REFLEXIVE METHODOLOGY: MIGRANT CHILDREN IN TRANSITION

Migrant children and communities in a transforming Europe

MiCREATE

Migrant Children and Communities in a Transforming Europe

The project Migrant Children and Communities in a Transforming Europe (MiCREATE) aims to stimulate inclusion of diverse groups of migrant children by adopting child-centred approach to migrant children integration on educational and policy level.
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PREFACE

In this report, the researchers provide basic descriptions of the methods used in workpacage 8 Migrant Children in Transition. The research required a degree of flexibility due to covid 19 pandemics as well as country-specific circumstances affecting the situation of migrant children. The researchers are mainly concerned with the children's responses to the different methods. They describe how they entered the field, how the methods were implemented, how the research was facilitated, what difficulties were encountered and how they overcame them. The researchers also explain how useful the method seemed to them from a data collection perspective, how migrant children and gatekeepers were approached, how they identified informants and what role they played, how and why they used the method as such, etc. Additionally, researchers assess what was good/negative for gaining trust and how their presence affected the behaviour of migrant children and whether they succeeded in applying a child-centred approach, how the child-centred approach was ensured and stimulated, etc. Finally, they reflect on how and why they influenced the behaviour of the children/young people.

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1. Introduction

This report addresses the methodology used in the WP8 fieldwork. It reflects on the following approaches: participant observation and interviews with asylum-seeking children, i.e. students who live in Vienna but do not have a residence permit as many of them are in the asylum process. Therefore, each section of the report distinguishes how accessible and useful the methods were, how the asylum-seeking children responded to the methods used, how/if it was possible to assess the child-centeredness of the methods, and the personal reflections of the researchers in the field. As mentioned earlier, the methods included both participant observation and interviews. In addition, a child-centred perspective was used, meaning that respondents were made experts on their lives.

2. Reflexive methodology

Detailed information on the methods can be found in section WP8 Methodology of the qualitative report. Furthermore, the methods used are discussed in the following analysis, starting with participant observation. Secondly, the interviews are discussed and thirdly, further topics are covered in the section "various factors".

2.1 Participant observation

The following section deals with the method that was used to gain initial impressions in the study area and to establish first contacts with the respondents: participant observation. The aim of the chapter is to reflect critically on this method. In general, participant observation began in July until September 2020 in a basic service accommodation in Vienna, Austria. We spent a total of ten days doing participant observation (about three to four hours per day), but we also spend time with the children before and after conducting interviews (in the summer months 2021). Observations took place in different locations and on different occasions, e.g., in a playground, at a joint breakfast with parents and children, or doing crafts and playing games together with children. With the help of participant observation, especially in the period July to September 2020, the asylum-seeker were already accustomed to the research situation, which made the interviews possible. All in all, it was surprisingly rather easy to connect with the children. Despite the many interruptions, they were always open and trusting.

Access and usefulness of methods

Due to the corona pandemic, there was a long period during which it was not possible to apply the method. The observation process was established in summer 2020, unfortunately it was not possible to be physically present at the research site from September on. Nevertheless, during these weeks we established good contacts and a personal basis for further fieldwork. However, one of the researchers already knew many children and also the staff of the research site for several years. This probably also facilitated the establishment of a trust relationship with the children, also for the other researchers. Even though participant observation was only possible for a few weeks during the entire research period, it was useful for establishing contacts and getting to know each other.

In addition, it was helpful to come into contact with the employees of the accommodation and to gather informal information in informal conversations. It became apparent that the researcher's visits to the facility over several weeks in the summer of 2020 also formed a good basis for collaboration with the staff. Both sides got to know each other and built a relationship of trust. This was especially important when research resumed after the hard lockdowns due to the pandemic. Due to various restrictions, we relied on the help of facility staff to reconnect with respondents and to and to find dates for the interviews.

Responses to methods

The reactions to the method from the children, as well as parents and social workers was good. This could also be related to the fact that the respondents are used to people (such as social workers) being present in the accommodation where they live. However, some of the respondents did not seem to understand exactly the role of the researchers, e.g. asking if they were part of the team of social workers. Furthermore, since some of the children did not speak or understand German very well, it was not easy to get a sense of how the method were received. Moreover it wasn't easy to apply the methods with those who have little or no German skills. All in all, it can be said that the students did not seem to be bothered by the presence of the researchers; rather, many seemed to enjoy the presence and interest of the researchers in their views, opinions and every-day lives.

Assessment of child-centred approach

In general, researchers went to the facility with the goal of focusing on the children, but in some cases this was difficult to assess. In particular – as already mentioned – when there were language barriers, it was sometimes difficult to adequately inform the children about the role of the researchers and the goals of the project. This resulted in children who spoke German having more contact with the researchers than children with little or no knowledge of German. In addition, children who had lived at the research site for years seemed to have easier contact with the researchers than newer children. That might be a result of children who have been living in the facility for years being more confident in talking with strangers or taking part in research activities. Despite these structural challenges and hierarchies within the sample, also the Corona pandemic limited opportunities to assess child-centeredness. For example, the short time span made it difficult to evaluate long-term approaches, and researchers had to focus on approaches that allowed for quick and easy contact. Sometimes it was difficult to get a sense of whether respondents were comfortable with the research activities or whether they were trying to fit in. In these cases, a translator would have been helpful to better assess child-centeredness. Nonetheless, the principles of voluntarism and student needs and desires were placed at the center of the entire process, for example, by tailoring activities to student preferences. All in all, the researchers tried to assess as much child-centeredness as possible, but it is clear that the circumstances were not ideal for such an approach.

Personal reflection

Personally, it was not always easy to be present at the research site, mainly because of the role that the researchers had and their intersectional positioning. First, many asylum-seeking children seemed to covet the researchers' attention, especially during the summer when school is not in session and many transitioning children have little or no activities to fill their days (e.g. they ask for the researchers phone number and started calling and texting

on a daily basis). Second, it is difficult to know the personal stories of the asylum-seeking children and feel the fears and traumas associated with their journey and current living situation. Third, some students were very shy while others were very talkative, which made it difficult to find a balance to give attention to all children according to their conditions and needs. In addition, it sometimes seemed as if the researchers should have had training in advance on how to deal with trauma and escape stories.

Nevertheless, it was also a positive experience to build a lasting relationship of trust with the students that will probably last longer than the duration of the project. In addition, the method enabled the researchers to observe, in particular, the interactions between the children living in the basic services accommodation and the social workers working in the accommodation. It became clear, for instance, that due to the fact that many children speak different mother tongues and some of them do not speak German (because they have only recently arrived in Austria), the children sometimes have difficulties talking to each other. However, even though the social workers do not speak all the languages of the residents of the accommodation, fortunately there was always help from other children who acted as translators. This also allowed the newly arrived children to communicate with the other residents.

2.2   Interviews

This chapter deals with the second method used in the research. After the participant observation, we conducted interviews with children and adolescents living in the accommodation. This section aims to reflect on aspects of the method, such as usefulness, reactions to it, child-centeredness and concludes with a personal reflection

Access and usefulness of methods

Due to the Corona pandemic and several closures, as well as constraints beyond that, fieldwork was very much limited to the basics. Therefore, we conducted interviews after making contact with students through participant observation. This methodological phase was split into two phases, one in summer 2020 and another in spring/summer 2021 due to the intervening closures. The long interruption meant that many new contacts had to be made in the following year, as many students moved out during these months and others joined. As for the practical utility of the method, the researchers found it difficult to have a lively conversation with the respondents, as some of them were very shy and others had limited knowledge of German. The researchers also conducted three interviews with translators, which on the one hand allowed the children to speak in their native language, but on the other hand, the researchers were quite dependent on the translator and could not guarantee that he/she asked the questions correctly and also translated the residents' answers correctly. For instance, sometimes the children answered a question quite long, but the translator only translated two sentences of the children. Even though the researchers encouraged the translator to translate everything the children said, the translators often

pointed out that the children often said "uninteresting things" or "repeated themselves". Therefore, it was difficult to work with a translator. In addition, the questions in the questionnaire were for many children hard to understand, especially regarding the German skills. Here, the researchers sometimes struggled to rephrase the questions without losing their purpose. The questionnaire should have been tested more often with children who do not speak German well and to ensure that the questions are easy to understand.

Responses to methods

In general, it can be said that many children wanted to participate in the interviews, so that there was a high willingness to participate on the part of the respondents. Unfortunately, some children who did not have sufficient knowledge of German had difficulties understanding the questions and also elaborating on them in their answers. This sometimes created a difficult situation where both sides did not know how to proceed with the interview. Even though we tried to find a translator, it was, as mentioned before, not easy with the many different languages that were needed. In addition, the presence of a third person in the interview situation disturbed the intimate conversation situation. In this regard, it would have been helpful to work with the translators early on and involve them in the process of building mutual respect and trust.

Also, due to limited time (because of Corona), it was not possible to use more arts-based approaches. We tried to use approaches at the beginning, e.g. such as drawing family members as animals and sentence completion exercises, especially with younger children and those with little knowledge of German, but it did not work satisfactorily. It seemed that the respondents did not know exactly how the method worked. The methods that were used seemed to be too abstract and again required certain language skills that were not available. In retrospect, it would have been good to take approaches that allow the children to express themselves, for example, with dancing – therefore approaches that do not require specific language skills. In summary, the methodological approaches were not ideal for the target group. Nevertheless, participation in the project was high, and through many informal conversations, the researchers were still able to gain a good understanding of the situation at the facility.

Assessment of child-centred approach

First of all, it must be said that the power relations were clear from the very beginning: The children and their families in the facilities are in precarious living situations and are in need of any help they can get. This means that many children and parents approached the researchers and asked for help or came to them with questions about their ongoing asylum procedure. On the one hand, this shows the precarious situation in which the families find themselves; on the other hand, it strongly shapes the relationship between the researcher and the respondents. For the researchers, this raised the question of the extent to which it is responsible and helpful to engage personally with the families' situation, e.g. to help with
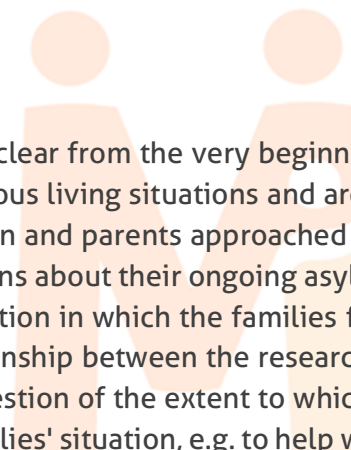
translations, the asylum procedure, material things and so on, and the extent to which the research relationship conflicts with this, given that we are not social workers. Nevertheless, there were situations in which we were always available to provide advice and support to the children, which also helped to build a relationship of trust.

In addition, it was important for us to work in a child-centered way, even though this was sometimes difficult because the possibilities for carrying out the methods were limited. The limitation in conducting a child-centered approach was mainly that we were not allowed to be present in the facility for long periods of time and then collect data. Unfortunately, there was not much time to experiment and find the methods and approaches that best fit the child. As mentioned earlier, some of the interview questions seemed inappropriate for the respondents' understanding.

In general, special attention was paid to parameters such as voluntariness, anonymity, and education about data processing, as this is a particularly vulnerable group.

Personal reflection

For us researchers, the most difficult thing was to keep the balance between trust and professionalism. Many of the families have been in the asylum process for years and have many (legal) questions, worries and fears. Since they do not receive enough counselling and support, many came to us with their worries. This repeatedly put us in the situation of having to decide whether to get involved privately or to distance ourselves, as we do not have the resources and know-how to help adequately. Yet we often found ourselves in situations where we were privately involved with children or their families, answering their questions or helping them. This fact points to structural deficiencies in the Austrian asylum procedure that need to be addressed politically: insufficient or no counselling, little or no information about the procedure, and long waiting times. Many are therefore dependent on the private help of individuals.

In addition, it was not always possible to choose the best child-centered approaches that would have been optimal for the individuals in the sample. This was mainly due to the long period during which field research was not possible because of Corona.

2.3 Different factors

This section addresses the issue of various factors that influenced the fieldwork and could have affected the results or were perceived as important by the researchers.

The composition of the children for the interviews, in terms of different social categories, certainly influenced the results of the research, e.g. the more mixed the sampling is, the more different perspectives are obtained. However, in terms of gender, the sample was very mixed, with both boys and girls participating in the study. There were slightly more

respondents female than male. In terms of age, many participants were between 10 and 14 years old, some were older, and some were younger. Especially with the younger ones, it was sometimes difficult to create a classic interview situation, more improvisation had to be done, e.g. by rephrasing the interview questions. Regarding the ethnic and religious background of the children, the sample was very mixed. There were European children as well as children from Asian and African countries. Many were Muslim, some Kurdish, some Christian, and one family is Hindu. The legal status of the respondents was twofold. Most are in the asylum process, so they have no residence permit and can be deported at any time (if the decision is negative). This is a very precarious situation. Other families in the facility have subsidiary protection, which is a temporary residence permit. We don't know much about the socioeconomic backgrounds, but it is likely that they vary, but almost all parents have difficulty settling in Vienna regardless of their socioeconomic background. This is also the case for the language component; most of the children learn German very quickly and soon move around their environment quite naturally. The children's parents seem to have more problems with settling in and learning German. Regarding disabilities, some children have chronic illnesses and need constant medical care. For some families, the poor health care system in their countries of origin was a reason to flee. All in all, the sample was very diverse.

Regarding various factors affecting the results obtained, the researchers also noted difficulties in coding the interviews. The researchers formed categories regarding the questionnaire and these categories were compiled in a coding guide in which specific characteristics were assigned to each category. MAXQDA, a coding software for content analysis of qualitative data, was used here to allow for comparison of interviews and to analyse recurring content. The software served to provide insight into the data material without prejudging the researcher's interpretation of the content. However, the distribution of quotes and the selection of "important" quotes into specific codes were subjective. Precisely because different researchers were involved in this process (but only those who also participated in the research), the researchers had difficulty finding a consistent line when it comes to defining "importance". Here, it would have been good to have more discussions with other partners to address this challenge, and also more time to research the right approach to deal with it.

3. Conclusion

In summary, the Corona pandemic made it difficult to conduct child-centered research. In particular, the many lockdowns caused us to lose contact for a year after establishing contacts and trust. However, due to good rapport with local staff, it was possible to continue research the next year. The different language levels sometimes made it difficult to conduct the interviews. Nevertheless, we always tried to remain flexible and put the children's best interests first. In the course of the research, it became clear what a precarious situation of liminality (Turner) the children find themselves in; many have been waiting for years for an asylum decision. They and their families often don't know where their case stands right now, which is why many are uncertain and fearful about the future. It was striking how strongly

the families and children approached the researchers with concerns and questions; this suggests that they do not have sufficient contacts and lack much information. For us researchers, this was a complex situation in which we did not know to what extent we should engage with each problem. It was also often a balancing act between sympathy and distancing in order to have a basis for research. For this situation, but also for questions of how to deal with trauma in empirical research, training for the researchers should have taken place in advance. We acquired the know-how for this in the course of the research, which also meant uncertainty in contact with the children.

In summary, the research proved to be challenging, but a good foundation was established through the many hours spent in the field. One of the researchers had worked at the facility prior to the project, which facilitated contact and already brought trust. It shows that for research with very vulnerable groups, it is important to have gatekeepers.

FRANCE

Bastien Roland

1. Introduction

The MiCREATE project aims at assessing the legal and normative framework for migrant minors in transit through a child-centred approach. The project also seeks to understand the transit experience of these young exiles in Calais. For this purpose, collecting first-hand testimonies from these minors constitutes a crucial and valid source of data (MiCREATE 2019). The field survey described here was based on various methods. Firstly, the approach was to immerse myself in the Calais associative environment for my whole fieldwork period between October 2019 and January 2021. I retained the status of a socio-legal worker in an association providing access to rights that I had held since August 2016. Thus, contrary to the classic position of the researcher who infiltrates his field as a participant observer, it is the informant who has become a researcher[1]. My previous position gave me privileged and

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[1] Before and during the research project, I was alternately an informant or respondent for several researchers investigating the migration situation in Calais.

legitimate access to the field. Then, access to legal files, minutes of meetings, and the accompaniment of young people in administrative procedures enrich the field data. These data are a rich source for understanding what is at stake in the interactions between institutions and migrants who integrate or fall under a procedure (Paté 2018; Carayon, Mattiussi, et Vuattoux 2018). The second source of data is based on participant observation both in the places where people live (camps, Jungles, day shelters, non-institutional accommodation, reception facilities) and in the accompaniment, including physical accompaniment, of young people in their procedures and their interactions with the institutions they face: police, courts, prefectures, social work institutions or schools. The final material used to collect the data is based on interviews with 27 migrant minors and young adults [2] (25 unaccompanied and 2 accompanied minors), as well as 17 interviews with people who work with unaccompanied minors in Calais: associations, public prosecutors, juvenile court judges, educators, lawyers.

The conditions of the investigation were not without difficulties. Field observations were often disrupted by the politics of harassment of exiles in the border zone (Guenebeaud 2017; Fassin et al. 2014). This situation of permanent insecurity created by the migration regime greatly affects the relationship with the respondents. The field research described here was conducted with some minors living on the Jungles of Calais[3]. Most of them are still in a transit situation. They are often outside the institutions.

Many practical, methodological and epistemological obstacles arise for the researcher when conducting a biographical interview with a minor in transition living in the streets. The precariousness of the living conditions and the lack of privacy must be overcome. It is necessary to maintain a link in the face of wandering situations. The language factor must be overcome when dealing with respondents who are mostly non-French and non-English speaking. Care must be taken not to hurt or endanger these young migrants. It is important not to awaken any traumas. Nevertheless, it is necessary to be able to exchange information without falling into the trap of having to tell the story, a pitfall that characterises institutions providing care for unaccompanied minors and asylum seekers (Kobelinsky 2012; Paté 2018). It is also necessary to overcome this public's fear of leaving traces, such as interview recording. Finally, and more classically, it is necessary to overcome the asymmetry of the power relations between the researcher and his respondents. Here, this means overcoming mistrust of the researcher, whose function is not self-evident. It also involves minimising the asymmetry of the adult-minor relationship as well as the relationship as a French person, in a stable legal situation, versus a foreign minor, who lives in precarious conditions and who perceives himself as irregular.

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[2] Three of our respondents were of age at the time of the interview. One of them had turned 18 the day before the interview. Another respondent had been legally monitored as a minor a few months earlier. A third respondent is somewhat different from the sample in that he is no longer in transit. He is 19 years old and has been living in France for several years. However, his legal situation, his background, and the way in which he could see it encouraged us to include him in our research.

[3] The term 'Jungle' comes from the Pashto DJungle meaning 'forest', first used by the Afghan community in 2009 to refer to both their living quarters in Calais and the difficulty of their living conditions, the term was taken up in the media and then in the academic field (Agier, Bouagga, et Galisson 2019).

Faced with these difficulties, the fieldwork was built on opportunities, on the basis of the researcher's place in the Calais area. It was sometimes decentralised outside Calais, in particular to observe the institutions with which the young people had to deal. Limitations to this research are related to the inherent difficulties of working with highly vulnerable populations. These include the nomadic nature of the subjects and a tendency to restrain from openly sharing their stories.

2. Reflexive methodology

2.1 Participant observation

Access and usefulness of methods

The use of participant observation is a necessary corollary of the interviews with young people. It allows us to describe the living conditions of the people. The latter were not very forthcoming in the interviews about their life in Calais. This bias is explained by the fact that the young people know that I know the jungles, so they do not describe what they think I already know. In addition, these observations give an idea of the social interactions of the young people interviewed in the camps. The data collected allows us to refine the interview grid.

In addition, participant observation makes it possible to be identified in the field and therefore to recruit young people for the interviews.

The place of the researcher

In this investigation, the relationship to the field cannot be understood without taking into account the place I occupied within the Calaisian associative circle. Since 2015, the Calais associational network has changed considerably with the combined impact of the photo of the little Aylan Kurdi and the 'Great Jungle' of Calais (Pette 2016; Agier, Bouagga, et Galisson 2019). New associations were set up and volunteers from all over Europe came to Calais. This influx has led to an increase in activities to support exiled people. Recruitment takes place on a voluntary basis or, more rarely, as an internship. Volunteers are often young people who take advantage of their "*biographical availability*" to give their time, having had a first experience that can be described as professional or militant [4](McAdam 1986). Volunteers are often young, just finishing their studies. For many of them,

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[4] The focus here is not on the involvement of volunteers in supporting exiled people. This commitment is multifaceted. It varies and evolves according to the associations, the trajectories of the volunteers and their experiences, including in Calais. Humanitarian actions, social support and militant commitments form a continuum in the space of the migrants' cause in Calais. However, the boundaries between these three dimensions are extremely porous. A volunteer involved in Calais can find himself in the same day on these three dimensions. Distributing food, accompanying a person to the hospital, and holding a protest demonstration against the Calais situation for example. In addition, the authorities can add a militant dimension to a

this is often their first significant experience in the field of social work, humanitarian work or activism. In this way, they develop skills that they can later use on the job market. Similarly, the activist skills acquired in Calais are recycled in other areas of struggle.

My arrival in Calais is entirely in line with this movement described above. As a young graduate, I arrived in Calais on 2 December 2015 as an interpreter for Médecins du Monde. I took advantage of my Arabic language knowledge to be recruited. I stayed there for a month and a half before doing the same period of voluntary work for an association that manages clothing distributions and that still exists today. After a first departure in March 2016, I returned to the Great Jungle in August 2016 as a volunteer for a legal support NGO I had to work on family reunification files for the unaccompanied minors living In the Jungle who had family members in the UK. This moment constitutes a biographical turning point since it structures my entire Calais experience until my presence in this research work. For three months, until the dismantling of the large Calais Jungle, I accompanied minors in the administrative procedures aimed at allowing them to legally cross the border to the United Kingdom to join one of their relatives. In this way, I developed my first legal and social skills.

The mental exhaustion induced by the episode of the dismantling of the Jungle saw my departure from Calais in November 2016. I returned in September 2017, still working as legal advisor for the same legal support NGO, taking advantage of a new moment of "biographical availability". However, the field had entirely change. From a shanty town, the exiles now have to live in small informal settlements without permanent buildings5. There are fewer people, between 800 and 1,500, but the range of legal requests I am asked to help with is larger. From family reunification, I had to train myself in asylum procedure, Dublin, appeals against minority status, deportation litigation and expulsions. However, I still had a strong interest in legal issues related to minors because of my first experience in family reunification. In October 2019, I was recruited by the Micreate project to conduct this field research on minors in transit in Calais. My recruitment is directly linked to my fieldwork entries. Even before the start of the fieldwork, I am already 'embedded' in Calais (Olivier de Sardan 1995). This opens up certain privileges, such as distancing myself from agreed-upon discourses to privilege the use of indigenous categories (Bajard 2013).

The mistrust of migrants, Including migrant children

The precarious settlements where exiled people live are zones of relegation to the margins of the city produced by institutions (Agier 2016). They are perceived as such by

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humanitarian situation (e.g. food distribution) by banning the distribution. Providing a meal then becomes an act of militant commitment that risks repression.

5 The experience of the rights access association in accompanying people who are victims of police violence is interesting here. The collection of victims' testimonies (the exercise here is similar to an interview situation) was easier in the shantytown of the Great Jungle in 2016. Indeed, the collection was often done in the victim's hut: a place where he or she felt safe, away from the police, offering conditions of privacy. In addition, the person could receive guests, offer tea and food, thus establishing a situation of exchange between equals that did not leave them in the sole position of victim. The destruction of the shanty town in October 2016, the informal unbuilt camps, which are constantly being evicted, have considerably reduced the number of testimonies and complaints against police violence, which have not disappeared.

their inhabitants. They seek to hide their precarious situation from their relatives back home, with a pervasive feeling of shame. I often heard my interlocutors in the Jungles compare their living conditions to those of animals. "*We are like animals.*" Moreover, many exiles do not wish to leave traces that could be used against them and make them risk being sent back to another country. The misdeeds of the Dublin regulation have already happened: registering their presence in France in an administrative procedure, whether or not they consented to it, means that they run the risk of being sent back to the European country in which they previously left their fingerprints, or else of creating a precedent that would jeopardise their future asylum application in the United Kingdom under the same regulation.[6]

The Calais area is saturated with media coverage, but the people living in the Jungles have no control over the story that is told about their situation. This feeling of dispossession increases the mistrust of people carrying a camera or a dictaphone. There may also be a feeling of intimacy being violated, especially as the absence of private places makes it impossible to escape the outside gaze. Aware of this, media presence is filtered and controlled by the associations in places where they can have some control upon the space. Taking photographs is rarely authorised: for example, it is forbidden in some day centres, in order to guarantee the serenity of the people and prevent potential self-exclusion. here self-exclusion is defined as the tendency of the person to avoid contact for fear of being filmed or photographed.

