando. Porque por algo me quedé. Y entonces ya esto es lo que tengo. Con respecto a mi caso, es eso.

Entonces, una de las mayores dudas sería en qué momento te dieron un visado Estonio...

Claro. Para nosotros la compañía eh... como nosotros Cuba no hacemos un proceso, de que cuando tu vas a salir por trabajo, tienes una empresa que te representa y la empresa es la que te hace el proceso. Sabes, cuando llegamos a Riga, Latvia, nosotros.. en el aeropuerto cuando llegamos, hubo un a pequeña situación... Veníamos todos cansados, era un viaje largo. [Viene la hija de otra familia del centro, amigos de Y. La saludamos. Tiene 1 año y medio.]. Era un viaje largo, estábamos todos cansados y pasaba que no querían que pre chequeáramos. Y era que nosotros no teníamos la Visa para entrar en Riga. Eso nos damos cuenta pero bueno ya llegó una persona que se supone que era de la compañía, que inmediatamente llamaron que nos dejaban salir. Eramos los únicos que estábamos en el aeropuerto. Y fueron ellos los que nos dieron la salida. Y ya después de estar una semana trabajando en el barco, fue que nos ponen esta Visa.

Porque la compañía de Tallink de donde es?

Me doy cuenta de que la compañía Tallink es de aquí, de Estonia. Claro, entiendes?

En Cuba tu no los sabías?

No. Nosotros cuando nos hacen todo el proceso, a nosotros nos dan el pasaporte, el billete de salida. Los dos billetes, porque era La Habana, Rusia... Claro, tu no sabes. Y ahora aquí, cuando estoy en este proceso es cuando me doy cuenta de todo. De que esa visa es de aquí de Estonia. Por eso es que Suecia me dice que tengo que venir para acá a pedir el asilo. Y entonces yo decido venir para acá. Y eso es lo que me pasa. Y ahora... estoy esperando. Esperando a ver que respuesta me dan ellos pero no pienso negativo, pero sí que no me siento bien porque he recibido muchas negativas. No he tenido, eh... para mí no ha habido cosas que... Por ejemplo, ese mismo abogado no vi que hiciera un buen trabajo en el juicio. Yo parecía un papagayo hablando, claro! Que es mi problema, pero para eso hubiera ido yo sola, no me pongas un abogado. Porque él no habló nada, no reclamó nada... Solamente que la policía tendría que haberme hecho un examen médico que no se me hizo.

Te lo han echo ya?

No me lo hicieron. No me lo hicieron. Y así... todo ha sido no, no, no, no y no. Eh... yo sinceramente cuando me quedo en Suecia me quedo, no? porque encuentro en aquel momento era "amigo" pero nosotros en Cuba, cuando estábamos en la secundaria, la etapa de adolescencia, fuimos novios. De escuela, pero también visitaba mi casa, yo visitaba su casa... y nos reencontramos aquí en Suecia. Él estaba sólo, trabajando y ya tenía su casa. Y entonces comenzamos a romancear otra vez y... y... quedamos en que, mira, me llega esto de que si me tenía que venir para aquí para Estonia y me dice: "Mira, como hay que pedir papeles tuyos a Cuba, vas para Estonia, para que tampoco estés aquí ilegal, porque entonces ya estás diciendo que no se te puede hacer nada.". Porque mensualmente te dan tu mesada para tu comer, lo que sea. A la vez que te dicen que no pierdes todos esos derechos. Entonces él en aquél momento había empezado un trabajo y el trabajo estaba muy flojo. Había que mandar a buscar mis papeles de Cuba, había que hacer cosas. Entonces es mucha desinformación también. Porque los papeles míos en Cuba se demoraron mucho tiempo en llegar. Claro, de Cuba a Suecia, es bien lejos. Y después mandarlos para acá. Cuando llegaron para aquí, que si había que legalizarlos, traducirlos... Sin fin de cosas. Y todo eso es tiempo que ha pasado, tiempo que ha pasado y entonces luego, después él presenta para su ciudadanía sueca que, gracias a dios, ya la tiene. Que también era algo que teníamos a nuestro favor. Ya entonces que él recibe su ciudadanía y yo mis documentos los tengo del lado de acá, acordamos presentar... Matrimonio dijimos que no porque monetariamente no teníamos como para eso, hacer una boda... Yo no estoy en Suecia, él tiene que venir aquí... es un dinero que después nos iba a hacer falta, entiendes? Entonces ese proceso esperando entrevista para lo que le llaman ellos en Suecia "Zambo". El problema es que eso se demora, de que te citen de 3 a 4 meses... Porque nosotros aplicamos por internet. Y la aplicación, tuvimos hasta que buscar una persona que lo hiciera por mi porque yo no hablo sueco. Y eso también es un tiempo que lleva, y también tengo el tiempo en contra mía. Porque si me dan una respuesta negativa, y yo estoy esperando la entrevista en la embajada sueca. Ellos pienso que no les interese. Yo lo puse en mi carta de opiniones y argumentos, para que ellos supieran también en lo que yo estoy. Pero ahora mismo no te puedo decir con seguridad si me lo acepten, si me den el tiempo, o no... No sé. Tampoco tengo mucha guía aquí. Porque aquí la única que habla español soy yo. He tenido que aprender el inglés a fuerza. Y para mí comunicarme es un poco difícil. Pero bueno, trato. Trato.. cuando tengo mis dudas, algo que no entiendo digo "espérate". Pongo translate, necesito entender... porque

¡estoy sola! No tengo una guía. Esta muchaha sí, viene, me dice “Esto es para aquí, para allá...”. Porque me han cogido cariño, ya llevo un buen tiempo aquí. Pero seguro, seguro no tengo nada en la mano. Todo está negado y no sé qué voy a hacer. Sólo me queda esperar. El tiempo dirá.

Entonces tu ahora estás a la espera de que te den esa respuesta de reunificación familiar.

Sí.

Y te la darán antes de noviembre.

Ya me la tienen que dar. Ya me tienen que dar la citación a finales de septiembre-principios de octubre, porque ya serían los cuatro meses. Pero después que haga la entrevista, ellos como que, tres meses o cuatro meses más para entonces darme la respuesta de si yo, para yo irme para Suecia. Vaya que esto es duro. Esto no es una cosa ideal de que yo cojo y me voy. No es así, ¿entiendes? Por eso te digo que no sé qué será de mi vida. Sí quisiera ya salir de esto porque me siento sola aquí. Muy sola. No puedo trabajar porque dicen que si yo presento este nuevo proceso, tengo que esperar seis meses para trabajar. Entonces los meses que ya tuve anteriormente están perdidos. Y entonces sigo en las mismas. No, no, no veo nada a mi favor, ¿entiendes? Porque si estuviera trabajando digo “Bueno, estoy trabajando, estoy ganando algo...” y eso me tiene entretenida. Pero el estar sin hacer nada, la espera y que todos los días me despierto así, abrir el hotmail a ver qué tengo y es con mucha tensión. Mucha tensión y después de la noticia que me den, ¿qué hago? ¿cómo hago? Dónde puedo coger... No sé qué voy a hacer. No sé qué será de mi vida, qué será. Según me dicen esto que han hecho es por los sudanís.

¿El incendio?

Sí.

2. INTERVIEW MA & OT

Date: 25 January 2016
Format: Skype. Recorded.

Duration: 36' 29", from which recorded: 24' 11"

Do you want to do the interview now?

Is it difficult?

No, and it's... like, all the answers are correct.

Ok, ok. I guess we can do it first.

So the first question is: Are you aware of the refugee situation in Estonia?

Eh... yes, more or less, I think I am. I don't know the exact numbers at the moment, because I'm at home with the baby and then I don't watch so much news, but more or less I'm aware, I think.

Where do you get the information from, usually?

Usually from the news. I think Estonian broadcasting news. From radio, or TV or from their website are the main which I follow when I want to get information about this topic.

Ok. Are there many different types of sources where you can get the information? Not just like the mainstream newspapers but, are there also other alternative media or information sources?

Yeah, I think there are more kind of blogs but I know few of them which give alternative view on this topic.

And could you explain me, briefly, which is the refugee situation in Estonia? You can include your personal opinion, or not, and you can make it as long as you want.

Ah, ok. You mean how do I see the situation at the moment?

Yes, what's happening and, yes exactly.

Ah, ok. I know there are some NGOs which are preparing themselves and preparing people for being ready when more refugees come here and they also, for example, they teach volunteers how to help refugees if they come here. Mh... and I know also that every year some people have already come here but I think the first ones who are supposed to come here, how I say it... you know, European Union gave some numbers to all the countries, how many refugees they have to take. Like a "quote". This is the word? And I think this people, they should come right now in the end of January or February, then they start coming here. But, eh... for example in Tartu I have heard that in some schools already there are students who are not from Estonia. They are already some students. And then, eh... schools for example are finding ways how to integrate them, how to give them knowledge and education. And as I understand there is a problem, that many of the refugees speak arabic but in Estonia there is not many people who speak arabic. Specially in usual schools. Then it's difficult to get the connection with the families and specially children. Maybe the parents speak English also but maybe the children only speak arabic. Then it's specially difficult for teachers, for example. But I guess children themselves they somehow manage to communicate. Because, I mean if in the Kindergarten they can communicate somehow when they on't talk yet, the language can't be the main problem. I don't know what

to say about this. I guess now, these following years shows how it all goes. When more and more refugees are coming here.

[M's boyfriend, O, arrives home. They greet each other and she explains him that we are doing an interview about Refugees in Estonia. He wants to participate.]

Yeah, I guess time shows how it goes. But now it's also... Estonia is divided into two parts, I guess. One part it's not ok with the refugees here and the other part is willing to welcome them however it's possible. And it makes

[Sona el telèfon. Pausa.]

O added that there is also the third part of Estonian people who are maybe not against refugees but they are not so welcoming. Their attitude is not so welcoming but they see they have to come but that it's actually just a small part of a bigger problem in the world. O: that they should deal with the problem, not the consequence.

Ok, mhmh...

But I guess this third part is the part whose voice is not so loud. Because the haters are really loud and also these people who are really, want to welcome all the people, they are also quite loud, I guess. So it's making like, polarization in society.

And what are the main discourses or reasons of the haters?

Well, they say that refugees are coming to rape our women and they are not blending in the culture and they... I guess some people are also afraid of the jobs. That the refugees are taking the jobs.

So do you think it's more like an economical or cultural- identity reason?

Is it a question what I think or what I think that the people think?

When they say they are against refugees, they explain it with economical reasons, or cultural-identity ones? Or both? None?

Both. Because also this is a problem, that if one third of Estonian children are living under the poverty limit, then they say that why our government should give money to refugees when they can't help their own people. So I guess economical reasons... but also cultural and identity is definitely the reason. So yeah, I think it's both, for sure.

And do you feel that the refugees that are living in Estonia already, like you were telling me before about the schools, do you think that they are integrating to the society?

It's difficult to say at the moment because I really don't know any family so closely.

[Parlen en estonià una mica amb l'O]

Do you know this center in Vao küla? Which is the refugee center?

Yes

For example, at least it seems that half of the village don't integrate with them, but there are also some who say that it is completely ok, people are people and that's the way it is. But it's the thing that, you know, when you have a class of 23 people, students, and there is already one family who says to their children that the refugees are bad, already this one child, he's coming to school and can really affect this atmosphere of this class and makes the integration more difficult. And in Estonia is the thing... already Russians an Estonian are not really integrating. So, yeah, it would not be easy the process I think. Yeah, I guess it's the frightening? Fear. So I guess fear is the main reason why people... their attitude is not so welcoming.

