Regaining a Social Life

The Influence of Housing and the Neighbourhood on Social Integration Processes of Eritrean Permit Holders

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Content

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I hope this thesis can function as a mediator for the voices of permit holders and the needs they have concerning housing and a neighbourhood, in favour of their social integration in Dutch society.

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Introduction

On the 18th of September 2015, newspaper *de Volkskrant* announced a critical situation concerning the housing of refugees with a residence permit in the Netherlands.[1] The article declares a shortage of social housing for the social groups qualified for this housing category. The article declares a shortage of social houses to be able to house all different social groups who are qualified for this category of houses. Next to the already existing local group of people with a low income, such as elderly people, psychiatric patients and disabled persons, there is also a growing amount of refugees with a residence permit who have right on subsidised housing. The biennial task of municipalities to house permit holders is therefore a troublesome one. They experience difficulties in completing these tasks.

Since 2014 the amount of refugees coming to Europe has remarkably increased due to crisis situations in particular regions of the world.[2] The Netherlands also has to deal with an expanding amount of refugees. Nowadays, many refugees come from Eritrea and Syria, who both have more than ninety per cent chance of receiving a residence permit.[3] National and local governments need to find solutions for the reception of the large amount of incoming refugees. Municipalities, the *Centraal Orgaan opvang Asielzoekers* (COA)[4] and housing associations have to solve this housing problem and have to create new accommodations.[5] This is not easily accomplished as different parties with different aims and possibilities are involved, ranging from national policies to permit holders. Housing deals with many processes, such as policy making at both national and local levels, municipal capacities, and integration aims and possibilities. It has turned out that national policies are often implemented in a diverse way at local levels due to different ways of problem framing and thereby as well different approaches to problem solving (Poppelaars and Scholten 2008, 336-7). Moreover, the way housing policies are constructed and employed have great influences on integration processes of refugees, such as on feelings of belonging, social capital and

[1] http://www.volkskrant.nl/binnenland/woningcorporaties-vluchteling-moet-woning-delen~a4144552/, accessed on May 23, 2016
[2] http://www.vluchtelingenwerk.nl/feiten-cijfers/cijfers/bescherming-nederland, accessed on May 23, 2016
[3] http://www.vluchtelingenwerk.nl/feiten-cijfers/cijfers/bescherming-nederland, accessed on May 24, 2016
[4] Centraal Orgaan opvang Asielzoekers (COA) is responsible for the reception, supervision and departure of asylum seekers coming to the Netherlands.
[5] https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/asielbeleid/inhoud/huisvesting-asielzoekers-met-verblijfsvergunning, accessed on May 24, 2016

social cohesion (Phillips 2010, 212; Bakker and Dekker 2011; Cheong et al. 2007; Tselios et al. 2015; Boschman 2012).

National and local governments are obliged to be quick and creative in finding solutions to these housing shortages. Housing corporations need to create temporary and alternative solutions to the housing shortage for permit holders, which has led to the use of empty government buildings and elderly care houses as well as shared housing possibilities.[6] One of those creative solutions appeared in the municipality Nijmegen, in the province Gelderland. Here, a former student residence in Lent – a village close to Nijmegen – was transformed in a four-year residence for Eritrean permit holders. Remarkable is that the residence is actually not located within the village and a regular neighbourhood with people from different ethnicities but at a remote and isolated location outside of it, away from direct neighbours. Council members of the municipality of Nijmegen argue that they chose to make use of this opportunity due to the shortage of available dwellings in the area and the low expense possibilities of permit holders (Gemeente Nijmegen 2015, 1).[7] It was an alternative to quickly house a large amount of permit holders. Furthermore, they argue that permit holders can help each other with integrating in the host society if they are housed together. This is, however, partly being contradicted by people with knowledge about Eritrea, especially in the case of Eritrean refugees living in the Netherlands where strong social control allegedly hinders integration in the society.[8] It is unclear why the municipality has chosen for this specific population composition. According to Salina,[9] who is part of the first generation of Eritrean refugees, they did this to prevent ethnic clashes. Furthermore, the municipality stated that the houses were most suitable for young single adults due to their low incomes and the low rent of the residence (Gemeente Nijmegen 2015, 5). Eventually, ninety-six Eritrean male permit holders were housed at this place and still live there at this moment of writing. This created an ethnic segregated neighbourhood, except for twenty-one students of a Dutch university – who are housed at the same location to create a less unilateral population composition (Gemeente Nijmegen 2015, 10).

[6] http://www.volkskrant.nl/binnenland/woningcorporaties-vluchteling-moet-woning-delen~a4144552/, accessed on May 23, 2016

[7] http://www.volkskrant.nl/buitenland/nijmegen-van-plan-eritreeers-samen-te-huisvesten~a4122508/, accessed on January 13, 2016

[8] http://www.volkskrant.nl/binnenland/-ze-wonen-hier-in-klein-eritrea~a4192666/, accessed on December 2, 2015; Senait, first generation Eritrean, interview 11-05-16; Abdulatif, first generation Eritrean, presentation 09-05-16

[9] Salina, first generation Eritrean, interview 04-05-16

1.1 Problem statement

When I first read about the housing plans of the municipality I was wondering what would happen to the integration opportunities of these permit holders. How can Eritreans integrate in Dutch society when mostly people from their own country of origin surround them? Previous research showed that migrants that live in a multi-ethnic neighbourhood and those who reside in ethnic segregated areas experience differences in social integration processes (Boschman 2012; Sturgis, Kuha, and Jackson 2014; Duyvendak, Hendriks and Van Niekerk 2009). It is expected that permit holders who reside in residential segregated neighbourhoods integrate at a slower pace and are less socially integrated than those who reside within multi-ethnic neighbourhoods together with native people – children of citizens born in the Netherlands and third-generation migrants (Boschman 2012, 354).

To verify this hypothesis, I have done qualitative research on the following central research question: *what is the influence of housing and the neighbourhood on the social integration of Eritrean permit holders living in the municipality of Nijmegen?* With this research I want to provide insight in how housing policies concerning permit holders are being employed and how these and other factors involved influence their social integration processes.

1.2 Fieldwork

During a period of fourteen weeks, from February 2016 until May 2016, I have done qualitative anthropological fieldwork, including interviews and observations concerning the current lives of Eritrean permit holders. I will elaborate on the research methods applied for this research in detail in chapter two of this thesis, here I will briefly discuss the research location.

1.2.1 Research location

The fieldwork site consists of two locations. The first is the isolated and ethnically segregated neighbourhood in Lent, where the large group of male Eritrean permit holders live. The second location contains different neighbourhoods within the city Nijmegen and villages nearby, where Eritrean permit holders live in neighbourhoods with people of different ethnic backgrounds. The use of the second location allowed me to compare the social integration processes of the two different Eritrean groups and thereby also allowed me to have enhanced

understandings of the actual influence of housing and the neighbourhood on social integration of Eritrean permit holders.

1.2.2 Research population

My research population consisted of two groups of Eritrean permit holders: Eritrean permit holders living in Lent and Eritrean permit holders living in Nijmegen and surrounding villages. To obtain more information about this group from different perspectives and to find out how neighbours and local inhabitants thought about the arrival of the Eritreans, I had broadened the scope of my research participants. I included local inhabitants from surrounding villages of the accommodation in Lent, students that live on the same terrain as the Eritrean men in Lent, language buddies and host families of the Eritreans in Lent, employees of refugee organisation VluchtelingenWerk, and Eritreans who are part of the first generation of Eritrean immigrants in the Netherlands and have knowledge about the country Eritrea, Eritrean habits and the integration of Eritreans in the Netherlands.

Due to the strong social control among Eritreans in the Netherlands, which I will further explain in chapter three on the context of Eritrea and its population, anonymity is extremely important. All names used in this thesis are fictional. In order to avoid repeating myself and spending much time to refer to my specific research population, I use the term 'Eritreans in Nijmegen' to refer to the Eritrean permit holders and research participants that live in and nearby Nijmegen. When I use 'Eritreans', I refer to all Eritrean respondents that participated in this research. When I refer to Eritreans in general, who did not participate in this research, I will indicate this clearly.

1.3 Scientific relevance: conceptualising integration

In this research, social integration is the most interesting form of integration due to the specific way of housing and population composition of the Eritrean permit holders in Nijmegen and the possibilities this housing situation entails. Throughout the thesis, I reflect on the aspect of social integration of the Eritrean men living in the municipality of Nijmegen, and how it is being influenced by different factors that are involved in the daily lives of the men. The factors that I consider relevant for the social integration of permit holders include the housing area, housing composition, population composition, home-making, ethnic and interethnic contact, social capital, social trust, and social cohesion.

Before focussing on the analysis of my research it needs to be clear what is understood by the term social integration. Despite the fact that it is not always clear what the concept integration exactly comprises, scholars, politicians and citizens are using the term. There is no single definition, rather, the concept is a much contested one (Ager and Strang 2008, 167; Phillimore and Goodson 2008, 307).

1.3.1 Integration as a multidimensional process

Different definitions are granted to the concept integration. Still, there are some commonalities within all definitions. One commonality is that integration starts with the entrance of a migrant into the host society and subsequently transfers in a multidimensional two-way process (Lomba 2010, 415; Phillimore and Goodson 2008, 309). Integration policies argue that minority groups as well as the host society and its majority population, should equally make an effort in adapting to each other for a successful integration of the minority groups (Lomba 2010, 418; Castles, de Haas, and Miller 2014, 268; Phillimore and Goodson 2008, 308; Phillips 2010, 211). Thereby, one should keep in mind that individuals are different and thus also the progress of their integration processes (Lomba 2010, 417; Heckmann 2006, 18; Phillimore and Goodson 2008, 309).

Another commonality is that integration finds place between two dimensions: the private and public dimension (Lomba 2010, 417). The private dimension implies the actual situation of the individual in the host state (ibid.). This contains, for example, the individuals' situation within the employment market, education, housing or its dependence on social benefits (ibid.). The public dimension implies the social and the legal conditions in which individuals are situated (ibid.). Social conditions consist of the domains housing, education, employment, and health – the areas in which actual private integration processes find place (ibid.). Legal conditions refer to the individual's actual legal status (ibid.). One's legal status is obviously a highly relevant and essential instrument for individual integration possibilities and processes as it gives people rights and citizenship. It also determines the extent to which they are allowed to participate in state institutions, such as education, employment and health care (Lomba 2010, 419-420). In this research I will focus on both the private and the public dimension, however, the scope of my research is limited to housing and the neighbourhood as these factors are the most obvious and interesting ones in this case study.

As integration is multidimensional it cannot be understood without taking the involved factors and interconnections into consideration (Phillimore and Goodson 2008, 309). Ager

and Strang (2008) provide a supportive conceptual framework in order to understand integration and the position of refugees. The factor 'housing' is part of the 'means and markers' of integration, that captures functional indicators, showing the values of a certain community and their means to integration (Ager and Strang 2008, 169-171). I continuously relate the housing situation of the Eritrean men with the social connections the men have. The domain 'social connections' includes dimensions of social capital as subdivided by Putnam (2002, 11): social bonds of a refugee with its own community and social bridges of a refugee with members of other communities. 'Linking' can be considered as a third form of social capital, which involves vertical relationships between refugees and institutions of power and influence (Cheong et al. 2007, 29). I will discuss these social aspects in chapter four on housing composition (4.2.2), and chapter five on the neighbourhood. I also include the facilitators 'language and cultural knowledge' and 'safety and stability' as it will turn out that these facilitators have great influence on their social networks and the possibilities they have to socially integrate. The domain 'facilitators' contains situations and skills that are useful for refugees to be able to engage confidently within a community, which I will discuss in chapter five (5.2 – 5.4) on the development of a social life in the Netherlands and the experience of social cohesion (Ager and Strang 2008, 181-184). Housing is the major factor throughout the thesis, which influence will be examined by relating it to the social connections the participants in this research have and thereby exploring its influence on their social integration.

Figure 1: A Conceptual Framework Defining Core Domains of Integration

Ager and Strang 2008

1.3.2 Social integration as a long-lasting process of inclusion

Integration consists of several dimensions. In this research the emphasis is on social integration. This dimension of integration "refers to the inclusion of individuals in a system, the creation of relationships among individuals and their attitudes of individuals and groups." (Tselios et al. 2015, 416). In this thesis, Heckmann's (2006, 18) definition of social integration will be used. He argues that the social integration of migrants captures a process of learning cultural traditions of the host society, getting access to positions and statuses within that society, building a social network with its inhabitants and creating feelings of belonging and identification towards the society (ibid.). In order for a successful social integration, the host society is obliged to adjust its institutions to the needs of migrants and develop ways to interact with them (ibid.). To be able to analyse the social integration process of permit holders in a host society, it can be divided into four categories: structural integration, cultural integration, interactive integration and identificational integration (Heckmann 2006, 15).

Structural integration corresponds to the public dimension of integration, involving the acquisition of rights and access to membership of host societies' institutions, such as education, the labour market, housing, welfare state organisations, and political participation (Heckmann 2006, 15). These core institutions, dependent on one's participation, determine the socio-economic status of citizens, including their structure and resources (ibid.). The accommodation that is being offered by the municipality is the first step towards structural integration. From this point, individuals have the possibility to further integrate as housing serves as a foundation for further participation in the host society (Phillimore and Goodson 2008, 316). This will become clear in chapter four on housing and its influence on social integration possibilities.

Cultural integration refers to the necessity of acquiring a number of proficiencies of the host society and its culture, to achieve access to rights and statuses as a refugee (Heckmann 2006, 16). Therefore, refugees are required to change their behaviour, attitude and cognitive abilities to a certain extent, and the state is obliged to create new ways of adapting to the needs of their refugees (ibid.). In order to explore the culture of the host society, it is crucial to be in contact with its citizens to be able to discuss and exchange cultural traditions, which will turn out in chapter five on the neighbourhood and interethnic contact (paragraph 5.1.1).