Finally, exiles live in legal limbo, deprived of legal protection. This leads to an inflation of arbitrariness, particularly by the police (Chamayou 2015). This permanent insecurity opens up to a potential distrust of people whose function cannot be precisely identified, or whose function is precisely data collection (Trani 2008; Fresia, Bouillon, et Tallio 2006). The exiles have to deal with a great diversity of actors (institutional, associative, individual) that they sometimes have difficulty identifying, and whose interaction they have difficulty defining as necessary/obligatory or not. The accusation of collaboration with the police or the state is never far away. The researcher (but also possibly the community worker) must therefore constantly justify his or her presence and function.

Rights based approach

I therefore have decided to keep up my socio-legal work as I was doing my research.[7] It was about "entering the universe of meaning of my respondents" (Clavé-Mercier et Rigoni 2017). This also makes it possible to give pledges and thus to create a trusting relationship useful to the investigation (Boumaza et Campana 2007). It should also help me to overcome the mistrust of exiled people by taking on a recognised and legitimate role in the field,

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[6] The latter is legally true until the implementation of Brexit on 1 January 2021.

[7] This choice was not necessarily unanimously accepted by the members of the association at the outset. However, it was accepted by the members of the field team present at the time. I would be keen to legitimise my position by continuing to contribute to the work carried out by the association, in particular by supporting the reflection, coordination and training of team members. Subsequently, my position as a volunteer-researcher was a given, a fact that was not questioned by new volunteers.

particularly in the Jungles. It is a way of approaching a field, which can be described as sensitive, where people 'hide' because they feel they are on the fringes of legality (Fresia, Bouillon, et Tallio 2006).

Finally, remaining within the legal access association ensures that I am in a privileged position to observe the associative dynamics as well as institutional practices with regard to exiled persons and minors in particular.[8] I am at the heart of the 'space of the cause' of foreigners, defined as: *'as all the associations and activists who welcome, help and defend foreigners present on French territory, regardless of their status or nationality'* (Pette 2014: 406). This role was also ideally suited to conducting participant observation from the perspective of minors, with the institutions they might face. It also provides access to a wealth of information on the migration and legal pathways of the young people accompanied.

However, this choice of role is time-consuming. It has forced me to continue my legal support interventions (Bailleul et Senovilla Hernández 2016). It raises the question of the perception of the researcher by the interviewees (with the risk that entails in engaging (Olivier de Sardan 1995)). It offers less critical distance from the field (Makaremi 2008). It raises the question of the place of the activist and that of the researcher (Dunezat 2011).

The choice of the field

The participant observation work was carried out in several areas and places in order to get as broad an idea as possible of the interactions that migrant minors in Calais may face. This observation did not take place in a particular place or structure that would allow us to capture all the moments of life, as can be done in an accommodation facility. On the contrary, it was spread out over time and space in an attempt to capture as many aspects as possible of what life in transit in Calais can be like, with some limitations to which we will return.

The first areas of observation were the accompaniments of minors in various administrative procedures. They happened between October 2019 and February 2021, depending on the requests. The function of legal intervener has enable me to legitimise my presence. My position there was far from that of a passive observant. However, I have chosen to intervene, for several reasons, including to advance procedures that were in the child's best interest, when he could not intervene for linguistic or lack of juridical skill. Finally, because I agree with Nicolas Jounin in his definition of '*ethnography as an*

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[8] This helped me in the legal and institutional assessment I had to conduct for the project. As a researcher, I was able to attend meetings between the associations and the department about minors in transit in Calais. These meetings were a very interesting source of data both for the survey and for refining my practical information to be given to the young people. These meetings allowed me to negotiate interviews with institutional actors. However, my place in these moments less rely on my quality as a researcher and observer than on the competence I could bring as a legal expert who knew the field and practised it. I was therefore a stakeholder in the exchanges, with a view to action research that aims to transform reality. This was also an opportunity for me to quickly disseminate some of the lessons learned from my field observations.

intervention [...] and that it is perhaps by provoking institutions, by testing the limits of social relations that we learn the most' (Jounin 2009:97).

A second field of observation along the way was being informed on minors in detention, depending on the young people who found themselves detained. I had asked the legal team at the deportation centre (in charge of supporting people in their appeals) to inform me of any of such cases. The team did so diligently, and here again, the bonds of friendship came into play. This has allowed me to discuss directly with these young people about their detention conditions, the procedure that led to their non-recognition of minority status, and to be able to provide them with legal support if I could. It was in this last role that I introduced myself in order to justify my presence and to make my visit understandable to both the police and young people. I visited six young people detained in retention centre.

The third area I wanted to observe was the arrival of young people in Calais and the capacity of emergency shelter services to take them in charge. Under what conditions does a young person accept a shelter? hat institutional responses are given to their request? To do this, I have asked the association that conducts evening patrols to join their team on a temporary basis, while conducting my observations.

During the summer of 2020, I have conducted a period of observation in the largest camp in Calais and then in some others, in order to observe the living conditions of young people and their interactions. The choice of the place is due to its size, to the diversity of nationalities living there and especially to the linguistic factor since the majority of the people were Arabic-speaking. This allowed me to understand what was being said (at least partly) without having to rely on a translator. I justified my presence by the fact that I was visiting friends or young people in their place of living.

The day centre for exiles in the centre of Calais was another observation point for relationships between exiles and volunteers. It was also one of the best places to meet and talk to young people because of the privacy it offers.

My last field of observation concerns a night shelter run by volunteers that I knew well. This place has welcomed many minors. I have volunteered to help the project and run the place between December 2020 and January 2021.

For all the places of observation mentioned, I had little to do with gatekeepers. Most of the associations I contacted agreed to include me in their teams as a temporary volunteer for the needs of my research. Here, the bonds of friendship and acquaintance played an important role. The setting of the detention centre, a place of confinement, limited my observations to a simple 30-minute visit. I was not able to conduct observations in the emergency shelter because of the health situation and Covid-19 cases. This repeatedly postponed my visit until it was cancelled, despite the oral agreement that I had obtained from the shelter management team.
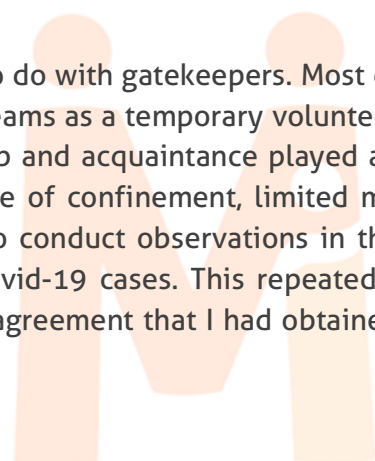
In my fieldwork, although many people knew about my research activity, I have chosen not to reveal my observation activity, in order to minimise the effect of my presence in the field as an observer, making it impossible to take notes openly. I have therefore preferred to take breaks to note on my phone, or record a voice note, adopting the naturalness of someone sending a message. When I got home, I would write down the results of my observations.

Responses to methods

Being identified in Calais

My presence in the field rarely caused any problems because I was often easily identified by the exiled people. Either they already knew me previously because of my long presence in the field (and therefore theirs as well, unfortunately), or because they had recognised me and identified me as belonging to the associative field.[9] Another way of getting in touch with people was through recommendations from other volunteers. I converted my particular resources and skills in Calais: speaking Arabic, having been in Calais for a long time, having legal knowledge, especially on issues related to minors, so that I would be approached. This made it easier for me to make contact with many young people.

The language factor

My knowledge of the Arabic language clearly guided my fieldwork. It has often enabled me to enter into contact with respondents without having to lean on interpreters/ gatekeepers to interact. Above all, this skill used to arouse astonishment. As a matter of fact, I look like a white French male. It has led people to be more open and to ask me if I had origins or how I had learned Arabic. I was then happy to explain myself before continuing the conversation. One respondent was 'recruited' in this way. Above all, this skill ensured that I was friendly without becoming an insider (also because I was not a migrant.) In the field observation situations, I used my knowledge to gain acceptance, using humour in particular (Besson 2010). This also allowed me to understand part of what was being said around me without people sometimes suspecting my language skills.[10] This is a common situation in everyday life, which sometimes leads to funny scenes, and it gave me access to an understanding of certain situations to which I would not have had access.

Support in the procedures

Supporting the procedures was a powerful way of creating a link with the young people and gaining their trust. It was necessary to put together the file, to discuss it with the young person. Explain to them what was going to happen. Their questions and reactions made it possible to evaluate their awareness of the legal framework and, sometimes, the way this

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[9] I have the advantage of a very recognisable gait and I often rode a bright yellow tricycle like no other.
[10] I have a good level of conversational Arabic, but I am not bilingual.

awareness had been built up in previous dealings with administrations (Daniela Piana, Emilia Schijman, et Noé Wagener 2018). Often the procedure required that we meet again. The time spent together has led to particularly rich informal exchanges. Above all, this legal support has sometimes had a major influence on the young people's transit situation, to the point of completely changing it by obtaining refugee status, recognition of minority status or the right to family reunification in a Dublin transfer. The relationship of trust has also sometimes made it possible to recruit other young people on the basis of recommendations from the former or the observation that their procedure has been successful[11].

On the Jungles the need to situate myself

On the Jungles, I was sometimes perceived as a volunteer, because I am white and I speak French and know the associations. It was not uncommon for people to come and ask me for a tent or shoes when I was walking around the camps. I redirected people to other associations. On other occasions, I was identified or recommended by others as a lawyer. People came to me for questions about Dublin or to find a person who had been arrested. For example, a young person with whom I had already spoken once or twice came to ask me "*if we could talk*" and therefore if we could move away to make sure we were not overheard and interrupted. He wanted information about the asylum procedure in France.

I also often found myself in the position of a guest. I was offered a chair (rare on the Jungles) a cup of tea, I was offered to share meals. I am asked questions about France, the UK. I am given rumours and information on the evolution of the situation in Calais.

Several episodes show that I was trusted or not considered likely to cause dangerous interference. For example, one person came up to a young man I was talking to and interrupted us to ask him in Arabic if he had made any progress with his research on boat engine oil. Another day, a smuggler came and stood next to me to address everyone in order to fix prices and means of payment, totally ignoring me.

Also, it was easy for people who wanted to end the interaction with me to leave: we were outside, in a place with many people. Coming and going is easy on the camp. So many interactions with young people on the campsites ended because other people entered the conversation, gave their opinion, leading to the young person withdrawing and then leaving the conversation. There is no privacy on the Jungles.

While my position as a volunteer did not raise any questions, my work as a researcher aroused more circumspection and even incomprehension. Explaining what I was doing was not a problem. However, many questions came up about the practical interest my interlocutors could get out of it. I was embarrassed by the question and often replied with a vague hope that France and Europe would change their practices with regard to their situation.

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[11] Rather, to help new young people with their procedures.

On Jungles, my key to entry was to visit young people I already knew. Nevertheless, I felt the need to take on an identity: I first introduced myself as a lawyer, before adding the position of a researcher. This double position allowed me to justify my presence and to meet minors. Given the number of people present, it was not possible to tell everyone this identity, so I was given one that made sense and proved to be rather practical (Tarrius 2017). I am thus "*the lawyer who helps minors.*" This is how one young person introduced me to another who asked who I was and what I did. On one occasion, I was mistrusted by an individual who thought I was an agent of the state when I was explaining to a young person his legal options. I was quick to deny this, but his intervention proved to be beneficial in clarifying my role.

The evening marauds

Another field of observation was the night marauding with an association supporting migrants. These patrols are particularly aimed at new arrivals who come late in Calais. They aim to offer them support by distributing hot drinks, blankets and meals. In addition, these marauds seek to offer vulnerable people shelter solutions. They allow us to observe the arrival of new people in Calais in an emergency situation as it is night time.

The solicitations (or not) of the people we met, their acquaintances, the relays they found, give us an idea of the tactics used to survive: soliciting migrant peers or voluntary organisations? Sleeping on the Jungles or in the interstices of the city? Accepting care (night in a hostel, social samu) or not? It also shows whether or not the person is inserted in a group: are there friends or acquaintances to call or not? It is also an opportunity to see how Calais is situated in a circulatory territory (Tarrius 2015). In other words, are people passing through Calais for a very short time while waiting to reach other places of transit (Grande Synthe further north, Belgium, etc.)?

In addition, these observations make it possible to understand how institutions deal with (or do not deal with) minors newly arrived in Calais in an emergency context[12].

Assessment of child-centred approach

On support in procedures

The definition of the child-centred approach in legal terms has "*4 levels of* [child] *involvement that can be identified in the decision-making process: being informed, expressing an informed view, having their views taken into account; being the principal or co-decision-maker.*" (Micreate 2019:30). When accompanying young people to institutions, my position

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[12] After 5pm, minors must be directed to a shelter via the police station, which is not without its difficulties: fear of the young person, long waits at the police station, refusal of care....

as a French-speaking adult, mastering administrative issues, often led me to act as an intermediary between the administration and the accompanied minors. I always tried to compensate by translating the interaction to the young person in order to keep him or her involved in the procedure, but this was not always enough. However, the bias here is empirical (Archard et Skivenes 2009). It concerns legal technique. The aim of the support was defined with the young person beforehand: to apply for asylum, to have their minority recognised, etc., and the young person gave their agreement. It was unthinkable and unfeasible to bring a young person before an administration if he or she did not want to. Indeed, the unaccompanied minor has a certain power to act (*agency*) (Vervliet, Vanobbergen, et al. 2015; Vacchiano 2014). In the situation in which he finds himself, where no one is legally responsible for him, the minor has to assert his rights by himself. His choice is based on whether to enter a procedure or, on the contrary, to attempt to pass illegally. Of course, as the enquiry shows, these choices are made on the basis of resources, obligations and information that the young person thinks he or she has (Düvell, Rodier, et Vallois 2005). This is even more true in Calais, which functions as a way out to the UK in the face of an unsuitable situation or outlook. This does not mean that he or she does not remain a child at risk, particularly with regard to their living conditions (Gilbert 2014; Thompson et al. 2019). These resources partly neutralise the power relationship between adults and children. Thus, there is no possibility of forcing a young person to enter a procedure, even for his or her own good (from the perspective of the French adult). Trust and credibility therefore become essential[13].

On the Jungles

Protection and inclusion are generally recognised as two necessary pillars of the child-centred approach (Micreate 2019). Jungles and life in transit at the border constitute a space, where young people are excluded from any legal protections (Chamayou 2015)(Unicef 2016). Out of personal ethics and in order to respect the framework set by the research, in the field, during my interactions with young people, I have systematically offered them shelter and invited them to ask me if they needed to try to set up some form of protection. In addition, I have always reported to the authorities the dangerous situation of the minors I met.

In an attempt to help them, I have sometimes tried to find solutions that met their expectations in terms of protection without having constraints in return. In this respect, the night shelter run by volunteers was a popular solution. This consideration of assessing the young person's needs was always the first step before conducting observations. However, the situation of danger does not exclude the agency of young people, as mentioned above. A good way of advancing the investigation and neutralising the adult/child power relationship was to make the young people informers, fixers, by putting forward their knowledge of life in the Jungle and of life in transit. As for me, I was giving them my

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[13] Both for the legal support and the survey

knowledge of the French, and sometimes the English institutional world, French. So this exchange was a mutual learning process.

Personal reflection

An adult status to be qualified

I did not always manage to shed my adult status during my field observations. I was sometimes called "sir" or shown deference. Nevertheless, this identity is less relevant in Calais in a wandering situation than that of a white French volunteer. The minors live with adults, often from their own community, on a daily basis. Thus, the social and administrative condition, the linguistic factor, and community membership appeared to me as more determining factors than minority. The fact that I am a man undoubtedly facilitated my integration into a very male world, without this being a decisive factor. In my interactions with young people, I often felt that I was having conversations with equals who had lived a life that I had not. Their migratory experience had given some of them a maturity they would probably have preferred not to have. The condition of minors and children did not always make sense to them other than in a purely French legal sense. "*I can't be detained theoretically*". The age difference with their adult peers was sometimes not very marked, one or two years.

The limits of observation

The choice of my observation sites was sometimes guided by the language factor, since I would access more materiel meeting with Arabic speakers that, a language I could speak myself. Even though I knew the Jungles where Eritreans and Afghans lived did not offer the same dynamics in terms of peer organisation, I had to make choices according to my capacities. These observations provide rich material concerning living conditions in Calais, the relationship with institutions or associations. This theme was less discussed in the interviews by the minors and myself, perhaps because they knew that I knew, or because of a lack of perspective in the face of a daily situation that is difficult to put into words.

However, these observations suffer from limitations that are partially overcome by the interviews. I never shared their condition of exile but only witnessed it. I only shared the living conditions of the people in the camps for a few hours at a time.

Distancing and emotions

My emotions came into play, of course, and I often returned after several hours on the Jungles with a feeling of anger, uselessness and powerlessness in the face of the situation I was observing. These are classic feelings for many of the volunteers present in Calais and are often answered by concrete action. (Doidge et Sandri 2019). These emotions questioned the political usefulness of my research in the face of the situation I was observing. The temptation was great to go *native, as* Raymond Gold put it (Cefaï 2003). From then on, the

solution found to reconcile emotions and research activities lay in the level of commitment to action (Makaremi 2008). At certain points in the investigation, I left my position as an observer to participate fully as a field activist. Action took precedence over observation (Soule 2007).

2.2   Interviews

Access and usefulness of methods

The interviews form the core of this survey. It is a material that was sometimes very difficult to collect. The words of the young people drew a history of migration in Europe. They made it possible to understand how and why these young people arrived in Calais. In the same way, they offer leads to understand their expectations and their choices. The words collected allow us to measure the gap between the aspirations of these young people and the institutional possibilities offered to them. These interviews draw a critical view of the "users" on the public service offered to them (or not). It is a voice that is often inaudible to decision-makers that has been collected here.

Interviews with adults

Soliciting associations or activists who support migrant minors was easy. For many, they were friends or work relations. I already had their contact details. We knew each other well. My position as a researcher was not unknown and did not arouse any particular suspicion. I tried to avoid the pitfall of peer collusion by asking people to tell me everything they knew about an event or incident, even if they knew that I knew or had been involved in it. This seems to have yielded some results. I discovered perspectives that I did not know about

Talking to institutions such as judges, prosecutors or prefectural officials proved more complicated. Requests were made in more formal emails. Some were not successful. Other institutions (such as Préfecture or prosecutor) were willing to answer me, with the agreement of their hierarchy when a duty of loyalty was necessary.

A second way of interviewing institutions was to ask people who had recently left their jobs to take up other jobs… in the associative sector. In these cases, the interview was divided into two parts and focused on their two functions. Several interviews were conducted by telephone due to the covid situation, but the material collected appeared to be sufficiently rich despite the absence of face-to-face interviews.

Recruitment methods

Many research studies on migrant minors in transit note the difficulty of conducting individual interviews with this vulnerable group. Some have been conducted within institutions (Vervliet, Vanobbergen, et al. 2015; UNHCR 2018). Others have favoured focus group interviews, which are considered more likely to free up the voice. (Unicef 2016;

Senovilla Hernández et Bailleul 2016). Some researchers eventually abandoned interviews in favour of other methods such as document-based work (Paté 2018; Carayon, Mattiussi, et Vuattoux 2018).

The choice made here was to build on the volunteer experience conducted previously. Despite its dry nature, providing legal support is a powerful tool for approaching minors in transit who are eager for legal information that can influence their journey (Senovilla-Hernández 2019). Young people who had previously been monitored were approached. Others were met during the fieldwork because of their legal needs. Meetings were therefore made as the fieldwork progressed, by opportunity, with attention paid to diversifying the nationalities.

The interview grid for minors

The interview grid focuses on the transit experience of these young people in Europe. It takes a chronological dimension to respect both the biographical dimension and to facilitate the understanding of the story by the interviewer. It begins with a simple question: "*Tell me about your first day in Europe?"*. The interview continues by focusing on the experience and conditions of transit up to the day of the interview. Questions can be used to refocus the story on the steps taken since arrival in Europe. The aim is to find out what impressions the young person has gained from his or her dealings with institutions and use of the legal framework. No judgement of veracity is made. The aim of these questions is to decentralise the questions in relation to the usual administrative questions so that the young person does not have the feeling of being interrogated (Fresia, Bouillon, et Tallio 2006). It is important that the researcher's position is understood and that he/she is not assimilated to institutions (Mekdjian 2016). It is also a question of showing the young person that his or her point of view is taken into account by reversing the paradigm. It is up to the young person to give his or her opinion on the institutions he or she encounters and not the other way around.

Responses to methods

Talking to adults

Conducting interviews with institutional staff working in public administrations carries the risk of only having access to a discourse on the agents' representations of their jobs rather than their actions (Spire 2017). The method I have tried to use to address this is based on my experience as a legal practitioner. I countered the rhetoric with examples of cases I had followed and my expertise to counter it. This could be done in the context of the interview or at the time of the analysis, offering a critical look at what is being said.
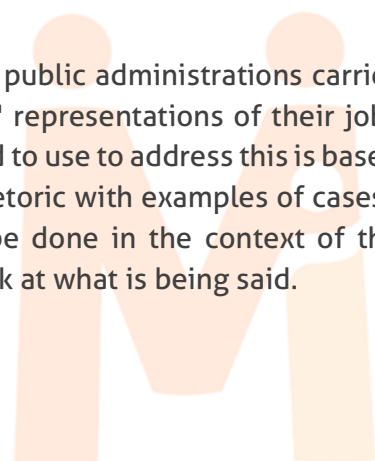
The conditions of the interview

During the early stages of the fieldwork, I found it quite difficult to get an interview with a minor. At the beginning, when I met a young person who agreed to the interview, I would take their details and arrange the interview for the next day or a few days later, while I found a place and arrived with the consent forms translated into the right language. But often the young person had forgotten about the appointment: he was busy, he had to go to a distribution, meet a friend... Sometimes he could not or did not want to go to the meeting place, which was considered too far away or whose address was unknown to him. The interview is a luxury here that the urgency of survival hardly allows (Bruneteaux et Lanzarini 1998). Moving, walking a long distance to talk to a stranger seems like a waste of time when there is so much to do: going to a distribution, recharging one's phone on a generator...

The solution was simple: I was instead taking charge of the transportation, arranging with volunteers who had a vehicle, or who were marauding and who agreed to provide this service. I would then pick up the young person in the Jungle and take him or her to one of the day care centres to which I had the keys so that I could carry out the interview in good conditions. It would have been impossible to run an interview on the Jungles: the weather conditions, the lack of comfort, the absence of privacy, the presence of third parties who were at best curious and at worst malicious made me consider the experience useless, unethical, and difficult (Meh 2016).

The conditions of the interview were part of a counter-gift, of what I had to offer the young person in exchange for his time: warmth, electrical sockets and wifi as this extract from my field diary shows:

"Today Younes calls me, I didn't have time to see him yesterday. I gave him an appointment at 2pm at the day centre. He calls me this morning at 11am and asks about me. He tells me that he is at the station and that he is cold. I decide to bring the interview forward and manage to negotiate a room at the day centre to meet him immediately. This is how the terms of the unspoken exchange are established, interview for warmth." Field diary 6 November 2020.