And what do you think about the government's policies about the refugees?

I really don't understand this, what government really thinks. What is really thinking about this. Because they say, or at least some part of the government say that of course, we need to take them because we are part of the European Union, but then the other part, like this right wing parties are against it and then... I really can't see what is the idea of government. Because they say that we need to take them, but they don't have actually solutions how this works in real life. Because this people need to have, as I told you about these NGOs who are, who are teaching volunteers. I guess that in every town, in every county we need these NGOs and many volunteers. But I think government, they don't understand themselves yet how it should work. Because at the moment, most of those volunteers are, they are volunteers. But it's like extra job. And also I think the problem is, like, house. Or where these people should live. Because Tartu said that they don't have so many apartments to give, like municipal apartments.

Yeah...

It's difficult to say what I think about government because I really don't understand their ideas They are not very clear, what they are talking about. It's, like foggy. They say big words but they don't have ideas behind these words, I think.

And, if you want to say, what is your personal feeling about the refugees? Do you want them to come? Or you don't?

Mh... I think that we have to help them, because it's not it's not their responsibility what's going on. As they are now away from their homes we need to help them. But there is this big problem how to integrate them because it has to start from the very first minutes when they are here, because otherwise it goes... I have lived in Norway, in Oslo, where, when I took metro, then it was after few stops or so, then I saw that there were no Norwegian people in the metro anymore, because some parts of the city were only for other people. And, well, that is not integrated society. There is like one Oslo and another Oslo. And this can be really dangerous.

[O says something to M in Estonian, so that she can add information]

O wanted to add that it can be... what is also to be afraid of that... Like, in Norway, all the money you get from the state is enough to live but in Estonia, you need to have a job because the state funding is not so big. And if these people can't have a job, it increases crimes. This can also be...

Do you want to add something to the interview?

What was the last question?

About your personal opinion.

Aha. As I said, I think we have to help, because all the countries should help. Because these people are not responsible for what is happening in their countries. So they are like victims and we have to help them as we can, but for sure it can't be easy way. It hasn't... It's not easy as 1 2 3, it takes time and a lot of effort from both sides. I guess also for the people who are coming, and the people we are here and we have to welcome them. I think it's, yeah, it can be like this, I don't need to add anything more.

Yeah, O will add something.

O: I will like to see the governments trying to deal with the problem in Syria. Because at the moment I cannot see anything trying to stop the war by Europe or by the States.

M: So yeah, if the government could do something also with the places, then it would be good. For people, then they don't have to come away from their homes.

2. INTERVIEW LI

Date: 28th January 2016

Format: Written

Are you aware of the refugee situation in Estonia?

Aware of the refugee situation. As in knowing the fact that Estonia is not accepting as many refugees as other European countries. I know that their conditions will be quite good, proper housing and an opportunity to take language courses, learn other traits, but they will remain isolated from the rest of population at first? That's how some who have already arrived have shown to live. In terms of locals welcoming them: the situation is terrible, lot's of anti-refugee propaganda floating around in the media.

Where do you get the information from? Are there many existing sources of information about the topic?

Sources... news, discussions with friends. Mostly news. In comparison to other nearby countries, the information is quite subjective and biased.

Could you explain me, briefly, which is the refugee situation in Estonia? You can include your personal opinion if you feel like it.

See the first question. + My feelings about the situation: better to wait and see, not let paranoia and biased sources shape our opinions. Return to common sense: these people are war refugees and want to be welcomed as we did in the 1940s (lots of Estonians fled to Sweden, the UK and the States before the Soviet occupation).

Do you know anything about Vao? If the answer is "yes", what do you know?

Hadn't heard of Vao but googled it. But all in all hadn't heard it before that.

What do you think about about the Government's policies on the topic?

The Government seems to be cooperating with others in the EU. What other choice do they have? I guess I'm not opposed to their actions which I'm not specifically familiar with anyway.

Do you feel that the refugees are integrated in society?

In theory, yes. In practice, some are, some aren't. Just have to wait and see. Estonians are essentially mistrustful of strangers and that won't change overnight.

In your opinion, how would integration of refugees be possible in Estonian society?

As I'm reading the news now, the first article I open and I see Vao. This always happens that when you acknowledge a term it suddenly appears everywhere.

To answer your question: I think the language courses provided is a solid first step and eventually letting them live with the local population. It's hard to tell, you're right. New mechanisms will be brought to light as things progress, I'm sure. First plan A and hope for the best. It would also help to portray refugees in a better light in the media so acceptance from the locals will happen eventually. Right now, a refugee is lazy, aggressive and dangerous (a pick-pocket, a rapist etc). That's not cool. (... and dangerous ACCORDING TO NEWS OUTLETS)

Do you know the site Humans of New York? They recently did a series of refugees in Europe and showed them in a very compassionate light.

3. INTERVIEW RE

Date: 4th February 2016

Format: Skype. Recorded.

Duration: 49' 15", from which recorded: 20' 02"

Are you aware of the refugee situation in Estonia?

I, yeah, in general. Yeah, in general I'm aware.

Where do you get the information from? Oh, sorry you wanted to say...?

I, no. It's, everything.

Where do you get the information from? Are there many existing sources of information about the topic?

I think from TV, from internet, from social media, newspapers, from friends and I think mostly from different people. Like, people are talking about the subject and then I get the

information from people and then probably from social media when I see that some people I know are sharing some news. And also the talk shows in TV are giving a lot of information.

So do you think that currently this topic is something very present in the society?

Definitely, yeah.

Could you explain me briefly which is the refugee situation in Estonia? You can include your personal opinion if you want.

Hm... I don't know when it started already. A year ago? Or less? When my time sense is really not ok because so many things have happened in my life that I don't bother myself with things in the society that much but, yeah, they wanted to increase the amount of refugees that can enter Estonia and then people started to be really against to this. And, eh... it just started to be a huge, huge problem among the people, the politicians, also the media of course made it even bigger, I think, and eh... I think they are still struggling with this but, yeah, I'm not so... I don't read about it every day, that how it's the situation and what's the present situation going on. And, ask me something more specific.

Yeah. Do you know anything about Vao?

Yes, I haven't been there but yeah. Of course it was a big shock when local people put the fire on the house in Vao. So, definitely... And yeah, I also read many really really nasty comments in internet from just like regular people and it's kind of scary that there are so many people that are really thinking that we should kill the refugees, and burn their houses, or something. so I think that there are many people that... The people are scared, and the people who accept it are scared of these people who are scared.

So the people who are against refugees are very open to give their opinion?

I think they are, yes. I mean, they are maybe more... I think it is really emotional for them and they are more in something, and if they see some refugees

[Entra una companya de feina seva. La R li diu que està fent un Skype. Parlen en Estoni]

Sorry, the door is open so people can come. So what I was telling? Ah that is something that is really emotional but probably they don't want to discuss it. The people are of course very different but they are not much, like... Normal discussions... There are more just some random insults to these people and I also went to the supporting concert. I think it was in the end of August, or September, in Vabaduse Veljak, in the Freedom Square, when some active musicians and people in the cultural field made up this concert to support the refugees and actors and other people, made their speeches and everything. that was really, really really great. They organised it really fast and I think now it's also the event... even won some prizes. That is one of the, or the event of the year, last year. Ah... Yeah, the one organization gave it out this prize to them. So there it was really nice to see that people are actually supporting the refugees and they are not against and, because at one point it started to feel that everybody are against and that there are no people that are supporting. So that's why I think they made the concert and there are many many people that are ok with this that the people are coming. And related with me it's also that I've been travelling and I've met foreign people in my life, so I can accept them much easily. But probably people who haven't travelled around are more closed, and you know, it's really logical if they feel differently. So I think it's just about the awareness.

You mentioned before the word “scared”, that the people who are against it are scared. And I wanted to ask, where do you think this fear comes from? Is it something tight to identity, or culture, or due to economical factors...?

Both, I guess. Yeah, the people are getting really angry if they see that the refugees get even more support than maybe people are earning in Estonia. Because there are many people in Estonia who are poor. So that's why they are mad and, mh... so there are of course, these economical reasons. But I think, like, you know, mostly and deeply it's still the identity and the cultural thing that we are really small nation and we have had our ... in some reasons we are not so tolerant, actually. We are thinking that we are but regular Estonian people is not so tolerant. So, yeah, I think everything's coming from the past of occupation. If many people are really related with the past and they don't have new experiences coming from nowadays world.

And what do you think, or do you know about the government's policies on the topic?

You mean at the moment?

Yes.

I think I don't know how is the situation now but I think it also depends in, how do you say it, Erakoond...

The party?

Yeah, it depends on the party, on what do they support. There are parties that are really finding that it's ok to increase the amount and to support the people who are coming, but then there are some very very conservative parties. Specially one that is really against it. And they are also, with the media, they try to even manipulate some people who are also living in the past and thinking that things should not change.

Living in the past, you mean remembering the period where Estonia was occupied?

Yeah. all the relations with Russians and Germans and at one point we were free but it didn't come easily. So we want to hold it really really strongly. And it's, of course, it's fine, but we should think how to do it with the world we are living now. And if this people don't have a place to live in their own country, then we should just take them as regular persons. We should not think about the cultural background maybe that much. But it's hard, of course.

And do you feel that the refugees that are already in Estonia, do you feel that they are integrated in the society?

I don't know them personally but I think some of them are. And some not so...

[Hi ha un silenci llarg. Sembla que ha marxat la connexió d'Skype]

Reeli?

[Silenci]

Reeli?

Yeah, now I hear you.

So, yeah, you were saying...

So what was the last question?

If you feel that the refugees are integrated in society, the ones that are already in Estonia

Hm. Yeah, I said that I think that some of them are but definitely not all of them and I think it's still in the process.

And in your opinion, how integration would be possible in Estonian society?

I think I said it already also, that is all about the awareness among all the people. Because we see that there are so many different opinions about it. Really differently. So it's probably about the awareness and we should, probably in the government, there should be some people that we trust and who are supporting and explaining the subject reasonably. Maybe then people will understand it more and then accept it, but of course it's difficult because everybody has to come out from their comfort zone and start to think how to create new jobs for them and how to... Just how to let them integrate.

So then you think that maybe something that it's not so easy but a longer process?

Yeah, definitely. It takes time, I guess. Estonian people are slow. [Laughs]

The interview is until here, but if you would like to add something in the end, feel free. As you want.

Yeah, as I said that it would be interesting, I think, also for you to interview some people who has not travelled at all in their life, and what do they think about it. Because if you have had the connection with foreign people then it's easy to accept and tolerate but if you haven't had the experience, the yeah, it makes sense maybe more that you are a bit scared or you don't know how to think about it. So, if you find these people who haven't travelled really much, I think you could find different answers.

Yeah, and do you think that this thing that the less you have travelled and seen people from different cultures, do you think it is related with this thing that "the more distant you are with something, the more scared you are towards the difference, or the otherness"? Or you think it is because you have personally been "an immigrant" in another place and you know how it feels?

I think the first one maybe. Yeah, because people are travelling and participating in different kind of projects abroad, for two weeks, for example. But it's already with so many different foreign people and the experience with other people is so bonding, that you don't have to be an immigrant by yourself to understand it. You just have to have close relationship or something, or close situations together with these people. So I think that bonds.

Ok. Thank you.

4. INTERVIEW VE

Date: 21st February, 2016

Format: Face to face. Recorded.