Interactive integration implies the inclusion of a refugee in social systems in the host society. To accomplish this, the essential features of cultural integration, especially the communicative ones, should be managed (Heckmann 2006, 17). Refugees and permit holders

can find support and solidarity of co-ethnics in the beginning of their arrival in the host society (ibid.). They can share and discuss their experiences in the host society with people with similar backgrounds. Yet, to achieve a successful interactive and structural integration, one should also build relationships with non-refugees or natives (ibid.). As will be described in chapter five on the neighbourhood and interethnic contact, it takes much time and effort in order to have interethnic contact and to build relationships with citizens in the host society.

The last category of integration, identificational integration, refers to personal feelings of belonging to and identification with ethnic, local, regional and national groups (ibid.). This is a form of integration that takes time and develops in a later phase of the integration process (ibid.). As my research group is still in the beginning phase of settling in the new environment and as they did not command the Dutch language enough, I was not able to do research on this topic.

Altogether, social integration requires much time and can even take more than one generation (Heckmann 2006, 17). Refugees have to put emotional and intellectual effort in their integration process, and the host society needs to find ways to adapt their services to the newcomers (ibid.). Thereby, both time and space are important aspects within integration, which can vary between and within all involved categories (Heckmann 2006, 17-8).

To be able to execute the housing plan in Lent, there were several parties and organisations involved in discussions about the necessities concerning the housing of the Eritrean permit holders in Lent. To achieve the best implementation of the housing plan, the different parties and organisations informed themselves about the specific background of the current fleeing Eritrean generation (Gemeente Nijmegen 2015, 2). A specific Eritrean migrant organisation in Nijmegen did not exist at the time the housing plan was going to be executed. Yet, by approaching first generation Eritreans within the municipality, the municipality could make use of a ‘bridge’ that could help them in translating and implementing policies into concrete projects (Gemeente Nijmegen 2015, 2; Korkut et al. 2013, 154; Poppelaars and Scholten 2008, 349). The first generation Eritreans could provide the municipality of actual and useful information about Eritreans in general (Poppelaars and Scholten 2008, 350). From the discussions evolved that collaboration between all involved parties was essential in order to achieve three pillars: adequate housing and management, integration and naturalisation, and integration and participation in the neighbourhood (Gemeente Nijmegen 2015, 3). The local government was thus trying to comply with the necessary two-way process of integration. They made effort to remove barriers to inclusion of the Eritrean minority group in the host

society, by making their services suitable for the Eritrean permit holders. The effort of the municipality turned out in a considerable difference between the social lives of the Eritrean men living in Lent and those living in Nijmegen.

1.4 Structure of thesis

This thesis consists of a comprehensive description of my fieldwork findings, linked to theoretical debates concerning the main concepts that are involved. Chapter two describes how I have executed my research, including the steps I have taken to reach my research population and the methodology I applied. Chapter three provides background information about Eritrea and its population, which is significant as it influences the integration possibilities Eritreans have right now. In Chapter four and five I will focus on the two main topics of my research, which are housing and the neighbourhood, and the influence of these two leading factors on the social integration of Eritrean permit holders. Chapter four examines how the actual housing situation and living environment of the Eritrean men have influence on the social integration. Chapter five describes the population compositions in the neighbourhoods, the presence of social cohesion, and the social lives of the Eritreans, including contacts and relationships between Eritreans and those between the Eritrean men and other people from the host society with different ethnic backgrounds.

- 2 -

Methodology

In doing fieldwork and to be able to answer my research questions I have made use of several research methods. First of all it was important to enter the field, achieve access and build rapport with my research population. This has been a challenging process as Eritrean refugees of the current generation are a vulnerable group due to their position as a refugee but, moreover, due to their background and experiences in Eritrea (see background information in chapter three). After gaining access to my research population, I applied varied methodological techniques to obtain information. Hereby, data triangulation was crucial as the use of only interviews was not sufficient because of language barriers and difficulties in obtaining comprehensive and substantiated answers of the Eritrean men.

2.1 Entering the field: getting served on a silver platter

In order to gain access, I approached some institutions by e-mail, from which I knew they were or could be related to my research population. To my disappointment, response was minimal and I was already thinking about alternative research populations. Then I coincidentally discovered a special project of refugee organisation *VluchtelingenWerk* in Nijmegen. It was called *project LiNk* and it was exactly engaged with my envisioned research population: the Eritrean young men living in Lent. The emphasis of the project is placed on the support of their participation and integration processes, by organizing varied activities for them. I approached the project coordinator and presented my research and my willingness to become a volunteer. Fortunately, she was searching for someone who could do research on the impact of the project on the integration of the Eritreans. I was lucky to approach her at the right time. She agreed on my research proposal, and so I started my fieldwork.

I entered the field as a volunteer and executed several tasks to support the project. These were tasks such as linking the Eritrean men to language buddies, giving information about upcoming activities and trainings, and supporting activities such as at library visits or at a cooking course. During these moments I could meet my research population from Lent and introduce myself as a researcher for both my study and for *VluchtelingenWerk*. Being able to present my research from both institutions was helpful to me as I had the feeling that my

research was more valuable to me and my participants in this way, as *VluchtelingenWerk* exists in order to help refugees. Reciprocity had thus helped me in reaching respondents and doing research. Furthermore, through my supervisor at *VluchtelingenWerk* I was also being informed about activities that other organisations organized for the group Eritrean men living in Lent. Sports activities were organized by several sports clubs, for instance, and neighbourhood meetings were organized by *Welcome to the Neighbourhood* (WttN) – a voluntary organisation founded by local inhabitants of Lent and Oosterhout, which are two villages that are located nearby the neighbourhood of the Eritreans. I presented myself as a researcher to these organisations and they were all receptive to my research. They thought it was an important subject to do research on as they all saw the complications that the housing situation of the Eritreans in Lent involved. Therefore they all welcomed me to join their activities, whereby there were even more opportunities to get in touch with my research population.

Reaching my second research group – Eritrean permit holders living in or nearby Nijmegen – was more difficult as I had to reach most of them by making a detour. At first, I hoped to find respondents through the snowball-effect strategy, by using an already-existing network to find participants (Neuman 2012, 91). Unfortunately, this turned out to be more difficult than expected. There were only a few men that matched with my research population. I had found a few other respondents through activities of *VluchtelingenWerk* in which I participated and where I asked them at the end of an activity if they wanted to participate in an interview. This strategy was more successful. There are not many interest groups who organize activities for regular housed permit holders – those who have their own rental house in a regular neighbourhood in a city or village, surrounded by people of varied ethnic backgrounds. I had to find another way to reach them. As *VluchtelingenWerk* is refugees' first point of contact in finding their way in Dutch society, I could find this research group through their registration system. Subsequently, I approached them through their personal coach or an Eritrean interpreter from *VluchtelingenWerk*. The interpreters could explain my research in Tigrinya – the language the Eritreans speak – which made it more easily to explain the sense of it to the respondents, to win the confidence of respondents that I was a real researcher and to obtain informed consent. As I will explain in the next paragraph (2.2), the level of distrust among Eritreans is incredibly high due to their background and the still prevailing social control among Eritreans.

2.2 Using a mixture of research methods

> They have a secret in themselves. No freedom of culture, their culture killed them. Their culture is secretive. The culture is that they don't give their opinion.[10]

Distance, hesitance, caution and timidity – four characteristics that I as a researcher had to pass to gain trust of the Eritrean young men. Eritrean refugees are a vulnerable group which made it extremely important for me to gain their trust. They come from a dictatorial country in which freedom of speech is absolutely forbidden and where high sanctions prevent you from openly expressing your thoughts.[11] The only right thing you can do there is to agree on everything that is being told to you and asked from you. If not, you can expect the worst. Growing up in such political circumstances marked the present generation of Eritrean refugees by distrust.[12]

2.2.1 Gaining trust: being there

There are two phases of gaining access to the field (Gobo 2010, 119). First you have to enter the field physically – which I quickly achieved – and secondly, you have to enter the field in a social sense (ibid.). Villa Rojas (1979, 59) claims that building rapport is highly essential as this is "the only basis on which really reliable information can be obtained." This was a challenging process as it compels co-operation from participants and it takes much effort and time to build rapport with them. Soon I found out that learning Tigrinya and using it whenever I could in conversations with them was a good way to break the ice. They could laugh with (and at) me when I used it and it made them curious about who I was and what I did. Knowing names and showing interest in them was valuable to become more connected to them. By hanging around to informally observe and by participating several days a week during different activities organized for the Eritreans living in Lent, they became used to my presence (DeWalt and DeWalt 2011, 5). The Eritreans started to invite me to come over to their houses. I accepted these offers and it eventually resulted in more contact as described in my field notes:

> The first Eritrean started to make contact with me on his own initiative and he invited me to drink a cup of tea in his house. It felt like a victory for me to come this far after knowing the high level of distrust among Eritreans. I was excited but pretended as if it was normal for me to visit an Eritrean permit holder. He lived in

[10] Habtom, first generation Eritrean, interview 11-05-16
[11] Kebrom, first generation Eritrean, presentation 20-04-16; Hagos, informal conversation 18-03-16
[12] David, first generation Eritrean, presentation 09-05-16

> a house with two other Eritrean men. One happily welcomed me in his house as well while the other kept more distance. He was sitting in his bedroom, watching an Eritrean program and did not make an effort to come and meet me. That was fine by me as I wanted to give him space. Every time I entered a new house I could see on the faces of visiting Eritrean neighbours that they are amazed by my presence at first – a white girl they do not know or have not spoken to yet – whereupon they become curious and observe me on a safe physical and social distance for a while. Later on, many of them became more engaged in hanging out with me. One of the inhabitants called his neighbour to come visit their place as well. And there I sat between the Eritreans, who were all watching me. There was not much conversation unless I said something or asked questions. Responding was no problem for them as well as asking the same questions back to me. Otherwise it was quiet, they were watching television or were talking in Tigrinya, and every now and then they asked me politely if I would like to have some more tea or food. Yet, I constantly had the feeling that they really appreciated it that I was in their house and that I wanted to be with them. When I went away they warmly said goodbye and asked me to pass by another time – I officially entered the field.[13]

This situation repeated several times with different Eritreans every week. I gained their trust in this way. By being open to them when they asked questions, they were also open to me when I asked them things. However, their openness had a limited extent, which did not make it easy for me to obtain information concerning certain topics, such as possible negative aspects of their housing or their contact with neighbours, and feelings of home and belonging.

As there were not as much moments to meet and hang out with Eritrean men who lived in Nijmegen and its surroundings, building rapport with them was harder or even absent. To my view, if I had met the respondent at least one time earlier, this was much more pleasant for both parties during an interview and would have resulted in more in-depth interviews. It was comforting to know if the participant knew who I was. It was beneficial for the ambience to know each other beforehand, because I felt that the ambience was a little more tense and uncomfortable when I had contacted the respondent through someone else. I suppose that the level of distrust was higher during these interviews. The respondents preferred to immediately start the interview at the first meeting, whereby there was not much time to first get to know each other before taking the interview. I had to find ways to make the ambience more comfortable in another way. I always tried to make the atmosphere more relaxed by first asking regular things about the respondent and his house, to make some jokes and say some words in Tigrinya whenever I could. This already helped a little. Still, the atmosphere was not the same as during meetings with respondents I knew better. I obtained less

[13] Transcript of field notes, 14-02-16

information during interviews with respondents I did not really know as their answers were more brief and I had the feeling that some did not dare to show their real opinion about certain things. Fortunately, some respondents living in Nijmegen felt more comfortable in talking to me and could substantiate their answers more. Nevertheless, data triangulation was extremely important for my research due to obstacles such as limited language skills and openness and incomplete information but also to map perspectives of other parties that are involved in my research population.

2.2.2 The value of data triangulation

DeWalt and DeWalt (2011, 128) argue that a triangulation of methods is highly valuable as results can be validated by the use of different methods on the same research topics. Soon after starting fieldwork I could agree on this point. I mainly used interviews to be able to obtain specific information concerning housing and the neighbourhood and to find out what the thoughts and opinions of the respondents were about these factors. Interviews can help in understanding life experiences and subjective thoughts of respondents about their actions and performances related to social integration (Hesse-Biber 2014, 189). However, using more methods than just interviews was necessary to substantiate and complement answers of my respondents.

As informed consent is ethically reliable, the respondents understood for what the interviews served. Whenever I had the possibility to introduce myself in surroundings where I could execute my research, I mentioned that I was executing a research for school on how the social lives of the Eritreans looked like and also that I was a volunteer of *VluchtelingenWerk*. At the beginning of every series of activities everybody has to introduce themselves, so I could easily achieve this at these activities. At other times, for example, when participating in single activities without introductory meetings, I only revealed my role as a researcher when speaking personally to the men. Before taking interviews with respondents I always made clear why and on what exactly I was doing research and what happens with the information obtained. However, despite the fact that I mentioned that it is necessary for a researcher that respondents try to explain their thoughts, feelings and experiences as comprehensive as possible, their difficulties in trusting people, sharing their thoughts to others and being able to express themselves in a foreign language was noticeable and understandable. Therefore, next to taking interviews, I applied the following methods: observing activities where my respondents were involved in, having informal conversations with them, talking about their

behaviour with Eritreans of the first generation, taking interviews with local inhabitants of surrounding villages, and taking surveys.