On another occasion, a young man I was interviewing took out several phones, chargers and powerbanks from his bag. In preparation for our interview, he had collected all of his friends' charging devices to come and charge them on an electrical installation that was more efficient than the generators set up on the Jungle. A third young man asked me if we could meet to continue the interview as he was bored. He also wanted to have access to the Wi-Fi so he could download songs on his new phone[14]. We also had to adapt to this life in a hurry. Thus, several interviews stopped because the young people had an obligation: to be present in the Jungle to have access to food distribution, to leave with the marauding team to the accommodation centre for underage people[15].

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[14] In group reception, given the number of people, the wifi is weak. Our interview took place on an afternoon when the day centre was closed.
[15] Located in a city 45 km from Calais

I also learnt to schedule interviews almost immediately when the opportunity arose. If there was too much time between the appointment and the interview, there was a risk of a defection. In the best of cases because the young person had managed to get to the UK, in others because he had left Calais (for a care institution, another camp...) when he had not simply disappeared with an unanswered telephone number. Victim of a field eviction? Lost phone, unregistered SIM card? Some young people reappeared a few weeks later, after a stay in Belgium for example. For some, the least socially anchored in groups and those with whom I had not established a lasting contact, I did not know what became of them, especially after I myself had left the field for several weeks. Calais is a place of passage with difficult living conditions. People come and go, cross the border.

The reopening of an association day centre at the end of the summer made possible to meet young people in a favourable context to interviews. It was easy to get a room. The format of the interview did not rise any issue because this is how the legal support association receives people with questions. In some cases, I met the young person quickly at the day centre and then offered them an interview directly. The link is less strong, the distance is greater, and this does not allow the young person to be situated in the network of interrelationships in which he is inserted in the Jungles. This is one of the limits of some interviews.

Refusal of interviews

"Does it have to be? Do we have to talk about Afghanistan? Because every time I have to talk about it, it makes me sad, it's difficult." Field Diary 30 September 2020

The above remarks refer to the answer a minor whose legal case I had followed gave me as I was interviewing him. This brings us back to the question of the trauma of exile.[16] Not all reasons for refusal are as clear as this one. Nevertheless, these impediments constitute interesting data that show that the interview is part of a wider social field that must be taken into account (Beaud et Weber 2010). Estelle d'Halluin, in her research of asylum seekers, identifies several reasons for these refusals (Fresia, Bouillon, et Tallio 2006). Some of these echo the situations encountered here: the time-consuming nature of survival, as mentioned above (Bruneteaux et Lanzarini 1998); the uselessness of the interview for the respondent ("*it won't do me any good*"); the fear of revealing illegalities or traumatic experiences, difficult for a person whose proximity to institutions is feared.

Fear of registration, and forms

This fear is linked to a fear that could be described as a fear of leaving traces. This hyper-vigilance is expressed in several ways: use of a false name, refusal to allow oneself to be recorded or refusal to sign anything fearing the potential uncontrolled use of the interview

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[16] See personal reflection (below)

These refusals raise issues for the researcher in conducting an interview or complying with the ethical charter that has been imposed on him/her. They require flexibility. Thus, the signing of consent forms was quickly abandoned. The consent forms were always read out to the young person, in his or her own language, together with explanations and answers to questions.[17] On one occasion, the young person I met admitted that he could not read. What about others? It is difficult to say, but the use of consent forms contributes to distancing the researcher from the respondent. It contributes to a certain ethnocentrism of what an interview should be, by not taking into account differences in position, class and precariousness (Bruneteaux et Lanzarini 1998). Moreover, the interview situation is often one of 'Western-style self-exposure' (Fresia, Bouillon, and Tallio 2006:50). However, to be more fruitful, it is important that the interview is more like a conversation between friends or at least between equals. In this respect, many informal moments made it possible to obtain interesting information, sometimes unexpected biographical elements, taken from the young person's real history, which the latter does not necessarily mention in the interview. (Senovilla Hernández and Bailleul 2016). The formal framework of the interview is more favourable to stating an 'administrative narrative that is superimposed on the young person's real story'(Senovilla-Hernández 2019:57). The immediate or wider context in which people, and particularly minors, give a discourse and the role of the person to whom they give it, play a role in the narrative that is given of events (Spyrou 2011; Sigona 2014). It is therefore necessary to look at the conditions of production of this narrative. It may be a question of 'moving' the researcher to act (Makaremi 2008)or of asserting rights, memory and dignity (Fresia, Bouillon, and Tallio 2006:52). The legal framework has the effect of transforming narratives to fit the young person's migration strategy (Senovilla-Hernández 2019).

All the fears mentioned here illustrate the state of insecurity in which young people find themselves in their relationship with institutions. They reflect a lack of understanding of their administrative situation and their rights (at least in theory) (Coron 2018); or, on the contrary, a good understanding of their place in the social order in relation to the state (Bachellerie 2020). Then, these refusals, hesitations, and lies are merely strategies for concealing a prey in a strategy of the weak to the strong in order not to be captured by the institutions (Chamayou 2015).

Adaptations and adjustments to the fieldwork

Therefore, in order to conduct interviews, it was necessary to adapt. The issue of recording was a matter of constant negotiation. Taking notes in an interview situation in a language that was not my mother tongue proved difficult, especially without the presence of third parties who could have taken notes. The young people who finally agreed to be recorded in an interview were often those with whom a long-standing relationship had been established in the legal follow-up. This first key proved to be very time-consuming in terms

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[17] They also violated the discourse on the guaranteed anonymity of their participation since these forms included first and last names. I confess that I never managed to provide a plausible explanation for this paradox when young people pointed it out to me.

of commitment: I have accompanied young people in several procedures at the court, at the prefecture, with educational institutions.... which were sometimes far away. All these procedures were prepared in advance with the young person during one or more interviews. The support often took the form of letters and documents that had to be produced and sent before the appointments. The whole process could take several days of work.

A second simple key is the opportunity to meet young people in a safe environment. The night shelter opened by volunteers offered a place for exchange. The young people slept in warmth and were free to move around and do what they wanted. The atmosphere was sometimes like a holiday camp. Moreover, volunteers and exiles shared the same condition during the night, a cot in a dormitory that resounded with the snores of each other. Being able to sleep properly, to be warm, to put an end to the emergency of survival, to have shared a common experience made it possible to offer more favourable conditions for the interview, which could also be held in situ and in privacy.

Another key was to interview the minors in a "*release situation*". This expression was coined by Florence Bouillon (Bouillon 2006:84). She shows that she was more successful in obtaining better interviews in her sensitive field of squats by interviewing people who were about to leave this environment. In the case of the minors interviewed, this exit situation concerns the end of their transit, the recognition of an administrative status: being taken into care by child welfare, the successful completion of the family reunification file, etc. All these results free the interviewer from the burden of proof. These are all results that free up speech, with a permanent feeling of insecurity, thus providing the conditions for a quality interview. Thus, far from being a painful ordeal, the interview here constituted a kind of reflexive return on their journey.

Assessment of child-centred approach

The first exchanges with the minors we met at the Jungles were always aimed at finding out about their situation: how long they had been in Calais, their migration plans, their particular needs, their possible vulnerabilities, etc., before redirecting the person according to their needs, or even offering them legal assistance. Of course, for the young person, this introduction places me in the field of social work and volunteers in Calais. It is above all an ethical obligation that prioritises the possible needs of the young person over the investigation situation. It is about offering help and possible protection. In the same vein, when minors have legal cases, the preparation of their procedures was given priority over interview situations. This was also to allow the young person to refuse the interview if they so wished, which may have happened. Sometimes, the interview was interrupted to return to the legal process after the young person had mentioned important information about him or herself that could help with the case (such as the mention of a family member in the UK).

Some of the young people seemed to me to be too marked or too traumatised to respond to an interview. As I am not a psychologist, I have chosen not to ask them to participate for fear of reawakening traumas. On one occasion, I have made a mistake and found that the

respondent was not really interested in answering my questions about her experience in Europe, despite the apparent agreement I had obtained. Her silence and terse answers were sufficiently evocative to gauge the hardship she had endured (Kohli 2006). I quickly ended the interview.

As we have seen, some young people used the interview situations as resources. They were of course free to interrupt them at any time, which was sometimes done. During the interview, I listened attentively and valued what they had to say. I sometimes took advantage of the mention of certain legal situations to clarify a point that the young person had not understood. I hope I did not do this in the role of a teacher but through the simple exchange of information.

I have sometimes been very surprised to see young people asking me to resume an interrupted interview. I had assumed that this moment was a chore for them. Some young people enjoyed the exchange despite the emotionally painful episodes they were able to share with me.

Personal reflection

The researcher's position on the interviews

The first difficulty in conducting interviews with minors was personal. I had to overcome some of the reticence I had built up during my previous experiences as a volunteer in the same field. Each volunteer learns very quickly on arrival in Calais that there are subjects that one does not discuss with exiles without being expressly obliged to do so: the reasons for leaving the country of origin, the experience of transit before arriving in Europe (particularly Libya or the crossing of the Mediterranean), and in general, all accounts of suffering. Curiosity is frowned upon. It can provoke refusals, painful reactions, and awaken traumas. The volunteer may also be exposed to receiving accounts of suffering that he or she was not prepared to receive. There is a risk of so-called "ricochet" trauma.

There are cases where collecting such stories is acceptable from the volunteers' point of view (in Calais). Obviously, the person's consent is required. This collection must be carried out by a person qualified to do so: a psychologist, a socio-legal support worker, a lawyer, etc., and its purpose must be to help the victim who is giving his or her account: a treatment process, preparation for an interview to obtain asylum, filing a complaint about police violence, etc. If this is not the case, there is a great risk of exhausting the story, i.e. of producing conditions in which the exiled person will no longer want to tell his or her story at the moments when it counts, out of a feeling of exhaustion and uselessness(Carayon, Mattiussi, et Vuattoux 2018). Yet '*the narratives of suffering beings* [have] *become the cornerstone of a whole system of legal aid and recognition*' (Fresia, Bouillon, and Tallio 2006:32). The biographical interview in the context of anthropological research does not meet the conditions set out above for collecting the narrative. In addition, there is a certain personal reluctance to collect accounts of suffering that are not decisive for the

investigation and have a psychological impact on the interviewer and the interviewees. Some young people mentioned the reasons why they had to leave their country, or the difficulties during the journey outside of Europe For others, I have sometimes gained access to this information through access to documents from their proceedings as part of legal support activities. However, for ethical reasons, this research does not mention it. The researcher assumes that every person has the right to leave their country for whatever reason. Thus, collecting information on the period before migration appears superfluous and somewhat voyeuristic. Moreover, for the investigation, the stakes are crucial. The minor must be able to distinguish the researcher from the institutions. Raising these questions carries the risk of giving the young person the feeling that he or she is being evaluated or interrogated on the model of interviews he or she may have already undergone in the past (Mekdjian 2016). The research therefore focused on the transit relationship of young people in Europe and their interactions with institutions.

The position in intersectional terms

It is obvious that skin colour, nationality, function, social status and age have an impact on the perception that young people have of myself and on the relationship that we can establish. A new exile arriving in Calais will thus tend to turn first to those he identifies as peers for guidance. It is therefore important to make the effort to go towards this person to make contact. On the other hand, once they are familiar with their environment, the newcomer will be more inclined to ask for help from those they identify as volunteers, depending on what they need and what they perceive they can ask for.

During the interviews, the issue of colonisation has sometimes come up, most often as an explanatory factor for the choice of destination. On one occasion, a respondent questioned my discourse on the basis of my colour, while I was expressing my optimism about the outcome of his procedure:

 "You white people...you say one thing and do another" Field Diary 6 November 2020
Volunteers and employees of institutions were sent back to back in a single category.
My nationality sometimes influenced the speeches, either in a positive sense, "*France is good...",* or to refer me to the anger that the situation arouses. "*Where are the human rights?*

On the question of age, I positioned myself in the interaction by talking to adults first. Sometimes it was a matter of getting implicit validation from the peer group, before talking to a younger person whose attitude can be largely influenced by the group.

2.3   Different factors

Being a man probably made it easier to deal with a largely male audience. However, in my opinion, it was not a determining factor in conducting the interviews. Similarly, religion does not seem to be an important subject in the interviewer/respondent relationship. It all comes down to the relationship with transit. Most of the people interviewed are only

passing through Calais. They do not wish to settle there. Those who do not want to pass through are in a transit, which could be described as administrative. The issue here is to have legal documents, access an accommodation and not to be sent back. Positioning is based more on factors such as regular/irregular, housed/street, non-precarious/precarious. We must add the perception of helper versus oppressor, those who ease the transit period in Calais versus those who prevent it. On this point, the perception of difference is sometimes blurred for some exiles and it is therefore necessary to assert one's side, to give proof. The ability to facilitate transit, to appear as a resource for solving a problem (particularly of a legal nature, but also to be able to provide goods, accommodation, translation, information) is very useful in the investigation relationship. It provides an ideal and necessary contradiction that legitimises the presence of the researcher in the eyes of the respondent and the researcher himself (Bouillon 2006; Senovilla-Hernández 2019; Vervliet, Rousseau, et al. 2015). The action, in addition to providing information, makes it possible not to feel out of place, incongruous in the face of survival situations.

As mentioned, the linguistic factor greatly influenced the field. Speaking Arabic made it easier to interact, to create links with the Arabic-speaking people in Calais. Interviewing Afghan people was more of a challenge. A translator had to be brought in by telephone. The translation interruptions made the interview less fluid, more time consuming, slower and more tiring.

The quality of the interviews has been uneven. Fatigue and the experience of the researcher are sometimes a factor. Nevertheless, some young people make better interviewees. Those who seem to have higher social and economic capital, particularly through their level of education, seem to be more experienced in interview situations, which is not surprising. Some young people who are in secondary migration have sometimes incorporated the challenges of recounting their adventure because of their previous interactions with social workers or institutions (Fresia, Bouillon, et Tallio 2006).

Surprisingly, this is also the case for young people whose transit took place outside of institutions, without any care or desire to be cared for. The discourse appears more fluid, more serene.

In contrast, young people who have experienced 'agency suppression' by the authorities are more reluctant at first to enter an interview (Thompson et al. 2019). The temporary, forced or at least unwanted care perceived as a threat has had the effect of pushing young people towards strategies of concealment with tendencies to withhold certain information in a bid to protect themselves.

Not surprisingly, the feeling of security in its broadest sense: physical, emotional, etc. is a prerequisite for conducting a quality interview. It is necessary to get rid of the urgency of survival. Offering conditions of safety also allows the person to re-establish a certain dignity in his or her own eyes. On another level than distrust, shame is an extremely limiting factor for speaking and testifying. For example, some young people have put off the interview

because they had not been able to take a shower and were ashamed of the smell they might have carried. We must therefore re-establish a certain equality in the exchange.

3. Conclusion

Conducting fieldwork in Calais with migrant minors in transit living in camps is difficult. The vulnerability of the group studied, its living conditions, the processes of illegalisation and illegitimization that has faced for years, all contribute to make it difficult to speak and to access the field. To these criteria, we must add difficulties related to language and age differences. Consequently, the interview situation is not self-evident for these minors.

As for the researcher, he or she has to deal with a field governed by the urgency of survival, mistrust, and even shame, where the position of researcher is not self-evident, and can even be assimilated to a position of dominant, and therefore dangerous. The researcher must both pledge and enter the universe of meaning of the respondents to be accepted (Clavé-Mercier et Rigoni 2017). The researcher must also manage to reconcile his emotions. Anger, indignation and despondency threaten people who are involved in Calais over the long term (Doidge et Sandri 2019). The violence of the situations they may observe or the testimonies they may collect sometimes raise the very question of the legitimacy of the research. Witnessing is not enough, especially when the field is an over-mediatised object. It is then difficult, not to say illusory, to think that the research can bring about a tangible change in the life situation of the respondents (Sukarieh et Tannock 2013).

The answer proposed here to these questions of access to the field, of gathering interviews with a vulnerable public and of the emotional difficulties of research on migrant minors in transit, lies in participation (Makaremi 2008). Taking an active part "*in the struggle for places*" that is played out in Calais (Guenebeaud 2017) legitimises the presence in the field, both in the eyes of the interviewees and the researcher himself. It even asserts itself as a relational ethic necessary to the investigative relationship with minors (Vervliet, Rousseau, et al. 2015). The choice was made here to continue the militant commitment undertaken previously as a socio-legal worker. It offers a privileged point of view to conduct participant observation of the institutional procedures faced by migrant minors. It also provides a useful counter-donation to the respondents in a context where information and legal support are quite rare and yet crucial in the face of the illegal situation in which the persons find themselves. This function also places the researcher in the position of a useful and mobilisable resource for the young person. This contributes in part to neutralising the distrust and social distance between interviewers and interviewees. It is also a factor that can have an impact on the migratory trajectory of minors. Participating and accompanying the young person in his or her steps is finally an ethical positioning of the researcher which aims to facilitate the child-centred approach by including the young person in procedures likely to protect him or her (Vervliet, Rousseau, et al. 2015).

All of this makes Calais a sensitive field that requires an important involvement from the researcher in order to gather material from a vulnerable public who is not passive face to their situation and knows how to show agency and resilience.

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CREATE

GREECE

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1. Introduction

The present report contains a general overview of methods used and data collected are presented. It draws on the value of reflexivity as a tool for promoting ethical transparency particularly when involving young people in research and demonstrates how a retrospective examination of ethical principles and practice increases our understanding of sound ethical judgement. As such, the reflexive methodology allows us to engage into a thoughtful relationship with the implementation of methods. Each method (participant observation and interviews) is structured on four parameters: i) access and usefulness of methods, ii) responses to methods, iii) assessment of child-centred approach and iv) personal reflexion. Here we attempt to describe challenges and complexities encountered during fieldwork

with children. The next section illustrates the impact of the characteristics of participants (age, gender, ethnic group, religion, legal status, socio-economic status, language) on the selected methodologies. However, it is important to note that, to varying degrees, age, gender, socio-cultural status, religion, origin have been grounds for sensitive moments and dilemmas. In addition, attempts have been made to link microdata of individual characteristics in order to form a broader set of criteria that could allow for assessments which is particularly valuable for child-focused researchers.

The aim of the study was to explore refugee children's experiences and views with a specific focus on their educational needs, friendship relations, social interactions, negotiation of sense of belonging, dreams and aspirations. So, we tried to gather and share the perspectives of refugee children on their realities and better understand the situation, the current circumstances, the main challenges that children with different socio-linguistic background are confronted with through observations and interviews with children, teachers and personnel of the camp. The study was conducted between July and September 2020 at Skaramagas refugee camp on the western side of Athens. The Refugee Hospitality Centre at Skaramagas functions as a short-term and mid-term hospitality centre and was selected as a representative place to satisfy the objectives of the study (Palaiologou Kameas, Prekate, Liontou, 2021). It is essential to underline that preparatory steps were taken as part of a pilot study between February and June 2020. More specifically, students from Hellenic Open University (HOU) interacted with refugee children in a positive way through planned, flexible, psychoeducational interventions that aimed at illustrating the potential of art for creating and promoting dialogue in an intercultural environment.

2. Reflexive methodology

2.1 Participant observation

Access and usefulness of methods

The first part of the study consists of a series of unofficial interviews with key stakeholders, heads of the different agencies working at the site and employees, in order to become familiar with their workplace conditions, record the ethnic groups and their needs, map the legal processes, gather insights on the area and scrutinize the atmosphere of the camp. The access to refugees held in camps is controlled by local authorities and by lead agencies, coordinated by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum. In this context, the research team was interrogated about the aspects of the research and the commander of the camp was informed in detail about its aims and purposes. The commander emphasized that caution should be taken to ensure that children and their families would not be exposed to further harm as a result of collecting information or/and of implementing actions and interventions designed to support children.

After this important initial step, participant observation was scheduled by attending classes of a non-formal education in the camp where children of various ages participated.

At this point, it is essential to note that the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) provides afternoon educational activities in the camp (Palaiologou, Kameas, Prekate, & Liontou, 2021). The selected approach enables the research team to observe research participants, learn about their behaviour in their environment. More specifically, researchers remained in the classroom without intervening to examine school behaviours, the nature of relationships/interactions with peers and teachers, to detect eventual emotional difficulties or social isolation and any other information that they found useful. In doing so, we took objective, detailed notes about social, emotional school climate and children engagement in school activities and in this way, we developed a more holistic understanding of the dynamics of different sociocultural systems in the classroom. In addition, we tried to make our observation as unobtrusively as possible in order to record a "natural" child behaviour. On the other hand, in some cases, during the participatory observations, the researchers actively engaged in the activities of refugee children. In this sense, they participated in an actual course just as any regular child in order to become part of the group and the culture, to blend into the school community, to learn about how children make sense of their experiences through involvement in school activities, to create a sense of trust for the participants and made them forget that they were being observed.

Regarding the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) representatives and teachers, they were hospitable, informative and they acted as facilitators in the realization of the research. The assistance of the staff together with the willingness of the research team created a climate of trust and appreciation, with the result that the refugee children reacted in a positive way. The researchers tried to form respectful, non-discriminatory relationships with the participants who were treated with compassion, empathy and care. We gave space to children' voices, we encouraged them to express their feelings and concerns but we did not press for answers. In addition, we communicated in a child-friendly manner having in mind children's cultural values and beliefs and respected the characteristics of their developmental stage. The pedagogical activities sparked participants' curiosity and enthusiasm and kept them motivated. The refugee children felt actively involved in meaningful tasks, they interacted with others and enjoyed a sense of belonging.

In sum, the information gathered by the research team was very useful and important, as it became a real acquaintance with the reality of these children. Researchers made widespread, careful observations to gather qualitative data about children's behaviour, body language, language use, interactions between children and teachers and activities. They tried to record everything that happened, to write observations, thoughts and feelings in order to have a good deal of data to analyse. But sometimes this practice became complicated. The main challenges were to immerse in an unfamiliar context, and to detect the "interpolation" of data analysis due to emotional engagement of the researchers. It is important to underline the importance of having a detailed plan before head into the field and of defining the target behaviour. We have to note that there was the intention for further participatory observations, so the research data would be even richer but the Covid-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on our research.

Responses to methods

Every time the research team visited the camp, the gate control was strict for security reasons. In order to gain staff's (and commander's) trust, researchers provided information about the purpose of the research, gave a lengthy description of the methods which would be used, clarified that the children would be protected from psychological harm, ensured confidentiality of personal information and shed light on the voluntary informed consent to participate in research. Towards children, the researchers were direct and honest. Pertinent information about the nature of the research were also given, specifically to the parents. The research members spoke clearly and simply, used child friendly vocabulary, listened carefully, actively to children's feelings and needs and tried to build positive relationships. In addition, they validated children's emotions and created an environment of trust and respect. But the research team did not have time to connect with children due to displacement of refugees (Skaramagas camp is a place of transit of refugee population). Additionally, our research project has been negatively affected by measures in combating Covid-19. Pandemic restrictions did not permit the use of systematic participant observation that could allow us to gain insight in a more detailed manner into the child's behaviour, child's view and how to promote their mental health and wellbeing.

During the activities in classrooms, the children showed that they adapt and get used to our presence immediately, they were friendly but restrained at the beginning. More specifically, regarding our presence, it is important to underline that the researchers did not judge or evaluate children's actions / performance, they promoted the climate neutrality objective (as non-participant observer), and created a warm, inclusive classroom environment (as participant observer). Through this prism, observing spontaneous interactions between peers and teachers seem to reflect the natural behaviour of children. For the part of participants and staff, signs of discomfort were not observed. But we have to express the need for a "more" adequate sampling of behaviour. In this sense, it is crucial to be on site for a period of time that could allow the researchers to interact with the participants and better understand their reality. It would also help to attend inter-agency meetings, if allowed, as on-site employees had the opportunity to share realities and problems that were not visible to the naked eye.

Assessment of child-centred approach

The non-formal education program that is implemented has a child-centered orientation and one of its roles is the psychosocial approach of children. Child-centered approach means taking the needs of the child into account and stemming from the child's interests when making decisions about the child. During the program activities, such as creative activities, sports activities, art activities / laboratories, activities that provided remedy to psychological consequences through expressive, cultural activities or the creation of groups of teenagers which offers opportunities to learn new skills, the members of the research observed or/and actively collaborated with refugee children and teachers. Teachers and researchers seek children's cooperation in activities. Life / social skills, learning and communication are the important part of interventions. The children had the opportunity to

express themselves on their own terms and become fully involved in the research process. Teachers and researchers showed empathy, encourage children to interact with others, help them verbally express their emotions. In this way, we observed that children overcome their shyness and anxiety.