Duration: 7' 23"

Are you aware of the refugee situation in Estonia?

Mh... I think so, yeah. Not fully, but I've followed the news.

Ok, that was the second question: where do you get the information from? Are there many available sources about the topic?

I follow the news, I don't do any extra look up.

Could you explain which is the refugee situation in Estonia? You can include your personal opinion.

Ok. There is no real pressure of refugees at the moment, I think. There's kind of an agreement with the EU countries that we should take up to 500 hundred in a year, which is pretty low in terms that we already have migration about 3000 in a year from outside of EU coming to Estonia just to work, so it's a small part of whatever migration is. And there has been non part of this 500 hundred that has agreed so far.

That has agreed?

Yeah, between EU to share the refugees' pressure in EU from the Greece, and Italy and so on.

So Estonian government has not agreed?

They agreed, it has been there. But there has not been really... No one has arrived so far. Cause probably that's some paperwork or something like that, and nothing has happened so far.

Ok. Do you know anything about Vao?

Yes.

What do you know?

It's one of the more buildings which holds the refugees so far.

One of the buildings? So there's more buildings in Estonia?

I guess there would be, yeah. There is one probably in Tallinn which is more like "closed", where you can't go out. It's for probably before you are sent out. That's all I know... I don't know.

Do you agree with the Government's policies with the topic? With what the government is doing about it?

I don't... I think Government doesn't have any kind of topic. I mean Government... I don't agree in a sense that... I agree in a sense that is kind of balance and so on and so on but I think Government is like, is too scared to just make decisions. Like before we talked, that there is right wing government which is cool in their views but it has been so long there that they are afraid to get against the nation, and in the same time they want to kind of be right wing, so they are kind of in between and never make real decisions.

But do they think they feel pressure from the EU?

But of course they feel pressure. Yeah, they feel pressure. I mean I think they feel but part of their kind of views as well... they would agree with it but rather loud, loud minority which is against of it...

The people that are against refugees, and the people that are approving them, do you think they are loud about it?

For me, it feels that the ones against refugees are louder than the ones for it. Like...

Have you seen messages or something? Have you heard people saying something direct that they don't want to have refugees in the country?

Yeah, everywhere. In the bar, in the street, in the random comments in the newspaper... The news from the nationalist party... is like everywhere. And besides their actual gatherings in the street and so on.

Why do you think they are against refugees? Is it because of economical reasons? Or identity/cultural reasons...?

They explain it more as identity than as economy but I guess it's... I personally feel, I mean I don't know what they think, I can just guess. But I guess it's more about identity, that most of these people haven't really met any... I mean, I don't want to kind of make it too wide comment but most of these people haven't travelled and haven't met many people from different countries so probably they are afraid of that.

Like afraid of the "otherness", or difference?

Yes, yes. So it's more identity than economical problem. I don't think Estonia has a problem with labor. There is more jobs than there's people to work in Estonia.

So you personally, what's your position?

I am for helping refugees, of course. I am kind of, I mean... I am very liberal in that sense as well that we should be open for everyone, but I am also... I think it should be smart enough that not like let's accept everything, everywhere, everyone... Like, let's talk things through. But I definitely don't agree with that Zero-type of policy.

Do you think that the refugees that are already in Estonia are integrated into society?

No, not at all.

Not at all. And what do you think that it would be necessary? How integration could be possible?

Just make them part of the everyday life. It's both ways, they have to go out, they have to work, they have to go to school, meet people... and every time they meet someone in the street they will also be more welcome. It takes one black person, one asian person, one muslim people... to accept all of them. So I think they have to be just part of the society, not sitting in Vao or whatever possibilities are.

So thank you. That is all.

Thanks. It was shorter than I expected.

5. INTERVIEW SA

Date: 22nd February, 2016

Format: Face to face. Recorded.

Duration: 13' 11"

Are you aware of the refugee topic in Estonia?

I know a little.

Where do you get the information from? Are there many available sources that talk about it?

Like newspapers, online basically. Cause now I am here in a different country, I read online a little bit.

Do you think it's a hot topic? In the newspaper very often? Or it's not so...

I think it's kind of hot topic. And often also people share it on facebook. Like some articles or their opinions of views about it.

And these opinions are anti or pro refugees?

I think they are like different people who, different views ah... In my group of friends, let's say, people are not against it. I think like every story has two sides, and there is a reason why they are coming here but also some refugees take like advantage of it. Maybe they don't need and and go, just with the flow.

Okay. Have you read any news about refugees or asylum seekers that were maybe abusing from the system and are not really in need?

Ah... Yes, I've read articles but always when I read them then I've thought maybe it's not true. Like, totally true. this is the point of view of the writer. What do you say...

Journalist?

Journalist, yes. It's the view of him or her and this might not be totally true, but the other day I read some article about a family who has lived in Estonia already... I think they are from Ukraine or somewhere, and they might have lived here already like 7, or 8 years. And they have like 3 kids. 2 of them are born here and I think all the kids, they talk Estonian language

and also the father, but they don't get... I think they need to leave soon. They are not getting the permission to live here forever even though they have a job and this is kind of sad, cause hey have made like an effort and their kids know Estonian language... So why can't we accept them in this country? Why not?

And could you explain me the refugee situation in Estonia? It can be briefly, and you can explain your personal opinion, however you want.

From my point of view... I think like some refugees, they need to leave their homes because there are wars, they're bombing their homes, they're dying there... and I don't think that the way to make it to Estonia is rather easy or simple. Maybe some family members will die on the way. Eventually when they make it, if they want to learn, we should kind of help them. I don't know. I think it's quite hard because some people want to learn, want to emigrate into the... but some don't. Because my friend is studying medicine in Sweden and she said that in her school there was a refugee, kinda... But he was... I don't remember which country. And, eh... he came there and he could learn with them, the medicine, but he was saying "oh, why don't you give me a translator?". Like, "why do I need to learn the language?". Swedish language, or even English it was hard for him, so he asked for a translator. And after a week or two he was gone. Of course he left school, he didn't dare or bother to learn. So I don't know where he went, maybe he went to some other country to try there... I mean you have to give something to receive something bad. You cannot go and make demand. But this is a fine line because you never know if this person... Like, on the street, like even here in Barcelona. You see like, beggars. And you think "Oh, I might give him money". But then you see them every day, everyday, and then you say "What, why aren't they looking for a job or some better opportunities? Why are they here?" And then you see some of them are drunk or high and it's easier for them to ask money from other people than to do something themselves, to do anything to change it. So it's kind of the same with the refugee topic. Like... you never know who really needs help and who doesn't.

So do you think maybe that Estonian policies should work on the fact of being able to distinguish who is really in need and who is not?

Yes, but at the same time I think it's maybe in the border, you have like... I mean, nobody wants to come to Estonia, I think everybody knows it's not the best life there. That you really need to do something to live there. But maybe on the border there is like 300 people, you don't have the time to kinda have a chat with everybody and find out "Oh, why are you here? What are your plans for future?". I understand they don't have this time, so I don't know the solution. I don't know.

Okay. And do you know anything about Vao?

Ah, yes. I think somebody set the house on fire, the other night... Which is kind of sad. I think some people call it a patriot thing but eh... No, come on. If you set somebody's home on fire because they are in your country and they are kinda struggling to settle down and you set their home on fire this does not show that you are a patriot of Estonia. I mean, this shows you are just like... Your world is small and you only see like a little bit. But, no, I haven't been there or anything.

And the refugees that are already in Estonia, do you think they are integrated into society?

No, I don't think so. But remember I told you today that I saw this guy here in Barcelona who speaks Estonian and is on a vacation for four days and lives in Estonia, in Pärnu? And very surprised, he speaks Estonian. His name was Mohammad but I did not ask where is

he from, but probably from some place down there because his skin was also a little bit darker. i did not ask what work does he do because I didn't have much time, but I was surprised, it was nice that he spoke Estonian and it seemed that he has settled in, or settled down, or like, integrated. Yeah.

But was he a refugee?

I don't know, cause I had just a minute or two because they had to leave. I might see him more tomorrow or the next day because he's staying in the hostel.

Maybe it is also something you would not ask...

[Laughs] Yeah! Are you a refugee? Maybe he was, maybe not.

And, so, how do you think that integration could be possible? You are Estonian, you know Estonian society, how do you think that it could happen that the refugees would integrate and be part of the society?

Mh... I honestly don't know...

Yeah, it's a hard question.

Yeah, because from this question, do you know Nicolà?

I don't personally, but I've heard about him, yes.

Like, he's not a refugee but he has lived in Estonia like for 8 years or something? And he does not speak Estonian and, I don't mind but I think if I was him I would learn Estonian. Like, it would be... you feel more like at home. It seems that he wants to stay in this country and this would kinda help. He gets along with everybody but in the shops or like, whatever doing, with older people who don't speak English it would be easier to speak Estonian and it shows to locals, it kinda matters if somebody learns their language and wants to be like a part of your culture.

So do you think it would be reciprocal that if the refugees show interest and effort to integrate, then also Estonian community will accept them better?

Yes. Yes. If they show more interest, I think the Estonians will accept them more. But I think, I remember when I was in Iceland, three years ago, in Reykjavik there's a part of the city that there is some... I don't think they are refugees, but people from different cultures, from Africa or something. And they lived there and somehow they kept the...

Economical help?

Yeah. Some money, help. And it's kinda good money. In Estonia, even if you are. Let's say if I quit my job, I'm unemployed, I get like shitty money. How much is it, 100€? Or something like... not more, I think. But I think these people get like more more money. Like more. At least I remember somebody told me in Iceland. And this kinda makes these people not want to work. Because why? I'm getting the money already, why should I find a job? I think, refugees, it would be nice if they get a place to stay, a home, and food help, but there would be like limits if after a month, two, they haven't even tried to find a job or learned the language, they need to move on to another place. You need to... maybe there is another house, or no, but let's say they don't accept the same person, then you have to find your

own place. Maybe the homes should have like language lessons at the beginning and maybe that would help them, but if they don't want to learn, then you can leave our country and you can go wherever you want.

Okay. Thank you very much.

[Laughs] You're welcome!

6. INTERVIEW RO

Date: 22nd February, 2016

Format: Face to face. Recorded.

Duration: 9' 26"

Hello

Hello. So, Are you aware of the refugee situation in Estonia?

Well, I hear stuff around. I know that there is refugees in the region of Estonia. I don't know how many people and stuff but I hear things... it's a topic.

And is it a secondary topic or a hot one?

In newspaper I don't know, I don't read newspaper but what people say around it's pretty hot topic, yes.

Okay. And when you say "what people say around" do you mean comments about it? Do people show publicly their opinion?

Yeah, they are really open and really not into this thing and they like to share their ideas and ask people what they think about it and bla bla bla.

Okay, so people are kind of loud about it? But are they louder the pro refugees or the anti refugees?

The ones totally against it. I never heard something good about the pro refugees. Okay, maybe some friends, because as it is a hot topic, then we talk about it and share our ideas but people I don't know, that talks randomly about this, they are doing it all the time because they are against it, not because it's a good thing.

What things do they say?

That they should not be there, that they're bad. Like, all the time bad comments about the refugees. They don't like them, they don't want them. Never a positive attitude.

And are there many sources that talk about the topic, also alternative ones? Or just the Estonian TV and media?

What do you mean?

Are there alternative newspapers, for example?

I don't know.

You don't know, ok.

Usually I see it in the news, magazines, newspapers... but I really don't know because I don't speak Estonian so I don't follow it much.