2.2.2.1 Interviews: overcoming language barriers, timidity and aloofness

First of all I had to select my interviewees. This was not always easily to achieve and, eventually, the respondents are not representative for all young Eritrean male permit holders of the current generation. As mentioned earlier, selecting interviewees living in Nijmegen went differently and directly as there were mostly no possibilities to informally speak to the respondents before taking an interview. At the research location in Lent, half of my selections were based on the extent of the Eritreans approaching me during activities. I concluded from this, that they liked talking to me, felt confident in being with me, and trusted me to a certain extent. I approached those Eritreans for an interview and almost all of them wanted to cooperate. This group of actively participating Eritreans make my research population less representative as these Eritreans are already more open to contact and would hypothetically better integrate on a social level, than those who did not participate in activities. I made the research population of Lent more representative by approaching the other half of my respondents myself, without speaking (properly) to them earlier. I found them through the snowball-effect or via the register of *VluchtelingenWerk*. By this division of respondents of Lent I made my research population more representative. Yet, there was another factor that made my research population less representative.

In general, the English or Dutch command of language of Eritreans is very limited, much more limited than I expected. I had to find alternative techniques to take interviews with the Eritreans. As the level of distrust is high among Eritreans, I did not want to make use of an interpreter. I was afraid that the presence of an interpreter at an interview would harm the level of trust between me and the Eritrean young men and affect the answers they would provide in an interview. Therefore, I was dependent on participants who could speak sufficiently Dutch or English, which influences the representativeness of my research population as those who have better demand of the Dutch or English language are likely to integrate faster on the social level (see more about the importance of language in chapter 5.1.2). In line with Gobo (2008, 196) formulating questions in an understandable way is vital for participants who, in my case, do not have full proficiency of the Dutch or English language. At first I experienced difficulties in taking structured interviews. I had prepared a list of questions but I soon found out that the formulation was way too difficult. After the first two interviews I simplified the questions and tried again. I repeated this action several times,

until I reached the most basic formulated questions. Some interviews eventually turned out in a more semi-structured interview. According to Neuman (2012, 139) and Hesse-Biber (2014, 189), this is a way to trigger respondents to talk about their experiences and opinions as previously prepared topics are discussed very openly. This turned out well with interviews about the lives interviewees lived in Eritrea. Furthermore, I used a Tigrinya dictionary to look up the most essential words of every question, to be able to make a question understandable. I also started to work with schemes and using pictures and other physical or visual material to make them understand my questions, and the other way around, to check whether I understood their answers. These steps helped me a lot in obtaining answers from my respondents.

Another difficulty in taking interviews with Eritreans was that some did not want me to record the conversation. In these situations I could understand what Gobo (2008, 196) argues, that recording interviews is convenient as the researcher can fully focus on listening and responding to the informant. Now, I had to focus on my notes, which delayed the conversation and influenced my capability of responding properly and interrogating on given answers. On the other hand, this delay turned out positively once in a while as respondents sometimes took more time to think and complemented their answers automatically while I was still typing.

One of the difficulties I endured during fieldwork was that it was hard to get the Eritreans talk about their opinions. Presentations I attended about Eritrea and its population (see 2.2.2.3) and four interviews I had with Eritreans from the first generation, confirmed and explained this problem.[14] It turned out that the current generation is coming from a world wherein nobody was allowed to give their opinion due to the dictatorship in Eritrea and the harsh sanctions that occur at every minimal mistake people make – that is, doing or saying anything that is not in line with the dictatorial political mind-set. Besides, the hopeless situation in Eritrea right now makes that nobody has a goal there – except for escaping the country – as nothing they do is rewarded. Due to these situations, the generation of Eritrean refugees I am working with have never learned to think about their own opinion and cannot substantiate their ideas very well.

This background made it hard to obtain opinions of the Eritrean men. Of course there were some men who could explain their thoughts more in depth. However, I mostly had to trigger these explanations myself by interrogating or by giving examples. Hereby, the problem

[14] Presentations given by Eritreans of the first generation, attended on 20-04-16; 09-05-16; interviews with Eritreans of the first generation 30-04-16; 04-05-16; 11-05-16

became that some respondents could only respond on these probing questions and examples but they did not come up with their own ideas that I did not mention. According to Neuman (2012, 170) I need to be neutral, non-judgemental and objective in interactions with respondents. I tried not to guide the interviews by giving examples of different perspectives. After asking whether they were satisfied with the amount of contact they had, for example, I had to mention examples such as if the amount of friends they had was enough, if they would like to have more friends, what kind of friends they wanted to have, for instance, Eritreans, Dutch people, other foreigners, men, women, young or old. Perhaps my ways of approaching the respondents and asking questions was not appropriate but it was the only way I could stimulate them to talk.

Eventually, my interviewees consisted of nine Eritrean permit holders living in or nearby Nijmegen, sixteen Eritrean permit holders living in Lent, five local inhabitants from surrounding villages of the accommodation in Lent, two students who live on the same terrain as the permit holders in Lent and four informants who are part of the first generation of Eritrean immigrants in the Netherlands.

2.2.2.2 Participant observation: its essentiality and difficulties

As language skills were limited and Eritreans have difficulties with substantiating their opinions, participant observation has frequently complemented or clarified the answers I obtained from interviews. In an interview with Merhawi, for instance, he explained that he did not have many friends in the neighbourhood and did not know the other men, except for the neighbours who were living beneath him.[15] However, in the weeks after the interview, I saw Merhawi hanging out and playing football with other men than he had mentioned during our interview. I cannot fill in for him whether it are friends or not, however, it did confirm that he knew more people in the neighbourhood and also has more contacts than he argued himself.

The longer I was participating in the field, the harder it was for me to keep observing happenings. Benjamin Paul (1953, 441) states that "participation implies emotional involvement; observation requires detachment. It is a strain to try to sympathize with others and at the same time strive for scientific objectivity." I sometimes lost this scientific objectivity as things became too 'normal' to me. Especially in the last month of my research I realised that I was not focussing on daily happenings in the field anymore. I realised this

[15] Merhawi, interview 25-02-16

during gatherings with my team of *VluchtelingenWerk*, where I always gave a short update of my research findings. By discussing my findings with colleagues, I noticed that I was able to reason in a logical way and subsequently list the points that required more focus.

2.2.2.3 Collecting data from different perspectives

I have also used surveys to hear more about the perspective of non-Eritrean contacts of the Eritrean men living in Lent. Most Eritreans living in Lent, and a few who live in or nearby Nijmegen, have a language buddy and a host family organized by *VluchtelingenWerk*. The aim is to give the men the opportunity to practice the language and experience how people in the Netherlands live. I was wondering how the language buddies and host families thought about their interethnic contact with the Eritreans. As I did not have enough time to visit them all, I used a survey with open-ended questions, which I had sent them through the e-mail network of *VluchtelingenWerk*. The organisation regularly uses surveys this way, so I knew I had a good chance to approach them through this medium. I eventually received twenty-five surveys from host families and language buddies.

VluchtelingenWerk organizes different presentations for volunteers and employees on background information of large refugee groups and their integration in the Netherlands. Thanks to this initiative, I have attended three presentations about the country Eritrea and Eritreans in the Netherlands. Data triangulation often occurred here as information I obtained from interviews and observations of the Eritrean young men were being clarified during these moments.

2.3 Conclusion

Doing fieldwork with Eritrean young men consisted of several difficulties: limited language skills and minimal expressions and substantiation of subjective thoughts. Data triangulation was therefore essential. All in all it took much energy but perseverance kept me going and eventually I got much energy from respondents when achieving relationships with them and obtaining useful information.

Chapter three will provide some background information about the context from which the current generation Eritreans originate, including my research population. It is useful to know more about their socio-cultural, economic and political background to be able to understand the behaviour of the Eritrean men that prevailed during my research, as their backgrounds had a significant influence on this.

- 3 -

Life in Eritrea and the Influence on its Population

Little research has been conducted on the current state of affairs in Eritrea. Since Eritrea is being governed by the political party 'People's Front for Democracy and Justice', freedom of press and speech is forbidden, whereby newspapers are banned and scientists and journalists are rejected access to the country (Weldehaimanot 2010, 232; Kibreab 2009, 50-51). As Dutch newspaper *de Volkskrant* made public in January 2016, those who do research on especially the political situation in the country and the power of the regime in Eritrean diaspora communities are sometimes even being persecuted and intimidated.[16] I will not dwell too much on these political topics, since it is not relevant for my study. The information given in this chapter is obtained from academic articles, the earlier mentioned presentations at *VluchtelingenWerk*, and several expert interviews with Eritreans of the first generation, who fled the country during the armed conflict or war between Eritrea and Ethiopia. To avoid problems for the Eritrean participants of my research I have not included any personal information of them in this chapter that concerns political issues. Many things I observed and experienced during fieldwork became clear through the information the first generation Eritreans provided.

3.1 The change of former 'liberators' into oppressors

Eritrea is a young nation. It has been colonized for many decennia by Italy, England, and Ethiopia (Weldehaimanot 2010, 235). In 1991, Eritrea finally gained its independence by the party Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), under the leadership of Isaias Afewerki (ibid.; Woldemikael 2013, v). Eritrean citizens and people of the Eritrean diaspora of the first generation who are still attached to their home country have great passion for nationalism as they are very proud of their finally achieved independency and now want to maintain it (Weldehaimanot 2010, 236; Bernal 2004, 3). Their political mind set is "frozen by its own perception and interpretation of the past" (Reid 2005, 468). This attitude permitted a radical change, whereby the victor of Eritrea's independence, Afewerki, could become todays'

[16] http://www.volkskrant.nl/buitenland/eritrese-intimidatie-in-nederland-breidt-zich-uit~a4232786/, accessed on January 27, 2016

political leader (Bernal 2004, 9). The same party who initially liberated the country transformed into the 'People's Front for Democracy and Justice' party, led by Afewerki and many (ex-)military men (Woldemikael 2013, xiii). It is still the only ruling and legal political party in the country nowadays (Weldehaimanot 2010, 235; Human Rights Council 2015, 73). In 2001 Eritrea even turned into a dictatorship (Hedru 2003). All this made Eritrea in fact a "nationalist movement turned into a state" (Woldemikael 2013, vii). At the moment there is still a condition of 'no war, no peace' between Eritrea and Ethiopia (Human Rights Council 2015, 35). This implies a society that "constitutes a complex and dynamic social system in which institutions become reproduced with a potential for – positive or negative – conflict transformation" (Swiss Peace Foundation 2008, 17). According to the Human Rights Council (2015, 339), Eritrea creates such a strong national military force and an open-ended mandatory conscription in order to secure its freedom and sovereignty. Furthermore, the national service should also serve to transcend any religious, ethnic and regional differences and thus create cohesion (Kibreab 2009, 43). It is being argued that Eritrea is using these arguments and constantly makes propaganda to lure the youth into the army (Kibreab 2009, 45).

Due to the prevailing dictatorship in the country, the citizens are enduring harsh restrictions of freedom. There is no privacy (both within and across borders), no judiciary, no parliament, and no freedom of speech, religion or movement (Human Rights Council 2015, 72, 91, 102, 126, 160; Kibreab 2009, 50). Individuals only receive identity documents when fulfilling ones task in the civil or national service (Human Rights Council 2015, 102-4). However, if one is subject to the national service, identity documents are only being procured when ones employer or commander permits the individual to leave, and that permission is difficult to acquire (ibid.). Moreover, conscription in the national service is indefinite (Human Rights Council 2015, 187). The report of the United Nations Human Rights Council (2015) confirms the stories I have heard, that one is obliged to follow the commands of the regime and those who are working for that regime. Disobedience is not an option as they will undoubtedly be followed up by harsh sanctions (Kibreab 2009, 58). As David understood of current refugees, nobody knows who is part of the regime and everyone could be monitoring by order of the government.[17] Therefore, fear and distrust is present to a large extent, also among the Eritrean refugees in the Netherlands (Human Rights Council 2015, 95).[18] Senait

[17] David, first generation Eritrean, presentation 09-05-16

[18] David, first generation Eritrean, presentation 09-05-16; Kebrom, first generation Eritrean, presentation 20-04-16; Salina, first generation Eritrean, interview 04-05-16

told me that the young men are still afraid for what happens with information they tell to somebody.[19] They do not know who is trustworthy, they do not believe anybody and everybody has secrets.

Due to the harsh human rights situation and the military service that starts immediately after high school – or actually, one finishes the last year of high school in the military under the guise of political education – many young Eritreans deliberately repeat classes, quit school early and flee the country right before they are being picked up to go to the military base (Weldehaimanot 2010, 243; Kibreab 2009, 52; Reid 2005, 479; Human Rights Council 2015, 342). This explains the low education level of most Eritreans of the current refugee generation. Those who stay will most likely end up in the military service or will always have to hide and live with a fear for the police and military, risking their lives and the lives of their family members (Human Resource Council 2015, 104; Kibreab 2009, 53).

3.2 A stagnating economy and forced labour

As the political party is obliging nearly every citizen to serve in the military, the economy is standing still.[20] According to Salina, the country is disorganized, whereby its citizens are becoming disorganized as well.[21] Despite the small number of education programmes there are in Eritrea – 12 grades (primary and secondary school) exist and a few institutions of higher education for the best students – most Eritreans thus drop out early (Human Righst Council 2015, 61, 106, 346, 371). This corresponds to the education level of most men I spoke, which varies from sixth grade to twelfth grade, but most did not make it until twelfth grade.[22] Those who finished higher education are unable to apply for jobs that suit to their education level as no one receives their actual diploma, only if one finishes national service (Human Rights Council 2015, 345-346). The government does this to disable the possibility of people avoiding conscription (ibid.). Now, those who have studied are unable to prove that (ibid.).