Also, allowing children to have voices, they felt that had an active role in their lives. There are ethical issues of working with migrant and refugee children, and the common critiques of participatory research with young children (Due, Riggs & Augoustinos, 2014).

During the observations, the research team took into account the views and needs of the children. So, the researchers noticed the complexity of the situations and through dynamic interactions, they came in contact with the children and "eavesdropped" their experiences and desires (for instance, activities "Our stories", "Our travels"). It is necessary to report that teachers had a dynamic role and built positive relationships with the students. In addition, teachers created an educational environment where children regardless of age, gender, ethnicity or culture could learn and feel they belong. They respected children' identity, tried to respond to individual differences, placed students in the center of learning process, made them feel comfortable and involved them in all the activities of the classroom.

The Art-based approach that was used to facilitate interaction and inclusion is the ArtsTogether project. In particular, the ArtsTogether project aims at developing and testing a curriculum based on artistic activities and collaborative approaches that used in order to equip teachers for dealing with diversity, fostering mutual understanding and respect among their students and improving the educational performance of refugee students. The main objective of the ArtsTogether project was to create specific measures that target refugee children, aiming to provide comprehensive support, to eliminate linguistic / cultural barriers and educational disadvantage they may experience (https://www.artstogether.eu).

Activities such as "Presenting myself" (children are presenting themselves and their hobbies), "Our stories" (children are presenting their life story), "Map of the world" (children are designing the map of the world indicating the country of origin, the countries they want to travel), "Circle of trust" (activity that encourage the development of trust), aim at enhancing children's self-concept, presenting their experiences, encouraging students to locate and label countries, colour them and give information about them, interacting with others and finding commonalities between groups of students, in a safe, affirming and enriched environment. Trait-like propensities such as aggression, isolation, anti-social behavior were not observed. The students are active participants and the selected activities – well articulated and age appropriate - provide opportunities for "leadership" for every student.
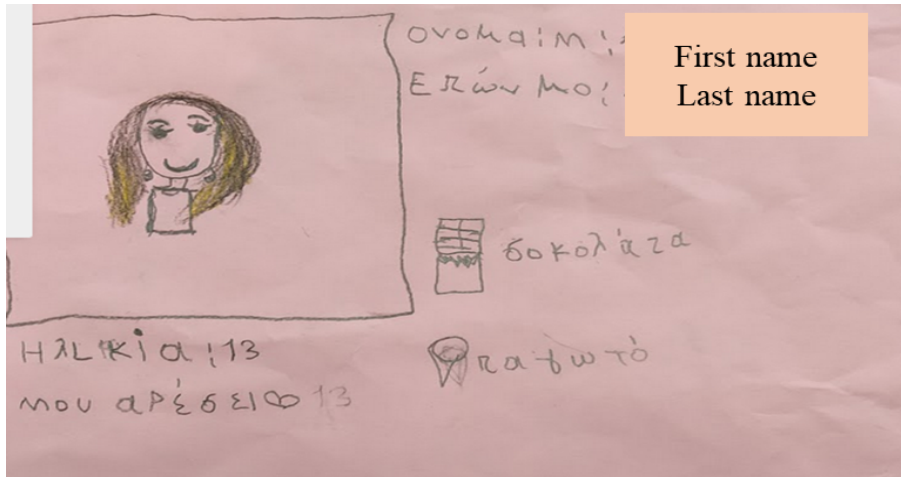
Activity: Presenting myself (first name, last name, age, I like chocolate and ice-cream)

Activity: Circle of trust

Personal reflection

The feelings that are created when a research team visit such places are peculiar. On the one hand, there are feelings such as sadness and grief for the life conditions and the previous experiences that these people carry, and especially when these refugee children feel pain and loneliness.

The first time the research team arrived at the camp saw a "neutral" area. From the outside, the roads were deserted and there were some parked vehicles, obviously of the people working within the camp. Externally the containers: some of them were slightly painted in other colors, such as red or blue and had few posters or an announcement, such as "school will open soon". The rest were in neutral white or gray colour and generally the image can be described as "flat". The courtyard looked like a roughly crafted "factory", spacious without nearby trash bins. On the other hand, there are positive feelings such as

pride and relief that there are people who want to ensure that all human beings can fulfill their potential and live productive lives in harmonious societies.

The real conditions at the camp were different from any expectations. Generally, regarding the teaching staff, it decreased in a period when the number of migrant children doubled. It is worth noting that now there is no evaluation of the educational project by an official body and the Ministry of Education has chosen to reduce the staff for the management of the project about the smooth integration of children in education from 6 people to 2 people, in order to supervise 40 schools for education of immigrant children. Greece is a transit country and is essentially called upon to do a good management of the crisis as it is not the final destination of the refugees. The program for the integration of children is not working effectively due to Covid-19 pandemic. Also, the financial support package is spent on managing the situation generally and not on the smooth integration of refugees. The educational act does not take place in a vacuum. When children go to school at the end of November and not from the beginning of the school year then it is difficult for migrant children to have social interactions and gain sociability. The prevailing conditions do not take into account the family and are a dystopian condition. Also, the closed type structures do not allow to refugee children to interact and that is why it is not easy for them to learn the Greek language since they do not come into contact with members of Greek society.

The main challenge remains the effective implementation of culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy given that students lack English proficiency (only few children had a good level of English language, especially older ages) and they do not master Greek language. And of course, the child-centred or child-focused research that requires children to be active rather than passive partners to the researcher (Emond, 2006) results to be a lot more difficult to apply in practice because it requires to have in mind children variables – refugee children do not form a homogenous group - human behaviour, social representations. Furthermore, the research team did not show any form of discrimination in their operation in (and out) of classrooms and children were seen as credible informants.

Turning a reflexive gaze upon our fieldwork practices, first of all it is essential to gain permission in order to entry into the location of our study and make sure that research team spend sufficient time with the participants in order to collect useful data for the study. Researchers record actions, activities and behaviour as they occur, so must be concentrated and well-prepared. In this way, the quality and quantity of observations, the role of the researcher (passive or active observer) and the rapport that he establishes with the participants under study allow to move into a new culture and accompany in a systematic manner the experiences, views, perspectives, representations of our participants.

2.2 Interviews

Access and usefulness of methods

For the purposes of our research – in a constrained time – the use of semi-structured interviews was deemed an efficient method of data collection. The interview guide composed of twenty open-ended and closed-ended questions is debated along three axis. The interview begins with general questions asked to identify the socio-demographic characteristics: age, country of origin, family members, family reunification, duration of stay in host country. The second axis is related to social frame. Specifically, we examine the views of refugee children concerning their surrounding environment, their perceptions during the resettlement process, their social interactions and friendship. In the third axis related to education, questions revolve around prior-schooling experiences, daily activity in school and children's expectations and dreams. The different types of questions should be considered as points on a continuum that aims to uncover the story behind the participant's past and present experiences. All interviews were recorded using a voice recorder and transcribed verbatim. In addition, we use a code, which was actually a number allocated to each refugee child to protect its identity. For instance, the code (C20) refers to the child with serial number twenty.

Among the 21 children interviewed, 5 were boys and 16 girls between the ages of 10 and 17 years old and they have been in Greece for 7 to 72 months. The interviews lasted 7-16 minutes and as mentioned above, the interview guide covered topics such as current situation in Greece, education, friendship, struggles, hope for the future. It is important to note that interpreters (interpreter from Danish Refugee Council and interpreter employed from the municipality of Chaidari) were necessary to convey information and meaning between researchers and participants. The interpreters already worked full-time at the camp for several months, so children felt familiar and at ease with them.

All participants' parents gave their informed consent for their children to participate in the study and were not compensated. It was stressed that participation was voluntary and children could stop participating at any moment. It is essential to underline that the interviewer did not press for answers in order to protect children from even potential harm. Some children were more talkative and in cases where the children were shy and required a good deal of encouragement, we tried to make them feel more comfortable and help them to express as much as possible (for example by rephrasing the questions, providing "hints"). Empathy, warmth, explanation of the aim of interview relaxed the children. Confidentiality was upheld and the interviews were conducted in Greek, Arabic, Farsi or English language with the help – when needed - of an interpreter in order to ensure effective communication. The findings reported relate solely to the child-centered assessment practices. The actual process of transcription started immediately after the end of all interviews.

As pointed out previously, the refugee children were cooperative and receptive to the interview, with a few exceptions that even if the refugee children came very willingly, they did not want to answer at all some questions. Generally, the researchers avoided questions that could reactivate the pain of traumatic events and opted for neutral questions without

emotional complexion or engagement but the difficulty to answer questions related to their past, country of origin or their journey until they arrived in Greece was present. To the contrary, it is important to emphasize that the interviewed children seemed to find questions concerning their future, hopes and dreams easy and gave an immediate response. Often, however, it was needed to repeat the questions to interviewed children and use examples in order to be able to answer them. In general, the research team had the impression that the children were familiar to the process, as if they had gone through it several times since they arrived in Greece.

The research team implemented strategies in line with the age of the children, their socio-linguistic identities, and the particular circumstances. A child-centred interview guide in the form of a game was designed to encourage peer-to-peer conversation. The interviews and the questions led the respondents to a biographical narrative. In this view, the interviews were transformed into multimodal life stories replacing the classic structured interviews. Consequently, the respondents come closer to the externalization of their feelings due to the previous on-site meetings. As previously stated, the research team had already established a relationship with the participants and created a space for confidence where they could express themselves freely.

Responses to methods

The interviews were included in the arts-based workshop as part of the same cycle of activities.

The research team designed for the refugee children a child-centred interview guide in the form of a game in the context of the methodological protocol of the project. This game takes place with the participation of 4–5 children, lasts for one hour and has specific rules and processes that correspond to the research questions and the principles of giving space to the children to participate actively, to express themselves – i.e. giving a voice to the children (Palaiologou, Kameas, Prekate, & Liontou, 2021).

In order to gain confidence during interviews, the importance of trust within researcher and interviewee is readily understandable. In addition, the researchers underlined the importance of children's right to voice their views and perceptions in questions / decisions concerning them. The interviewers asked simple, easy and short questions, gave time to children to answer and listened actively and patiently. The researchers explained to children that if they don't feel at ease continuing, they are not forced. The atmosphere between interviewer and interviewee was on child's level, which means, the first one gave meaning to child's words, entered into its daily life and considered interviewee as a complete child and not as a dependent, incomplete evolving human being. Respect of children's views and sensitivity to their particularities were also kept in mind. Additionally, researchers recognized that children were able to speak for themselves. The children were allowed to use all language resources, namely native languages, English and Greek. Competent interpreters assisted to this purpose as they knew how to bring the meanings forth in an accurate and culturally-sensitive way.

Assessment of child-centred approach

During the interviews, researchers used verbal (Greek and English) and non-verbal resources in order to communicate with children. Classes often included games, songs, and music kinetics in a circle to motivate and encourage students' participation. It is essential to note the use of different innovative child-centred research techniques, such as photographs and diaries. Also, the research team and teachers asked the children about their interests and what they had to suggest for the next meeting. Their opinion was measured and taken into account for the organization of activities. In this context, refugee children were asked to participate in the interview study.

The concept of child-centredness emerged from our interviews through the types of questions, the nature of themes and the attitude of interviewers. Specifically, we opted for clear and understandable questions and for open-ended questions which encourage the storytelling. The questions were in line with children's reality, maturity and needs. Specifically, researchers used short and simple sentences, spoke slowly and clearly. They rephrased questions that children did not understand and were careful for signs of confusion or misunderstanding. The scope of interviews was hence to identify the problems of refugee children, map children's views and perspectives, present challenges of integration process, examine their well-being and detect their feelings. Interviewers allowed children to freely express their views, to communicate and share their experiences and aspirations. So, participants were encouraged to share the meanings of the reality surrounding them. It is worth saying that interviewers informed children that there is not "right answer" and children's linguistic errors (in Greek or English) are not "repaired" in order to promote a positive reinforcement in an expressive micro-level.

On methodological problems in the collection of data from children and the power relations that may arise due to age difference but also vulnerability of refugee children creates an inequality in the relationship between adult and refugee child. To overcome such obstacles, the research team had the flexibility and great response to open research goals and methods (Ben-Arieh, 2005). Also, all the researchers in the group are educators with experience in participatory research with children and specially trained in issues of refugees and vulnerable groups. Confidentiality was also clarified to children especially since interpreters were full-time employees of the camp and on other circumstances worked with their parents, teachers, or other members of the community. Belief in confidentiality was achieved through the interpreter's good reputation in the camp's population as trustworthy and discreet.
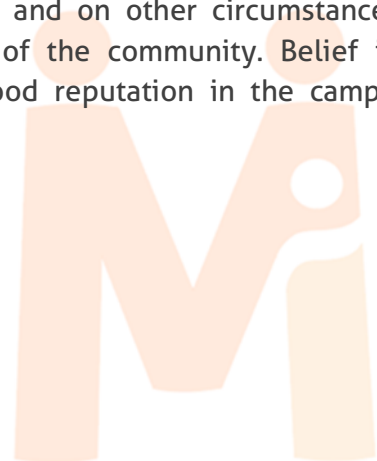
Personal reflection

Through the interview process some of the ethical dilemmas emerged during the study and reflected on.

There are difficulties in interviewing refugee children, because during the semi-structured interviews you may not pay attention to some important information and skip significant parts of the data. This is also due to the prejudices and ideas that the researcher possesses during the interview. It is needed to adopt a distance and an objective point of view, as much as possible, so that there are no personal filters that could interpret the context in a subjective way. If this distance does not exist, then it is almost impossible that there is no transfer of prejudices and perceptions that will lead to a wrong conclusion in the research.

There needs to be a professionalism and genuine interest in the research so that the views of the interviewees represent their point of view and not that of the interviewers. In addition, it is crucial to take adequate time to establish a good rapport with the children in order to enable them to reveal their feelings and expectations, and of course take time to clarify what the child is saying.

Some factors that were not initially anticipated, such as the time of the interview, the emotional charge, the difficulty of the children to answer some questions.

In terms of time, given the fact that the interviews are semi-structured, the research team should allow more time for the children to talk and not follow the next question when the children have a short pause. Also, it is important to report that in some cases researchers asked questions that were not linked to research axes or on the other hand, research objects were not explored in depth. In both cases, our concern was to avoid sensitive questions because interviewees were emotionally loaded.

There were moments of emotional charge where the children could not respond. Questions should be asked in a different way so that there is no such involvement.

When the children did not respond, there was an emotional charge for the researcher as well. Researchers stated that they felt empathy and helped them connect with children during difficult moments. On the one hand, they tried not to show their feelings, so that they did not feel sorry for them and that the interviewees were in a state of vulnerability. On the other hand, they showed that they understand and sympathize with their emotional situation by smiling or saying something irrelevant in order to relax or moving on to the next question. They tried to be neutral but at the same time they showed their emotional sensitivity. According to research, this is not a fault, the researcher expresses his emotion, and this could form a connection between interviewer and interviewee and reduce the influence of the power-submissive relationships. What is needed is the proper management of emotions, so that neither the interviewer. not to feel uncomfortable either the interviewee (Maggio & Westcott, 2014).

Finally, interviewers had to face the "I don't know", "I don't understand" children's responses due to the limited language proficiency or because children are not accustomed to serving as informants.

2.3   Different factors

It is important to note that the methodologies used must be in with different factors such as age, gender, language, ethnic group. Particularly:

Age: The age or in other words the developmental stage of students is related to cognitive maturation, cognitive flexibility, language skills and social, emotional development. This factor had a significant impact regarding interviews. In this view, older students responded with more courage and more detail in their answers while younger children found more difficult to understand some of the research questions. So, the conceptual content (of questions) must be understandable and accessible to student' age. The questions must be clear and age-appropriated.

Gender: Collecting data through interviews requires awareness and attention to gender at every stage of the process. Care was taken to ensure that the students were not exposed to stereotypical images of each gender or social representations regarding gender. We provided equal access to all students in a calm, friendly and informal atmosphere and all voices were heard.

Language: Several important issues were also raised by the factor "language". The students had limited English proficiency and had sufficient difficulty speaking on understanding Greek language. Their mother tongues were Arabic, Farsi or dialects. During the interviews, linguistic barriers were recorded and the interviewees had difficulties to develop appropriate responses. Students answered most questions with a simple "yes" or "I don't understand", that it can be interpreted as an ineffective communication due to linguistic barriers. In this reflect, the role of interpreter is crucial for successful communication.

Ethnic group: communicate with children from diverse ethnic groups / culture with different behaviours, customs and social values may emerge many challenges. It is important to approach these differences with respect. Assumptions and stereotypical perceptions about ethnic groups and their beliefs can be harmful and lead to discriminate against them. All research procedure should be formed so that it reflects the cultures and different aspects of migrant students from diverse groups (Banks, 2014). The research team embraces the differences and manifests equality and intercultural dialogue. Intercultural dialogue can only be successful if a group has an adequate understanding of its own collective identity. If this doesn't exist then embarks the path of xenophobia (Ratzmann, 2019).

It is stressed the necessity to negotiate and to question one's own values and practices, to listen to and engage with other cultures, to encourage the capacity to resolve conflicts

by peaceful means and to recognize well-founded arguments of others (Council of Europe 2008; Juchler 2009 as referred in Ratzmann, 2019).

3. Conclusion

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has been large, disrupting the conduct of our research and forcing researchers to rearrange and redesign part of the fieldwork.

The physical environment can influence the social interactions among the students. In other words, social interaction and the layout of space reciprocally influence each other (Brand, 2009). In this view, this practice involves relative accessibility of interaction and the socio-psychological interpretation of such interactions.

Teachers and researchers were flexible and worked at the pace of children and the children participated with curiosity, often describing to each other what they saw. Their expressions included questions but also admiration. Teachers and researchers ensure children have access to a range of experiences and allow them to explore and express their ideas. In addition, the research team address both theory and practice in multicultural education throughout the activities in a comprehensive manner, so that students can acquire the knowledge and confidence necessary to deal with multicultural issues in education with intelligence, professionalism, and understanding (Barry & Lechner, 1995).

These children are praiseworthy for everything they achieve; even under difficult conditions they find something that unites them. For instance, two girls, though from different countries (Syria and Afghanistan), spoke in Turkish to each other. The dynamics among refugees indicates the importance of friendship networks.

In conclusion, research with children always involves difficulties and unexpected events. Although there was preparation and planning for the methods and methodology for the exact course of the research, in practice this is never possible. During the process of building the questionnaire and the possible questions to the students, there was intense concern so that there are no points in the questions that will put the children in a difficult position. An issue that during the implementation of the interviews was ascertained by the research team.

In terms of the child-centred approach, the researchers took it into account at every step of the fieldwork and approached it from a pedagogical and ethical point of view. The members of research worked as a team, were flexible and adaptable to the needs of the children and tried to determinate achievable rules and set clear boundaries. They also recognized children as right-holders and they respected the child's right to be treated fairly and to be heard.

As Christensen & Prout (2002) said "*The perspective of children as social actors' has created a field with new ethical dilemmas and responsibilities for researchers within the social study of childhood. These concern, for example, the greater potential for conflicts of interest,*

often hitherto unrecognized, between children and other actors. It is suggested to work from a perspective of `ethical symmetry' in research relationships with children while taking into account the social and cultural positioning of children in their particular circumstances. An illustrative example is given of the ethical issues that can arise when children are seen as social actors. It is argued that codes of ethics, reflexivity and collective professional responsibility are all required in order to meet the ethical demands that flow from these newer perspectives on children. It is proposed, therefore, that researchers develop a set of strategic values within which individual researchers can anchor the tactics required in their everyday practice in order to work reflexively".

In order to provide better social and educational opportunities to refugee children and their families. Communities can play a significant role in identifying children' needs, in responding to child protection and in reducing risks through a care plan. Additionally, it is important to ensure that students learn the language of instruction and maintain contact with their mother tongue and to reinforce cooperation between formal and non-formal education in order to promote holistic children's development (Sirius Watch, 2018: 3). The involvement of parents with refugee background in their children's education is also crucial for academic performance and success. Refugee population has experienced lockdowns and restricted movement during the Covid-19 pandemic (Kondilis *et al,* 2021), the schools remained closed and the digital transformation of the traditional education system represented a menace for the continuity of education.

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ITALY
Erica Caredda

1. Introduction

This report contains reflections on the field work conducted on selected sample of unaccompanied migrant children in Sicily (Italy) within the MiCREATE project (WP8). The overall objective of this field work was to gain data related to integration processes and on the specific life experiences faced by migrant children in transition who are currently in Sicily from a child-centred perspective. The field research focused particularly on migrant children in transition, those who do not have a definitive legal status and whose migration path has not yet ended. The specific objectives of the field work were to collect data and testimonies on the specific life experiences faced by migrant children, on their understanding of well-being, their perceptions, values, attitudes and opinions in regard to the different aspects of their life in transition.

The report includes reflections on the methods used (namely participant observation and interviews), their usefulness in terms of collecting data, children's responses to the methods, and researcher's thoughts and observations. It is important to mention that the field work in Italy was highly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and government-imposed restrictions that limited the access to the centres for migrants, affected the design of field work activities that has to be adapted to the online environment limiting participant observation possibilities and also had impact on the general wellbeing of the migrants.

The present report first gives a brief presentation of the field work, the research plan and methodological approach, methodology used, and data collection process; then it provides the reflection on the 2 methods used, namely: participant observation (to the extent it was possible) and interviews; and finally, it provides concluding remarks with contextualization and critical discussion of the field work and methodology.

2. Methodological approach

The field work in Italy started in September 2020 and it was divided into 2 phases. The first phase was implemented in **September and October 2020**, and it was mainly focused on finding agencies and institutions who work with and should respond to migrant children's needs and that will be suitable for the research purposes. Such phase was a preliminary one, however, it was both fundamental and necessary to create a map of the reception facilities which were still active following a decrease in the arrival of migrants between 2018 and 2020, after the first pandemic wave. It was found out that most of the centres the research team tried to contact had been dismantled and only four cooperatives agreed to participate in the study, mostly because they already knew the research team. Therefore, after the identification of **4 reception facilities** in sites located in **three different Sicilian provinces (Agrigento, Trapani and Caltanissetta)** in small, old and poor villages whose economic life is mainly based on agriculture (apart from Marsala, a town near Trapani)**,** the research team organised an introductory meeting aimed at presenting the research to social workers and children (October 2020). In October and November 2020, the research team visited the reception centres to introduce the project, collect quantitative data about the reception facilities and plan upcoming research activities. The first visits also allowed to implement an observation targeted at the facilities rather than participants, because the contact with the participants was supposed to be established at a later stage. However, the research team was forced to suspend the activities so as to comply with Covid-19 containment measures applied at local and national level which strongly restricted mobility making travelling from one destination to another practically impossible. Access to reception facilities was forbidden so as to prevent contamination, therefore there was no possibility to implement the research activities in presence. Contacts created with the staff working in and managing the reception centres were maintained during the lockdown. They acted as mediators and helped to ask migrant children if they were ready to switch to online meetings and participate in the interviews. Finally, the research team resumed activities in **January and in February 2021** with online meetings with the 33 children through the Zoom

online platform. In **March and in April 2021** the 12 online interviews were conducted with the professionals working in the reception centres.

In collecting data, the following methods were used: **partly participant observation and interviews**. Participant observation was partly implemented during the introductory visit at the reception facilities. However, face-to-face activities with the participants in the centres were insufficient and only the partial observation was implemented, focusing more on the facilities rather than participants. Due to the restrictions mentioned above, all interview were implemented online via a Zoom platform. The interviews allowed to the research team to understand some aspects of the life of migrant children living in the sites, but it did not provide a full picture about the Italian reception system and transition of migrant children.

The number of migrant children involved in the field research is 50 migrant children who initially agreed to take part in the research. The partial observation took place in 4 reception facilities in 3 different Sicilian provinces; 33 interviews were implemented with children, while 12 interviews were conducted with social workers.