And do you know anything about Vao?

No, what is that?

Vao. It's the place where the Refugee Center is.

Ah! It's the town... Yeah, I don't know it. I haven't been there and yeah, I don't know it at all.

Could you explain briefly what is the refugee situation in Estonia? You can include your personal opinion if you want.

My opinion... Not only in Estonia, but everywhere. Refugees, it's not their fault, they don't want to be there I guess, and I don't think they do anything bad, and if they do is overdramatization. I think Estonian people do more bad things than refugee people in this relationship, let's say. They don't make much effort in Estonia. But it's more in the countryside what I'm talking about. When I talk with Veiko or people that are a bit more openminded then the conversation kinda makes sense, but when you meet like a random person in a bar that is drunk and not really happy... But it's the same with Russians. They go totally against Russians and against refugees. They don't like people coming to their country. I believe it's some kind of patriotic culture because the country is kind of new and they want to be really like, having their own country. They don't want people invading, they are scared of invasion.

So you think it's more like a cultural-identity thing?

I think it's more like a lack of education or not educated in the openminded way. I think this is something when it makes like a group belief then everybody that is not even trying to understand it, they just think their own way. I think it's a political issue.

Because, you, for example, being from France, when you have been in Estonia, you haven't felt any opposition?

Hm... just comments about it. I've not really met or seen any bad things happening around me. Maybe there has been, I don't know. but I really cannot... I am maybe more an ignorant in this side but I know refugees in Latvia it's the same problem. People don't want them because of money issues and things. They are not openminded to immigration at all, I think. but this is like, really again, it's more like a question of education. In my business and the people around me who have higher education they are probably thinking a bit more openminded I guess.

And how you met any refugee in Estonia?

No, I haven't actually.

And do you think that the refugees that are already in the country are integrated?

From what I've discussed with a friend, some of them are even volunteering constructing the roads, and they try to integrate a bit but I don't really know about it. So that's a wild guess, but I have heard that from a friend, so...

And how do you think Estonians could integrate refugees? How do you think that it could happen the integration in Estonian society?

I don't know because I don't really know the political system and how they are trying to do it, so I don't even know the intervention. But the integration itself, I think it's kind of bad to put them all in one place. Maybe they should not do this kind of "ghetto thing" [laughs]. But probably that's a practical reason, and, obviously, as you have to act fast, maybe that was the easiest way. Hopefully they will try to make it better so everybody feels a bit less put aside, and here we give you a piece of land, or something. That's the idea. I don't know.

Thank you very much.

When people talk about it it's like... because they think it's wrong and they want to know if I think it's wrong too... and every time I try to argue in this sense and say "Come on, open your eyes, they don't want to be here either. You think it's wrong but I think they have no choice to be there, and they don't want to quit their country because of the fucking war!". They have to do that and that's it... And I think that abusing any kind of system stuff, I think it's not correct. I don't know. Hopefully, it's gonna be fine. Yeah.

7. INTERVIEW TA

Date: 22nd February, 2016
Format: Face to face. Recorded.
Duration: 5' 27"

Tere Tarmo.

Tere. [Laughs]

So, are you aware of the refugee situation in Estonia?

Yeah, I've been living there for a while.

Where do you get the information from?

Eh... Can you explain?

Do you read the newspaper, or...

The newspaper, or listen to radio.

Okay. And can you explain me what is the refugee situation in Estonia currently?

There's no refugees in Estonia, I guess. Or, very little of them. And I think that if they come there, they will not stay there.

Why not?

Because we don't have such a Scandinavian or this kind of benefits like in other parts of Europe. And I think they don't like the weather we have.

Okay. And the... Do you agree with the policies the Estonian Government is having with the refugees?

I think our Government they don't even understand the situation. The seriousness or whatever. Like, they... mh... they are communicating it out, that they are picking them and selecting them, or something like that, so there is not strict policy, or certain policy about what to do when they will arrive, some day.

Mhmm. Which is your personal opinion?

I have nothing against them but I will not like if they just come and do nothing and wait for some kind of heavy support from the Government. Of course in the beginning you can help them, but at some point they will have to start taking care of themselves, work. In that case we can help them like if they, let's say, work a bit, and then they can get a little bit more. But not just they come and sit down on their asses, smoking weed and waiting for money to come every month or something like that.

And do you know any refugee yourself?

Mh... No. Personally not.

And do you think that the refugees that are already in Estonia, are integrated into the society?

No. Not, not.

How do you think integration could be possible? Like, you being Estonian, knowing your society, how do you think that there could be a positive attitude about them?

It would be very hard because Estonians as they are, are quite protective. Not protective but, how to say... [Laughs]. There are so few of us that we kind of protect our country, nationality, language... and we get really obsessed about that. So, I think the integration will be very hard.

Mhmm. And do you know anything about Vao?

Vao?

Vao küla.

Ah! Okay. I know one Vao ten or twenty, or even thirty years ago that it was a signal they got from the space and they opened it and they said "wow". [Laughs] But I know the place, yes. I have read about it, but where it is located, I actually don't know.

You don't know where it's located?

No.

But you have read about the place?

Yeah, of course, it has been all over the news for some months, and facts there, or some problems with them... So yeah, it reached the news.

So is it like a hot topic? Very present in Estonian society? That people talks about it?

People maybe, like, on the street or between us I don't think we talk a lot about that.

No?

In these situations when it is in the news and at some point, one, two days, everybody talks about it and explains some things that they don't ven understand themselves, but then that's it.

Okay. So thank you very much.

That's it?

Yeah.

So short!

8. INTERVIEW J

Date: 7th March, 2016

Format: Face to face. Recorded.

Duration: 20' 48"

Are you aware of the refugee situation in Estonia?

Yeah, I am aware of some of the things that are going on.

Where do you get the information from? Are there different sources that talk about it?

In Estonia not so much. It's mostly news, both online news and broadcasting, but eh... So, yes, nothing weird or out of place in this sense. Normal things like newspapers, radio stations, tv programs...

But are there alternative newspapers, or just the official ones?

They are official ones, yes. Alternative news in Estonia mostly comes in form of blogs, that people have their own opinions and if you like someone's opinions, then you follow them. And there are of course some alternative media outlets but they are mostly ridicule, because they are really... mostly about conspiracy stuff. So they can't be taken really seriously in terms of political views, and so on.

Have you found or seen any blog that talks about the refugee topic?

Yes, I have.

And do people express their opinions about it publicly and easily or...

Yeah. It's actually stunning how free people feel in terms of making their thoughts available to the whole world, considering what they are saying. I remember a couple of days back I read an Estonian blog ran by a married couple and they had a poll in their blog. Poll meaning a questionnaire. And the questionnaire was that is it more human to gas the refugees, yes or no? And that's like... I was just reading it and couldn't understand that how can they be taken seriously by people. And they are not a small blog either. I don't know, but in terms of more rational views and more in thought development, then I think nothing beats the news agencies and newspapers in Estonia. Because they have the best journalists in Estonia. In Estonia there is not so much media corruption, so you can trust what is published usually. And that means that the journalists are quite independent and you can trust their opinion. So I think in terms of quality, nothing beats the newspapers, but blogs are available and some of them are horrible, and some of them are good, and some of them are not saying anything.

And can you explain me, briefly or not, what is the refugee situation in Estonia? You can include your personal opinion.

The funny part is that there is no refugee situation in Estonia. It's mostly the situation is in the newspapers and not in the land of Estonia, or the nation of Estonia. But, yeah, if we go beyond the cynicism, then Estonia has to take some people and we have to consider that these people probably don't want to stay in Estonia, so they will use Estonia as a transition country, going to Sweden or Finland, or wherever they feel that they are better off.

When you say that Estonia has to take some people, you mean because of the new law from the EU or because of the Estonian government that has already a position in taking them?

No, Estonian government doesn't have a position, they are repeating the things that Brussels has told about the refugee situation. So, of course they have their own opinion but they respect the laws of EU. At least the government, people not so much. So in terms of Estonia I don't think we have a situation and in the near future I don't think we'll ever have one. But mostly what is happening is that the fear that is created with the refugee situation is magnified in terms of pushing their own political agenda. So the refugee situation in Estonia is used for power play in political field, mostly on the conservative sides, who see it as a perfect opportunity to gain voters and power by pushing the refugee button.

This statement that you said that "Estonia is a transition country" for them, to go to other countries afterwards, is it something that you have heard in the media, or why do you say that?

Most of my information comes from media.

But that sentence concretely, is it something that you've heard in the news?

Yes. I've heard it in the news and, as far as I know, the people that have come here, they don't wanna stay here. There is numerous reasons for it. First that the living quality is not as big as in other countries. The other reason is that they already might have relatives in the other countries where they want to go. Reasons are numerous. Also, one of them being that Estonia is not so open to the idea of refugees coming here.

Do you know anything about Vao?

Yes, I have been there a couple of times and besides that, I have followed the village of Vao in media as well.

And do you agree with the government's policies in the decisions around refugees? For example, the construction of Vao.

No, I don't. But also I acknowledge that I lack the knowledge in determining what is best for them or not. But for me the things they do in terms of integration might not be the best way to do it. Mostly the location where the refugees are taken, which is beyond my understanding, why do they have to be in the remotest parts of Estonia? But what I am really happy about our government is that even though the negativity of the people, they are not falling into populism that much. There is, of course, but they are still going through the plan of accepting refugees and they are more rationalised than for example Hungary, or countries where they have been using the situation to gain "laberage" to other desires in the political field.

Ahá. You see that the government is still trying to accept them and they are not falling into populism, but why do you think that is the motivation behind it? They want to make Estonia a multicultural country or is due to political international relations?

Yeah, I think that the main reason is that Estonia is small and it can't exist without the support of stronger countries. We had the option of choosing, because we are a border state, and luckily we chose the EU. And thus we have to obey EU laws and we can't be like blindly against them just because of misinformation. So I think one of the reasons why politicians accept the refugees is because we have sign an agreement with European Union, but of course the initial plan was to bring more refugees than what we have agreed with as a government. And the reason for it was that people were strongly against it and the government had to listen to the voices of the people who turned down the number that was said by the EU. So the motivations are many and it's probably a long topic that what are the motivations of politicians and so on.

And the refugees that are already in Estonia, do you think they are integrated into the society?

No. And that's mostly because Estonia has never had until now a plan how to integrate people of different backgrounds. And that has been a topic already before we had any refugees. It has been a topic since Estonian government was formed in 1991, that how to integrate the different ethnicities that we have. And we have over 20% Russians and the general consensus is that we have failed in integrating them to our society. And I think it has gone over this problem to refugees also. That we are not doing a good job in integrating them but let's see how it will be in the future because right now the government has

accepted a new plan for it. Much more coherent and regulated so we need to wait and see how this plan works and if it's better than the lack of plan that we have had so far.

Which is the plan?

I mean, the plan in integration that they have written down what they need to do, that the refugees have to learn Estonian and so on. Like the bullet points of how to make a person Estonian, basically. Yeah... And I think that's one of the interesting parts. Interesting for whom, of course... But interesting part of the refugee situation that we are trying to turn them into Estonians. We are not willing to accept them as Syrians or Afghans or whatever. They are here, so if they want to stay they have to become Estonians.

That was a bit related to my next question, that how do you think that integration could be possible, in terms of what would the people need to be fine with the co-inhabitation. But you more or less answered it, that they need to see them "Estonianizing".