There is no regular labour market as every aspect of the country's economy is dominated by the PFDJ (Kibreab 2009, 63). Every job is subject to conscript labour, exerted for the civil or national service as part of the national reconstruction programme, and wages of employees are being controlled, often making all wages equivalent to that of every conscript (Kibreab

[19] Senait, first generation Eritrean, interview 11-05-16
[20] http://fsi.fundforpeace.org/2015-eritrea, accessed on June 11, 2016
[21] Salina, first generation Eritrean, interview 04-05-16
[22] Different interviews with respondents between 24-02-16 and 11-05-16

2009, 63; Human Rights Council 2015, 421). These include jobs such as construction work in infrastructure and agricultural labour at state-owned farms (Kibreab 2009, 60). Citizens, therefore, do not have any goal of what they want to do in their lives as there are no satisfactory options in their own country and thus no reasons to study.[23] Furthermore, Eritrean citizens see their own country depopulating, thereby knowing that they have that option as well. Eritrean refugees of the current generation – the ones that have escaped the current dictatorship in Eritrea – thus come from a life marked by hopelessness, a life without future prospects. Salina, who works as an Eritrean interpreter, once had a conversation with a teacher of some Eritrean young men who are part of my research population.[24] The conversation clarified that the political background in Eritrea has had great impact on the men. They did not seem to be awake yet and some were traumatized. Most of them did not have a goal or future perspective at the moment of this research. Moreover, as Salina is an Eritrean ex-refugee herself, she knows that refugees need some time to rest from their flight to the destination country. She argued that the Eritreans did not totally realise yet where they have arrived and what it means to be in the Netherlands, despite having received their residence permit. Except for these economical differences, Eritrean people also come from a varied socio-cultural environment, which I will discuss now.

3.3 A traditional socio-cultural environment: a collective mentality

As mentioned earlier, religion is controlled in Eritrea (Human Rights Council 2015, 160). Four religions are permitted: the Orthodox Church of Eritrea (Christian), the Roman Catholic Church, the Evangelical Church of Eritrea (Lutheran-affiliated denomination), and Sunni Islam (ibid.). The division in religion in the whole country is around fifty per cent Christians and fifty per cent Muslims, and according to the stories of Eritreans of the first and the current generation, this occurs without any tensions between the groups (Woldemikael 2003, 118).[25] According to David, due to the harsh political circumstances there is more interest for religion as it offers people certainty.[26] In the Tigrinya area – the central and southern highland regions of Eritrea that borders on Ethiopia, which is where most refugees nowadays come from, including my respondents – most people are Orthodox Christian and a minority is

[23] Salina, first generation Eritrean, interview 04-05-16
[24] Salina, first generation Eritrean, interview 04-05-16
[25] Kebrom, first generation Eritrean, presentation 20-04-16; different interviews with respondents between 24-02-16 and 11-05-16
[26] David, first generation Eritrean, presentation 09-05-16

Muslim (Woldemikael 2003, 119-120). This division corresponds to the division in religion of my research population. Tigrinya is the dominant ethnic group of the nine prevailing ethnic groups and languages in Eritrea and captures fifty per cent of the population (Woldemikael 2003, 118, 120). Tigrinya people are slightly higher educated, which could clarify the high amount of Tigrinya people leaving the country (Woldemikael 2003, 125).

Abdulatif argues that there is a strong sense of a collective mentality and of preserving traditions in Eritrea.[27] On the countryside and in villages – where a large number of my research population originates from – this occurs even more than in cities.[28] Values of a certain group are more important than values of an individual.[29] Serving the needs of others take the first place, followed by executing ones tasks and following rules. This makes loyalty a valuable characteristic. Group members expect from each other that each person fulfils their tasks. However, this collective mentality is gradually changing and people's personal choices are being more accepted. Still, Eritreans that are now coming over have hardly ever lived or made decisions individually.[30]

Relationships between children and elderly people are traditional.[31] Children and elderly are separated, and respect and obedience to the elders and to others is important. Bringing up children is not necessarily focused on self-development or the development of talents – children are part of a family and their future is largely fixed and determined by the family. Parents' jobs are frequently defining the future of their children. Fathers have an important role in the sense of discipline. However, fathers are frequently absent as they are serving in the military or have already escaped the country. This leads to a lack of a male role model, sometimes including the fading of norms and values, different moral values and even derailment.

Furthermore, families are big but not many families are still intact. Almost every family has a family member living abroad on whom they are often financially dependent. If not, most families are planning to send someone abroad, often with the idea to let other brothers and sisters cross over later. Houses are often taken by three generations of family members.[32]

[27] Abdulatif, first generation Eritrean, presentation 09-05-16
[28] Different interviews with respondents between 24-02-16 and 11-05-16; Kebrom, first generation Eritrean, interview 30-04-16; Salina, first generation Eritrean, interview 04-05-16
[29] Abdulatif, first generation Eritrean, presentation 09-05-16
[30] David, first generation Eritrean, presentation 09-05-16
[31] Abdulatif, first generation Eritrean, presentation 09-05-16
[32] Kebrom, first generation Eritrean, interview 30-04-16

They are accustomed to share rooms with others.[33] Therefore, a large part of their lives are spent outside on a courtyard but also on the streets.[34]

There is a strong sense of social cohesion in neighbourhoods in Eritrea. People from the same region can also be considered as family, which is also noticeable in the social networks my respondents have in the Netherlands.[35] Most neighbours know each other and spend time with each other, especially the youth.[36] However, according to Eritreans of the first generation who still visit Eritrea every now and then, contact between neighbours is becoming less. This occurs due to the high degree of distrust as a result of the regime and the fact that nobody knows who the betrayers are that are linked with the regime. There is still contact between neighbours but people are also becoming more individual. The Eritrean refugees have said goodbye to the economic and political circumstances of Eritrea but the socio-cultural habits have travelled with them to the Netherlands.

3.4 Why the Netherlands?

> As a refugee it means that there is nothing to make any choices. You are just traveling where your legs inform you to [sic].[37]

According to the Eritrean young men, they came to the Netherlands based on their own choice.[38] Some of them mentioned that they knew the Netherlands of television and of football.[39] A few argued that they came here based on feedback they received of other refugees who arrived in the Netherlands earlier. Some knew that the rules concerning refugees, education and family reunion were more beneficial in the Netherlands than in other countries.[40] The largest part of the Eritreans who came to the Netherlands since 2014 were the first ones in their social network that arrived here. This implies that most of them did not know anybody in the Netherlands at the time of arrival. Most of them travelled without family or friends from Eritrea. However, some of my respondents are still in contact with one or two Eritreans who they know from their journey to the Netherlands, as refugees often

[33] Salina, first generation Eritrean, interview 04-05-16; Kebrom, first generation Eritrean, interview 30-04-16
[34] Kebrom, first generation Eritrean, interview 30-04-16
[35] Abdulatif, first generation Eritrean, presentation 09-05-16
[36] Kebrom, first generation Eritrean, interview 30-04-16
[37] Merhawi, interview 25-02-16
[38] Different interviews with respondents between 24-02-16 and 11-05-16
[39] Different interviews with respondents between 24-02-16 and 11-05-16
[40] Different interviews with respondents between 24-02-16 and 11-05-16

travel in groups.[41] In the meantime, some men do have some family members living here but these family members all arrived here afterwards.[42] Hagos told me that he definitely did not want to go to Germany.[43] He knew a little about the country, especially about Adolf Hitler, and did not want to go there because of the supposedly high degree of nationalism – one of the reasons he fled from his own country. Fithawi argued that he was actually planning to go to England but did not have enough money, so he ended up in the Netherlands.[44] The latter situation occurs most frequently, according to Kebrom, who intensively worked with Eritrean refugees of the current generation when they just arrived.[45] Many of the Eritrean young men were dependent on their smuggler during their flight to the destination country. Kebrom has spoken to many Eritrean refugees who were actually planning to go to Sweden, based on information they had about the proper reception of refugees and the relatively high wages there. However, most got caught on their way or did not know that they were dropped off in the Netherlands. Most of these Eritreans were totally dependent on human smugglers as they did not know anything of Europe.

3.5 Conclusion

The state of affairs since the beginning of the nation Eritrea has not been promising. Since it officially turned into a dictatorship it even became unbearable. The population is in total service of the government and chasing dreams within the Eritrean borders is something one can forget. Those who want to escape the harsh political and economic environment in Eritrea will have to risk their lives and flee the country. Their political, economic, and socio-cultural experiences in Eritrea have had influence on their mind-sets and behaviour, which could possibly influence the social integration processes of the Eritrean men. The next chapter will describe how the housing situation of the Eritrean men influences their social integration processes.

[41] Different interviews with respondents between 24-02-16 and 11-05-16
[42] Different interviews with respondents between 24-02-16 and 11-05-16
[43] Hagos, interview 26-03-16
[44] Fithawi, interview 18-03-16
[45] Kebrom, first generation Eritrean, interview 30-04-16

- 4 -

Housing and Social Integration

> It is Monday afternoon, the first day of fieldwork through my entrance at *VluchtelingenWerk*. I could immediately attend the housing procedure of the last group of Eritrean permit holders at their new residency in Lent. It was the first time I entered the site in Lent. The Eritreans had not arrived yet so I quickly walked around the buildings to see how their new accommodation was like. The terrain was like I expected, remote from city life and any neighbours, covered by a dreary atmosphere – the already cold temperature that day did not make the area more attractive – and the buildings were all identical to each other: grey and simple.[46]

Permit holders often have a vulnerable position in the host society as their position is dependent on regulations and perspectives concerning their legal status: a country's law and policies, the way these are being practiced, the support and management of public and private institutions and the dominant public ethos, varying from xenophobic to sympathetic attitudes. As many scholars, such as Phillimore (2013, 684-685) and Andersen, Turner, and Soholt (2013, 23-24) argue, low incomes of immigrants are a determinant for housing possibilities, whereby immigrants are largely reliant on social housing. This also applies for the Eritrean men of both my research groups, however, there are large differences in their housing situation and the impact thereof on social integration possibilities. This chapter will focus on the housing situation of both research groups – those living in the segregated neighbourhood in Lent and those who are housed in a regular neighbourhood in Nijmegen. Subsequently, I will analyse the influence of the housing area, the houses and the housing composition on the social integration of the Eritrean men.

4.1 The role of housing

In order to handle the large amount of incoming refugees, the Dutch government is obliged to distribute the amount of permit holders over municipalities every six months, which are then obliged to house them within three months.[47] The division is being done by the organisation

[46] Field notes 08-02-16

[47] http://www.vluchtelingenwerk.nl/feiten-cijfers/procedures-wetten-beleid/huisvesting, accessed on 7 January, 2016

Centraal Orgaan opvang Asielzoekers (COA).[48] The COA sets up personal profiles of the permit holders with important information for municipalities, such as size of the family, country of origin, language, education, work experience and possible disabilities. Based on these profiles, municipalities need to give permit holders suitable housing and are not allowed to reject anyone. In its turn, permit holders are obliged to accept the offered housing by a municipality. They are also allowed to find housing themselves, which, however, is not an easy task due to a lack of language skills and knowledge of housing regulations (Andersen, Turner and Soholt 2013, 23-4; Phillimore 2013, 684-5; Castles, de Haas, and Miller 2014, 274).[49] Permit holders are, therefore, often dependent on what the municipality offers.

Housing policies undergo different processes and different ways of governing on the national and local level. Even within the local level – the level of the municipality – housing policies are practiced in various ways and can have different outcomes for permit holders. Municipalities often have few settlement opportunities to offer permit holders, whereby they are regularly allocated to vacant dwellings (Phillips 2010, 214; Andersen, Turner, and Soholt 2013, 33). As occurred in the case of Lent, the location of the vacant dwellings has led to an excluded and segregated housing position of the Eritrean men, which involves an unequal distribution of a specific population in a specific area, which causes overrepresentation in certain areas, and under-representation in others (Bolt et al. 2010, 171; Castles, de Haas, and Miller 2014, 274).

Settling in a host country is the first step in the integration process (Dell'Olio 2004, 117). Phillimore and Goodson (2008, 314) argue that housing is a fundamental need and even occupies the highest rank in the hierarchy of needs, and is also valid for refugees. Secure housing is important for refugees as it gives them the opportunity to integrate structurally – it is the foundation for further participation in, for instance, in education and employment (Phillimore and Goodson 2008, 316). This, in turn, determines the socio-economic status of individuals (Heckmann 2006, 15). Moreover, housing is not just of material value but also has psycho-social significance when housing becomes 'home' (Phillimore and Goodson 2008, 314). Home is something that can be perceived from various perspectives and can have multiple layers and different meanings to different groups (Phillimore and Goodson 2008, 315; Phillimore 2013, 686). Home is multidimensional and people can attach importance to a particular home in a psychological, social and emotional way "created by familiar daily

[48] https://www.coa.nl/nl/keten-en-samenwerkingspartners/gemeenten/huisvesting, accessed on 7 January, 2016

[49] https://www.coa.nl/nl/asielzoekers/huisvesting-vergunninghouders, accessed on 7 January, 2016

routines and regular settings for activities and interactions." (Duyvendak 2011, 27). Furthermore, as it takes some time to attach value to a new home, home-making can be considered as a process (Phillimore 2013, 686-687). This process is partly influenced by housing policies as they can offer resources that contribute to, or may hinder, the production of home. It often occurs that immigrants make use of the 'mobile home strategy' (Duyvendak 2011, 31). This implies that immigrants partly recreate places within their new surroundings that remind them of their origin country, by designing the interior of their house in the way their former house did (ibid.).

4.1.1 The housing area: physical isolation versus physical inclusion

As described earlier, the former student residence that is used in Lent was one of the vacant dwellings the municipality had available. It is made out of cheap prefab material, which makes the rent ultimately low. Permit holders until the age of twenty-three receive a smaller benefit from the government and, therefore, have a smaller budget to spend. For this reason, only Eritreans in the age of eighteen until twenty-three are housed in Lent. The dwellings are located at an isolated location, with only a few large detached houses and farms in the nearby area. Other local inhabitants can be found at the actual village Lent, which starts at the other side of the highway, and in Oosterhout, which is situated further in the countryside (see Appendix 1 for a map of the housing location in Lent). Most of the Eritrean young men argue that they like the surroundings of Nijmegen, which, however, is not dedicated to the location, but especially to the people who help them (see paragraph 5.2.3 for more information about the relationships between the Eritreans and local inhabitants in Lent). The plan of the young men is to stay in Nijmegen if that is possible. Only two men rather move to another city where other friends or family members live.