3. Reflective methodology

3.1   Participant observation

Access and usefulness of methods

As initially aimed and according to the aims of the field research, it was expected that the participant observation will be implemented at the beginning of the field research, after the identification and introductory visits at the reception facilities. It was expected to implement several visits at the facilities to gradually establish the relationship with the migrant children and professionals in order to get deeper understanding and facilitate the observation. The participant observation was aimed to provide the research team with the knowledge about the expectations of the migrant children and professionals, the daily lives, to analyse the context where migrant children live and how this impacts their transition.

During the introductory meetings with the managers of the reception facilities which were aimed to introduce the project and research and to obtain a consent from the centres to participate in the research, a partial observation of facilities was implemented because the manager of the facilities introduced the research team to the structure and migrant children present within the reception centre. However, the actual participant observation was impossible and limited to initial introductory conversations with the children that aimed to build trust and acceptance. Therefore, it is not possible to measure the usefulness of the participant observation method in this case. However, it is known and approved that

the method is of a high value while working with the migrant communities and aiming to assess the behaviour with respect to the social environment they live in[18].

Responses to methods

As explained above, due to restrictions and impossibility to implement actual participant observation, some conclusions in this paragraph are being drawn from the partial observation. Overall dynamics among the participants were affected by the presence of the research team. It seemed that the participants have not expected a visit and they were curious and shy at the same time due to the presence of the strangers. Some of the participants with better Italian linguistic skills asked few questions to the research team and wanted to know about the next meetings that were planned. Considering that in this finial phase the research team aimed to create trust with the participants and to be accepted by them, the passive observer role was simply impossible and instead an observer friend role was used.

The professionals present within the reception facilities during the introductory visits seems to be more cautious and tried to be more professional, inquiring about the research, activities and publication of the results. In order to create a more at ease environment, the research team adopted a friend approach also with the professionals, sharing personal experiences in the field of migration. This ensured that the professionals felt more relaxed and more natural environment was created.

Assessment of child-centred approach

Child-centred approach during the participant observation was merely linked to the informal conversations with the children in order to establish trust. Researchers acted as natural as possible, letting children guide all interactions/communication but at the same time facilitating the discussions. The researchers here did not act as passive observers but rather than active participants as this was a fundamental initial part to establish a more natural environment. Researchers also applied child-centred approach by being present in more informal situations (as much as the introductory meeting allowed) where migrant children can express themselves more naturally, e.g., in their rooms, open spaces, common dining lounge.

Personal reflection

The participant observation methodology might be a very useful method in normal conditions where the face-to-face interactions are allowed. Unfortunately, the field work in

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[18] Khan, M. H, Ethnography: An Analysis of its Advantages and Disadvantages (November 1, 2018). Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3276755

Italy was heavily influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions, limited the possibility to implement the actual observation. The researchers kept a contact with the professionals working within reception facilities during the lockdown and tried to learn about the participants through the eyes of the professionals, however this is a different method than the usual participant observation. The following activities with the participants (namely interviews) where implemented online, hindering the possibility to observe the real conditions and context of the participants.

3.2   Interviews

Access and usefulness of methods

Participants for the interviews were selected based on their internal motivation to participate in the research. Initially 50 children expressed their willingness, but at the end only 33 children participated in the interviews. The interest to participate in the research in general decreased due to the restrictions and impossibility to implement activities in presence. The participants who initially were motivated as they saw the participation in the research as an opportunity to interact more with the people from outside the centre, improve their skills and change the daily routine, they were more demotivated once the activities and meetings with the researchers planned for the participants observation had to be suspended, and interviews were changed to the online environment.

At the same time, the researchers observed some changes in terms of participation and involvement of professionals. At first, the research team collected positive feedback from mediators, educators and managers who were willing to take part in the interviews together with migrant children and facilitate the process. Later, due to the Covid-19 restrictions, all the procedures within the reception centres were managed by only one professional per centre who organised the meetings, motivated the participants and facilitated the processes.

Interviewing as a method had some limitations when speaking with newly arrived migrant children due to their language constrains. The absence of linguistic and cultural mediators led to the exclusion of several migrant children due to language constraints. Also, online environment did not allow children to fully express themselves because, firstly, the facilities and devices impacted the quality of the interviews. Reception centres are not equipped with technological devices and 2 centres did not even have a Wi-Fi network allowing children to participate in the sessions. Moreover, online environment does not allow shy people to speak and be pro-active. Even though the researchers did the best to conduct online interviews, however online interviews did not allow the researchers to build an empathic relationship with migrant children.

Responses to methods

All interviews took place via an online platform as it was the only tool professionals working within the reception centres and children were able use (they were using online platforms for attending e-lessons at schools).

Before the individual interviews were implemented, 2 online group meetings were organized and attended by a satisfactory number of participants. During the 2nd group meeting the participants were invited to implement an educational and recreative activity focused on their dreams. During the activity the researchers asked migrant children to create a suitcase to be filled with all the things they need to make their dreams come true. Some children decided not to take part in the activity as they were busy with school or other recreational activities. This group activity allowed to create a relationship with the participants and motivate them to participate in the individual interviews. During group meetings, we saw children progressively dropping out due to their linguistic difficulties, lack of interest, or their emotional burden (waiting for their documents or a job opportunity, etc.).

During the individual interviews some of the participants opened, while others were not eager to express themselves, therefore the researcher had to continue with informal conversation to keep the interview going. The older children (average age: 17 years old) were more willing to share their experiences about how they overcome challenges and aspects regarding their inclusion. Researchers noted that it seemed to them that older children wanted to share more about their situation and difficulties, and it seemed that they don't have anyone else to share their concerns.

Assessment of child-centred approach

Interview method is considered as a child-centred if used with more time available focusing on the needs of the participants. During the interviews migrant children were able to express themselves, share their thoughts, observations and concerns. In additional to that, they talked about other aspects that worry them and in some cases the participants even asked for the suggestions and support from the researchers.

The researchers tried to take into the consideration the needs and interests of the participants, for that reason also initial group sessions were implemented to create a trustful and safe environment that promotes a non-judgemental dialogue.

In some cases, it was very difficult to implement interviews as children didn't speak due to the language barrier or their personal traits. In those cases, the researcher had to ask very direct questions that participant can understand and find the answer, in most cases – a short one.
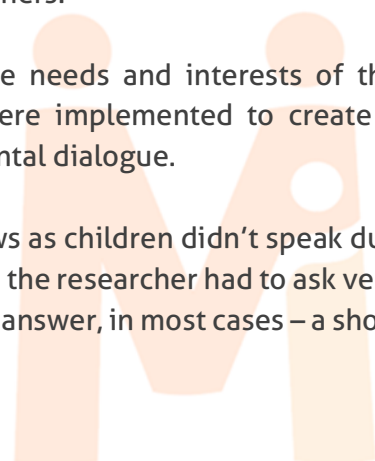
Researchers acted in a friend role, allowing children to guide the discussion, when possible. Sometimes the conversations were changing topics, and this process was left to its natural flow keeping their directions to the minimum. In any case, the researchers tried to collect all needed information for the research purposes.
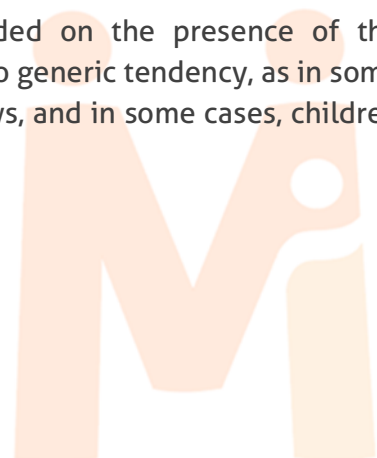
Personal reflection

For some children the interviews allowed to speak, express themselves and share their concerns that probably was not possible before. Some children participated in the interview for the first time in their life, therefore they were more reserved, as they had to understand what is needed from them and how open they can be. In some cases the researchers had to intervene proving additional support to them, but only in cases when this explicitly asked for and confirmed by the professionals.

3.3   Different factors

All interviews were implemented mainly a homogeneous group composed of 17-year-old migrant boys. The main differences were linguistic (most of them were Tunisian or Bangladeshi origins, a minority of them from Central Africa). Due to the linguistic differences, the researchers had to ask for the support of mediators working in the centre (Bangladeshi-speakers) and other mediators who have been already living in Italy for a longer time (Arabic-speakers). The way interviews were carried out did not allow researchers to implement different interventions, due to the time restrictions, poor internet connection and the openness of the respondents.

It was noticed that bit older children (above 17 years old) were move willing to open themselves and share their concerns and experiences. For newly arrived migrant children interviewing was challenging as they sometimes experienced severe troubles to express themselves due to emotional and linguistic difficulties. Even if, they were sometimes given the possibility to speak in their mother tongue due to the presence of the mediators, they rarely opened up themselves.

Finally, the openness of the participants also depended on the presence of the professional during the interviews. However, here there is no generic tendency, as in some cases the presence of the professionals facilitated interviews, and in some cases, children were not willing to speak at all.

4. Conclusion

In this report, we tried to critically reflect on the methodology used during the field research with children in Italy and to evaluate the extent to apply child-centred approach in the research.

The critical reflection on the methods is complicated as the implementation of the activities was highly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and restrictions that hindered the research. First, actual participant observation was barely possible, and researcher visited the reception facilities just for an introductory meeting before the restrictions were imposed. It would have been important and relevant to observe the dynamics and interactions within the reception centres in order to get a full overview of the situation of migrant children.

Interviews had to be adapted to the online environment that is not very favourable for migrant children who need physical contact and support. Even if a good number of interviews was implemented with children (33), however not all provided a certain degree of the information. Poor internet connection, linguistic difficulties, social distance and low levels of motivation hindered the conversations and willingness of the participants to share their concerns. Due to similar reasons linked to the Covid-19 uncertainties, the professionals even if initially quite enthusiastic about the research and participation, slowly lost interest and motivation.

The researchers had to create an environment favourable to the participants where children can speak freely, feel respected and understood, therefore the distant subjectivity of the researcher was not possible. The researchers tried to act as friends to empower the participants. It can be noted that structured online interviews with migrant children living in difficult conditions are not the most appropriate methodology to be used. However, when the conditions do not allow other possibilities, this remains the only one option to keep the communication with children.

The most important that all activities were children-centred from the beginning of the research and during online sessions, the researchers paid a particular attention to the children and encouraged them to participate by sharing all the things that might have interested them, therefore to a certain degree increasing their willingness to participate.

POLAND

Adam Bulandra
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1. Introduction

In the beginning, complementary to the preliminary description in the projects proposal the research was scheduled to be held in the Linin reception centre for foreigners seeking international protection. After the long-lasting exchange of information and negotiation with the Office for Foreigners, we did not get permission to enter reception centres to conduct the study. Furthermore, the state of pandemics resulted in closing all reception centres for external parties, even those organizations that frequently provided humanitarian support and their services for the inhabitants. To save the research agenda we approach the school in Coniewo where refugee children are going, but it occurred that the number of children living in the reception centre is insufficient to conduct the study there.

After the failure of the Linin concept of the study we deliberately decided on choosing different locations of alternative research to have a deeper insight into children's situation. One of the reception centres is located in a big city (Warsaw – 1,75 mln of inhabitants), while the second one is isolated – surrounded only by small villages (like Bezwola – 1200 inhabitants). The research in Coniewo school (proximity to Linin reception centre) was finally abandoned due to pandemics constraints. Due to lack of permission to enter the reception centres themselves, the study was thus conducted in two primary schools located close to two reception centres for foreigners seeking asylum.

The first one is part of the capital city metropolitan area in one of the capital's districts in Mazovian Voivodship. Or researcher spent five days observing children and spoke with three children here. The small number of interviews, despite overall children willingness, was caused by the dissent of parents, not trusting anyone. The centre here is specific one hosting the victims of family, sexual and gender-based violence which might contribute to the reason for dissent. The second one is located in the Lublinian Voivodship, being a small countryside school and the centre, itself is far from any larger city. This school has twelve years' experience of teaching children from the reception centre. Our researcher spent five days on observation and interviewing seventeen children. In both schools, children were asylum seekers.

Students attending those schools are subjects of compulsory education, so these schools were not the institution of choice (students/parents) but areas' schools where students are enrolled by inhabitance. The area school is obliged to accept a student that is living within this area.

In this report, researchers produce basic descriptions and accounts about the methods used, their success, children's responses to various methods, researcher's thoughts, observations and analytical memos. Researchers will likewise reflect on their capacity to represent the worlds of the migrant children to minimize their adult-centred perspectives and discuss how reflexivity was used to achieve a higher degree of ethical mindfulness – awareness of the relational and emotional nature of research. Within our report, we will draw upon Warin's (2011:812) perception of ethical mindfulness and reflexivity as intertwined concepts in improving the ethics and practices in research with children.

2. Reflexive methodology

2.1 Participant observation

Access and usefulness of methods

The study inside the reception centres was not possible due to the lack of governmental permission to enter those locations. Thanks to the established contacts and subsequent training we managed to conduct several interviews in the centres with the help of people
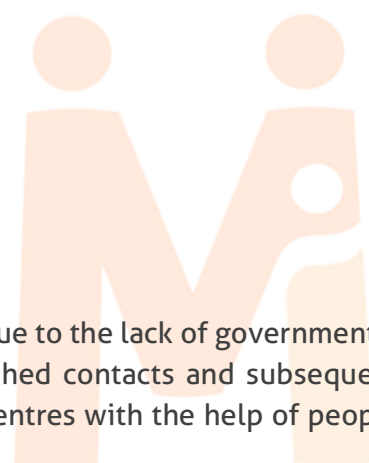
who worked there as language teachers of cultural assistants. No observation phase in the reception centre was possible.

In the Warsaw school, a researcher established prior contact with a gatekeeping teacher who had relations with children from the reception centre and offered her help during the observation phase of the study. She introduced our researcher to the school and provided support whenever needed. Usually, when the researcher entered a new class, the teacher introduced her to the children and the researcher asked the class if they agree she was present during the lessons. When asked, they always agreed; and due to the relatively large number of students in each class, her presence was barely visible which eased the observation. She did not interact with children or teachers during lessons. Observations met the expectations in terms of collected information. The possibility to observe children beyond the school environment was particularly important. The observer took part in the city trip during which less formal observation was possible bringing interesting data. Two cultural assistants were present during this trip which allowed noticing their work, methods used which unfortunately was not rated well by the observer. The new situation in which teachers and assistants worked showed no adequate sensitivity, behaving exclusionary or even oppressive towards migrants. It was the very essential outcome for the observation phase. The observation in a non-formal, out of school environment was perceived as useful and knowledgeable as broadened the perspective of migrant children functioning in situations where greater engagement and interaction was necessary. The relation with the school staff was proper but not very intense. The observer was allowed to spend some time in the staff room (when no observation in the classroom was possible) which gave her also an opportunity to talk to teachers in a pretty informal setting and learn their opinions about working with migrant children in general. Children and teachers did not take part in this report writing or consulting.

In Bezwola there was no gatekeeper or person introducing children with the presence of the researcher. To convince teachers and school staff to participate in the study a researcher organized a training session, where she presented methods of teaching Polish as a foreign language. This was the first such training in this school.[19]

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[19] The training session answered to expressed needs, also emerging from the recommendation of the Supreme Audit Office include in the audit report on the implementation of the integration means in the education of migrant children. All teachers participated in the workshop that familiarized them with JES-PL method (Language of Instruction – Polish). Method was developed to help teachers in teaching and support students with migration experiences. The support covers the development of language competences in certain school setting. JES-PL method benefits from the achievements of CLIL – Content and Language Integrated Learning and concerns integrated CLIL education based on the simultaneous lecturing content in the field of taught subjects and elements of a foreign language.
As a result, the method facilitates Polish learning and acquiring knowledge and skills in this language. The JES-PL method includes methodological and pedagogical instruction: it shows how to establish a relationship with students, based on trust, giving them sense of security and comfort. It shows how teachers can support students with experience of migration, prepares them to be cultural mediators and guides in the new environment. During the training, materials for learning Polish as a foreign language were also presented and donated to techers for use.

Classrooms in Bezwola school are small seized, so for some subjects like music or technology classes are joined between grades. Chechen children from the nearby reception centre are outnumbering Polish students. Observations were effective, providing valuable information as the classroom climate was less formal and children were given space to share experiences, life events, facilitating subsequent interviews with children. Due to the size of the school, there is the possibility to build close relations between students and school staff. It forms a more intimate, close culture of relations between school staff and children attending as anonymity is eliminated.

The classroom size had a prominent effect on the visibility of the observer. While it can be assumed that in a class of over 20 people the presence of an outside observer may (almost) go unnoticed, in a class of e.g. four it is simply impossible. Hence, the plan of non-participatory observation needed to be abandoned in favour of observation based on relations that were made spontaneously as a result of the students' interest in the observer. In a small countryside school, the appearance of a stranger prompted interest.

Therefore, it was important that the observation was not a purely technical activity, but was preceded by a stage of relationship building, thanks to which the school/class status quo was not violated/interrupted. The researcher spent some time before starting the observation devoted to telling about oneself and encouraging students to do the same, answering questions (mainly students to the observer, but also teachers to the observer). It was a very important stage, thanks to which the observed people had the opportunity to feel safe and appreciated. The observer each time assured that her goal was not to evaluate anything but just observe the didactic process. This was appreciated both by teachers and students.

In Bezwola, apart from the observations carried out in the classrooms during traditional lessons, the observer - similarly to the school in Warsaw - managed to participate in the outside activities of children. The occasion brought a trip to the memorial sites organized on the anniversary of the outbreak of World War II. This allowed for the observation of the relationship between children and teachers in different social contexts and tasks assigned to children. It also allowed observing:

- the behaviour of Polish and foreign students in a situation that differs from the class regime (less formal and not structured by rituals),
- spontaneous behaviour and relationships between students of the entire school in the situation of outdoor education,
- observing how teachers manage a situation involving activities at the cultural-religious site (e.g. how they deal with the situation of saying Catholic prayers at the memorial site when most children are Muslim),
- how children respond in situations that may potentially violate their sense of ethnic or religious identity (war, trauma, religion, etc.)

Such valuable observations were also made during the PE lesson (physical education), in which girls from Chechnya participated and which was co-educational. Having additional

information during the observation phase proved particularly important as it enabled an insight into the process of "accustoming" students from the reception centre with the situation when certain sports activities are common for both genders and are not separated.

Responses to methods

Warsaw school is a large facility, so the presence of the observer was hardly noticeable. Children did not pay attention to her presence, so it did not affect the class dynamics. The observer often was lacking information on the class she observed. She felt partly unprepared. It happened also there was no accession to be introduced and indicate the reason for the presence in the class. The relations with teachers were limited, no behavioural changes for teachers were observed. Participation in the city walk showed the change of teachers and assistants behaviour in different social contexts. During these out of school excursions, migrant children were largely neglected. The children in the course of the observation felt more confident with the presence of an observer, even relaxed. It happened quite naturally, without any triggering factors by getting used to the presence of the researcher in the class.

In Bezwola, before the observation phase researcher conducted training for teachers and other school staff. As a result, good contact with teachers was established, and the observer was perceived by them as an expert. Most of the teachers were open and helpful towards the observer. The relations with the two teachers went beyond school affairs becoming more personal. In small classes, her presence was noticeable but it did not affect the teachers' behaviour. They felt still freely, did not modify their approach and followed the lessons, as they did usually. It was confirmed by the behaviour of students who were not surprised by teachers behaviour, e.g. change of methods, or approach to lessons pattern. It was noticeable that teachers have great experience in working with children with migration background and their devotion to the pedagogic work. The teaching was built around positive relations with pupils and the feeling of being secured. Children trusted teachers, cooperated and engaged in lessons. There were no attempts to counter teachers authority or disregard them.

However, very often, feeling secure, they asked questions, specified questionable details, discussed, told stories, and answered questions. Apart from lessons with two teachers, there was a relaxed atmosphere in the lessons, which was conducive to children's openness and individualized work. During one of the lessons (geography), the researcher did not have a chance to introduce herself, describe her role in the class, and the atmosphere was rather tense throughout this lesson. The small number of students at school was conducive to the development of a good relationship between the researcher and the children. There was also noticeable, as confirmed by the teacher, that students' enthusiasm and motivation to work increased while the researcher stayed at school. The children showed great interest in the researcher, they came in contact with her and started the conversation themselves. The new stranger at school aroused great interest among children. This applied to both Polish and foreign children. Students were eager to start a conversation

during the break, asked questions and answered questions. They enjoyed the conversation, so they often continued it during the next break. The prospect of expected interviews also aroused great interest among students. They, without encouragement, created a list of interviewees, taking into account the order and specific date and time of the interview. They shared information after interviews and it encouraged them to meet. This could be felt in their attitude because each subsequent interview was somehow "easier" - the researcher did not have to explain the reasons, sequence and rules of the meeting, because it was done by the children themselves, informed by their predecessors. The interviews were long, exceeding an hour of conversation. During the interviews, children often took initiative, talked about issues that were not directly related to the question asked, and were interested in many issues. Those interviews also aroused great interest among Polish students who prepared their "who when" list and were disappointed when they found out that only their foreign colleagues were of researcher interest. Students repeatedly emphasized that the best part of this meeting is that the researcher devotes so much time to them individually that she talks a lot and listens carefully. The children felt important and enjoyed being the centre of attention. Some of them asked to meet again on the pretext of adding a few details or simply continuing the conversation.

The researcher conducting the observations and interviews in Bezwola was hosted with warmth ad heartiness. Her presence had not any adverse effect on the school's life and the continuation of the teaching process. In most cases, teachers behaved naturally and were willing to help the researcher. Children reacted positively to her presence and the willingness to talk with them, probably being already accustomed to the friendly atmosphere in the school. Children willingly engaged in interviews and interacted with the researcher.

In contrast, in the large school in Warsaw, it turned out to be impossible to create such a friendly and open atmosphere. The presence of a new person at school was not a very unique experience for children, because due to its convenient location in the capital city, this school is visited from time to time by other researchers, university internees, volunteers providing various workshops, etc.

In the case of both schools researchers also took part in extracurricular activities, such as trips, celebrations, etc., which allowed them to observe the behaviour of students and teachers in a different context and brought additional observations about the mutual relations between two groups.

Assessment of child-centred approach

In Warsaw, due to the size of the school and few opportunities to enter into closer relationships with children, it is difficult to speak of a child-centric approach. However, the researcher cared for children to give their consent to her presence in the classroom and her observation. In most cases, teachers allowed to ask for such consent and explain the role of the researcher. The children consented to her presence. Over time, there was a noticeable

increase in trust in the observer, but the relations between the researcher and the observed were not very intense. Due to the number of students in the class and teachers' approach - they were focused on the implementation of the curriculum base and usually preferred to spend as little time as possible on introducing the observer. The only exception was the lessons of Polish as a second language, as the teacher was the gatekeeper who introduced observer to the school. During her lessons, the observer was sometimes invited to participate, for instance, to say something in Polish to provide an example for children.

In Bezwola, we dealt with a completely different situation about the school environment. Due to the small number of students, personal contacts and small talks between the researcher and children happened regularly. Her visit was met not only with children's interest but also with great enthusiasm. Probably such things rarely happen in this village school. The classrooms climate at lessons with most of the teachers was informal, casual, making children feel good and safe. The researcher had the impression that children were cared for by the school staff, who in most cases were much engaged in their work. It should be noted that this school has already introduced a child-centred paradigm, perhaps without being aware of it. During several classes, children are given space to share their experiences and life stories. Teachers are very sensitive to cultural and religious differences and in most cases are well prepared to work with children with migration experience. Children are also given a sense of power and capability, taught how to avoid unnecessary competition, led on a positive path to success, always through assessment and strengthening child's talents. In one of the lessons, children autonomously decided to introduce the observer to a teacher who did not know her yet and described her role in the given circumstances. This and similar behaviours certainly give assumption to the conclusion that:

- children took the initiative as they felt confident and respected in this process,
- children got involved in the process and facilitated it in the way they felt is best,
- children in a subjective atmosphere expanded their autonomy, within which they not only gave their consent but also managed part of the process, e.g. (co-) organizing it,
- children entrusted the researcher and acted with a sense of security and even responsibility for the process of observation and interviews.