They... Maybe not so radical that they have to die their hair white, blonde I mean, and start wearing contact lenses or something, but what most people are afraid of is that they will try to push their own culture and since Estonians are really small, they are very insecure about their culture. And preserving it has always been an issue in Estonia. So already I think a lot of people would see it as a positive effect to start to accept them if they see they make an effort in learning the language or contributing to some part of the culture or the society, or the country.

So you think that the reasons why to accept them or why not to accept them are based in cultural and identity reasons?

Yes, absolutely. I think Estonians are really afraid and due to a lot of misinformation and propaganda, the fear has been inflating over the years now. But also I think if you take Estonians one by one then... If you put more explanation to the issue and to the background of the people, I think it would change a lot the air that there's currently in Estonia in terms of accepting refugees.

I don't have any more question, but to close up the interview, if you would like to add something else... Maybe your personal opinion?

Yeah, my personal opinion... I think Estonia could only benefit from people coming here because we have a country that could help a lot of people who have lost their homes and because our society is quite strong in Western terms, I think we shouldn't be afraid of losing our identity because of war refugees. I think losing our identity is much more relevant if we stagnate and build walls around us and not realize what is going on out there and put our head into the sand. So I think both would benefit, them because they would get a place to live without fear for their lives, and for us for getting out from our bubble and see how the world is.

9. INTERVIEW JUHAN SAHHAROV

Date: 8th March, 2016

Format: Face to face. Recorded.
Duration: 42' 04"

Could you explain me what's the refugee situation currently in Estonia?

You mean statistically? How many of them are here?

Yes, numbers and also policies. What is the refugee program now?

Okay. If we look at the last year's statistics, then in Estonia we had 226 asylum applications. So it's one of the smallest numbers in Europe, but still it's almost two times bigger than the year before that. So I would say that if we compare with the total migration, then the numbers are still very small. Because every year approximately 6000 people are coming to Estonia. You know, work migration, families, students, and so on. And from the 6000 it's only about 200 are asylum seekers, and the refugees who actually get the positive answers are, last year, 97. So it's only some percent from the whole amount of migrants. It's really small number. But I think when you ask about the situation... In my opinion, many Estonians they are monitoring the whole Europe. Sometimes they mix Europe and Estonia and they say "we have a problem with them, we have troubles", but OK, that is happening in Europe. Not yet in Estonia. So in a way, I think it's interesting that they see Estonia being a member in the EU and they see migration crisis and big numbers that are there, it's like if it would be becoming a part of Estonia.

The government agreed to receive 550 quota refugees, yeah? So they see that the situation in Europe it affects Estonia. So in that way, the situation has changed. But the truth is that Estonia has not received any quota refugees, from resettlement. So 550 is for many people a big number, but if you compare it to the 6000 is not big.

So 550 is what the European Union has asked, or what they have agreed already with Estonian government?

Agreed. Although none of them have arrived yet.

When is it that they are going to arrive?

They are negotiating with Greece and I think 7 people are quite closed. That 7 people are really going to arrive in April or May. So it's still a small number. Because one family refused and with Italy it also failed the communication. Cause Italy, they didn't give specific documentation that Estonian government asked for and needed. Data about background about these people. But I think they didn't have it. So that's the thing, that if Estonia has to resettle refugees, at least they need to know who they are and what are the documents and in this field it's sometimes very complicated.

And if you analyze the program to integrate refugees, which do you think are the strong points and the weak points of the program?

I think, in my opinion the weak point is that the local municipalities are still lacking the system. They don't have an exact role in the receiving process. We have some, two or three NGO's and then we have the Reception Center, and then we have police and border guard, but the local municipalities, they... I would say it is slow. I mean, the refugees are being dealt by local municipalities when they already have problems. For example, if the kids don't want to go to school, then the social worker comes out and says that we have a problem with that. But it's too late. We have recommended, for example the local

municipality in Tartu to establish a new service, that from the first week it would have an "official", someone who is face to face, every week, who is in contact with the refugee family. So they could more control also the situation. Because at the moment it's very very much on the shoulders of NGO's: ours and the Refugee Council also a little bit. So it's then one or two NGO's who are actually in the towns, in the municipalities, and we are taking the responsibility that we are beside them.

I remember you said that one of the things that Johannes Mihkelsoni Keskus does, and Refugee Council doesn't, is that you follow the asylum seekers until two years, with continuity...

At the moment it's 1 year. Not 2. And it's to refugees, not asylum seekers, but recognized refugees. And from these people, have you noticed if their intention is to settle in Estonia? Or is it a transition country to go somewhere else?

It depends. It's quite individual. Some could say that Estonia is a transit country but it's superficial, because if they have a good environment and if they get a good job, or an "enough" job for them, it's not definitely that it's easier in Denmark to get a job, for example. I think they leave because of the exact problems here. It's a yes and no answer. In the big picture, we are a transit country, I guess. Because the police and border guard says that when they trace the big monitors of where the refugees are going, of course Estonia and Latvia, the Baltic States, are not big roads where they go.

And do you think that this fact of not choosing it, or wanting to leave Estonia, do you think it's connected to the non-acceptance of the local people towards them? That feeling that they are not wanted here, makes them want to leave?

Yes, yes. Yes. I think it influences them. Because I have seen it also. We had a case with one Sudanese who worked in a laundry and he just openly said to the media that he sees this racism towards him and actually, he wants to leave because of that. I've heard some Congolese people that they want to go to Belgium because, he said "they know how to deal with us, how to integrate us better". Something like that. And also they have a big community there.

Yeah. I think that knowing that there is a cultural community from people from the same origin as them might be one of the biggest motivations to choose to go to a country or another.

Yes, and it's amazing how much contact they have. They already know someone in Finland, or Sweden, or you know, from Kurdish or Iraqi community. Or Albanian community in Helsinki. They know them and communicate with each other. Because internet and smartphones has made it so easy and fast.

So, Estonia is a really new country in receiving immigration, right?

From 1997. We have received since then. And we have had years that we had zero applications. So I would say yes, compared with other states, of course. And also the resettlement programs. Because for example, something that is very different from Finland and Sweden is that those states started step by step, slowly. For example, Finland started with some people from Chile, from Pinochet regime, from the 70s', then from Vietnam, also in the 70s'. And you know they are receiving 30 people from Somalia, and the plane came directly from Somalia, to Finland, so you know, they build it up very consciously and the public, the usual people, they kind of got used to it. That you know, there is this little

community of refugees, also in the Cold War time... but in Estonia has been suddenly. So the people haven't been used to it, so when it started in Europe... For example, when I started in 2009 nobody cared about that. Nobody told about that. We had maybe 10 to 20 or 30 people in Estonia. And actually it is still not very much bigger, but the thing is that the people's consciousness moved from one extreme to another very quickly. That the situation changed very quickly. So other countries have had a chance, and the society has had the chance to get used to it within long period.

So one of the reasons that could make people be more open about accepting refugees would be the time they will need to get used to it?

Yeah, but also no. Because it reached them really negatively. The first step, the first kind of contact is being really negative. Actually, I think in Finland they have their own problems but at least they had the chance to start it in a more positive way.

But do you think that this is related to the fact that many Estonian people, when the first refugees were in Jaama küla, before Vao, it's actually the case that nobody has seen them, nobody has experienced or interacted with them... Don't you think that maybe having them so separated from society, isn't this creating more distance between locals and refugees? And that could generate this negative image of them?

Mh... Yes. I think I agree with that. I think I agree. But one thing is refugees, and another is migrants, and you can never know who is refugee and who is not. It's more a problem. We have so few communities. I think, if you would put statistically it's not only about refugees, it's about Estonians are not used to see a, you know, Afroamerican person, black men and women. You never know if it's a refugee or no: is he a Nigerian student, or a Sudanese refugee? We don't know. The problem with Estonia is that we haven't had contacts, we haven't had relations. People don't have friends among the Muslims, or from Africa. If they see, for example, a black man, I guess they think "Ah, ok, he's a Nigerian student, he's here for one year and then he will leave". I think if you compare it with Barcelona, Rome or Marseille, it's completely lacking in Estonia this kind of multiculturalism in intimate relations. And of course we have very strong Russian mixed families and so on, but mixed families with Africans or Asians is quite rare. I think that's the reason, not that they are separated in Jaama küla or in Vao. Because they are separated in many many countries. In many Eastern, Central countries. Even if they are not separated, you can never say which kind of foreigners they are. Sometimes even Russians and Ukrainians, people are even negative towards them. Towards Ukrainian refugees. Actually, that is strange.

What always caught my attention very much is that a bit more than 60 years ago there were many Estonian refugees who went to Sweden or Germany, and I feel that nowadays, I don't know if you agree, but that people don't connect to accept refugees as the same that they suffered 60 years ago, when they were refugees themselves. I feel they don't connect these two historical moments, when it is actually, in the end people who scaped from war, just like they escaped some time ago.

Have you asked them that? To the people you interview? I think it is a really good question.

This concrete question, no. I have not. I did not dare, because I think Estonian society is very sensitive with the past of Soviet occupation.

Actually, I would recommend you to ask this, because it will give you exactly this feeling. I think people should think this. But many people don't do this connection. I cannot say why, we have to ask it. I think you can get different answers, even some could say that they don't

like even Estonian refugees. Because they didn't stay, they escaped, and now they came back, after the Soviet regime, and got their own houses. The government gave them their properties back, and actually it made many many people angry.

Because the ones who stayed...

Yes, they lived there, they renovated those houses for decades, and then they gave them back to the ones who had not been here. But I think it's more that they say that it was different back then. We had the world war and yeah.. they cannot compare Estonia with Africa. They don't do it.

So then, of course there's no real answer, but then this rejection of Estonians towards refugees can maybe then be said that it is fruit of the difference, that they are different? The "otherness".

Yes, I think you are right. Somehow, I think I am quite different also. Of course by doing this job but also I have always been supportive this open concept of nationality and being a nation. You can be black Estonian, for example. But many people think you cannot be black and Estonian. They have very narrow and limited concept of what it is to be Estonian, what are the borders of Estonian nation. It's very exclusive. I am not sure how it can change...

And the fact that there was that gathering of bikers in Vao, and then the fire in Vao, and the media covered both news. Do you think that this changed a bit their attitude? Have you seen some kind of evolution or changing in the Estonian conception over these years?

I think it mobilized the supporters. The refugee supporters. Because We and other NGO's we got more letters that people wanted to become volunteers and support people. To do anything. It was a problem for us that we couldn't find them an activity. It is complicated to conduct it, to manage their wished and expectations. Because it is hard for me to just elect someone and invite someone to meet with this or that family. It has to be very systematic. But what happened, it was an incident. I wouldn't overreact or emphasize that. You know, the bikers, we couldn't say it was a strong voice of society, it was just one gang. But of course, now, what happens with the ultra right party. That is a different story.

Ah, this party that is formed as a branch of that other ultra right party from Kiev?

No. What do you mean?

I have read that there is a new Estonian party, or it is being built now, which is really racist, and they don't want anyone from outside. And it's a branch from an Ukrainian party.

Ukrainian?!

Yes. I read about it in an article. I can send it to you if you want.

Okay. But, it sounds like Russian propaganda. It's so similar with these kind of stories that Ukraine and Estonian far right are related? It's... Actually it's nonsense. But it sounds like, you know, with English newspapers and websites that actually their news are being built by Russian propaganda. It's very real, and serious thing. They do it in NY, and London. But the other thing is that we have ultra right, but they don't have any connection with the Ukrainians. It's EKRE, you know?

Yes.