There are two regular high schools for Dutch children on the other side of the road, which own a football, basketball, and volleyball field that borders the terrain of the Eritreans. In general, during the day the recreation place is reserved for children of the high schools. At other times it can be used by other people. On the terrain the Eritreans live, there is a place to play basketball and to play table tennis, however, these are hardly used. Football is the most popular sport amongst the men and they play football daily at the recreation place of the high schools. According to Boschman (2012, 356) physical characteristics of a neighbourhood influence interaction opportunities as these can attract others and offer opportunities to generate interactions between people of varied ethnic backgrounds. However, it is unfortunate for those who are eager to meet non-Eritrean people, that, except for the Eritreans

themselves, nobody uses the recreation place after school hours, as it is not directly surrounded by neighbours. Considering the social integration possibilities in the area, the housing area does not have a beneficial location. Initially there are not many physical facilities present in which both Eritrean young men and non-Eritreans can meet each other. Inhabitants of surrounding villages have created a solution to that obstacle. There are several interest groups active in the neighbourhood in Lent, which all organize activities for the Eritrean men. I will elaborate on these practices in chapter five.

The Eritrean men who live dispersed over Nijmegen and its surroundings have a more beneficial housing than the ones in Lent. Yet, they still endure a vulnerable position in the housing market due to the impossibility of choosing their own living place and space. Their house belongs to the social housing sector of the lowest price class, located in an apartment building (except for one man who lives in a terraced house). Most of them are settled close to a supermarket and have recreation possibilities in their village or neighbourhood. However, interviews have pointed out that this group clearly has problems in finding their way around the neighbourhood. Adel, who lives in a quiet village a little further away from Nijmegen, was the first one who made this clear:

> I would like to do sports but I don't know where. I am new, so I don't know where. I am very good in playing darts. I received a diploma for it in Nijmegen. But in this village, I am new, where is a dart club? […] If I have Dutch contacts then it is alright but I don't have Dutch contacts so I don't know anything. But the problem is, how can I meet Dutch people? […] It is important to know people. […] Maybe I would like to live in Nijmegen later. Because you can find everything in Nijmegen, Nijmegen is a big city. Not many people live in this village, around 3,000 people. A little quiet. I am young, I want to play. Sitting home every day is not fun, boring. I want to sport, football etc., that is good.[50]

Most of them do not know where to find places for entertainment. They all told me that they do not know where to start searching and when I mentioned that they can use the Internet to search for things, it quickly became clear that they do not have enough computer and language skills yet to find such things. Besides, when looking for suitable sports facilities together with the men it often turns out that the only sports facilities there are in the nearby area are too expensive for them. The men do mention that they are very pleased that they have their own apartment and that they feel secure and comfortable in their own neighbourhood and house. However, according to Duyvendak (2011, 31), the lack of

[50] Adel, interview 07-03-16, my translation

familiarity in one's own neighbourhood, village or city might slower one's home-making process. This differs in the case of Lent, as outsiders – Dutch students living on the same terrain and other local inhabitants that live in surrounding villages – concern themselves with organizing daily activities for the Eritreans (see chapter five for more information about the relationships between the Eritreans and local inhabitants in Lent). Initially, regarding the structural aspect of one's social integration, the housing area of the research group in Nijmegen and its surroundings is more advantageous than the location in Lent, as regular neighbourhoods consist of basic facilities, including recreation facilities, and as inhabitants are surrounded by many direct neighbours. The Eritrean men in Nijmegen have a preferable starting point to socially integrate but the challenge lies in the ability to explore the facilities of the neighbourhood, in order to start an actual social life.

4.1.2 The houses: shared housing versus independent living

The residency in Lent consists of five buildings. Four of them are inhabited by Eritrean permit holders and one by Dutch students (see Appendix 2 for a map of the division of buildings in Lent). Each building consists of eight apartments (four on the ground floor, four on the top floor) with three persons living in each apartment. Every person has its own room but the housemates share the two living rooms (the second sometimes used as a storage room), the kitchen, bathroom and toilet. The interior of the apartments is scanty: a place to sleep, to sit, to cook and to wash. Except for the painting with roses that every household received from the housing corporation, no further decorations are found in the common rooms. The thin material where the buildings are made of causes housemates and neighbours to hear everything from each other. They can hear the neighbours walking upstairs and each other's music. In addition, housemates can talk to each other through the walls. If one person takes a shower, the whole house is awake. Tsegay argues that he often has a headache and that he "cannot sleep well as the houses are too noisy. You can hear all footsteps."[51] In other words, the men do not have much rest and privacy in their own apartment or room.

I have heard several Eritreans referring to their neighbourhood not as a 'neighbourhood' but as a 'camp' or even as a place for dogs, as in that it was just like another refugee camp.[52] In the beginning of their stay in Lent they were angry and disappointed about their housing. Yohannes made me realise this:

[51] Tsegay, interview 04-03-16
[52] Different informal conversations with Eritrean permit holders of Lent between 24-02-16 and 11-05-16

> In the refugee centre they told me that I was going to live alone. Then I waited for a long time and eventually I live in Lent together with other boys. I thought I was getting my own house. So in the beginning I was sad and not happy.[53]

In the last weeks of my research I asked some Eritrean men again what they thought of their stay in the shared apartments. It seemed that some of them accepted the situation and also understood that it is a problem of too little spare living space in Nijmegen.[54] However, they are all still looking forward to the moment that they turn twenty-three years old and have the right to their own house. Having their own bedroom is something that they really appreciate. Most men spend more time in their own room than in the common rooms with their housemates.[55] It regularly occurred that I was welcomed in their own bedrooms. Housemates and other friends also mostly hang out with each other in these rooms.

The Eritrean men who live in Nijmegen all have their own small apartment, which consists of one or two rooms. They also have the basic things to be able to live in their house, but remarkably compared to the low expense possibilities of the men was that they all had an enormous refrigerator and LCD television.

Concerning the home-making process and the interior of the rooms of the men in both Lent and Nijmegen, it is clear that the 'mobile home strategy' (Duyvendak 2011, 31) – the recreation of familiar places of their origin country – is being applied by all of them. Naser could clearly explain this:

> In Eritrea I also had much decoration in my house. Most people in Eritrea want to make their house pretty. That was also in my house. My mother and father also had it, that's why I want to do the same here.[56]

First of all, many men have pictures in their room or house of themselves and of friends or family members; they look happy or either sturdy. Religious lyrics on walls and pictures of important Christian figures are largely present. One of the Muslim Eritreans had hung up one of his praying carpets on his wall. Other Eritreans have a collection of teacups, cuddle toys, Christmas and birthday decorations, a carpet, and wrapping paper with shiny and colourful designs that functions as wallpaper. It is all in order to make their room cosier. When visiting the men in Nijmegen, most men had their huge televisions on, showing an Eritrean TV show or video clips of Eritrean music – music that they really love. Integrating in the Netherlands occurs, as yet, whilst maintaining a strong preference for Eritrean habits. This is in line with

[53] Yohannes, interview 02-03-16, my translation
[54] Different informal conversations with Eritrean permit holders of Lent between 13-04-16 and 11-05-16
[55] Different interviews with respondents between 24-02-16 and 11-05-16
[56] Naser, interview 11-05-16, my translation

the concept 'rooted cosmopolitanism' of Kwame Appiah (1998, 91), which implies that one is "attached to a home of his or her own, with its own cultural particularities, but taking pleasure from the presence of other, different places that are home to other, different people."

4.1.3 Housing composition: living with co-ethnics versus living alone

As mentioned earlier, the alternative housing solution in Lent resulted in shared housing. The Eritreans do not prefer living together.[57] They argue that they rather live alone, in their own house. If they would live together, they want to live together with their wife or family, who are now still in Eritrea or elsewhere in the world. Most of them are also planning to request for a family reunion with either their parents and siblings, or their wives (and children). The combination of the household compositions has been made by the housing cooperative in cooperation with the COA.[58] They strive to house permit holders together who already know each other from the refugee centre, unless there are signals that a specific combination could cause problems. In practice, it has turned out that there are good and bad matches of Eritrean men in the houses in Lent. Contrary to what is being stated by the housing corporation, not all Eritreans from the same refugee centre are actually housed together. Some housemates have become good friends and do almost everything together. In some other houses there are, according to two men, bad matches. This occurred, for example, in the house of Merhawi:

> I don't do anything with them. It is not nice, they are crazy. They don't have good behaviour, drink alcohol, dance, music in the night and I can't sleep. I have no relationship with them, it is not a good match, so I prefer sitting in my room. It would be nicer if the match was good.[59]

In the house of the other dissatisfied man nobody makes use of the common rooms. He said that the housemates do not have phone numbers of each other and never talk to each other, unless there are issues with cleaning the house. These two men mostly sit in their own room if they are in their own house or, otherwise, they hang around at houses of their neighbours.

Most housemates have the same friends in the neighbourhood, with whom they frequently spend time. Some men also have friends or relatives in other cities in the Netherlands. The housemates mostly do not take each other to those acquaintances if they live in another city, only if it is in their own village or city. However, it appears that the Eritreans do take each other to non-Eritrean contacts if they have an appointment with somebody. The collective

[57] Different interviews with respondents between 24-02-16 and 11-05-16

[58] Conversation with employee VluchtelingenWerk, who was concerned in the housing situations of the Eritrean permit holders living in Lent, 16-03-16

[59] Merhawi, interview 25-02-16

mentality as discussed in chapter three is thus recognizable in doing activities.[60] The Eritrean men prefer to do activities together with housemates (or neighbours, see chapter five), instead of doing activities alone. They feel more comfortable when they are accompanied by other Eritreans, when doing things in an environment that is unknown to them.[61] Tigges, Browne and Green (1998, 57-58) argue, that "regardless of the nature of the relationship, individuals who live with other adults have access to social resources that those who live alone […] do not have." Therefore, living together with housemates is mostly conducive to the extension of one's social network, both their ethnic as interethnic network.

The Eritrean men living in Nijmegen thus all live alone in their apartment. They all mention that they really appreciate their own living space and that they do not have to share it with others, as the Eritreans in Lent do. Most of the Eritrean men living in Nijmegen know at least one Eritrean in Lent. Naser clearly explained why living alone was preferred so much:

> Living together is not better. It is better to live alone, because if you have to go to school and you want to study well, then it is better to live alone. In my house, for example, I can study well because it is quiet. If you live with many people than the behaviour differs per person. One person perhaps wants to talk, one wants to take it easy and study, then living alone is better.[62]

However, there is also a dark side of living alone. The quietness in one's home can turn into loneliness, as the Eritrean men hardly know the people in the neighbourhood. According to the men and first generation Eritreans, people from Eritrea are not used to be alone. As described in chapter three, the Eritreans have constantly lived together with many other people before their housing in Nijmegen. The men mention that they miss that liveliness, as it is now always empty and silent in their house. Nevertheless, they do not want to live together with friends. If they want to live together they only want to do that with their wife or girlfriend, also preferred by the men in Lent. As it also turned out in Lent, Eritreans do not often undertake activities by themselves. That happens, if possible, mainly with other Eritreans that live close to them. Living alone thus also implies undertaking less activities.

[60] Abdulatif, first generation Eritrean, presentation 09-05-16
[61] David, first generation Eritrean, presentation 09-05-16
[62] Naser, interview 11-05-16

4.2 Conclusion

Taking housing in its fullness, living in a regular neighbourhood in the city or in a village is conducive to social integration, as the basic facilities and recreation places it offers can facilitate these processes. Though these facilities are open to everyone in the neighbourhood, they are not always financially accessible for the Eritrean young men. Moreover, regular neighbourhoods are inhabited by people of different ethnic backgrounds, whereby the facilities in the neighbourhood can serve as meeting places for all inhabitants. Eritreans could thus get in touch with a multi-ethnic population at these places. Furthermore, Eritrean habits are still considerably present in the daily lives of the Eritrean men, which is expressed in the interiors of the houses and rooms, as well as in undertaking activities with a collective mentality. Ethnic social networks of most Eritreans who live together are extending and thereby also increase the number of activities, whereas those who live alone endure more loneliness and engage in less activities which may include moments of possible interaction with non-Eritreans. It can thereby be concluded that those who are housed together, no matter of the location, or those who can do many things together with other Eritreans in the neighbourhood, are likely to have a faster social integration than those who live alone and are not surrounded by any co-ethnics. The next chapter will analyse the population composition in neighbourhoods and its influence on the social integration of the Eritrean young men.

- 5 –

Neighbourhoods and Social Integration

The neighbourhood in which permit holders are settled and the location of the neighbourhood within an urban area are related to social integration processes. Differences between living among co-ethnics, people with multi-ethnic backgrounds, and native Dutch people can result in different forms of social capital, including ethnic and interethnic contact, and thereby in different levels of social integration. Many scholars, such as Boschman (2012) and Duyvendak, Hendriks, and Van Niekerk (2009), have argued that the extent of interethnic contact is strongly related to either homogeneous or heterogeneous population compositions in neighbourhoods. Homogeneous neighbourhoods enable individuals to maintain ethnic contacts while heterogeneous neighbourhoods enforce interethnic contacts. In this chapter I will elaborate on the social capital of the Eritrean young men, including ethnic and interethnic contact. It becomes clear how social cohesion is being experienced by different parties. Finally, I describe how social capital has influence on the content of the social lives of the Eritreans.