Personal reflection

The researcher conducting this part of the study in Warsaw school frequently felt improper, lost, often not knowing which class she will join. It is common for big schools that be laud and driven somehow by chaos. She regretted low activity in the classroom as she thought about the possibility to assist the teacher and at the same time build relations with students. The only exception here was the aforementioned lessons in Polish as the second language.

The most challenging situation in the Warsaw school took place when the observer joined a group for a school trip to the centre of Warsaw. As mentioned before, the teachers and culture assistants treated migrant students with some superiority and indulgence and it was

noticeable that they do not expect migrant students to understand and benefit from the trip as much as Polish students should have. Witnessing this made the observer feel uncomfortable and willing to talk to the teachers and assistants about their attitude. Finally, she decide not to, feeling it is not admissible, because it would have interfered with the observed situations and definitely would have deteriorated the relationship between the research team and the school staff and its management. Anyway, this was one of the major ethical issues to deal with as observed behaviours constituted the model examples of symbolic violence in education. This was manifested by formal and hierarchical relations between teachers and students, a manifestation of authorship, silencing children, cutting off the discussion, enforcing certain narration to historical events.

On the contrary, in Bezwola the school community resembled family and all had close relations. The researcher joined classes according to the schedule prepared by the headmistress, which was updated on daily basis and checked for the absentees of teachers and then adjusted accordingly. The presence of the researcher had been taken seriously by all staff that engaged in cooperation. The observer was quickly accepted both by school personnel and children, especially those from reception camp as they are deprived of the opportunity to meet people outside the reception community. Children eagerly entered relation with observer yet before interviews started talking about their lives and experiences. One thing that is particularly interesting for the observer as a PL2 (Polish Language as the second one) teacher was to assess the balance between the language of communication and the language of instruction and its impact on the linguistic integration of children with migration backgrounds. Such observation was feasible during the mixed classes where Chechen and Polish students learned together. The observation focused on such elements of teachers' communication strategies as simplifying the speech, imagery, reactions to mistakes and lack of understanding, differentiating of the messages addressed to Polish and migrant children, working with manuals and assessment of the migrants' answers. Teachers who did not have glottodidactic background often chose the right approach by intuition. They for example adjust the message to the level of child competencies. It strengthened the positive relations with students, who felt secure and established trustworthy engagement in learning. This was perceived by the observer through the lens of her experience as the bond between children and teachers was already established and manifested during the observation phase. Children who attended Bezwola school was generally open and trusting with a new person arriving in the school. The first interview was much help here as an interviewed child shared her impression with other children. This issue is described in detail in the next paragraphs.

2.2 Interviews

In Poland, since 2015 we are observing a rapid decrease in the asylum application. The new government had closed the borders for asylum seekers causing a long-lasting crisis at the major border posts. The situation in Brest/Terespol earned international attention as Poland proved to breach the Geneva Convention on Refugees and had lost several cases before the European Court of Human Rights regarding the right to asylum. Nevertheless, the

number of people seeking asylum dropped and with this decrease the number of children in transition also diminished. It must be also noted that Poland is not the country of final destination for asylum seekers and many of them once pleading asylum is leave Poland to other EU destinations, including Germany, Austria, France or Sweden. All those circumstances caused a shortage of interviewees fulfilling the project's criteria of children in transition and made it impossible to reach the scheduled number of interviews.

Most of the interviews (12) were conducted in the Bezwola School by the researcher. All kids that matched project criteria and were attending the school had been interviewed. The researcher had been however forced by the school community to conduct interviews also with younger children and Polish ones that demanded equal attention. Another three interviews in this location were conducted after the school shut down during one of the lockdowns and was carried out by two teachers directly in the reception centre. Children who participated in these interviews were going to other primary schools in the area.

The interviews with children were long as the observer gained the trust of them relatively fast. The first interview held was breaking in the process as the interviewed kid pass the opinion on that conversation among peers encouraging them to participate. In the narration about the interview and its reception, two factors broke the ice, giving other children positive feedback. The first interviewed girl was satisfied that the researcher let her talk for an hour and paid attention to what she was saying, and she passed an opinion that the researcher is a kind and good person. This opinion repeated by other participants caused a growing interest in taking part in the study and children to be included in the interviews session prepared a special agenda created by themselves (a piece of paper with the schedule). When asked if they are willing to participate they always confirmed and eagerly repeated that long individual conversation was awarding and that the interviewers were very kind and emotionally warm.

No children were opposed to being recorded or felt oppressed with the use of the recorder. It was noticed that using technical equipment did not affect the emotions and self-control of interviewed child. If the child refused to answer the question it happened because the researcher instructed children about the possibility to refrain from speaking and – mainly – that the question touched this part of living stories that needed to be left behind by a certain child. It occurred more frequently with older children while younger ones usually answered all asked questions without hesitation. There was one particularly difficult interview with a girl from 8th grade that witnessed a crime over her sister and was emotionally devastated by the disappearance of her father (imprisoned, held in a psychiatric facility- a child could not be identified what exactly happened). The researcher feeling lack of comfort of the child, its emotions and strain in talking about those events did not explore them deeper having in mind the need for protection against difficult, traumatizing memories and the necessity to not victimize the child again.

In Warsaw, four interviews were conducted, of which three were done by the observer and one by the gatekeeping teacher, shortly after schools were shut down.

The first obstacle that prevented the observer from conducting more interviews was a huge difficulty with obtaining permission from students' parents. It was not possible for her to contact parents directly and the only link between the observer and parents living in the refugee centre led through the teacher working in the school and the reception centre. She made her best to encourage parents to allow their children to take part in the interview, but most of the parents were highly sceptical and even afraid that such an interview may be somehow used "against" their children at a later point. Interviews that were finally collected were rather short because participants were not very fluent in Polish and could not describe their experiences in detail. It is important to note that some students were willing to talk with the researcher but were not allowed to by their parents.

Access and usefulness of methods

The autobiographical interviews provided us with sufficient research material to conduct the analysis. It was certainly correctly chosen research direction. Especially the interviews conducted in Bezwola were very rich in data content as children easily opened to the researcher, they were talkative and in the opinion of the researcher - sincere. They spoke clearly and openly about their needs, they showed affection to the researcher. It was a very good idea to organize training for the school staff - the employees felt appreciated and were more open to cooperation. Thanks to this, researchers did not only act as takers but also became those who offered something, particularly sharing their knowledge and experiences. This good attitude established with the school management and staff acquired the necessary consents from parents possible. Children, as it was already mentioned, needn't be persuaded for being interviewed. They were even competing for the order of the conversation with the researcher.

The course of the interviews and the good attitude of children to the researcher was most likely caused by the fact that the researcher spent a lot of time at school, eight hours each five days. She was a visible person at every break, accessible, she willingly answered children's questions about mostly private matters (e.g. about her children). Another important factor was the friendly teachers' attitude towards the researcher and the fact that they often prepared the students in a few sentences for the presence of a stranger in the lesson.

The subjective approach to the child, acceptance of the children's initiative (e.g. in terms of organizing interviews and answering questions in the interview) made meeting something pleasant for both parties. Children were assured of the researcher's genuine interest in their stories, and it had a great influence on their openness and honesty in their statements. Furthermore, the researcher accepted the agenda of the interview that was prepared by children and was answering most of the questions that the child asked during the interview, also those related to the private life of the researcher.

It should be emphasized that planning interviews with children and young people should take into account the integration elements that ought to occur earlier before the interview

starts (relation-building events, small talks, art-based practices, showing interest). Their relation-shaping significance was invaluable for the outcome of the interviews.

The interview itself was conducted according to the scenario drafted by the MiCreate research team, but due to the dynamics of children's associations and statements, each interview differs and distributes the points of gravity differently than others.

In Warsaw, the greatest obstacle came with obtaining parents consent for the interview, which was hard even with the support of a teacher known to parents and children. We tried to use her assistance but most of the attempts were futile. Parents, recently entering refugee procedure and usually coming from countries ruled by totalitarian regimes controlling every element of personal living and making it suspicious created a mental barrier that was impossible to crash. Furthermore, most of them suffered domestic violence or sexual and gender-based violence. As a result in the presence of an observer, only three interviews were made. After shut down of schools in the second Polish lockdown, the aforementioned teacher manager conducted another interview with a Ukrainian child inside the reception centre. All other interviewees were of Chechen origin.

During the study, we did not use any art-based methods to facilitate engagement. Instead, we cooperated with teachers and school staff, making relations that resulted in the possibility to conduct some of the interviews during the lockdown. They also contributed to reporting, bringing more insight into the reflexive methodology, contrary to children with whom we lost any connection when schools were closed again in the response to pandemic security restrictions. Furthermore, we regretfully received the announcement that the school in Bezwola was closed. Our researchers made a social campaign to save this school as a perfect example of a child-centred approach in education based on the individual integrative work with a child, but these efforts failed.

Responses to methods

Students from the reception centre were recognized as open and willing to cooperate. This facilitated the contact of the researcher, although it was as well important that the relation was symmetric and the researcher approach to children as equals. She managed to gain students' trust by her accessibility (during breaks, lessons, before the beginning of the school day and after its end) and the interest in stories and opinions of students expressed in conversations in which partnership relations were maintained: everyone (student and teacher) could ask her question,s expressing one's opinion, joking, etc. The researcher is convinced that repeatedly emphasizing the right to refuse the answer during the interviews played an important role in relationship building. This strategy specifically helped older children in dealing with trauma. Such children did not feel forced to answer questions, were not pressurized and in the course of the interview became more open and trusting. Also, the lack of a judgemental approach was very helpful.

Similar aspects were important for teachers - the teachers' confidence was positively influenced by information that the presence of an observer was not related to the evaluation of the teacher's work. The explanation of the purpose of the observer's visit and the description of the project was important, valuable for teachers and won their favour. Both teachers and the headmistress were ready to provide help, organizational support and were cooperative. This had a prominent effect also on the researcher's relationship with children: they, observing the good relations between the researcher and their teachers, gained self-confidence and trust.

Assessment of child-centred approach

In most cases, interviews were conducted (until schools were closed due to the pandemic) in a safe school space, known to the student and providing necessary intimacy. They were conducted in a relaxed atmosphere, respecting the needs and expectations of children. The school premises gave the opportunity to openly talk about personal experiences, which would probably be difficult in the reception centre where one room is often used by the entire family, often with many children, not allowing for privacy. Conversations were open, with limited stimulation from the researchers. Most of the children were eager to talk about their experiences (often unpleasant ones), their needs and plans for the future. In the case of researchers, it is difficult to talk about any existing power relations as coming from the outside and staying for a lengthy period they were able to instigate children's trust and even enter into friendly, lax relationships with them.

Even if students' proficiency in Polish was limited, they usually seemed pleased that their experience is of adult person interest and that the whole conversation is being recorded, which showed them that what they have to say is important.

Personal reflection

In the case of the Warsaw school, convincing parents to give consent for the participation of their children in the research turned out to be a big problem. At that time, the majority of the centre's inhabitants were Belarusians and Chechens, who fled their countries due to political persecution there. Their confidence level was extremely low even when approached by a person working with them on daily basis.

Additionally, we observed a cultural difference in perceiving the role and significance of a psychologist (the researcher who visited the Warsaw school was a psychologist and was introduced as such to parents). It turned out that for adults from Belarus or Chechenya a perspective of contacting a psychologist suggests that there may be something wrong with a child and they preferred to avoid it.
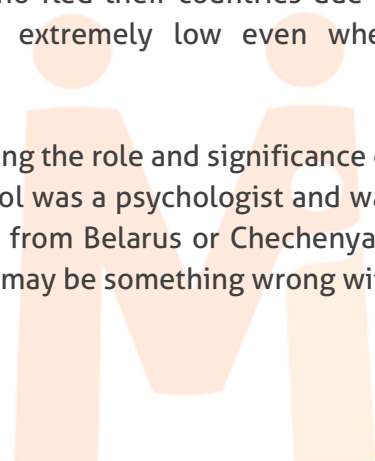
During less formal moments such as breaks between lessons or the city trip, the observer was treated by students as one of the teachers and apart from some exceptions they did not approach her.

In Bezwola, there were no organizational difficulties and the cooperation between staff, parents and children went very well. By far the most difficult personal experience of the interviewing observer was traumatic biographies of children. The researcher was particularly touched by the contact and conversation with a Chechen teenager who witnessed the murder of her sister. The girl's story should be declared unfinished - it was one of the most difficult interviews. The girl left many questions unanswered, or "saved herself" with false or untruthful answers (this was verified by comparing her statements with those of her siblings). She implemented defence strategies. For example, she did not accept information that her father may be in a psychiatric hospital (another version given by the teachers: in prison) after the trauma related to the brutal murder of his daughter. The girl glorified her father, drawing the image of an extraordinary person. She was just talking about the loss and missing.

Another quite surprising experience came with the decision of one of the Chechen boys to use a Polish equivalent of his first name in contact with the researcher. It also surprised teachers, who always referred to the boy by his Chechen name and did not even know how he called himself in Polish. It can be assumed that it was an attempt to build his image, consciously create himself: the boy, asking to be called by a Polish name, thus drew attention to that part of his identity which was not related to his ethnic origin, his previous life, but that, which started in Poland. The boy was extremely open to contact and eager to maintain it or even enforce it. It was also surprising.

In both cases, it was clear to the researcher that the contact/relationship must undergo a very distinct individualization. In the first case, it was important not to ask revealing questions, to take into account the child's right not to answer some questions and refrain to disguise the discrepancy between the version of the girl and her siblings. In the second case, it was important to accept the presence of the boy near the researcher at almost every break, listen to new stories, e.g. about picking mushrooms, and show interest.

We have noticed also a difference between older and younger children: the older ones sometimes displayed behaviours suggesting that the interview was stressful for them, and they occasionally withdrew from the relationship. On the other hand, the younger ones showed interest in the researcher and they eagerly talked about their lives, basically not self-censoring the content, which was the case with older children. Younger children often did not know why they were in Poland and did not know/remember the details of their journeys. They were also unaware of their status. Older children likely had such knowledge, but sometimes censored it.

The researcher had the strong feeling that Chechen children put great trust in her. It was noticeable by behaviour and a surprise because the length of acquaintance and its circumstances should not be a sufficient premise. Such an account was likely related to the

fact that informal leaders among children (one of the older girls and her slightly younger brother) felt that the researcher could be trusted (to a certain but significant degree). There is no doubt, however, that it was not a full trust, which seems to be perfectly understandable.

2.3   Different factors

Observation as a method is insensitive to criteria such as age, gender, religion, legal status, socio-economic status, language, and disability. This method does not hinder access to research techniques and the observer can accomplish his task without barriers. On the other hand, interviews with children and young people with migration experience have a critical point, which is the language knowledge or lack of it. It is not possible to conduct an interview if the child is in Poland for a short time and has not yet managed to learn to speak Polish. There was no such situation in Bezwola school, but theoretically, it could have arisen. This would mean that if the researcher does not know the Chechen language, the interview was not be carried out. The interviews were conducted in the researcher's language, which in most cases was the third language for children, after their native Chechen and second Russian (a large proportion of children learned Russian yet in the reception centres). In this situation, it should be assumed that the command level of the Polish language influenced what information the researcher obtained. It is quite natural that the respondent had to look for a communication strategy in conditions of limited linguistic competencies. Sometimes researcher's knowledge of Russian was helpful allowing children to use the Russian equivalent of a word that they did not know in Polish.

The age of the respondent was an important factor affecting the contact/interview. Older children were sometimes more restrained, especially in providing information about their family and legal situation. They also often reported no knowledge in this field as their parents did not talk to them about it. It is difficult to judge whether it was truthful or evasion from the uncomfortable question. In turn, younger children certainly did not have such information, but generally, they self-censored their statements less frequently. They also had more plans for the future compared to older children and fewer memories of their country of origin.

No significant influence of other factors on the course of the study was observed.

3. Conclusion

The study conducted in the reception centres or more precisely in the schools attended by children in transition had been successful despite formal and environmental obstacles, including the state of the epidemic. Researchers managed to collect sufficient material for further analysis and draw conclusions. The study group had not been ethnically diverse – most of the children who take part in the research were Chechens. This is still characteristic of the transition sites in Poland. The state of epidemic together with the strict border

policies enacted by the conservative Polish government stopped the influx of people and reception centres emptied, some of them was permanently closed. The number of children in reception centres dropped and unable for instance to conduct the study in Coniewo village – a school nearby Linin reception centre. Despite the Brest/Terespol crisis disturbances, after August elections in Belarus led to closing the border by Belarusian authorities.

Outcomes of the observation and interviews allowed us to conclude that research was much easier in smaller, countryside schools. It was probably caused by more individual approaches possible in smaller classes and generally more amicable environment and less anonymous community.

The participatory observation proved to be an effective research method however more sufficient in the countryside school where the researcher being noticed had many occasions to spontaneously build relations with children. The interest in the stranger was challenging for the researcher and obliged her to equal sincerity and authenticity to build trust within the community. A good scheme of communication between peers and teachers determined the success of the study. After the first interview opinion given by the respondent spread fast within the community resulting in queues for the meeting and positive attitudes of children.

The possibility of participation in extracurricular activities had a profound effect on the possibility to answer research questions. The interviews were substantial even taking into account the difference between younger and older children attending village or city schools. Younger children were more open than the countryside children did.

SLOVENIA

Barbara Gornik
Zorana Medarić

1. Introduction

Research under workpackage 8 Migrant Children in Transition began with a review of the existing theoretical and empirical literature on migrant children in Slovenia and an assessment of the institutional support offered to asylum-seeking children through public policy and existing practises. Already at this stage it was possible to assess how children's rights are taken into account in organisational processes and to what extent asylum-seeking children are recognised as individuals with special interests and needs.

This was followed by fieldwork at the asylum home for vulnerable groups of migrants in Logatec between August and October 2020. We visited the facility regularly to conduct

participant observation. During this time, we conducted seven interviews (individual and group). The interviewees were selected from among the minors accommodated in the asylum home. Although we aimed for age and gender diversity, this was not possible due to the extremely low number of girls and migrants under the age of 14. Moreover, girls and children under 14 usually travel with family members and are less open to communicating with other people in the asylum centre. Considering that most migrants leave the asylum centre premises within a few days of their arrival and continue their journey to other European countries, we acted pragmatically and decided to approach migrants who were more willing to talk to us, in our case unaccompanied male migrants between 14 and 18 years old.

We soon realised that these unaccompanied minor migrants are not in a position to give a comprehensive assessment of the asylum process because, as mentioned above, most of them leave the asylum home within a week of arrival and their asylum procedure, which officially starts with the first interview, has not yet begun. For this reason, we conducted additional interviews with two asylum seekers in Student Home in Postojna. The home accommodates unaccompanied minor migrants who are in Slovenia for a longer period of time and are going through an asylum procedure. At the time of the research there were five unaccompanied asylum seekers in Postojna, but only two agreed to participate in our research. Their participation was important to assess how the child-centred approach, in particular respect for the rights of the child, is implemented in the asylum procedures.

During the fieldwork, we also found that asylum-seeking children can provide some, but not comprehensive, insight into the child-centred approach to asylum procedures, mainly because they are not familiar with the rights they have as children in asylum procedures. For this reason, data collected from children was supplemented by information obtained in interviews with actors working with asylum-seeking children, including legal representatives, legal experts, social workers and reception centre staff. Informal interviews with other actors (legal representatives, security staff and social workers in asylum home) were conducted to complement the information gathered at the level of desk research and fieldwork with children. This stance broadened the research process in that the understanding of adults was also taken into account when interpreting the project findings.

The following report aims to reflect on the methodology used, in particular the use of participant observation and interview methods and their usefulness. It also reflects on the way we approached children and gatekeepers and how we built rapport with children and staff. It includes an assessment of what was good/negative in gaining trust with children, how we managed to use a child-centred approach and how the child-centred approach was ensured and promoted. Finally, the report includes our reflections on the most difficult situations we faced during the research, our expectations and personal feelings about a particular situation.

2. Reflexive methodology

2.1   Participant observation

Access and usefulness of methods

Approaching the gatekeepers

There were two gatekeepers at the Logatec research site. The key person for granting access was the head of Government Office for the Support and Integration of Migrants in Ljubljana. She was contacted by email in February 2020 with a request for access to the asylum centre in Ljubljana. The head of the office assigned a contract person, an employee of the office, to communicate with the lead researcher. The planning of the research was abruptly interrupted two weeks later due to the outbreak of the Covid 19 pandemic. Research activities were postponed until later in the summer, when the situation regarding the pandemic was expected to improve.

In June 2020, a new attempt was made to obtain approval for the research site. The main contact at the office informed us that they could not grant us access to the asylum home in Ljubljana due to the Covid 19 situation and the regulations requiring a 14-day quarantine for migrants. The asylum home was overcrowded with migrants. Considering the official response, we assumed that the management did not want researchers on site because of the conditions they were facing. After receiving a negative answer, we privately contacted an acquaintance, a staff member of the asylum home in Ljubljana. She helped us with a new request to the head of the office and got us access to the asylum home for vulnerable groups in Logatec. Requesting access with the help of the internal staff proved to be very helpful and valuable in this context.

The second gatekeeper we approached was the head of the Logatec asylum home. She was informed in advance about our research activities by the head of the Ljubljana office, who approved our presence at Logatec. In this respect, there were no problems from her side. She explained to me that she had no problems with us being on the premises as long as we had permission from the head of the Ljubljana office. We arranged a meeting where we presented the MiCREATE research protocol before entering the field. We were allowed to move around freely on the premises of the asylum home premises on the days and at the hours we decided ourselves. We had the impression that we had a trusting relationship with the staff of the asylum home, especially with the head of the department. All of them were willing to give us additional explanations when we approached them with specific questions. Their attitude was much appreciated by us because it made us feel welcome and not intrusive.

The field research with unaccompanied minors in the Postojna student home did not include a phase of participant observation, but only interviews. Therefore, the process of contacting the gatekeepers is described in the Interviews section (p. 6).

Implementation of participant observation phase

We were two researchers who visited the asylum home in Logatec several times a week from August 2020 to October 2020, spending about three hours on each visit. We spent about 30 days at the research site. In our fieldwork we tended to adopt a combination of observer (passive observation) and friend (moderate observation) roles.

On the first day of fieldwork, we used only passive observation techniques, as we were unfamiliar with the place and wanted to observe what was happening from a distance first, to feel the atmosphere of the place and observe the migrants' behaviour before engaging with them more actively. We were observers of the dynamics and happenings in the asylum centre; we observed the activities in different parts of the asylum centre from the side. We did not approach the migrants or engage in activities. Instead, we used the 'fly on the wall' technique to observe things as they happened, naturally and as undisturbed as possible by our presence. The technique of passive observation was useful for us to get used to the new environment and to feel safer when we started talking to the migrants. We did not know how they would accept our presence, so we wanted to take it slowly and not rush into the field.

Soon we realised that we could not act as passive observers for too long without making ourselves suspicious to the migrants. Right after the first day, we started to contact them because we felt that we had to explain our presence to them somehow. Breaking the ice was a challenge because we did not know what they wanted to talk about, what we could ask them and so on. They were interested in our role and asked if we were social workers, from UNICEF or another NGO. From the second day on, we moved to moderate observation and started to actively spend time with the migrants.

We considered it very important to be present in the asylum centre on a daily basis, as the turnover among the migrants was very high. The daily presence was crucial to gain the trust of the newcomers, because they saw us talking to the migrants who lived there. Also, we felt that if more than three days passed without our presence, we were back to at the beginning of the research, especially because the migrants we had met and could involve in the research were most likely already gone. Each time a few days had passed since our last visits, we met completely new faces and had to spend considerably more time establishing a new contact with the migrants.