The nationalist party. And this is real. Because you know, in Denmark and Sweden, when the far right parties came to coalition, it changed the environment. For example, Denmark. They are changing the laws and confiscating the properties. And so on and so on. It was very liberal 5 years ago towards refugees but now it's very... changed. So now when EKRE came to coalition, they are becoming slowly more and more popular. And I think it's this kind of anti-immigration policy and rhetoric, that it influences many people. And they use this sentiment... And so many people are confused, and this discourse gets into this people and they say "we just want to apply this hard liners, we want to be really conservative and we protect real Estonian interests". They use these feelings.

And if this ultra right party would gain voters and be elected, do you think that then for example this NGO would stop receiving funding from the government?

No, it's different. We don't get money from the government, we get it from EU. We get 75% from EU, although... it would go through the Ministry of Internal Affairs. But what we do is needed anyway. It's better to control migration than not to control. So even for far righters or conservatives, what we do it's wanted. But what you said before about this Vao incident, I just wanted to say that you see things in the right proportion. One thing is some incidents and another thing is political and even movements, because the EKRE, they have the youth organisation which is called Blue Dawn, or Blue Wake Up. *Aratus* is like...

Awakening?

Yeah, yeah, awakening. They are very active. Maybe something similar is also in Greece.

Yes, the Golden Dawn.

Are they far right?

Yes, definitely.

And they also have far left with Siriza.

Yes, they have all the extremes.

[Laughs] Yes! We have only far right at the moment. But actually I think that if you would interview them, they would not say that they are ultra right, they just say they are national and conservative.

They use the word "patriotism".

Yes, positive slogans. They use only positive slogans.

And do you think that the media shows any opinion: anti or pro? Estonian radio, TV, do you think they are neutral? Or they show some affinity?

I think they are not even neutral, they are... At the moment it's a little bit better, but half a year ago, they actually weren't really... If you for example you have 5 politicians from ultra right and 5 from the social democrats, more liberal ones, and if the ultra right people, if you publish them more, is it like... does it mean that the media is also far right? Because they are just shouting louder, they are more active. So in a way they got the leading position and the media covered it. Media gave them word. But actually at one point they didn't do it

anymore, they didn't publish it anymore. Maybe they got the idea that they had to balance it. And then other movements appeared like Sõbralik Eesti (Friendly Estonia).

So now you believe the media is balanced?

Yes, more balanced than half a year-a year ago. It started in May. So soon it will become a year that this debate is on. That you can read it every day.

And if you would have to name an objective, a goal, something that needs to improve, what would that be?

You mean goal to whom?

Sorry, yeah. Like, to make the situation better for both the refugees and the local people. What do you think that would be an objective to achieve integration from both parts?

I think still what is lacking is that the State hasn't come up with what is their strategy. In a positive, and clear way. What is their... mh...

Position?

Yeah, one thing is position. And the other thing is that they are hesitating to give a statement. I think it's bad because that also makes the public hesitate. Because for example the Prime Minister, from the liberal party, he has been clearly out speaking supporting.

Taavi Rõivas? But isn't he from the right wing party?

Yes, but he's also liberal.

Right wing in economical matters but progressive in social issues?

Yes, exactly. Exactly. Of course they are not social democrats, because their economy is neoliberal. But in this they are... surprisingly, open minded. Many from the Reform Party. It's kind of how you frame it. They say "we need new people, new workers, new geniuses like Steve Jobs, who was a refugee". But I think it's just a camouflage. Because the asylum seekers are not about economy actually. You cannot regulate with asylum seekers, you cannot regulate the job market. Maybe in Germany if you have thousands of them. But in Estonia if you have 150, it's so small number. So I think the economical it's not the best argument, that we could have better economical potential with the refugees. Actually, statistically is nonsense. Do you know what I mean?

Absolutely. Because also the application process doesn't allow the applicants to work until...

6 months.

Exactly. I remember when I was in Vao and talked with some people, that they said they wanted to work but they were still in the waiting process.

Some of them don't want to work. Some of them do, but also some of them don't. Specially if you have a family is hard to... I mean, it's easy to simplify this, but we have had families, 4 or 5, who just took the benefit money, for the kids, and that's it. And they are not willing to go to work. So it's a big struggle at the moment. We have to think how to motivate them.

And also, we cannot publish it. We cannot say to media that actually what you are talking is true! [Laughs] We have to balance it and give them good examples only, at the moment.

I understand. It's really interesting.

Yes.

So I think I asked already everything I wanted.

Hmhm, if you have any specific question you can write to me, and if you are back in Tartu, you can also visit me again.

It would be really nice.

I am here all the time.

But I am not going to be able until Summer.

But then write to me! For example, I cannot say many specific figures, but if you need them I can send them to you.

That would be great.

I think yes.

10. INTERVIEW GÖ

Date: 15th March, 2016

Format: Written

Below is my best in commenting on your questions. But first a long background:

My comments are most probably not representative for Estonians in general, since I'm a Swede living here since 15 years. They are most probably more representative for my own personal experiences of migrants and refugees. Since I'm born in 1950, I have obviously no memories of the big waves of refugees that came from Estonia, mainly in the autumn of 1944. But, I met quite a few of them as I grew up and I wrote a piece on my experiences for an art exhibition in Estonia a couple of years ago and I attach it. As I met these people and understood that they had managed to escape war, oppression and occupation, I had no problem with understanding that they were refugees. And that they came to Sweden was not hard to understand either because we are neighboring countries though we have the Baltic Sea between us.

I also met people from Germany and Italy who had managed to escape to Sweden during World War II. As they were non-nazis and non-fascists I had no problem with understanding that they were also refugees since they had managed to escape both Hitler and Mussolini.

And again, Sweden was a neutral country during this war and was also close, at least for the Germans.

My first own experiences of refugees came in 1956 and they came from Hungary. The people there had made an uprising against the communist regime, mainly in Budapest, and it was crushed by Soviet armed forces. Again, no problem with understanding that these people were refugees.

Next experience is from 1968. Pretty much the same scenario as in 1956, but this time in Prague, the capital of those days' Czechoslovakia. The so called Prague-Spring was brutally crushed by Soviet armed forces. No problems calling them refugees either.

And, both in 1956 and 1968, the refugees had no problems with integrating into the Swedish society. The town where I grew up, Södertälje just south of Stockholm, was and still is an industrial town with companies like Scania, deLaval, Astra and, in those days, Standard Radio & Telefon where my father was a boss. These industries needed employees, both on the factory floor and in Research & Development. The people who came as refugees were all hard-working people and many of them had a higher education and were consequently employed more or less on the spot. The lack of labor was actually that big that my father, together with people from the other industries, went to those days Yugoslavia on recruitment missions. Many of those who thus came wanted to leave Tito's regime, but they didn't really called themselves refugees but rather migrants. And, again, they were quickly absorbed and integrated in the Swedish society.

Today the situation is a bit different. We can see a mix of refugees and migrants coming from countries not exactly being close to Sweden in terms of distance, culture or religion. We can also see that Sweden finally has realized that the country doesn't have the resources needed to integrate them fast enough in the society. There is an obvious lack of housing, schools, jobs, cultural interaction as such... The outcome is segregation, and the Swedish border is becoming harder and harder to cross for non-EU citizens.

In very general terms, I think that Estonia regards Sweden as a perfect example on what not to do in terms of migrants and refugees. And this makes it high time to comment on your questions:

1. Are you aware of the refugee situation in Estonia?

Yes, I'm aware of the refugee situation here. To put it mildly, Estonia has a restrictive attitude to both refugees and migrants.

2. Where do you get the information from? Are there many sources that talk about this topic?

I get my information mainly from <http://news.err.ee/> and <http://news.postimees.ee/> . Plus of course from Estonian news in TV and radio (which K. translates for me when the need arise)

3. Could you explain me which is the refugee situation in Estonia? You can include your personal opinion. The interview will be anonymous.

In very general terms, I think that Estonia's attitude on refugees and migrants is based on two major issues.

The first is the fact that only some 25-30% of Estonia's population consists of Estonians. The other part is the result of the Soviet occupation and consequently consists of mainly Russians, Belarussians and Ukrainians. Given the fact that the total Estonian population is

only a bit more than 1.300.000 people, I think that the Estonians are of the opinion that they have their share of non-Estonians already.

The second main reason is what I would call the "normaalne-attitude". If you ask an Estonian how he or she is, you will in most cases get "Normaalne" as an answer. If that means that the person feels bad or good is not really revealed... However, "normaalne" goes beyond that. I believe that, again in very, very general Estonian terms, it's not considered normaalne to be a muslim, or black, or have eyes like a Chinese or Japanese, or being gay or lesbian....

I have to make a correction to my comments: It's of course the other way around. I was thinking of Lasnamäe in Tallinn and Narva where the share of Estonians are some 1%.... Got carried away I guess, so the correct number of Estonians in Estonia is some 70-75%

4. Do you know anything about Vao? If yes, what do you know?

The small village of Vao is nowadays well-known in Estonia as a refugee camp, however microscopic compared to the camps you hear about in Greece, Turkey and so on. Even compared to Swedish refugee/migrant camps. Anyhow, the refugees staying in Vao have at least roof over their heads which is not the case in Greece, Turkey or even in Calais... As you know there was a fire in Vao some time ago. It was definitely not self-ignited. Somebody had arranged that fire. If it was an arson or a fire by accident has not been revealed yet. Looking at Sweden again, there have been, and still are arsons at houses intended to become refugee camps...

5. What do you think about the government's policies related to the refugees in the country?

As much restrictive it can be within the framework of EU norms/rules/cooperation (if a EU-cooperation in this respect really exist...)

6. How do you think the Estonian people feels about accepting refugees and asylum seekers in the country?

See 3.

7. Do you think integration of refugees in Estonia could be possible? And if so, how could it be possible?

In limited numbers yes, provided that the refugees have the competences and skills needed for the Estonian labor market. I just made an article on Ericsson's factory (or supply site as they call it) in Tallinn. They have 1.500 employees representing 30 different nationalities. And most of these nationalities are not from EU member nations. India, Malaysia, China are just a few examples. But, these people have the competences and skills Ericsson needs. And, there you are, an integration situation quite similar to what I wrote about in beginning of this long, long mail; more or less a copy-paste situation from Södertälje when I grew up: If you have the competences and skills needed, it really doesn't matter if you are an Eskimo, Apache indian, Zulu, or whatever.

11. INTERVIEW LA

Date: 16th March, 2016
Format: Written

3. Are you aware of the refugee situation in Estonia?

I am as aware as the national media coverage allows me to be. In other words, I know as much as is mediated by the news. More information is distributed when some decisions are being made on the national or European level (such as quotas for the EU member countries).

2. Where do you get the information from? Are there many sources that talk about this topic?

I primarily rely on ERR news, both online and on TV. Occasionally I also read articles on Postimees. A lot of information also comes in through my Facebook feed (other people sharing news and expressing their opinion).

3. Could you explain me the refugee situation in Estonia? You can include your personal opinion if you want. The interview will be anonymous.

The refugee issue has clearly polarised the Estonian society, as all people seem to be strongly opinionated on the matter. I find such activism really surprising, as Estonians stereotypically tend to be rather slow and even indifferent towards many matters that would necessitate some sort of a response. Yet the question of refugees has not only caused a public debate, but it has also made people to take real action, even though currently Estonia does not seem to be a tempting destination for the refugees and the country does not seem to be threatened by an influx of refugees.