5.1 Developing a social life in the Netherlands

Social trust, social cohesion within neighbourhoods, and possibilities for the creation of social capital are all closely related to social integration processes. This becomes clear in the neighbourhoods of the Eritreans and the forming of their social capital. As described in the introduction, there are ninety-six Eritrean young men with a residence permit living at the remote location in Lent, together with twenty-one Dutch students of the university of applied sciences. The Eritrean men who are housed in Nijmegen or a surrounding village are all housed in a multi-ethnic neighbourhood. The question is how these population compositions influence the social integration of the Eritreans. In contrast to what scientists argue about the negative influence of homogeneous neighbourhoods on social integration, such as Gijsberts and Dagevos (2007, 807), and about the contribution of heterogeneous neighbourhoods to social mixing, like Duyvendak, Hendriks, and Van Niekerk (2009, 46), the consequences of population compositions on social integration processes seem to bear opposite results. During my research it turned out that theories regarding the negative influences of ethnic residential

segregation on social integration processes could initially be applied at the segregated housing situation in Lent. However, the effort of interest groups – which was the requirement of the municipality to execute the housing plan (Gemeente Nijmegen 2015, 8-11) – made a significant difference in the possibilities to socially integrate.

5.1.1 The importance of co-ethnic relationships

For many immigrants, social capital is the most important form of capital they possess in the host society (Jacobsen 2006, 282-283; Lamba and Krahn 2003, 336, 355; Cheong et al. 2007, 41). Social capital can provide them with other sorts of capital necessary to integrate, such as economic capital and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986). Several scholars have attempted to theorize social capital. Pierre Bourdieu (1986) was one of the first scholars that argued that social capital contains social networks of individuals and institutions which are marked by mutual recognition, and subsequently gives individuals access to other important resources. Putnam (2002, 11) distinguishes two roles within social capital – 'bridging' and 'bonding': "Bridging social capital concerns voluntary associations and horizontal ties based on common interests that transcend heterogeneous differences of ethnicity, religion and socio-economic status. In contrast, bonding social capital refers to exclusive social ties that people build around homogeneity." Bonding social capital also includes ethnic social capital. Cheong et al. (2007, 29-30) complement these forms of social capital with linking social capital. This form involves the vertical relationships that support individuals in access to institutional resources in order for one's economic and social development – including legal statuses and citizenship rights.

According to Lamba and Krahn (2003, 338), a valuable network for immigrants is their family network. Family has the same effect as a co-ethnic network, as it can offer ethnic, social and emotional support, alleviate and facilitate immigrants' integration processes by providing useful information, and mediate in material, financial and employment networks (Jacobsen 2006, 282; Lamba and Krahn 2003, 338-339; Tselios et al. 2015, 419; Boschman 2012, 354). Unfortunately, all Eritrean men miss the important family network as they all came to the Netherlands alone, without family members. Lamba and Krahn (2003, 339) argue, that those who migrated without their family may thereby experience a slower integration process. This generation of Eritreans are the ones who are obliged to create a social network and find useful resources themselves. As the family network is missing, the Eritreans now find their mutual support at co-ethnics.

Opinions of the Eritreans about living in Lent differ. On the one hand, some men experience living together with ninety-six Eritrean people as a negative factor. Every Eritrean from this research group emphasized the issue of not being able to practice the Dutch language due to the population composition. In addition, some had a clear opinion about why the whole population composition was dysfunctional. Amongst many others, Kelifa and Hagos could explain why it was a problem:

> There are only Eritrean guys living here and we only talk Tigrinya. That is the problem. How can you know the Dutch language? We don't practice or use the language for anything, only at school. But at the school it's the same, we are only with Eritrean people so we only talk Tigrinya. […] I came from Eritrea to this country. But without talking the Dutch language, how can I live in this country?[63]

> Living with Eritrean boys is difficult: first is language, second, the culture in Eritrea and in Holland is not the same. The way how we live right now is just like in Eritrea so I don't know how to adapt to the culture of Holland. It is a big case. I really want to adapt. Because I now live in Holland, not in Eritrea. I want to forget the Eritrean culture.[64]

The men realise the necessity of cultural integration in order to fully socially integrate in the Dutch society and the hindering of the housing situation and population composition they were subject to. The Eritrean men in Lent experience a lack of bridging social capital and people who make them familiar with Dutch habits and Dutch ways of living, whereby they keep using their own cultural traits and feel that they do not have the possibility to integrate.

In the beginning of my research, it surprised me most that despite the fact that so many Eritrean young men are living on a small terrain in this neighbourhood, most of them only know the ones who live in their own building.[65] They argue that they do not really know who are living in the other buildings. They greet each other on the street, but besides that, they do not interact much with each other. There are moments where the Eritreans of the different buildings meet each other and are in contact with each other, such as at school and at activities organized in the neighbourhood and at sports activities.[66] Yet, for most of them, the contacts are limited to and remain limited within their own neighbourhood.[67] They like to stick together to their own well-known little group. The men have repeatedly mentioned that

[63] Kelifa, interview 24-02-16
[64] Hagos, interview 26-03-16
[65] Different interviews with respondents between 24-02-16 and 11-05-16
[66] Field notes of participant observation between 08-02-16 and 11-05-16
[67] Field notes of participant observation between 08-02-16 and 11-05-16; Different interviews with respondents between 24-02-16 and 11-05-16

they are all the same, that they all carry the same cultural baggage, and that they do not see the point of meeting all of them.

On the other hand, most of the Eritrean men living in Lent experience social cohesion with some other Eritreans from their neighbourhood. In line with Phillimore (2013, 688), living in an ethnic enclave can support their reconstructions of home. Tselios et al. (2015, 419) argue that "people usually prefer to interact with those who resemble them, who share the same ethnic heritage, have the same social status, and hence share experiences and tastes." As discussed earlier, immigrants can find great support and solidarity from co-ethnic immigrants who reside in the same host country. This solidarity and support is also beloved among this Eritrean generation. At the moment of this research, the social capital of the Eritrean men living in Lent mainly consisted of other Eritrean refugees: refugees who still live in the refugee centre they came from, Eritreans who they know from their hometown in Eritrea, and Eritreans who live nearby or with whom they now live with. They are also the ones with whom they undertake activities and explore the Dutch society. Bonding social capital is to a certain extent being really appreciated. The Eritrean men like to be in contact with at least one other Eritrean, to be able to talk in their own language, share their well-known culture and talk about their experiences in the Netherlands. However, most Eritreans in Lent experience an overload of Eritrean people and Eritrean customs. They want a little less from the Eritrean life and more from the Dutch ways of living.

All Eritrean men living in Nijmegen have a very clear view of a desired social network. They are housed in a regular neighbourhood where they are often (one of) the only Eritrean(s), and experience great loneliness when no other Eritreans are living close to them. On the one hand, this loneliness makes them more dependent on neighbours in case they have problems, for example. On the other hand, they even try harder to be in contact with Eritrean people who do not live in the neighbourhood. They intend to do anything necessary to be in contact with other Eritreans. For all of them counts that, whenever they have the opportunity, they are in contact with other Eritrean people.

The social capital of Eritreans living in Nijmegen mainly consists of other Eritrean refugees who live elsewhere in the city or village or in another part of the country. The men mainly undertake activities alone or, when other Eritrean people live nearby, they undertake activities with them. It often occurs that they have one very good friend with whom they do many activities together. Other contacts with Eritreans are more superficial. They encounter each other by being in the same class at school, through the Internet, but also in public

spaces. According to first generation Eritreans, it is normal to approach other Eritreans on the street, as it is part of their culture.[68] However, all contacts between Eritreans seem to be limited to a certain extent, due to the present distrust. As described in chapter two, the harsh political circumstances they experienced in Eritrea already marked this generation of Eritrean refugees by distrust. Additionally, despite the fact that Eritreans are away from the repression and extreme control of the regime in Eritrea itself, they still do not know who is trustworthy or not in the Netherlands.[69] Bakker and Dekker (2011, 2032-2033) argue that trust can be increased in an environment of social control, collective efficacy and strong social networks. In the Eritrean case, however, social control has achieved the contrary as the control is too strong. This prevails due to loyalists of the Eritrean regime who also reside in the Netherlands and exert influence through meetings, parties and churches. They control the loyalty of other Eritreans towards Eritrean customs, beliefs, norms and values, and thereby discourage integration. Yet, these controlling practices are not directly visible and nobody knows who exactly executes these controls. Due to this complicated situation among Eritreans, their trust towards others can be impeded and can lead to distrust. Everybody is cautious towards what they share with and say to other people, both Eritreans and non-Eritreans.

The simultaneous downside of the attachment to co-ethnics is its consequences considering social integration. Social contacts influence one's position in socio-economic hierarchies, due to resources social networks provide (Gijsberts and Dagevos 2007, 807). Limited social relationships and contacts between different ethnic groups may therefore hinder social integration, as ethnic minorities have fewer and less access to resources than natives (Tselios et al. 2015, 419; Boschman 2012, 354).

5.1.2 A lack of interethnic contact versus bridging interethnic contact

Both scholars and Dutch politicians widely argue that social relationships with inhabitants of a host society – both natives and other ethnic groups – contribute to the integration of ethnic minorities (Tselios et al. 2015, 419; Boschman 2012, 354). Therefore, proficiency of the host society's language and learning Dutch values and norms is crucial (Gijsberts and Dagevos 2007, 808; Boschman 2012, 356).

Salina argues that the Eritrean men in both Lent and Nijmegen are afraid to speak the Dutch language in public.[70] Some feel ashamed to talk in Dutch. In Lent it occurs that some

[68] Kebrom, first generation Eritrean, interview 30-04-16
[69] Salina, first generation Eritrean, interview 04-05-16; Senait, first generation Eritrean, interview 11-05-16
[70] Salina, first generation Eritrean, interview 04-05-16

men who already have a better command of the Dutch language ridicule those who do not speak much Dutch. The extent to which an immigrant commands this language depends on the investments people make in order to learn and the opportunities they have to speak (Gijsberts and Dagevos 2007, 808-809). Living in an ethnic homogeneous neighbourhood or having only Eritrean contacts is not offering enough opportunities to achieve better language proficiencies. Therefore, some men join their forces and practice the Dutch language together.

It is assumed that less contact with natives leads to less access to important resources and thereby also to limited life chances (Tselios et al. 2015, 419; Boschman 2012, 354). For this reason, ethnic residential segregation is seen as a negative factor for the creation of bridging social capital, and subsequently for social integration (Boschman 2012, 353-354; Gijsberts and Dagevos 2007, 807). This situation can be linked to the 'isolation thesis', which includes minimal contact between ethnic minorities and natives as the latter hardly live in these areas (Boschman 2012, 354).

According to the Eritreans living in Nijmegen, the composition of the population in their neighbourhoods mainly consists of native Dutch people and sometimes some other foreigners. Heterogeneous population compositions can evolve in two different ways. On the one hand, these compositions can contribute to more social mixing and thereby enhanced social mobility opportunities (Duyvendak, Hendriks, and Van Niekerk 2009, 46). On the other hand, however, research in the Netherlands has shown that ethnic diverse neighbourhoods can have a negative effect on social trust (Bakker and Dekker 2011, 2031, 2033). These could contribute to less understanding and social trust between neighbours, thereby damaging rather than building harmony within a community (Boschman 2012, 356; Sturgis, Kuha, and Jackson 2014, 1303).

All Eritreans I spoke mentioned that they are open to meeting Dutch people. There is only a big difference in the amount of interethnic contact between those living in Lent and those living in Nijmegen.

As the men living in Nijmegen live alone and regularly experience loneliness, they have stronger feelings to make contact with neighbours than most Eritreans living Lent. However, in contrast to what I expected before entering the field, interethnic contact within the neighbourhoods of the Eritreans in Nijmegen is very minimal. I soon realised that the men hardly know who live in their neighbourhood, street, and sometimes even in their own apartment building. They experience great difficulties in making contact with neighbours.

Some greet everybody on the street but conversations do not go any further than "Hello, how are you?"[71] Four men have a little more superficial interaction with direct neighbours, but only one man has more regular and profound conversations with its direct neighbours. He also goes to his neighbours when he has problems. Abdella approaches his language buddy when he has problems, as she is the Dutch person he knows best.[72] The others only appeal to someone of *VluchtelingenWerk*. All men mentioned that neighbours are kind to them when they need help, but real interethnic contact or social cohesion seems to be absent. The problem for the Eritreans is that they do not know where to meet other people and a lack of money and access to facilities or activity centres restrain them of meeting new people.

In line with Ash Amin (2002, 972) mixed neighbourhoods do not necessarily have to form one community that share the same values, interests and identity, and generates solidarity. Rather, they consist of several different relationships between people without much interaction between the different affiliations (ibid.). There are no signs of integrated communities in the neighbourhoods of the Eritrean young men. I had the impression that the Eritreans experience a lack of "sense of community, their sense of belonging to a neighbourhood, caring about the people who live there, and believing that people who live there care about them", due to the minimal contact between them and other neighbours (Portney and Berry 2001). This lack is detrimental for social contact and social capital (ibid.). According to Ager and Strang (2008), superficial interactions can still be considered as bridging social capital and supportive in feelings of home and belonging. However, in line with Tselios et al. (2015, 419) and Boschman (2012, 354), these superficial contacts do not lead to access to resources that are useful for one's integration process. The men living unnoticed in Nijmegen clearly experience limited integration opportunities.

Regardless of the isolated housing location and the minimal amount of facilities that the neighbourhood offers, the Eritrean men living in Lent seem to have a privileged position considering interethnic contact. In contrast to literature concerning residential segregation (Boschman 2012, 353-354; Tselios et al. 2015, 419; Gijsberts and Dagevos 2007, 807), the deprived location of their residence and the almost single ethnic population composition did not go hand in hand with the 'isolation thesis'. Most of the young men are longing for

[71] Berhe, interview 08-03, my translation; Grmay, interview 25-03, my translation; Russom 24-03, my translation

[72] Survey of language buddy of one of the Eritrean men living in Nijmegen

meetings and contacts with people of other nationalities, and, fortunately for the men, some interest groups responded to these longings and undertook action.