Building trust with unaccompanied minors

In our approach, we tended to adopt a friend role. Our aim was to deal with unaccompanied minor migrants on a relatively equal basis and to express our desire to listen to them. We avoided being pushy and forcing our presence when we felt that the migrants showed obvious distrust or lack of interest in talking to us. We wanted to connect with them in a spontaneous way, just as one builds relationships in other interpersonal situations. Because of their age, life experience and developed personalities, we felt that we could build a relatively equal relationship. The fact that we were female researchers (aged around 40 years) could have a positive impact on building trustfull relationship. However, we still felt that there were status differences between us and them that made the power relationship unbalanced.

In order to reduce the power imbalance as much as possible (knowing that it is impossible to reduce it completely), we made an effort to spend as much time as possible with them. We approached them with questions like: How are you? Where are you from? How long have you been here? We took time to talk to them about the things they wanted to talk about. We often talked about their journey to Slovenia, their experiences before they arrived, their home and family, their country of origin, their plans for the future and the like. We joked with them and tried to find common ground. We tried to build relationships of mutuality and respect. We aslo connected with the migrants through social media profiles (Facebook) where we could chat in the afternoon after we left the premises of the asylum centre and where they could see what we do for a living (that we are researchers dealing with migration issues).

In order to build a relationship with the migrants, we responded to their needs, when possible, provided them with hygiene items and clothing, lent them our phone, allowed

them to connect to our personal internet hotspot, helped them with money matters and gave them information about the asylum procedure. On the other hand, this fortified our position of power at the same time. We offered to buy coffee for them several times and reacted positively when we were invited to have a cup of tea in their container. It seemed important to them to be able to accommodate us and offer us something. With the youngest ones (who were not included in the interviews) we also played games, painted and watched videos.

In order to build a relationship with the migrants, it was also important for us to show that we are not part of the institution of the asylum home. Therefore, we avoided talking to the security staff or having a coffee break with the social workers as much as possible. We felt that the fact that they saw us in the areas of the asylum home where the migrants were staying and not in the headquarters of the asylum home strengthened our 'neutral' position and our distance from the institution.

Usefulness of the method

Participant observation was particularly valuable in approaching the migrants and gaining an understanding of aspects of the migrants' lives in the asylum home. This was a crucial phase in building a relationship with the children and other educational staff who play an important role in the asylum process. In doing so, this phase had important implications for the feasibility of the research and data collection. The informational value of the interviews would have been severely compromised if we had not been able to establish at least some level of rapport with the unaccompanied minors during the observation phase.

The participant observation phase also proved important because it provided the context for the later phases of the research, including the open-ended interviews. We were able to ask questions that we would not have been able to ask if we had not spoken to the migrants

first. Finally, the observation phase allowed us to develop specific premises about the migration processes and to gain an understanding of the environment and dynamics within the context in which social interactions related to the migration processes take place, such as relationships with staff, institutional support and an insight into the (non-)presence of child-centred approaches in the facilities and reception centres. Through observation we were able to gain data on the functioning of the asylum home, the interactions between migrants and home staff and the social dynamics.

Responses to the methods

Unaccompanied minor migrants were generally very approachable. Language skills played a crucial role in migrants' accessibility. Those who did not speak English could not participate in our conversations. It often happened that there were one or two unaccompanied minors in the group who had sufficient English skills to have a meaningful conversation or to help with translations for his friends.

The fact that unaccompanied minor migrants are always with other migrants during their stay in the asylum centre made it easier to have a relaxed conversation in a group. We were two researchers doing the participant observation, which probably also contributed to a more comfortable atmosphere and more fun with the migrants. On the other hand, one could assume that when the migrants saw us talking to and helping other migrants, we were perceived as someone who could be trusted and who could offer support and help. However, it is difficult to assess how our presence influenced the migrants' behaviour.

The staff at the research site were generally very helpful and gave us information in informal interviews and off-the-record conversations. We spoke to other stakeholders (security staff and social workers in the asylum centres) to supplement the information we had obtained during desk research and fieldwork with the children. This stance broadened the research process in that the understanding of the adults was also taken into account when interpreting the project findings. However, as we spent more time with migrants, we were not able to build a very close relationship with other participants. Sometimes we felt that they lacked trust, especially because a researcher is expected to look at the situation critically.

Assessment of the child-centred approach

In the participant observation phase, we tried to spend some time with the migrants beforehand so that they could get used to us and our presence. This approach is in line with the child-centred approach as it builds on the most trusting interaction between us and the migrants. Building relationships and a good rapport with the children is an important element in this type of research. As mentioned earlier, developing a friend role was helpful to achieve a certain level of child-centredness and to promote the migrant children's agency. In the participant observation phase, we let them lead the conversation, let them
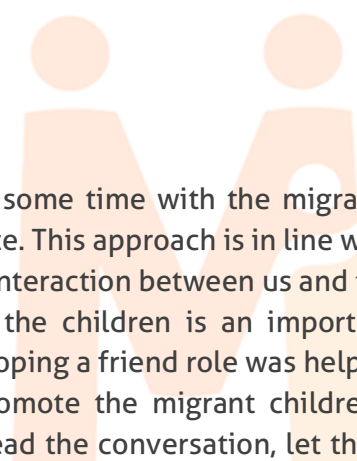
ask us what they wanted to ask, and eventually they could start or end the conversation with us whenever they wanted. In this sense, participant observation allowed us to minimise the power imbalance (although the differences were also not completely eliminated due to the limited time we could spend with them) and our research was characterised by the co-construction of knowledge in this part.

Our research followed a child-centred approach, also in terms of using the process of reflexive enquiry, meaning that we questioned our own views and were aware of our personal philtres and the situations we were in. After each day of observation, we took field notes in which we discussed not only what we had directly observed, but also our perceptions and views that might have influenced the research process. In the field notes we tried to reflect on what we thought was good to gain trust with the migrant children, how the children reacted to the methods and how we interacted with the migrants, and also what were (un)pleasant, difficult and challenging moments in the observation phase. From the field notes, themes emerged that we used to understand larger theoretical considerations related to the research question, in particular how children perceive or experience life in the asylum home and how asylum home staff deal with the transit situation of migrant children.

Personal reflection

One of the biggest challenges was to enter the field and approach the migrants, especially because we had never worked with migrants in the asylum centres before. We feared that our presence might be perceived as intrusive and wanted to avoid this. We felt insecure and were afraid that we would ask the "wrong" questions, questions that would be inappropriate, too personal or insensitive. We also felt that if we did the observations alone (individually) we would be less relaxed and more reserved towards the migrants. Doing research together with another researcher helped us feel more comfortable and open to different situations when we spent time with migrants. We also felt that being a woman generally did not have a negative impact on the migrants' reaction to our presence. On many occasions we felt that our approach was received positively and with interest. In this sense, we felt that they appreciated someone taking an interest in their experiences, feelings and well-being. We were perceived as someone who could offer help and useful information about the asylum process, but this confirmed our position of power. Unaccompanied minor migrants approached us with questions about the hearings, their rights and the follow-up procedures and asked for assistance with practical issues.

2.2   Interviews

Access and usefulness of methods

Approaching the gatekeepers

At the Logatec asylum centre we did not have gatekeepers to conduct the interviews with unaccompanied minor migrants. We mainly spoke to migrant children who did not yet have the full status of asylum seekers (they get this after the first interview) and who were not assigned legal representatives. Therefore, we had no one to ask for permission to approach the migrant children except the migrants themselves.

In the Postojna student home, the situation was different: firstly, because we did not conduct participant observation, and secondly, because all unaccompanied minors had a legal representative who had to consent to the migrants' participation in the research. Access to the Student home in Postojna was initiated by us approaching the headmaster and asking her to authorise access for research purposes. We were immediately redirected to obtain consent from the legal representatives of the migrant children. We received the contact details of five legal representatives, but only two responded with a positive answer. After meeting with the legal representatives, we were allowed to invite two asylum seekers to participate in the study. Both agreed to participate. Access to the site was thus approved by the headmaster of the dormitory and the migrants' legal representatives.

Implementation of the interviews

In total, we conducted nine interviews with 21 unaccompanied minor migrants; three were individual interviews and six were group interviews with two to four unaccompanied minor migrants. Seven interviews were conducted in the asylum home in Logatec and two in the student home in Postojna.

In Logatec, the interviewees were selected from among the minors accommodated in the asylum centre. We wanted to achieve age and gender diversity, but soon found out that this would not be possible due to the extremely small number of girls and migrants under the age of 14. We also found that girls and children under 14 usually travel with their family members and therefore do not interact as often with other people in the asylum centre. Considering that most migrants leave the asylum centre premises within a few days of their arrival and continue their journey to other European countries, we acted pragmatically and decided to approach those migrants who were more willing to talk to us, in our case unaccompanied male migrants between 14 and 17 years old.

During the participant observation, we took time to talk to the migrants before inviting them to participate in the research. We took special care to talk to migrants who claimed to be minors and at the same time manifested their minority also physically. This approach proved important because the migrants are familiar with the fact that as unaccompanied

minor migrants they have significant advantages in the treatment by the police and in the asylum procedure. In this context, we found that it is not uncommon for young adults to claim to be younger than they are. Some of the respondents who claimed to be minors admitted to being over eighteen and revealed their true age after they left Slovenia when we communicated via social media.

We did not use an arts-based approach when interviewing unaccompanied underage migrants, mainly because we felt that we would need more time to engage them in arts-based practises. Instead, we talked about their pre-departure experiences, detention and deportation, access to social support and legal protection, access to education and/or language courses, separation experiences, (in)safety and daily life in the 'liminal' phase'. We managed to get information about what makes them happy and secure, what is important to them and how they experience everyday life in asylum. We were curious to know what they would change to improve the conditions in the asylum system and what are the most critical aspects.

The interviews were conducted with the help of a translator. The involvement of a translator was necessary because the migrants did not have a sufficient command of the English language. We managed to hire two interpreters, but not professional ones. They were migrants from Egypt and India who spoke Arabic, Hindi, Urdu and Pashto. We felt that the procedures of consecutive interpretation of the interviews had an impact on the accuracy of the information. The interpreters did not translate all the statements but summarised the most important points. This gave us data that was valuable for conveying the content and message but limited for the ethnographic analysis of the verbatim transcriptions.

These were interviews with boys who had not spent much time in Slovenia either before the interview (up to one month) or after the interview. For this reason, we conducted additional interviews with two asylum seekers who were accommodated in student Home in Postojna. The home houses unaccompanied migrant minors who have been in Slovenia for some time and have gone through the asylum procedure. Both interviewees spoke Slovenian well and the interviews could be conducted without a translator. One of the two was 18 years old, so we did not need to obtain permission from his legal representative. The interview with the older migrant took place in a classroom at the student home, while the interview with the younger migrant was conducted in a café across the street near student home. The latter was conducted in the presence of the coordinator of the integration programme. Only the interview with the older asylum seeker was recorded, as the younger one declined this possibility. In the case of the younger asylum seeker, we took notes during the interview and wrote down the content of our conversation immediately after the interview.

All interviewees received a small symbolic gift after the interview as a sign of gratitude.

Building trust with unaccompanied minor migrants

In Logatec, we usually spent at least two to three days with the migrants before conducting the interview. The invitation to participate and the research itself were presented to them step by step, stressing that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they would help us if they chose to be interviewed. Explaining the purpose of our research was helpful in their decision to participate, as was the role of a friend that we took. Although we did not have enough time to build deep trust between us and the migrants, we felt that small favours and assistance on our part created a sense of reciprocity, in the sense of "I am helping you with your research because you are also helping me/being nice to me."

The interviews in Logatec were conducted in different places depending on the migrants' wishes, in the container, in the room, in the playroom and in the garden area. We were also completely attuned to the wishes of the migrants, who preferred group rather than individual interviews. We felt that interviewing in a group had a positive effect on the atmosphere of the interview, reduced stress for the individual participant (which could happen if there was only one interviewee) and contributed to their feeling of security. During the first interview, we obtained written consent from the participants, but found that this step was very child-unfriendly for migrant minors. Although the consents were given in a language the migrants could understand, they obviously showed feelings of mistrust, especially when asked to sign on paper. In all subsequent interviews, the step of obtaining written consent was omitted. Instead, we obtained verbal consent from each participant, which was recorded at the beginning of the interview.

In the Postojna student home, where we conducted two interviews, the situation was completely different. The main obstacle in the interviews was that we did not have a phase of participant observation that would have allowed us to build a relationship with the children. The first interview was conducted on the same day that we met the migrants for the first time. This did not leave enough time to get to know the interviewees and to spend at least a minimum of time talking to them in an informal atmosphere. Although we explained a few times to the coordinator of the integration programme that we wanted to interview the asylum seekers after the first meeting and that this was very important with regard to our child-centred approach, she did not seem to understand our position and the reasons for it. As we wanted to be as flexible as possible, we did not insist on further meetings and conducted the interview already at the first meeting.

When researcher arrived at the student home, she was greeted by the programme coordinator and taken to a classroom where two asylum seekers and another person from the home staff were waiting . The atmosphere was very formal. At the same time, the programme coordinator took a very protective attitude towards the asylum seekers, pointing out that the researchers often come to conduct interviews without giving these children anything as a sign of gratitude. This moment created some tension in the classroom and had a negative effect on the migrants' willingness to tell their story. Resercher had the feeling that they perceived my position of power and that they participated in the interview not because they personally wanted to, but because they felt obliged in some way.

The programme coordinator did not allow the interview with the younger asylum seeker to be recorded without the consent of his legal representative, while the older one, who was 18 years old, could decide this himself. As I had expressed the wish to have two separate interviews, this was not a problem and the younger one left the classroom after we had started the interview. I felt that the protective attitude of the coordinator had had a negative effect on the overall atmosphere and had created a feeling of caution and reticence towards me. Nevertheless, my interlocutor gave his consent to record the interview. Another person from the dormitory staff was present at the interview as an observer and followed our conversation from the back of the room. I had the impression that this had a very negative effect on the interviewee's willingness to tell his story, as if he thought he had to give the 'right' answers. He was not very talkative, gave short answers and was not very critical about the asylum procedures. I had to guide the interview with very specific questions and therefore could not let him do the talking.

Before taking the student home, I turned to the younger asylum seeker because I felt I had to explain to him that everything had gone well with his friend and greet him "in a more friendly and less formal setting". The conversation I had with him two weeks later in a café in the presence of the programme coordinator was better in terms of information value. We managed to create a very relaxed and positive atmosphere. The fact that the asylum seeker was accompanied by a programme coordinator whom he trusted and with whom he had a friendly relationship contributed to his willingness to tell his story. It was also important that the programme coordinator not only observed our conversation but actively

participated in it by reminding the interviewee of many funny anecdotes they had encountered together over the past two years. This felt very positive as it expressed the trusting relationship between the two of them on the one hand and allowed me to enjoy their mutual trust on the other, thus bridging and balancing the lack of trust between me and the interviewee.

Usefulness of methods

In the asylum home in Logatec we included boys who had not spent much time in Slovenia before the interview (up to one month) or after the interview. The limited time they spent in Slovenia was a particular obstacle to the informational value of the interviews. On the one hand, it can be assumed that these migrants were not in a position to provide a comprehensive assessment of the reception and determination procedures for asylum seekers. On the other hand, due to their short stay, they may have been less critical and less able to reflect on the main shortcomings and possible improvements of the system as such. As mentioned above, unaccompanied minor migrants usually leave the asylum centre within two or three days and do not yet start the asylum procedure, which officially begins with the first interview.

For this reason, additional interviews were conducted with two asylum seekers in student Home in Postojna. This home houses unaccompanied minor migrants who have been in Slovenia for some time and have already gone through an asylum procedure. This was important for our aim to assess how the child-centred approach, especially respect for the rights of the child, is implemented in the asylum procedure. The main obstacle in interviewing the migrants in Postojna was that we were not able to conduct a participant observation phase that would have allowed us to build a relationship with the children. Therefore, the information value of the interviews was weakened.

We only partially succeeded in obtaining data on asylum procedures through the lens of the child-centred approach, including access to rights and child-friendly procedures, effective protection measures and measures to promote children's well-being. During the field research, it became clear that children seeking asylum can provide specific but not comprehensive insights into the evaluation of the child-centred approach to asylum policy and law, mainly because they are not familiar with the rights they have as children in asylum procedures.

For this reason, data collected from children was supplemented with information obtained through interviews with stakeholders working with children seeking asylum, including legal representatives, legal experts, social workers, and reception centre staff. Informal interviews with other stakeholders (legal representatives, security staff and social workers in asylum home) were conducted to complement the information gathered at the desk research and fieldwork level with children. This stance broadened research process as the understanding of adults was also taken into account when interpreting the project findings.

Responses to methods

If we spent sufficient time with the migrants before the interview, this had a decisive influence on the information value of our conversations. We observed that if we did not devote enough time to them to at least get to know each other to some extent - e.g. if we had the feeling that one of them would soon be leaving the asylum home and we wanted to speed up the conduct of the interview - the migrants tended to give socially desirable or affirmative answers. The promise to give them small symbolic gifts encouraged their interest in cooperating with us, but not necessarily in talking openly with us. We had the impression that in some cases they only wanted to cooperate for the sake of the gift, without being willing to share their views sincerely. Not all who displayed this tendency before the interview were actually invited for the interview. The information value of the interview also depended on the personal characteristics of the interviewee, as some were more open, talkative and verbally competent than others.

Assessment of child-centred approach

The child-centred approach was partially followed. Migrant children could actively participate in the co-construction of knowledge when explaining their well-being and migration experiences. We tended to use open-ended questions to allow migrants to express their views according to their personal preferences.

The main obstacle was that the aim and topic of the research in work package 8 was very adult-oriented. Although the migrants were involved in the research as participants, in order to achieve the objectives of the project, the interviews had to be guided by the researcher, especially since the child-centredness in asylum law and policy is related to legal concepts and rights of migrant children, which require specific (adult-centred) legal knowledge. During the fieldwork, we found that asylum seekers can provide specific but not comprehensive insight into the evaluation of the child-centred approach in asylum policy and law; overall, they are largely unfamiliar with the rights they have as children in asylum procedures. For this reason, it was difficult to apply the child-centred approach to answer the research questions formulated in workpackage 8. In other words, issues related to access to social support and legal protection, support for migrant children, access to child-friendly information, access to rights and relevant procedures would not necessarily come up in the interview if migrants were not asked directly about these aspects.

Personal reflection

One of the biggest challenges we faced during the fieldwork was the high turnover of migrant children in the asylum home. Many of them came and left the facility within a few days. In this respect, we never knew if the migrant children we wanted to invite to participate in the study would stay in the asylum home long enough to conduct the

interviews. We felt that we had to hurry up and speed up the process of involving the migrants in the research activities to avoid them leaving the asylum home before the interview.

Another challenge was that sometimes we could not achieve a relaxed atmosphere during the interviews. This usually happened when we had not spent enough time with the unaccompanied minor migrants before the interview. In these cases, the interviewees were not very talkative, gave short answers and were not very critical of the asylum procedures. We had to guide the interview and ask very specific questions, which deviated from the child-centred approach.

2.3   Different factors

The target group involved in the study were all unaccompanied minor migrants with (pre)asylum seeker status, boys aged between 14 and 18. Given this homogeneity of the participants, no differences by gender, age and legal status can be described. They had different ethnic and religious backgrounds, but the number of migrants participating is not high enough to allow conclusions based on these variables. The socio-economic status of the migrants, which could have an impact on the implementation of the methods, was not examined in the study. No methodologically relevant findings and conclusions can be drawn from this.

3. Conclusion

The aim of workpackage 8 Migrant Children in Transition was to examine integration and support measures from a child-centred perspective, as well as migrant children's experiences of migration and life in transit. This work package was specific in that it examined asylum policies in relation to children's rights and individual perspectives. Therefore, in order to achieve the aim of the work package, we examined how migrant children define their well-being during the asylum process, while on the other hand, we had to direct the research to consider child-centred legal and policy-relevant aspects of the study. In this respect, we cannot claim that our research was entirely child-centred.

Participant observation was particularly valuable in approaching the migrants, building trust and gaining an understanding of aspects of migrants' lives in the asylum home. This phase had important implications for feasibility and data collection in later phases of the research. The observation phase allowed us to develop specific premises about the migration processes of migrant children and to gain an understanding of the environment and dynamics within the context in which social interactions related to migration processes take place.

In the participant observation phase, we were most successful with the child-centred approach, as we tended to spend a lot of time with the migrants, making the interaction

between us and the migrants as trusting as possible and developing a friend role, which was helpful to facilitating migrant children's agency and minimising power differences between us and the migrants. On the other hand, we feel that we were not so successful with the application of the child-centred approach during the interviews, mainly due to the fact that the aim and topic of the research in work package 8 was designed to be very adult-oriented. For this reason, it was difficult to apply the child-centred approach in the interviews to answer the research questions formulated in workpackage 8, especially because child-centredness in asylum law and policy relates to legal concepts and rights of migrant children, which require specific legal knowledge.

TURKEY

Sedat Yağcioğlu

1. Introduction

As part of the Migrant Children and Communities in a Transforming Europe (MiCreate) Project, this report reflects on the findings from Turkey that is prepared according to the main objective of the project: "inclusion of different groups of immigrant children with a child-centred approach based on the integration of children in the fields of education and politics". The research is carried out with Syrian children living in Şanlıurfa province of Turkey located on the Turkish-Syrian border and follows a reflexive approach.

The report was created under two main headings that scrutinize first, the participant observations of the researcher during the entire field research process, and second, observations that emerged during the interviews. In particular, it includes the dimensions

and dynamics of reflexivity that was set as the main research methodology of the project. The main component of this report is to describe research methods, difficulties and accomplishments during the field research, the children's reactions to these methods, the researcher's thoughts and evaluations about the method, and his observations, including the field diary.

The first part of the report presents participant observations during the entire research process. In this section, the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the research process in Turkey is evaluated. It is significant to analyse processes of designing of the research methods as well as actual field research experience that would not be foreseen from the beginning but were shaped during the emerging conditions.

The second part discusses observations regarding the interviews with the children. As the interviews were held at homes due to the Covid-19 pandemic, a dynamic participant observation opportunity has been created.

Overall, the report reflects the results of the research which emphasizes the significance of observations that would enrich the research data. At the same time, it follows the principle of reflexivity which creates a crucial methodology for the research itself.

2. Reflexive methodology

2.1 Participant observation

Participant observation is one of the important methods of qualitative research. Since the aim of the research is to scrutinize the daily lives of children, the participant observation is a suitable method for in-depth investigation of people's everyday lives that goes beyond their self-presentations (Boccagni 2012).

Participant observation allows the theorization of power, subjectivity and policy dynamics from below (Zapata-Barrero, R. and Yalaz, E., 2019). Within the frame of migration scholarship, the research applied participant observation that reveals subjectivity of children in relation to governments, political dynamics which caused migration, and their political existence in the country of immigration. Participant observation allows the researcher to be involved in everyday lives of people and provides important insights from explicit and implicit aspects of people's daily life routines, rituals, interactions (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002).

In summary, in this part of the report, the researcher sees himself as a medium of data collection, and therefore, discusses his observations. However, in terms of the content of the report, it is crucial to emphasize that, due to the conditions resulted from the Covid-19 pandemic, in-depth observations during the field research could not be actualized sufficiently. Therefore, the report provides a more detailed reflective analysis of the

interviews that were successfully conducted. The section of participant observation discusses more general conditions and observations during the research process.

Access and usefulness of methods

This study develops from the principle of taking the child-centred approach and applies qualitative research which does not objectify individuals and groups it studies while seeing the participants of the research as the subjects of their own experiences. The qualitative method is compatible and successful in terms of revealing children's understanding of the migration processes and their current lives and scrutinizing their perception of new spaces of relations, culture, and opportunities.