The most vocal part of the society seems to be scared of refugees who for them seem to be representative of something that is completely alien and therefore threatening to the current seemingly stable way of living in Estonia. They are opposed by those who strongly support people's right for free movement and believe that migration is inevitable. However, the majority of people, irregardless of their standpoint, have almost no experience with refugees. I feel that there is a lack of well-grounded analysis that would focus on the practicalities. It seems to me that neither of the groups has any actual idea how to deal with a sudden influx of immigrants.

4. Do you know anything about Vao? If yes, what do you know?

I know that it is a relatively poor rural area with a high unemployment rate, it is the location of the refugee centre and that there was an arson attack on the centre last summer.

5. What do you think about the Government's policies related to the refugees in the country?

Many of the ministers seem to be at a loss with regards to this question. On the one hand, they attempt to take into account the hostile attitude of the vocal xenophobic part of the population, on the other hand they try to cultivate the European values of equal opportunities and tolerance. I think that there is too much guesswork and too little actual data and rational planning. The talk of the refugees as strangers who are 'a threat to the nation' seems to belong to the previous century.

6. How do you think the Estonian population feels about accepting refugees and asylum seekers in the country?

As mentioned before, I think that there is a divisive line, but those perspectives that people currently have are often based on prejudice that results from secondary experience. The refugees are depicted as a homogenous and often threatening group, but as soon as people have actual contact with the asylum seekers, I believe that their attitude also changes, they start to see the shared humanness rather than the perceived differences.

7. Do you think integration of refugees in Estonia could be possible? And if so, how could it be possible?

I certainly hope so, because I am a firm supporter of the free movement of people and for me, borders are arbitrary and they should not be used to confine people into certain areas. The most important thing is to incorporate the refugees into the normal daily life as quickly as possible. Every individual seeks for some kind of output in order to feel that he or she is a valued member of the community.

12. INTERVIEW EH

Date: 18th March, 2016

Format: Written

1. Are you aware of the refugee situation in Estonia?

A bit.

2. Where do you get the information from? Are there many sources that talk about this topic?

This specific number of 50 refugees I remember from the article talking about putting Vao centre on fire. Basically just very random articles. I think the government and/or could do a lot more to let the people know what the situation is and going to be. Definitely not many sources are talking about this topic.

3. Could you explain me the refugee situation in Estonia? You can include your personal opinion if you want. The interview will be anonymous.

There is a centre for them in Vao where around 50 refugees are living, I think? And during the next 2 years there will be 550 more of them. I am very welcoming towards them. I even thought about being a volunteer in some refugee helping project, but I was too young. This whole discussion has revealed the racist side of Estonia. If it's going to continue like this and get worse, I am seriously going to consider moving abroad.

4. Do you know anything about Vao? If yes, what do you know?

As I mentioned, only that there are around 50 people living there.

5. What do you think about the Government's policies related to the refugees in the country?

I know very little about it but I'm happy they are trying to be tolerant and take refugees here. This is the point where I actually almost like that Estonia is so poor so the refugees really need to get a job which is motivation for them because the supporting money from the government is obviously not enough for a normal life.

6. How do you think the Estonian population feels about accepting refugees and asylum seekers in the country?

I really hope that the 'against' side is just very loud and actually small. I think uneducated ones are usually the ones who haven't been abroad and are intolerant. I don't know... I guess a referendum is only way to get the real answer for this.

7. Do you think integration of refugees in Estonia could be possible? And if so, how could it be possible?

It comes down to Estonians being tolerant which is, as I said, unsure how many are actually against refugees. I think Estonian society is not ready for it but I also think that there is no other way to make our society more tolerant that wait until there are no Estonians who have lived during the Soviet times... I don't think it's fully possible, but the most important part is that Estonians wouldn't be like "I won't talk to him, he is a refugee" and have the attitude that any person can be an Estonian what ever his skincolour is.

13. INTERVIEW E

Date: 19th March, 2016

Format: Written

1. Are you aware of the refugee situation in Estonia?

I definitely could be more informed about it.

2. Where do you get the information from? Are there many sources that talk about this topic?

Mostly facebook and online newspapers. I'm not aware of any sources except mainstream media.

3. Could you explain me the refugee situation in Estonia? You can include your personal opinion if you want. The interview will be anonymous.

I don't know about any exact numbers, but I do know that Estonia has agreed to accept a certain amount of refugees to our country. Sadly, there are a huge number of people against it and they are being very outspoken about it. They are showing great immaturity and intolerance towards the refugees, thinking of themselves as a superior race and comparing the refugees to animals and accusing them of rape and other criminal activities. There is also a group called The Soldiers Of Odin, that consists of self-appointed 'policemen', who promise to take violent action towards the refugees. Of course there is also a great number of tolerant people, who do charity work to help the refugees, but it seems that most of the Estonian population is very opposed to the whole situation (this may

only seem so, because the people with a negative attitude towards them are far more outspoken).

4. Do you know anything about Vao? If yes, what do you know?

Vao is a small village in Estonia that hosts a refugee center. Some anti-refugee activists once set that house on fire.

5. What do you think about the Government's policies related to the refugees in the country?

The Government is mostly pro refugees and wants to appoint big allowances and places to live upon coming here. I mostly agree with that aspect, although I think the state budget could be distributed a bit more evenly between our own people and the refugees.

6. How do you think the Estonian population feels about accepting refugees and asylum seekers in the country?

As I said, most of them seem to be against it and they are being very aggressive about it.

7. Do you think integration of refugees in Estonia could be possible? And if so, how could it be possible?

I am not sure. It would only be possible if we had a non-prejudiced attitude towards them, but I am afraid that a large portion of Estonians is going to be very rude and aggressive, maybe even violent, towards them. I don't think the refugees will feel very welcome here.

14. INTERVIEW KR

Date: 21st March, 2016

Format: Written

1. Are you aware of the refugee situation in Estonia?

I am not sure. The information available is quite controversial and does not create a trust. Rather it is confusing. My personal opinion is that the refugee situation in Estonia today is more existing on a piece of paper and not in reality.

2. Where do you get the information from? Are there many sources that talk about this topic?

I could list: political parties, governmental institutions, media, different opinion groups, friends... So yes, I would say the sources are endless, since the topic is hot.

3. Could you explain me the refugee situation in Estonia? You can include your personal opinion if you want. The interview will be anonymous.

The few ones who have ended up here, according to my information, have been taken care of. Then again - what are we talking about when in reality, the current people's movement to Europe has not really influenced Estonia, since we obviously are not too attractive.

4. Do you know anything about Vao? If yes, what do you know?

Of course. Last year we got information (through media) that there are few asylum seekers accommodated in Vao village. While their applications are proceeded, the people were provided accommodation and basic services, their children got the opportunity to go to school.

5. What do you think about the Government's policies related to the refugees in the country?

I fully refer to Göran's answer.

6. How do you think the Estonian population feels about accepting refugees and asylum seekers in the country?

Estonian people feel very much afraid and there are several reasons; Göran already wrote about the historical reasons and I would like again to emphasize the issue about communication. Things are not openly communicated, information is controversial and rather directed by the yellow media, as well as political forces, trying to use the subject for their benefit.

7. Do you think integration of refugees in Estonia could be possible? And if so, how could it be possible?

I pretty much refer to Göran's answer again. Estonia has never been and is not a hostile country. We definitely do not cultivate the clean "Estonians" policy here like Hitler once wanted to do in Germany. People coming here, doesn't matter from where, are always welcomed when they are coming with good will and want to be part or connected to this small piece of people and country.

In conclusion I would like to say that I believe that people who for some unfortunate reasons have to leave their home and country will be more happy and integrate easier in the countries similar to their own culture and way of living. In that respect I would like to see Estonia welcoming refugees from Ukraine for example.

15. INTERVIEW N

Date: 21st March, 2016

Format: Written

1. Are you aware of the refugee situation in Estonia?

I think I am, yes - as much as I've seen and read in media.

2. Where do you get the information from? Are there many sources that talk about this topic?

Postimees, Õhtuleht, news and opinions shared on Facebook, discussions with friends and other people

3. Could you explain me the refugee situation in Estonia? You can include your personal opinion if you want. The interview will be anonymous.

As much as I have understood, this topic is mostly speculated and spoken about - if I get it correctly, then in reality there are not many refugees there yet and probably will not be many in general (compared to Germany for example). As Estonia is not extremely wealthy and thus not much attractive country, I suppose that it will not be the destination, where extreme amount of refugees would want to come to.

4. Do you know anything about Vao? If yes, what do you know?

Yes, I know they have a center for housing refugees there and I know that there are far more refugees housed at the moment, than should fit in this place. For some reason I know as well that the refugees there play football...

5. What do you think about the Government's policies related to the refugees in the country?

I am satisfied with the current policies related to refugees. I approve that it is carefully considered which refugees to accept and which to not (in terms of if they really need help and if they are not threat for security, and health-checks)

6. How do you think the Estonian population feels about accepting refugees and asylum seekers in the country?

I think it's impossible here to generalize the whole population as the opinions tend to vary a lot - there are people who are extremely against refugees, as well as people, who simply say "well...would be nice to have some diversity". And people, like me, who do not agree with neither of these sides. I think that it is not a simple yes/no questions and is far more complex than I am able to think about it.

7. Do you think integration of refugees in Estonia could be possible? And if so, how could it be possible?

Yes - through finding volunteers who would be willing to have them as a friend in everyday life and introduce them to the culture. So that every refugee would have someone, who takes them with to really regular events (such as public events or just going-out-with-friends evenings). So that they would feel from the first moment on that they belong here and they have a nice group of people around them and would thus feel more secure and part of the local culture (in a really small scale I've felt the same when starting to live abroad - everything feels so much easier if I have a local friend, who knows the answers to simple questions such as "where should I fix my laptop?" "how do I access doctor?" "where can I start doing some sports?" etc) and who would help in learning the new language

16. INTERVIEW M

Date: 8th April, 2016

Format: Written

1. Are you aware of the refugee situation in Estonia?

I am aware.

2. Where do you get the information from? Are there many sources that talk about this topic?

The information comes from news outlets, not many sources to count.

3. Could you explain me the refugee situation in Estonia? You can include your personal opinion if you want. The interview will be anonymous.

There aren't many refugees here yet. the situation is still quite bad. the attitude towards them is negative. i try to have a positive or neutral outlook.

4. Do you know anything about Vao? If yes, what do you know?

Vao centre is an apartment complex where the refugees are living. it has been set on fire once.

5. What do you think about the Government's policies related to the refugees in the country?

The government is working slowly but surely. thankfully there aren't going to be a big amount of refugees coming in at once.

6. How do you think the Estonian population feels about accepting refugees and asylum seekers in the country?

Estonians are negative towards the refugees. they believe that they are going to be economical migrants, criminals or terrorists, whose reason for escaping is not justified.

7. Do you think integration of refugees in Estonia could be possible? And if so, how could it be possible?

The integration of the refugees is possible if they're brought in contact with the locals, allowed a job and language courses. the biggest mistake would be the development of the refugee "ghettos", not offering them jobs or language courses. they should also be provided other possibilities education.

17. INTERVIEW K

Date: 8th April, 2016

Format: Written

1. Are you aware of the refugee situation in Estonia?

i'm not very in tune with the topic. i have read a couple of articles on it, but as i'm not very educated in that field (foreign policies), my attitude towards refugees is determined by emotions alone, not by sensible knowledge, facts.

2. Where do you get the information from? Are there many sources that talk about this topic?

I mainly get that information from news articles.