Vluchtelingenwerk and other local inhabitants predicted beforehand that the housing situation in Lent, and especially the specific population composition, could engender issues concerning the integration processes of the Eritrean men. Therefore, different interest groups make much effort to organize all kinds of activities that focus on the participation and integration of the Eritrean men in Dutch society. Local inhabitants of voluntary organisation 'Welcome to the Neighbourhood' (WttN) are organizing different events, such as the weekly Sunday afternoon meeting where the men can hang out with local inhabitants, but also find free second hand clothes, furniture and electronics. Once in a while WttN organizes a music meeting, where the Eritrean men can play music together with local inhabitants. The municipality and welfare organisation *Tandem* organize sports activities and sports events in cooperation with local sports clubs. *VluchtelingenWerk* organizes courses and classes where the Eritrean men learn how institutions in the Netherlands work, and where they have the opportunity to discuss their experiences in the Netherlands. *VluchtelingenWerk* also matches Eritrean men, interested in practicing the Dutch language and exploring Dutch customs, with Dutch citizens. The young men do not have to put much effort in finding entertainment as it is all being offered to them.

Charity-minded local people and charity organisations can support newcomers in finding their way in the new society and help them to become familiar with mainstream public spaces (Jacobsen 2006, 283; Lamba and Krahn 2003, 339). Mutual trust evolves more easily when such organisations and such helpful people are involved during the integration process of refugees and show interest and understandings towards their situation (Bakker and Dekker 2011, 2031-2032). According to Satzewich (1993, 315), these formal and informal relationships "are not timeless entities but are rather flexible in the face of changing circumstances," and they shape an immigrants' social capital altogether.

The Dutch students living on the same terrain as the Eritrean men in Lent can also be considered as the charity minded sort of social capital. As mentioned earlier, the municipality has deliberately made one building available for Dutch students not only to create a more diverse population composition at the residence but also to stimulate interactions between Eritreans and Dutch students and thereby encouraging the integration process of the Eritrean men (Gemeente Nijmegen 2015, 10). However, there is only a little group of Eritreans that is in contact with the Dutch students, and the other way around, there is only a select group of students that is in contact with the Eritreans. Other students sometimes participate in the

activities organized by the select group, but they do not make an effort to mingle with the Eritreans. The students organize activities such as a movie nights and dinners, or the creation of a vegetable garden together. Many Eritreans like to participate in these activities. Yet, they hardly make contact with the students and when an activity is finished the men go home as soon as possible. Interethnic contact almost only occurs during the activities organized by the students.

There is also another group of Dutch students involved in activities organized by refugee or charity organisations. They are involved, for example, in the cooking course where they help with doing groceries and cooking and eat together with the Eritrean men. However, these students do not have much contact with the Eritrean men, only on organized moments.

The downside of the organized activities is that many of them are being organized for all Eritreans living in Lent. It regularly occurred that there was an uneven division of Eritreans and non-Eritreans, which implied that most conversations still found place between co-ethnics, instead of between Eritreans and others. Activities were also often organized on the terrain of the housing location in Lent. Such activities still limit the extent to which the Eritreans can explore their surroundings, which is not conducive to their social integration.

The interethnic contacts the Eritreans in Lent have are subject to either bridging or linking social capital, as the people and organisations mainly help them in becoming familiarized with socio-cultural or structural aspects of Dutch society. Only very few men are in contact with non-Eritreans outside organized activities, and those are all people who they know from either *VluchtelingenWerk*, WttN, a previous refugee camp or from living on the same terrain.[73] Real and lasting friendly relationships have not evolved yet. Nevertheless, due to the organized activities, the men in Lent have more possibilities to have interethnic contact and to explore the host society than the ones living in Nijmegen. All kinds of relationships with non-Eritreans can help to acquire necessary tools for integration.

Both the Eritreans from Lent and from Nijmegen are in the beginning phase of integrating in an interactive way. Salina expects that contact between Eritreans and non-Eritreans will become better in the coming years and that the Eritreans' dependence on other Eritreans will become less.[74] Some men in Lent already experience a feeling of leaving their safe Eritrean environment. The men need more time to command the Dutch language better so they are

[73] Yohannes, interview 02-03-16; Tesfit, interview 09-05-16; Field notes of participant observation between 08-02-16 and 11-05-16

[74] Salina, first generation Eritrean, interview 04-05-16

able to communicate with non-Eritreans. And, additionally, they need some time to get to know who the other is.

5.2 The importance of social capital in building a social life

Due to the differences in especially bridging and linking social capital between the Eritrean men living in Lent and those living in Nijmegen, the young men have different supplies and different possibilities for activities. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, there are many different organisations involved in the participation and integration processes of the Eritreans living in Lent. Initially, none of the activities is mandatory, but the organizers of the activities which are especially organized for the Eritrean men, do appreciate it if they attend the activities and if agreements are being followed up. Thereby, these men have quite some things to do, which sometimes even becomes too much.

First of all, most of them go to school 5 days a week. Second, several sports clubs in neighbouring villages have offered the Eritreans (almost) free membership, whereby many men practice at least one sport: football, volleyball, hockey, tennis, running or cycling. One man has even been scouted by a sports club to come play at a high level. Those who play football also play several days a week at the recreation field next to their house. Third, playing music and following music courses is another thing that some men would like to do, but that has not been a possibility yet. Fourth, there are the activities of *VluchtelingenWerk* including a cooking course, but also classes about the mental health care, physical health or about budgeting for example. Furthermore, almost all of them have a language buddy and a host family to eat with, either once a week or once in two weeks. Almost all Eritreans experience these contacts as extremely valuable as they can meet local people and learn something about cultural traditions in the Netherlands. Only a few Eritreans thought a host family takes too much time. Some experience difficulties in following up agreements with their language buddy or host family due to the many activities they have to do, in addition to the necessary rest and for some also the necessary time to process the stress of their flight to the Netherlands. Some men partake in activities organized by the Dutch students that live on the same terrain. At the Sunday meetings of WttN the Eritrean men can meet, talk and play games with local inhabitants.

As described in chapter three, all of the Eritrean men are religious. Only seven out of ninety-six Eritrean men are Muslim. If they have time, they go to the mosque on Fridays. The others are Orthodox Christian. WttN has made a floor of an old shed available where the

Eritreans have created their own little Orthodox church. A small group of about fifteen to twenty men visit the daily church ceremonies, organized by one of the men in cooperation with two older Eritrean men who live in Nijmegen. Each month on one Sunday, there is a big church ceremony which is attended by around fifty men. On the most important holidays – which is around three or four times a year – all men try to go to the church in Rotterdam where there is a special Eritrean Orthodox church. The men all mentioned that the church is really important to them, but not all of them visit the church every day. Salih explained that the big church ceremonies have primacy:

> Yes, I go to the church ceremonies in the house in Lent. If I do not have to train, then I go to the church every day. The church is more important. If there is an important church ceremony I am not going to cycle.[75]

Some of the men attach less importance to the church ceremonies or other Eritrean traditions and practice them in their own way. An example is the fast period in April. In Orthodox Christianity, fasting means that it is not allowed to eat animal products. Many Eritreans tried to do this here, but according to some of them, it was sometimes too difficult to escape from animal products during all activities they had, and they just forgot about the tradition for a moment.

Due to the many activities that are organized by the interest groups with all their good intentions, the men are constantly being approached by different parties. They regularly have to deal with double-booked appointments and have to make decisions about which activity is most important to them. Being subject to such interest groups means that the men are able to explore what the Netherlands and their neighbourhood have to offer, but the risk, however, is that they miss the whole part of how to achieve something. Everything is organized for the men, which makes that most of them do not become independent and competent themselves and do not learn to make decisions according to their own wishes and capabilities. Now it appears that when they need something, most of them wait until someone else knocks on their door.

For the Eritrean men living in Nijmegen, there are no similar activities and involvements of neighbours and organisations as in Lent. Half of the Eritreans living in Nijmegen go to school five days a week while others go to school only three times a week. It is unclear why this differs. Two men have a membership of a sports club which they got for free from the

[75] Salih, interview 05-05-16, my translation

municipality. Adel, who lives in a village close to Nijmegen, has found an affordable fitness centre in the centre of Nijmegen, but he has to travel there by bus. The others do not do any recreation activities in their own neighbourhood. They do not know where to find such a place or it is too expensive. Permit holders in Nijmegen normally do not have a language buddy, but as they are in the same classes as the Eritreans from Lent and hear their stories about the many activities, some men obtained an exception from *VluchtelingenWerk*. The refugee organisation wants to balance the difference in attention between the Eritreans in Lent and in Nijmegen a little more by organizing language buddies and host families for some men in Nijmegen as well. Four out of nine men in Nijmegen now have a language buddy now. Furthermore, I have seen three men a couple of times at the sports activities in Lent. They sometimes come along with class mates or friends from Lent to be able to sport. For many of them this is not close to their house, which indicates that they want to put much effort in both entertainment opportunities as well as the preservation of their bonding social capital.

The Eritrean young men living in Nijmegen are also religious. Only Abdella is Muslim and wants to go to the Mosque on Fridays, but he always has school on Fridays.[76] The others are Orthodox Christian. They all mentioned that they would like to go to an Orthodox church, but they argue that Nijmegen has none. Kiflom is the only one that goes to church, a Russian orthodox one.[77] He does not understand anything of what they say during the mass, but it still gives him a good feeling to be able to go to an orthodox church. Whenever the Eritreans can afford it and have time, they also go to the Eritrean orthodox church in Rotterdam on holidays. There was only one man that has never been to any church in the Netherlands. He did not seem to want to go to a church, but the decorations in his house clarified that he attaches value to his religion.

The absence of the support of refugee and charity organisations and charity-minded neighbours for Eritrean permit holders in Nijmegen clearly results in a much more limited number of activities and thereby also to more limited opportunities to socially integrate.

An activity that occurs at all Eritrean men, and derives from Eritrean cultural habits, is visiting other Eritreans. In Lent this happens daily as they all live close to Eritrean friends, which makes the neighbourhood quite vibrant. The men in Nijmegen are subject to much less visits or less diverse visits, due to the limited amount of Eritreans in their neighbourhood.

[76] Abdella, interview 03-03-16
[77] Kiflom, interview 11-05-16

Those who can also visit Eritrean friends and acquaintances in other cities in the Netherlands – some who still live in an AZC or who live in another city. The expensiveness of train tickets, however, extremely limits the amount of visits. During my visits at the Eritrean men it occurred very frequently that there were more Eritreans present who were also visiting. People constantly drop by, even if it is for a few seconds to see what is going on. As mentioned earlier, Eritreans prefer to undertake activities with other Eritreans. It has appeared that they do not quickly undertake activities by themselves. Those who have the possibility to do things together with other Eritreans have more activities to do, than those who are alone.

5.3 The experience of social cohesion in the neighbourhood

Social capital is the foundation for the construction of social cohesion. In public debates and policy discourses, much attention is paid to this phenomenon (Cheong et al. 2007, 28). In the dominant discourse, social cohesion involves the population in a society that share common norms and values, including feelings of belonging and solidarity for people from varied backgrounds (Cheong et al. 2007, 28, 39). It is largely argued that immigrant groups contribute to ethnic diversity within a society, and thereby also contribute to social fractures in values and obligations in broader society (Cheong et al. 2007, 29). From a political perspective, immigration is often seen as having a negative influence on social cohesion, but social networks between immigrants and other citizens in a society can alleviate these fractures and contribute to social cohesion (Cheong et al. 2007 29, 41).

At the research group in Lent I had the opportunity to find out how the social cohesion between Eritreans and local people of other neighbourhoods was, as I had several possibilities to participate in the activities which were organized for the men. I focussed on two kinds of local inhabitants: people who are part of the organisation WttN and people who are not involved in any refugee organisation but do regularly encounter the Eritreans in their neighbourhood. The first motivations of the local inhabitants to become involved in WttN was curiosity about the new Eritrean neighbours. The fear that some other local inhabitants had concerning the Eritrean newcomers also played a role. It made the people of WttN eager to convince the negative thinking inhabitants of the positive things refugees could bring. In the beginning of the arrival of the Eritreans in Lent, there were quite some inhabitants who were afraid that the young Eritrean men would harass their children when they pass their houses on their way to school. A teacher of one of the high schools told me that there are many parents who have this idea and hand this idea over to their children who subsequently

do not welcome the Eritreans. The fear could possibly be declared by a fear of competition over scarce resources (Gijsberts and Dagevos 2007, 807). Unfortunately, I have not been able to reach these negative thinkers and cannot confirm this idea. However, through conversations with other local inhabitants I figured out that the conflict and contact theory (Sturgis, Kuha, and Jackson 2014, 1288) is valid here.

The conflict theory refers to feelings of anxiety and threat, which are often related to social identity, positions in power and status hierarchies, or triggered by competition over scarce resources, and can emerge between minority and majority groups in ethnic diverse areas (Sturgis, Kuha, and Jackson 2014, 1288; Gijsberts and Dagevos 2007, 807). Ethnic minorities often occupy the lowest ranks within socio-economic hierarchies (Gijsberts and Dagevos 2007, 808). It is assumed that native people within the same socio-economic rank feel most threatened by these groups, due to the competition over scarce resources, and therefore avoid contact with ethnic minorities (Gijsberts and Dagevos 2007, 808; Sturgis, Kuha, and Jackson 2014, 1290). On the other hand, the contact theory indicates that having contact between individuals with diverse ethnic backgrounds can reduce the use of negative stereotypes and discrimination (Sturgis, Kuha, and Jackson 2014, 1288). When a local inhabitant has positive contacts with a person from another ethnic group, this positivity can be generalized to other members of that group and potentially to the whole ethnic group (Sturgis, Kuha, and Jackson 2014, 1288). For example, the longer the Eritreans live in Lent and the more positive contact there is between the Eritrean men and locals of surrounding villages, the lesser the negative attitudes of the locals and the more they encourage the good practices of WttN.[78] It is not necessarily the case that these formerly negative thinkers do are in contact with the Eritrean men now, but the tensions seem to have decreased, which verifies the notion of the contact theory. Minimal interethnic contacts between ethnic minorities and the native majority population thus cannot only be ascribed to ethnic minorities. The willingness of natives to mix also plays a role in these processes.