Evaluations of the interview process of the two questionnaires designed for the research are discussed more in detail in the "interview" section of the report. The main points regarding the methodology are the following:

• Both questionnaires were structured on the basis of the University of Vienna's forms while some Turkish adaptations were added. Both questionnaires offered sets of questions in order to obtain children's views.
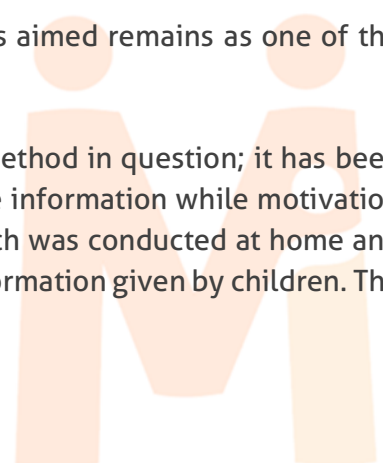
• Due to the pandemic conditions, the interviews were conducted in the houses of the children instead of institutions. This needs a reflection regarding the application of the methods of the research. First of all, putting children at the centre of the research enabled a successful interview process in their houses. As a result of becoming a guest in children's homes, close relations were established with the children. Creating contacts with the relatives of children at home was another contributor to the research during which children developed a positive attitude towards the research and researcher.

During the research, creating a friendly environment and expressing joyful feelings of the researcher and the interpreter during the interviews were other factors that strengthened a positive relationship between children and the researcher.

• In the process of applying the research methods, informal relationships allowed to chose interviewees which created motivation to ensure the effectiveness of the method.

• The art-based approach that could not be developed as aimed remains as one of the limitations of the research.

In summary, considering the suitability of the research method in question; it has been observed that the questionnaires were successful to receive information while motivation and cooperation of the participants were high as the research was conducted at home and the observations at home environment strengthened the information given by children. The art-based approach remains open to further development.

Responses to methods

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic conditions, the study failed to obtain permission to conduct research at the institutions in Turkey. Therefore, the interviewees were selected through personal connections established during the field research and the research was carried out through home visits. For this reason, it could not possible to visit institutions and observe their institutional services as part of the field research.

In addition, in order to reduce the risk of contact caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, children's social spaces, public spaces, and institutions could not be examined in detail. Therefore, participant observations in these spaces were not possible.

However, following assessments could be given regarding the field observations:

• According to the requirements of the project, , I arrived in Şanlıurfa on 12.11.2020 to do my field research. As a researcher being first time in Şanlıurfa, I started to make observations as soon as I entered the city. The image of a "divided city" was visiable which resulted from urban renewal projects and unplanned urbanization policies in Turkey. When driving from the airport towards the city center, I observed first high-rise apartments with modern architecture that were formed as luxury housing complexes, while the city centre, called "old Urfa", had more historical and relatively poor neighbourhoods.

• In the central districts, such as Haliliye and Eyyübiye, where significant numbers of immigrants live, Arabic scripts were visible on the boards of shops and stores, despite legislative changes to restrict them in the last years. The first striking element of the immigrant presence in the city was these multilingual signs.

• The presence of immigrants on the streets of Şanlıurfa was easily observable in terms of demographic density. According to 2020 data, with a total of 421,367 immigrants, Urfa is the 4th city in Turkey in terms of the density of Syrian immigrants. Together with the unregistered Syrians, the number is estimated to be around 500 thousand people. For this reason, the presence of immigrants is visibly noticed in almost every districts of the city.

• Considering the existing shops, stores, businesses, and restaurants operated by immigrants, a "natural integration" process seems to have taken place. However, it would be crucial to examine other studies and research reports in depth to arrive into a conclusion. As part of the objectives of this research, the findings obtained from the interviews with the children would shed lights on the integration processes of the immigrants.

As detailly stated in the "interviews" section of the report, during the interviews taking place at homes, a trustful atmosphere was established while children developed a positive approach to the questionnaires. Thus, all stages of each interview were completed completely.

Assessment of child-centred approach

The child-centred approach was successfully developed in the study. In line with the principles emphasised in The-Potentials-of-a-Child-centred-approach-to-the-Integration-of-Migrant-Children.pdf, children were at the centre of the research who answered questions about their own lives. The research carried the principle that the best information regarding children's lives would be acquired by their own experiences.

The main factors pointing out the child-centred approach situates life experiences of children into the centre of the research. As the interviews were conducted at children's homes, their lives, thoughts, emotions, and expectations were observed and collected through two questionnaires.

Personal reflection

As the research process coincided with the pandemic conditions, the situation created significant challenges regarding coordination, planning, site visits, and any other details throughout the research. The emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic and its worsening in the following months constituted the biggest difficulty for the research which I could not have foreseen when we made the research contract. In my opinion, it would be beneficial to convey the details regarding these difficulties and my experience of the situation that fundamentally affected the research process and the research findings.

First of all, it was not possible to go to the field in April – May 2020 as planned because of the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic and the worsening of the conditions in Turkey, including the lockdown measures, travel restrictions, and interruption of in situ research in institutions.

In the absence of traveling to the field, the preliminary study was carried out by online communication. Many initially planned research steps, such as visiting the important institutions that produce studies on the subject, identifying the children who would become the participants of the research, determining the institutions to conduct research, and starting the processes of research permission failed to be carried out directly in the field, through face-to-face acquaintances. However, in order to eliminate possible uncertainties until the pandemic conditions would get better and allow for a field research, all of the coordination, preparation, research permit works were done by e-mails, phone calls, and video calls, although this type of remote work made the initial stage of the study very difficult in several respects. The following points summarize the emergence of Covid-19 pandemic conditions and the situation in Turkey:

1. Due to the legal and procedural processes related to conducting research in Turkey, it is very difficult to conduct research as an independent researcher without being affiliated to any research institutions. Considering the limitations in communication caused by the

absence of face-to-face interactions, the research faced significant difficulties to provide healthy and successful process of communication.

2. Obtaining the necessary legal permissions to conduct research without an institutional affiliation poses significant difficulties in Turkey. Because of health risks of face-to-face meetings, the process of obtaining a research permission became impossible. It is not legally possible to enter state-controlled "refugee camps". For this reason, the research started reaching out international and local non-governmental organizations working with children. However, the research permit could not be obtained even from international and local institutions that have the most positive point of view due to the pandemic conditions. As a result, the research could not actualize the initial aims of the research. This process was also discussed through video calls with the project's coordinator of the University of Vienna, who is responsible for the Turkish section of the project.

3. As a result of all these difficulties, it was a necessity to search for ways to reach out children through informal and personal connections and by using snowball method in the region.

As a result of the project's new updates, the researcher's availability, and loosening of the pandemic measures in Turkey, preparations for the field research were made in October 2020 and Şanlıurfa was reached on 12.11.2020. Meeting with a lawyer registered to Şanlıurfa Bar Association, a field worker of UNHCR's Şanlıurfa Office, a social worker from the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services, and a representative from Şanlıurfa Provincial Directorate made it possible to exchange views on logistical possibilities, legal processes, and choosing the participants of the research. These meetings also showed that it would not be possible to carry out research at governmental institutions as well as non-governmental organizations under the pandemic conditions. In this regard, starting from April 2020, all of the attempts to receive research permissions to conduct research with children in various institutions and organizations were rejected.

Upon these developments, considering that it would be more useful to use personal connections to reach children (and, therefore, immigrant families), I decided to meet a psychologist who immigrated from Kobani and had been acquainted with many families and had organic relations with them. Considering that the person in question has command of regional languages such as Kurdish and Arabic and his occupation as a psychologist, it was decided to include him in the research as a "translator".

At the beginning of this cooperation, the translator was provided with detailed information about the research. Later, through contacting families, permissions were taken to conduct interviews with children. The translator reached out to each family one by one and appointments were made together for the interviews.

As this summary shows, as it was not possible to obtain legal permission from state or non-governmental organizations to conduct research within their institutions under the pandemic conditions. Reaching the participants of the research by using the snowball

method and personal connections was a stressful process for the research and necessitated a pre-study process to determine the participants of the research. Two options emerged for the implementation process of the research: Due to the impossibility of obtaining a research permission at the institutional level either the field research would not be conducted or children would be visited at their homes who were identified through personal connections. Being aware of the impacts of carrying the process at home and through the guidelines of reflexive methodology, the field research was replanned.

Based on previous qualitative research experiences, the research expected that new challenges would need to be overcome that would result from home visits, such as entering into the private lives of people, inadequacy in obtaining information about institutional structures, and building a trustful atmosphere during the interviews to carry the research successfully.

Ethnic, religious and cultural similarities between the region where the children migrated from and the new country/region they live in (Turkey – Şanlıurfa) have emerged as important factors that fostered to naturally build a relationship between the researcher and research participants. Since the researcher has a close culture with the country and the region, it was observed that these factors offered positive outcomes for the research when creating relations with children and understanding children's spaces of existence. Moreover, the gender aspect had neither a negative nor positive impact on the study. Similar interest and motivation of both female and male children supports this observation.
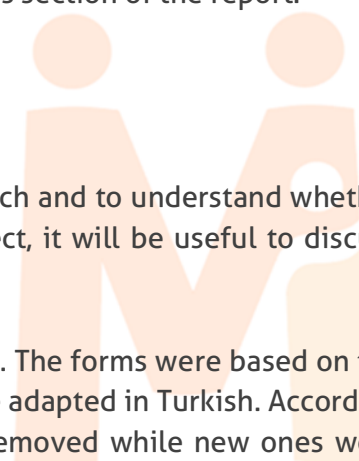
2.2   Interviews

As emphasized at the previous section of the report, in the absence of a participant observations at the institutions, the main scope of the field research was limited to interviews with children. In this regard, observations during the interviews will be discussed in this section.

The questionnaires that were used during the interviews, observations at homes, as well as possible impacts of conducting the interviews at participants' homes and the reflections regarding the child-centred approach will be discussed in this section of the report.

Access and usefulness of methods

In order to reveal the characteristics of qualitative research and to understand whether these methods corresponded to the objectives of the project, it will be useful to discuss them in detail.

Two basic forms were prepared and used for the research. The forms were based on the English forms that the Austrian research used, and they were adapted in Turkish. According to the needs of the locality, some of the questions were removed while new ones were

developed. The forms in question are the interview form with open-ended questions and a fill-in-the-blank form that aims activate the art-based approach and enable children to think in multi-dimensional ways.

The questions in the interview form were not asked question by question with a didactic method but rather were asked in a free flow in a narrative format that were shaped during the flow of the interviews. In this framework, not all of the questions were asked one by one to each child. Considering the life differences among children and observing which questions/subjects were more motivational to them, the questions focused on children's experiences and how they reflect on them.

On the other hand, the fill-in-the-blank form on which the art-based research was applied was given to each participant and children were asked to fill the blank spaces by writing down "what comes in their minds first". As the mother tongue of the researcher and the participant were not the same, children were reminded that they could write in their own language. However, all the participants preferred to write in Turkish with the help of the translator. Children were motivated to answer as many questions as possible to increase their contribution to the research, however, they were told that it was not mandatory to complete every sentence.

In the process of using both techniques, the children were also reminded that "there are no right or wrong answers" while emphasizing that the importance of interacting with them was to learn from their experiences. It was observed that children's motivation to participate in the research was increased with the emphasis on the importance of children's own opinions. For the art-based application, when children were asked to fill the blank sentences by writing down the first things that came to their minds and drawing a picture of their own experiences through words. This aimed to eliminate the "possible hesitations that children may feel while answering the adult who asks a question".

During the entire process of interviews and art-based research, it was observed that children were more successful in answering open-ended questions and their cooperation was higher. On the other hand, it was observed that some of the children had difficulties while filling the blank spaces of sentences. Situations where children's language and comprehension levels were linguistically inadequate to form sentences and fill gaps might be the main reason for the motivational decrease.

As the interviews were held in the houses where children live due to the pandemic conditions, significant consequences occurred. First of all, child-centred approach was successfully implemented as the interviews were conducted in their living spaces. Home visits and becoming their guest at home allowed us to establish close relations children. Entering the homes and establishing further relations with their relatives also effected children positively towards the researcher and research.

In the process of interviews and art-based techniques, it was important to create a sincere conversation environment that made children feel that both the researcher and the

interpreter enjoyed the process. This was another factor that allowed children to establish a positive relationship with the researcher and the research itself.

Responses to methods

Due to the Covid 19 pandemic conditions, it was not possible to obtain permission from the institutions in Turkey, therefore, the research was conducted at children's homes through personal connections. By meeting with children's families, the study was explained to them and then their consent was obtained for the participation of their children. The research was carried out in one of the rooms at home where only a child, the translator, and researcher could spend time alone. As the houses were entered through personal connections of the interpreter who knew the families, it was the first factor to establish trust.

During the home visits, a short social time with all of the family members was spent which contributed to create a "hospitality atmosphere" and provided an environment of trust. In addition, the atmosphere of trust was also reinforced by informing all family members about the research before the interviews began. The children were also given detailed information about the research and stated that their participation was a voluntary one which they could leave any time. Thanks to the good communication of the translator and the researcher, the studies were carried out in confidence.

After the place for the interview was physically prepared, such as being alone in the room, preventing noise transmitters, preparing questionnaires and voice recorder, a warm atmosphere was created by playing small games and getting to know children more closely before the start of the study. In this way, it was observed that children could develop a sincere interest and natural participation in the study process was ensured.

By ensuring that the interview room would be an isolated environment from other people in the house and by informing all family members and children about the confidentiality of the interviews, privacy of the informant was secured. By informing children that their identities would be hidden, the voice recordings would not be used other than taking notes, and that they would be destroyed after use, possible distrust regarding privacy was tried to be eliminated.

It was observed that conducting the study in the home environment where children live did not have a negative effect on the research. On the contrary, observing the home environment where they live and getting the first impression about their relationships with family members allowed to have more observations that supported the field research material. Children's high motivation and willingness to participate in the research was observed. The presence of the translator and researcher did not affect the answers of children.

Assessment of child-centred approach

Situating the child-centred approach in to the field research was successfully achieved. The physical infrastructure of the child-centred approach was strengthened by conducting the study in children's own homes, carrying the interviews mostly in their own rooms or in the common areas, such as the living room that stimulated the sense of belonging of children's daily lives and their idea of home.

The questionnaire, consisting of open-ended questions, followed a child-centred approach as it aimed to capture children's perceptions, life experiences, and life satisfaction regarding migration. During the interviews, instead of didactically directing each question one by one without skipping, the questions were posed flexibly within the framework of the themes or focuses about migration. In this way, the thoughts and feelings of children were determined as part of the child-centred approach.

Conducting interviews in the homes provided children with opportunities of feeling in the centre of the research as they answered questions about housing directly by marking the situations in their homes or expressed their opinions about their neighbourhoods by looking out the windows and balconies. The fact that children were in a position of owners of home, it created an opportunity to feel themselves in the centre.

The aforementioned hosting also helped to break the possible hierarchical perceptions in terms of power relations. Children offering treats, such as Turkish coffee and tea, became indicators of the "hospitality culture" and reduced possible inequalities in the context of power relations. Thus, instead of a process in which the researcher was at the centre, children became the actors of the research.

Reflecting on the usefulness of the research methods, the questionnaire and the fill-in-the-blank form created an "information" process that centred children into the research while children had high motivation to participate in the study that was a result of the warm atmosphere created by this process. Children's detailed information on immigration policies, migration/settlement process, educational life, and daily life clearly showed how in-depth data could be obtained from their experience when a child centred approach is developed.

Personal reflection

To summarize the personal evaluations of the interviews with the children during the research; it would be useful to emphasize a few points. First, due to the lack of field studies in institutions, the interviews were conducted at children's homes and number of interviews targeted in the research design could not be actualized. Visiting the relevant institutions on-site and examining their service systems for immigrants could also not be achieved.
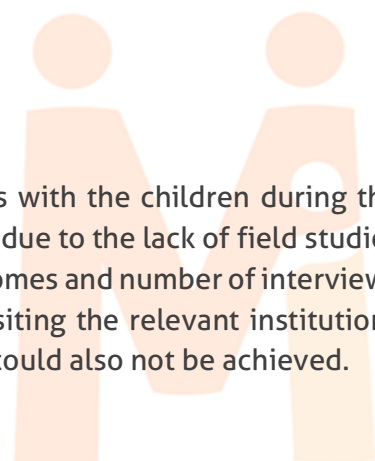
As stated in the relevant sections of the report, due to the limitations created by the Covid-19 pandemic, informal resources were used to reach and communicate with children and the interviews were held at children's homes. This situation created a few points. First of all, instead of having a more professional structure where the meetings would take place in a systematic way, a flexible planning was required in children's homes which were accompanied by the presence of other family members. In order to overcome these obstacles, when the houses were visited, all of the family members were informed in detail about the research and an isolated environment was requested for the interview. Adjusting these challenges created additional workload and stress for the research. As the appointments were arranged in an "informal" way, some families could not be reached on appointment dates and it was necessary to approach different participants. In addition to these, conducting the interviews at homes had two positive results: observing the children in their natural habitats and creating a more egalitarian and child-centred interview environment by breaking the hierarchy between the researcher and children.

The initial target of interviewing 25-30 children planned for the research could not be achieved. The necessity for informal meetings, the absence of an official permission from the authorities for interviews, and the risks that pandemic created in terms of home visits limited the study to work with 15 children. Moreover, not only the numbers, but also the goal of increasing diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity, and religious diversity were limited.

Finally, the Covid-19 pandemic restricted the study in term of observing children at institutional visits and examining the institutional service systems on-site. It is useful to note these limitations.

2.3   Different factors

It is important to analyse different factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, religion, legal status, social economic situation, language, and disability that affected the methodology and findings of the research.

The age distribution of the participants of the study was between the 7 and 17. The impacts of age on the study could be evaluated as follows: Difficulty levels in terms of comprehending the questions and the differentiation of their experiences and services offered to them. The children at younger ages had difficulties in understanding the research, answering the questions, and keeping the motivation. For example, 7 - 9 year old children had a harder time understanding the aims of the research and, therefore, their motivation to participate was lower. In addition, language competency of younger ages was not fully sufficient for research techniques. Despite the translator's existence, the younger age group raised doubts about whether they understood the questions or not. Children's difficulties in answering questions may be an indicator of a language inadequacy. Also, as young children do not remember the migration process as vividly, this created different results in terms of reflecting on their memory and life satisfaction compared to older children. Differences

between play age and school age developments also led to various life experiences and levels of life satisfaction.

The gender identity of the children also revealed differences regarding interpretation of the experience. However, it is not possible to make a detailed analysis on this issue since equal numbers of females and males could not be selected due to the pandemic conditions.

All participants of the research consisted of immigrants from Kobani and Raqqa regions in Northern Syria where Kurdish people densely live. As it is known historically, the Kurdish people basically live in three main countries. There are historical relations and family and kinship ties between the Kurds living in the South-eastern Turkey and Northern Syria. This historical tie, common values, common political struggle, and same religion had a significant impact on research findings. In particular, there is a considerable geographical proximity between the Syrian city of Kobani and Şanlıurfa's Suruç district (there is only border line between the two towns. one can see the other across the border and there are widespread kinship relations). One of the most important factors that affected the research is these shared ethnic, religiously, and cultural belongings in the region – both where they come from and immigrated.

It was observed that the history of "national unity" of the Kurdish people and the shared place of emigration and immigration has been a facilitating factor for children to adapt to new conditions. Apart from the obligation to learn Turkish, which is the only official language of Turkey in educational and institutional spheres, the widespread use of Kurdish in Urfa in daily life seems to facilitate the adaptation of children to the city. The density of Kurds from Turkey in Şanlıurfa has increased the feeling of belonging to the country, reduced the rate of alienation, and motivated them to participate in the study.

Due to demographic and historical similarities such as belonging to the same ethnic group, speaking the same language, and sharing a common memory, children have not perceived themselves culturally "foreign" while the migration process has not corresponded to a major break in their lives.

Along with the common ethnicity, the shared religion seems to have facilitated the cultural adaptation. As both immigrant Syrian Kurds and Turkish Kurds have Sunni Islam and Alevism, adaptation process and life satisfaction were facilitated positively due to commonality in values and daily rituals.

Due to the pandemic conditions, the mandatory interviews at home provided an important opportunity to observe the living spaces of the children and determine their socio-economic conditions on-site. Conducting the interviews at home created opportunities for participant observation, which is one of the most crucial techniques of qualitative research. Considering the conditions of the homes visited, most of the families have low socio-economic conditions. As learned during the field research, majority of them live in rented flats and many have difficulties to meet rent payments despite the social support they receive. Significantly, most of the homes where the interviews were conducted

did not have a heating system even in the November. It was observed that the basic furniture needs were insufficient, while a refrigerator would be mostly the only house supply. There were also no television in some houses and in most families, only the father had a smart mobile phone. In smaller flats with two bedrooms and a living room, all children of the house generally shared one room. In addition, there was no internet connection or computer in any of the houses.

Considering that education is carried out online in Turkey during the lockdown, children's lack of internet connection, computer or smart phone deprived them from attending lectures and taking exams. In houses where more than one child attends school, children took turns to follow online lectures from their father's phones. Yet, they did not have enough opportunities to follow all the classes. Therefore, when the effects of the pandemic are combined with the inadequacy of the economic conditions, the inequalities in access to education creates negative effects on migrant children.

Moreover, the absence of educational and psycho-social tools such as games and toys, etc. might have a negative impact on the development of children.

3. Conclusion

In this research, qualitative research methods were used with the aim of studying the views of children on the migration process and their new lives. Before analysing the findings, this report was prepared through reflexive thinking in qualitative research that scrutinizes the relationship between the researcher and the researched.

Qualitative research model was used as the main method of the research that enables to "present perceptions and events in a realistic and holistic way in a natural environment" (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008: 39). Qualitative research integrates contextual sensitivity which avoids objectifying individuals, groups, or events studied and reveals meaning-makings, perceptions, and understandings of people while reaching a theoretical integrity (Kümbetoğlu, 2008: 47). The methodological intervention of this research aimed to study living conditions and life satisfaction of migrant children and to examine their understandings and experiences regarding migration. More importantly, "child-centred approach" has been a crucial methodological goal that avoids objectifying the participants of the research.

Particularly in migration studies, "being reflexive on our social positions, categories of thought, beliefs, feelings, perspectives, and conceptual schemes should be an explicit and vital part of our research efforts." (Zapata-Barrero and Yalaz, 2019). As the details are presented in the report, when the entire research process is considered reflexively, it would be possible to enrich the data holistically. Thus, when the researcher's positionality and the research results are considered together, it allows to make a holistic evaluation.

The covid-19 pandemic emerges as an important factor affecting all of the planning, coordination, and field research processes. The health risk of researchers and participants, the necessity of keeping the fieldwork as short as possible due to national pandemic measures, the necessity of finding the participants through informal relations in the lack of institutional permissions, and the necessity of conducting interviews at home made it crucial to consider the pandemic as an important condition that has an impact on the entire research.

Participant observations remained limited as the pandemic did not allow to visit institutions and conduct face-to-face interviews with children in those institutions. However, conducting interviews with children at home revealed positive effect in terms of observing children in their own "world" where they live.

Make interviews at home as an only possible way, in fact, provided important opportunities for observing the living spaces and neighbourhood life of the children. Migrant children live especially in poor neighbourhoods, in rented, small, non-heated houses, with inadequate furniture and house facilities. The lack of computers and internet connection at home makes it especially difficult for children to attend online classes during the lockdown conditions. In addition, children spend a lot of time at home due to the lack of socialization and playgrounds in the neighbourhoods as well as quarantine conditions.

It can be claimed that the interview forms worked in general. Children answered the questions sincerely and they cooperated with the study with motivation. Entering the houses through personal connections, meeting family members, and involving in a "hospitality" atmosphere were important factors that developed trust and a smooth progress.

Ethnic, cultural, and religious characteristics of the regions where the children come from and where they currently live share similarities that entails a facilitating effect in the adaptation process. In addition, considering the fact that the researcher and the translator had similar cultural background, it created a trust environment and provided an encouraging effect on children.

In summary, when the research process is examined with methodological reflexively, it can be claimed that the Covid-19 pandemic affected the entire research process and made it necessary to change methodological design, especially in fieldwork. This report analysed in detail the possible effects of informal relationships and interviewing children at home. The questionnaires used in the research functioned in general terms and the basic findings of the research are compatible with the observations of the researcher. The report emphasized the fact that, children's common ethnic, historical, cultural, and religious heritage with the country they migrated to have significant effects on their migration experience. In short, the entire research analysis would be more insightful when taken together with the reflective analysis and observations included in this report.

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