3. Could you explain me the refugee situation in Estonia? You can include your personal opinion if you want. The interview will be anonymous.

there hasn't really been a huge flow of refugees yet. just recently we accepted less than 10, as far as i know. because of our geographical and economical standpoint we probably won't receive many in the future, either. the attitude towards refugees is in accordance with the nature of estonians. because we are not very open people, everything uncertain, distant and "other colored" brings an emotional reaction. i feel that the biggest "experts" in this are the middle-aged and older estonians who are also not economically well off and less educated.

4. Do you know anything about Vao? If yes, what do you know?

Vao centre is located in the vao village, where there has been several strange incidents. in the october of last year one apartment building's balcony caught fire. the government was then under the impression that this incident was the expression of hatred towards refugees by the locals. they thought it was to scare them. this stance was of course released before any investigation had started. in january, drunk criminals were caught trespassing in vao and didn't take commands to leave from the head of vao village. the area around vao accommodates simple estonians who before the creation of vao has lived a simple life. i think that the fears of these Estonians living in that area are justified: the refugees come from a totally different environment and there isn't a 100% guarantee that all of them have good intentions.

5. What do you think about the Government's policies related to the refugees in the country?

I'm not familiar with the decisions of the government regarding the issue. i have heard that they have promised to do a thorough background check on every one of them...

6. How do you think the Estonian population feels about accepting refugees and asylum seekers in the country?

For my thoughts on this, see answer 3.

7. Do you think integration of refugees in Estonia could be possible? And if so, how could it be possible?

Jobs should be found for the refugees as soon as possible while also having to take language courses. the living arrangements should be simple, essential items only. if that's not acceptable, then i'm curious, if they even had that strong of an urge to leave their homes. that's my opinion and only MY opinion Emoticono smile.

18. INTERVIEW LY PÄRN

Date: 28th April, 2016

Format: Written

1) *How would you define the Estonian Policy about Asylees? How would you evaluate its performance? Would you highlight any problem? Or would you consider that its performance is successful?*

Estonian policy about asylum seekres are quite conservative. Our main challenge is right now to implement relocation and resettlement decisions (we have not previously been involved in these processes). Currently we are making our fist steps.

2) *How and when it is considered that an asylum seeker has been integrated satisfactorily? Is there any tracking process to follow the refugees after they have been accepted as "asylees"?*

Several studies have been made on the integration of persons who has granted International protection.

In summary, we can t say that legal framework gives sufficient opportunities for successful integration

Link: <http://www.pagulasabi.ee/sites/default/files/public/rahvusvahelise-kaitse-saanud-isikute-integratsioon-eesti-uhiskonda.pdf>

3) *Why is it that the majority of Estonians are against the acceptance of refugees? To what causes do you relate this negative position towards refugees? (cultural, identity-based, economical...?) To what extent/How much do you think that it is related to the history of occupation in Estonia?*

The main reason may be the lack of knowledge and the wrong communication. And also there is effects of the history of occupation in Estonia. Estonia has organized previous years a series of campaigns to raise public awareness.

19. INTERVIEW RA

Date: 12th May, 2016

Format: Written

1. *Are you aware of the refugee situation in Estonia?*

I'm aware of the situation, but I wouldn't say that it's that much of a problem right now, but maybe in a not so far away future. The amount of refugees we are having at the moment is really small compared to the population.

2. *Where do you get the information from? Are there many sources that talk about this topic?*

.I don't actually watch any news or read any newspapers,so most of my information comes from Facebook or from other people.

3. Could you explain me the refugee situation in Estonia? You can include your personal opinion if you want. The interview will be anonymous.

The refugee situation in Estonia is as follows:We have a lot of people left from the soviet era,who still haven't learned our language or culture.I think that Estonians are very skeptical and negative about reffugees,because we can't even integrate the Russians in to our own culture.But atleast our religious beliefs are whatnot the same,not like the muslim barbarians(not all of them).That frightens the people,the beheadings,suppressing females,terrorist attacks,and all of this religious bullshit,becous Estonia is mostly atheist country,we don't belive in imaginary friends battling eachother with fancy words in old books.

4. Do you know anything about Vao? If yes, what do you know?

.I don't know much about Vao.What I do know is that there is a place somewhere where a bunch of refugees sits around doing nothing using the EU-s money for it.Great Life grin emotikon.

Do they deserve to be burned alive for it during the night.No.

I don't approve of unnesassary violence,especialy when there are children and women involved,but the media circus that followed was mindblowing.If it were some other situation not conserning reffugees,nobody would have given a flying fuck.Hippocracy.

5. What do you think about the Government's policies related to the refugees in the country?

The government is a punch of pussys who takes every order they get from EU and make it happen,no matter how stupid it is.Our primeminister is a joke.A little boy,who has been grown by the masters to be a puppet.So yeah,I think you could say that our refugee policy is like this:

EU says jump,Estonian coverment asks How high?.So in a way we are actualy back in the soviet union,being ruled by someone else.Soon this will give rise to rightwinged partys who are against EU and refugees.

6. How do you think the Estonian population feels about accepting refugees and asylum seekers in the country?

I think most of the people are against refugees because we have neighbours who done fucked up.Sweden is the rape capital of the EU because of the massive hords of muslim dickheads.In finland they live of socialmoney,the Finns are paying for everything.So why the fuck should Estonians want that kind of thing.I know these people have been through a lot,coming from war ravaged places andwhatnot,but a lot of them are just a punch of freeloaders looking for a easy life.In Estonia we have as saying that FEAR HAS BIG EYES.When we take a look around in Europe and see the shit that is going on,and we live in this safe cousy little country,no we don't want that foreign

7. Do you think integration of refugees in Estonia could be possible? And if so, how could it be possible?

NO.

20. INTERVIEW JO

Date: 15th May, 2016

Format: Written

1. Are you aware of the refugee situation in Estonia?

Yes, I am.

2. Where do you get the information from? Are there many sources that talk about this topic?

I get my information from local and foreign newspapers, Facebook, youtube. Also i have been spectator in public events. I want to know as much information as possible.

3. Could you explain me the refugee situation in Estonia? You can include your personal opinion if you want. The interview will be anonymous.

From my point of view the situation in Estonia is quite bad and getting even worse. Because people don't realise the problem. Of course its sad whats going on. Most of people. Especially older ones is against muslim invasion. But government still wants to take "refugees", even now EU wants to regulate this. Like countries who are against this, must pay the fine. Media is labelling us rassists but it not so, some of them are obviously and that is not ok. I am against this also. I have friends from Taiwan, Japan etc. So I am not rassists at all. Also I feel sorry for people who is suffering in war zone and I want peace. (they are now even buddist teachers who is against muslims. Cant find the link though) But this problem goes deeper than just this. For muslims there is only one religion and its islam. They don't respect women, they are aggressive. They are forcing their god as only god and there are no other choices. Government don't take families. They are mostly taking young men. Who are just looking for better money I still believe in "rahvusriik" (nationalist contries ? :D) and support Poland, Hungary and Chezc Republic. Who are also aginast this. IF i be really honest I would say its start of white genocide.

4. Do you know anything about Vao? If yes, what do you know?

Not much.

5. What do you think about the Government's policies related to the refugees in the country?

I think government has forgotten our people and don't listen to us. They are supporting refugees with clean rooms and money. They only do what Brussel is saying . For me it shows they are sold out. They want to do this softer. Like saying we are only taking 500 muslims or so. OR only families for war zone. But obviously it is nothing like that.

6. How do you think the Estonian population feels about accepting refugees and asylum seekers in the country?

Like I said for me most of people are against this. I understand also people who sees this other way.

7. Do you think integration of refugees in Estonia could be possible? And if so, how could it be possible?

It would be possible if people will take our land traditions and respect those. But like in London or Sweden shows. Its totally different. There are lot of slums. Muslims are on streets yelling quran and being really arrogant. So their intention is not to integrate but making their own communities and growing bigger so.

:P SO I just wrote first things what came to my head. Sorry if I made grammar mistakes or something

is blurry for you. If you want you can ask more questions and I will try to do my best. :)

21. INTERVIEW MARIA KALJUSTE

Date: 16th May, 2016

Format: Written/Chat

Anna Mottioli

tere Maria, how did it go in Prague? I did not want to write you while you are there, but I guess you are back in Eesti?

Maria Kaljuste

yes ..Im .

So your questions

first How many followers and voters do EKRE have in Estonia?

we got approx 50 000 votes if i remember wright

but our popularity rate was 7% then

now its 14.. even 19 according to some reacers

excuse my mistakes in english - im not used to wright in english .-)

so its many time bigger

What are the policies that EKRE would do in their political program

> considering the refugee situation in Estonia?
that is so long story that it takes hours and hours to explain
we feel sorry about the situation in world - but we are not agree with that how our
government handles it.
we think that its not best ways to estonia and also not for those who really need help
we think that they are not getting it ..and money is wasted etc
did you got the answer ?

Anna Mqttioli

yes, thank you very much:) and i would like to ask something else

Maria Kaljuste

please
do

Anna Mqttioli

*if EKRE would be in government, then Estonia would not accept the EU quota plan?
Maria Kaljuste*

yes we would not ... we think that the system of helping should be based to the real
possibilities ... and how the helping is most effective.. there should be camps and even
cities build closer to refugees we should send food, maybe constructable houses, pillows
etc ... instead of bringing them here ... etc.

Maria Kaljuste

look at my page ... we are going to collect 1 milj signs against EU quota plan together with
other countries to brussel (Fortress Europe project)

Anna Mqttioli

*i will look at it right now. i understand the answers:) and just one last answer: why do you
think that so many Estonians are against the refugees? because of economic reasons or
because of cultural-identity reasons?
one last question i meant, sorry*

Maria Kaljuste

because of the common sense :)

Anna Mqttioli

*ok thank you very much for your time!
it was very nice of you to answer my questions even not knowing each other
aitäh*

Maria Kaljuste

:) im happy to talk and answer .. because otherwise people do not understand us...

22. INTERVIEW F

Date: 17th May, 2016

Format: Written

1. Are you aware of the refugee situation in Estonia?

My information comes from the media, thus I am as aware as the media is depicting the situation.

2. Where do you get the information from? Are there many sources that talk about this topic?

My information comes from the media, which covers the topic quite a lot.

3. Could you explain me the refugee situation in Estonia? You can include your personal opinion if you want. The interview will be anonymous.

I don't have any direct experience with refugees. I think the problems, that are depicted in the media, are a bit overblown. The social system and its boons are not so lucrative for the refugees, thus there won't be any masses of refugees coming here to stay. Also, people of Estonia are not yet tolerant enough to other kinds of people in our society.

4. Do you know anything about Vao? If yes, what do you know?

Again, I only know as much as media is saying. I know that there are some refugees there.

5. What do you think about the Government's policies related to the refugees in the country?

I don't have a detailed and indepth knowledge in that question. But I do believe that to some degree we should accept the refugees and grant them elamisväärsed (hard to translate: direct translation-worthy of life; but it's not so radical word as it sounds in English. I'd write "humane") living conditions, that said, I don't think they should be treated better than other socially unsecure people in our country.

6. How do you think the Estonian population feels about accepting refugees and asylum seekers in the country?

I think, Estonians are not yet tolerant enough, nor used to seeing "different" people in their society.

7. Do you think integration of refugees in Estonia could be possible? And if so, how could it be possible?

(she somehow got the question wrong, thinking that you asked about positivity) She answered:

Positivity can only come through concrete, real positive examples.