Local inhabitants that are involved in WttN argue that they feel strong social cohesion between other participants of WttN, other local inhabitants who are also welcoming the Eritrean young men in Lent, and the Eritreans themselves.[79] Simultaneously, some local inhabitants argue that they do not have any issues with the presence of the Eritreans, but are not that eager to become involved in activities with them. People who are not or minimally involved in WttN have mentioned that some people of WttN are too excited about the

[78] Linda, interview 06-03-16
[79] Linda, interview 06-03-16; Peter, interview 07-03-16

Eritreans.[80] Some neighbours argued that the amount of attention and the kind of activities that are being offered to the Eritreans should be done in more consultation with their target group. Activities should be offered with less pressure and should be more suitable to them. An interesting offer by WttN was a trauma workshop. One of the members of WttN knew a woman who was specialized in the so-called method 'finger tapping', which was suitable to former child soldiers. People of WttN did not know whether this method was also applicable for the Eritrean young men, but nevertheless, they organized the workshop and invited all Eritreans, including all other interested local inhabitants, to participate in the workshop. According to employees of the mental health care and some uninvolved locals, traumas are a theme that should be handled with care and only by professionals, not by a layman.[81] This is also a reason for some local inhabitants to consciously not to become involved in these, according to them, too ambitious practices and thereby also to become involved in the Eritrean men. The young Eritrean men, on the other hand, do not seem to have negative feelings concerning WttN. Many Eritreans argued that the practices of WttN are very good and that the persons who manage it are doing a good job, because they try to help them with their issues. It is unknown, however, whether they sometimes also experience an overload of activities or feel pressure to participate in their activities because they are exactly organized for them. The surveys showed that host families and language buddies regularly felt that the men never dared to say no. Perhaps this can be explained by the lives they lived in Eritrea, where there was no option to say no, and by always being polite in their new environment.

5.4 Conclusion

It can be concluded from this chapter that the Eritreans want to become part of Dutch society, but simultaneously want to maintain their Eritrean habits. The Eritrean young men find much support from other Eritreans.[82] Bonding social capital is thus essential for them. However, in the case of the Eritreans, this form of social capital does not help them to useful resources that help them to integrate, as they are the first ones in their social network that have arrived in the Netherlands. Living in a neighbourhood where the majority of the population is Eritrean is also not advantageous for one's integration, as inhabitants are constantly surrounded by the habits of their origin country. Despite the opportunity of having a host

[80] Petra, interview 14-04-16; Kim, interview 22-04-16
[81] Petra, interview 14-04-16; Kim, interview 22-04-16
[82] Different interviews with respondents between 24-02-16 and 11-05-16

family to be able to take a look in the lives of a Dutch family, the men in Lent think they do not have enough opportunities to explore Dutch cultural traditions. Additionally, as both groups have much bonding social capital, but not much or, according to them, not enough bridging social capital, the Eritreans do not have many opportunities to improve their Dutch language proficiency, which is detrimental for social integration.

It has appeared that a certain extent of help in familiarizing in the host country is crucial for Eritreans. In case of a lack of bridging social capital, it has turned out that the Eritrean men experience issues in finding their way in their new living environment, and in meeting new people. The presence of bridging social capital of the Eritreans in Lent has shown a significant difference in the amount of activities in daily life and possibilities to explore life in the Netherlands and the opportunity to create new interethnic contacts hereby. Refugee and charity organisations and charity-minded people can offer newcomers opportunities to socially integrate. However, this should not turn out in complete facilitation as that will eventually not lead to independency.

Finally, contact between different ethnic groups in the host society is essential to achieve social cohesion in a neighbourhood. More contact and more familiarity with Eritrean refugees has led to more acceptance and appreciation by other groups in the host society.

- 6 -
Conclusion

The combination of housing location and population compositions in neighbourhoods clearly influences social integration possibilities of Eritrean permit holders. Eritreans housed in a regular neighbourhood in Nijmegen or a surrounding village have particular advantages over the ones living in the ethnic segregated neighbourhood in Lent. It turned out that regular neighbourhoods have many facilities and recreation places to offer to local inhabitants. Such physical characteristics of a neighbourhood are conducive to social integration, as they can generate interactions (Boschman 2012, 356). People from varied ethnic backgrounds can come together in such places and, dependent on one's intention and effort, meet and build relationships with other people, including Eritreans, non-Eritreans and non-permit holders. It appeared that it is important that such places are accessible to everyone of every socio-economic class, so no groups will be excluded. This implies that the places need to be physically accessible – in the form of distance – and financially affordable.

Furthermore, being housed in a regular neighbourhood can also entail issues in becoming familiar with one's living environment and in making contact to new people. A little assistance in the form of bridging or linking social capital, arranged by organisations or inhabitants of the host society, in introducing newcomers to Dutch ways of living, opportunities for entertainment and places where they can meet new people is desirable. This form of capital provides access to the resources that are necessary to socially integrate (Tselios et al. 2015, 419; Boschman 2012, 354). Besides, by having bridging capital, Eritreans can practice their Dutch language proficiencies, which is crucial to be able to further integrate in the host society (Gijsberts and Dagevos 2007, 808; Boschman 2012, 356).

Considering the housing location in Lent, ethnic segregation has led to the preservation of Eritrean cultural habits and the creation of much bonding social capital. The men appreciate to preserve these habits and to have bonding social capital to a certain extent, as it reminds them of home, and enables them to speak in their own language and share experiences with people who have a similar cultural and historical background. However, some experience an overload of Eritrean customs and people. This is not helpful for one's social integration, as one cannot practice the Dutch language and cannot become familiar with customs of the host society in this way. The bonding social capital they have does not lead to access to useful

resources (Tselios et al. 2015, 419; Boschman 2012, 354). Simultaneously, the large amount of interest groups the neighbourhood in Lent attracts, facilitates the number of social integration opportunities, as well as the extension of one's social network. The downside is that the amount of attention in the form of activities sometimes becomes too much for the men as they cannot follow up their appointments sometimes, because of double-booked appointments or because they are in need of rest. In addition, as activities are being organized *for* them, instead of *with* them, it produces a reverse effect on the men's independency level. Those who are enthusiastic about helping the Eritrean men, need to be aware of the extent of helping them. It is important not only to introduce one to what a society has to offer but also to how it works and how one can make use of necessary and practical services and facilities.

Regarding the aspect of living alone, it has turned out that those who live alone are more reliant on their own capabilities and undertake action sooner if they endure issues. In the beginning, they also experience more difficulties and loneliness as they do not know where to start building a new social life. Eritreans do not quickly undertake activities alone but feel more confident in doing activities together with other Eritreans. The strong value of having bonding social capital also applies to this group. The collective mentality which characterizes the socio-cultural life in Eritrea, is still obviously present in the Netherlands. Living together with Eritreans or having co-ethnics in neighbourhood is therefore advantageous in exploring ones living environment, undertaking activities, as well as meeting new people, and is thus beneficial to social integration.

In the end, both the housing of permit holders in an ethnic segregated neighbourhood as well as housing in a regular neighbourhood, turn out to have their setbacks. In line with Korac (2006, 63), it is favourable for Eritreans to "become part of the host society […] by achieving closer contacts with natives, while maintaining their own cultural identity." The host society needs to give newcomers space so they can integrate in a rooted cosmopolitan way – being able to maintain their cultural particularities while simultaneously making use of particularities and people of the host society (Appiah 1998, 91). Eritreans need bonding social capital in the starting years of their integration process for the mutual ethnic support they can offer each other. Together, they are strong and capable to handle more things than when they are alone; together, they dare to move in an unknown environment; and together, they can blow off steam. They are open to integrating in the host society, but a safe and well-known place where they can retreat is vital in the beginning of their integration process. That means a place where they can be with co-ethnics or a place where they can practice their

usual Eritrean cultural habits – a place that can be considered as home to them. This can, for instance, be a regular neighbourhood where several Eritreans are housed, so they can regularly visit each other or an Eritrean cafe which can function as a meeting point. Having such a need for a safe bonding social network does not mean that they will not mingle with people from different ethnic backgrounds. Their bonding social capital needs to be considered as a cooperation as small groups of Eritreans undertake more activities than an Eritrean on its own and they can thus stimulate each other to explore the new living environment and its inhabitants.

In agreement with Cheong et al. (2007, 42), it seems not to be 'the more the better' and social capital is not a cure-all. Certain relationships may contribute to access particular resources and desired outcomes while at the same time or perhaps in another contact, being limiting or counterproductive in access to other resources (ibid.). At this moment, it can be concluded that intermingling with non-Eritreans is still minimal and social integration processes are still in their beginning phase. A beginning to social inclusion and the construction of relationships with non-Eritreans has been made at the Eritreans living in Lent, while most of the men in Nijmegen still have to start. As stated by Heckmann (2006, 17), social integration requires much time and effort, which is also valid for the Eritrean young men. The future will tell to what extent these men are really able to integrate on a social level.

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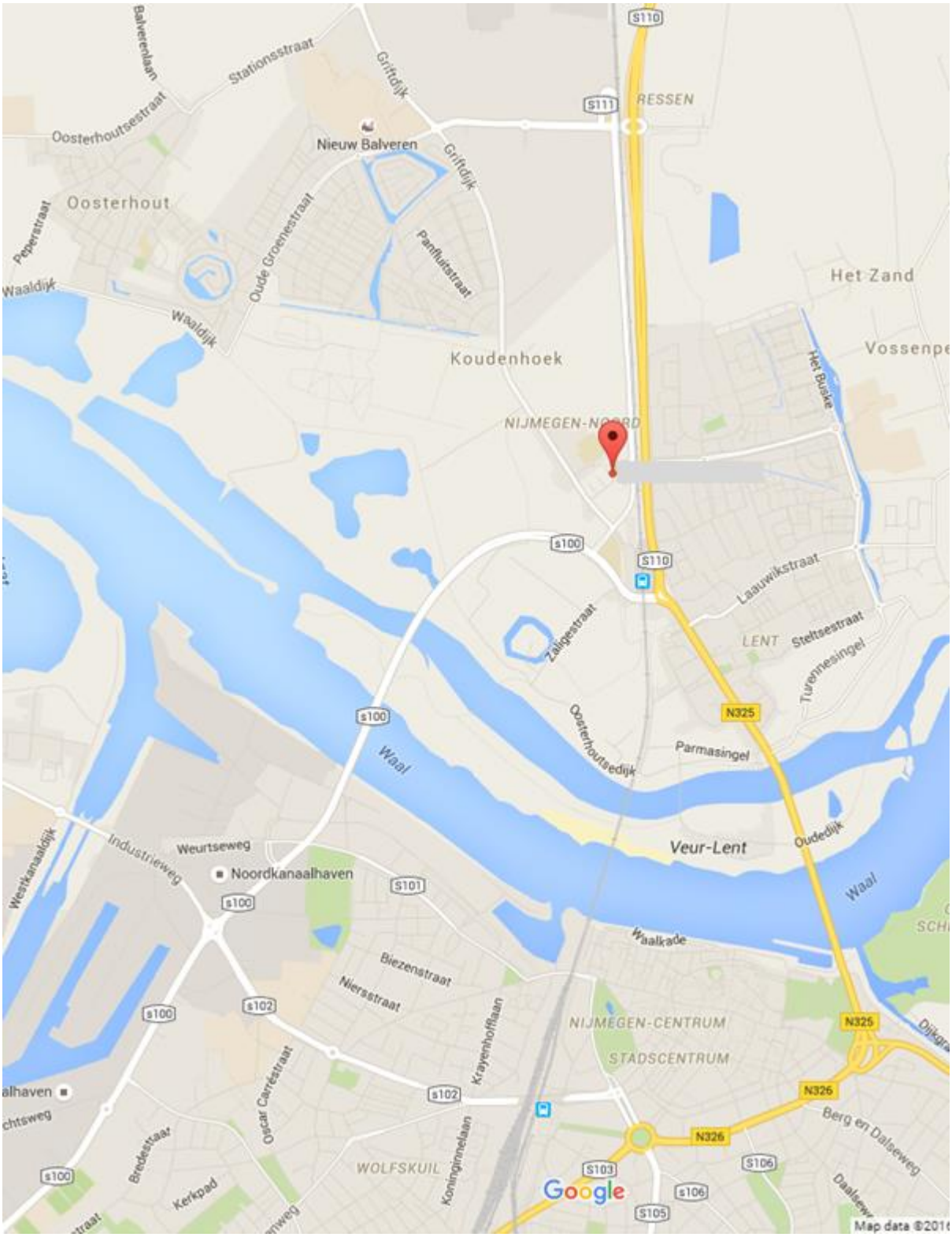
Appendix 1 – Housing Location Research Group in Lent

Housing location: 



Distance to supermarket: 850 m
Distance to centre of Nijmegen: 3.7 km
Distance to recreation space: - m (football and basketball field next to site)

Appendix 2 – Living Site at Lent

*WttN = *Welcome to the Neighbourhood* – voluntary organisation of local inhabitants of mainly Lent and Oosterhout
*Buildings with red cross do not exist.