Year : 2024

Educational and Occupational Aspirations of Refugees

Otmani Ihssane

Otmani Ihssane, 2024, Educational and Occupational Aspirations of Refugees

Originally published at : Thesis, University of Lausanne

Posted at the University of Lausanne Open Archive http://serval.unil.ch
Document URN : urn:nbn:ch:serval-BIB_A912279339E93

UNIL | Université de Lausanne

FACULTÉ DE DROIT, DES SCIENCES CRIMINELLES ET
D'ADMINISTRATION PUBLIQUE

INSTITUT DE HAUTES ÉTUDES EN ADMINISTRATION PUBLIQUE
(IDHEAP)

Educational and Occupational Aspirations of Refugees

THÈSE DE DOCTORAT

présentée à la

Faculté de droit, des sciences criminelles et d'administration publique

de l'Université de Lausanne

pour l'obtention du grade de

Docteure en Administration Publique

par

Ihssane Otmani

Directeur de thèse

Prof. Giuliano Bonoli, IDHEAP, Université de Lausanne

Jury

Assistant Prof. Flavia Fossati, IDHEAP, Université de Lausanne

Prof. Justin Powell, University of Luxemburg

Prof. Pieter Bevelander, University of Malmö

Lausanne

2024

UNIL | Université de Lausanne
IDHEAP
Institut de hautes études
en administration publique

Imprimatur

Vu le rapport présenté par le jury de thèse, composé de

Prof. Dr **Giuliano Bonoli**	Directeur de thèse
Prof. Dr **Flavia Fossati**	Autre membre du corps professoral
Prof. Dr **Justin Powell**	Expert externe
Prof. Dr **Pieter Bevelander**	Expert externe

le Décanat de la Faculté de droit, des sciences criminelles et d'administration publique autorise l'impression de la thèse de

Madame Ihssane Otmani

intitulée

Educational and Occupational Aspirations of Refugees

Lausanne, le 23 février 2024

Décanat de la Faculté de droit, des sciences criminelles et d'administration publique

Professeur Nils Soguel
Vice-doyen

UNIL | Université de Lausanne

Table of contents

Synopsis report

Introduction

For many countries of the global north, migration is a highly relevant topic in political agendas. While labour migration is often portrayed as less "problematic" because it is perceived to be more beneficial for the receiving country as it doesn't weight on the host country's welfare state. The same cannot be said about forced migration, as this type of

migration comes with various challenges to host countries and those inflicted by it (Fiddian-Qasmigeh et al 2014; Chetail and Bauloz 2011). Following recent conflicts such as the regime change in Afghanistan and the conflict in Ukraine, it is unlikely that controversies and debates surrounding this type of migration will subside any time soon.

What makes studying forced migration interesting, aside from all the controversies and heated debates surrounding it, is that it comes with more challenges to both host countries and those directly affected by it. In fact, forced migration constitutes, for most parts, a major disruption of career and life development plans for those subjected to it and often requires a profound redefinition of objectives in potentially all realms of life. For host countries, this type of migration is challenging as this population is perceived as more difficult to integrate (GE 2022) and one of the groups that is most at risk of permanent exclusion from the labour market (Brell et al. 2020). For certain, this outcome is the result of various factors, such as the trauma associated with the events that led to forced migration, the experience of forced migration itself and the difficulties in adjusting to a new, mostly unfamiliar culture (e.g., Phillimore 2011; Ullman et al 2015; Ligabue 2018; Hamburger et al. 2018). To remedy these challenges, many western countries, including Switzerland, have designed, and implemented various integration programs focused on quick labour market access for refugees. While these programs my offer refugees, a foundation to navigate the new rules and customs of the labour market and education system of the host society (e.g., Bevelander 2014; Valenta and Bunar 2010), studies have shown that they can also limit them because of their compulsory nature and narrow focus (e.g., Arendt 2020; Hinger and Schweitzer 2020; Konle-Seidl 2018) which doesn't take into consideration the diversity of profiles among the refugee population.

Therefore, we need more studies to investigate the extent to which the diversity of profiles in refugee population and more specifically their aspirations are considered while implementing these various integration programs and measures. In this thesis, argue that looking at refugee integration through the lens of aspirations offers great insights into what works and doesn't in the process of integration and social inclusion of refugees into host society. Aspirations are an important determinant of achievement. Early research on aspiration formation highlighted the important role that this process plays as a

determinant of status attainment and in the reproduction of social inequalities (see e.g., Blau and Duncan 1967; Sewell and Shah 1968). Despite this large corpus of literature on aspirations, there is little research focusing specifically on refugees, as most of these studies centre around aspirations of children and adolescents in the US context. While there is a literature on migrant aspirations (See Portes, McLeod & Parker 1978; St-Hilaire 2002; Boccagni 2017) which offers interesting insights about their aspirations and how they were shaped, I stress that the experience of forced migration is still different from planned and voluntary mobility and requires to be approached differently. I expand more on this in the literature review section of this thesis.

Overall, existing research on refugee aspirations is recent and consist mostly of qualitative studies conducted in Australia, Canada, and the UK. It has focused mostly on the high skilled (e.g., Pietka-Nykaza 2015; Hebbani and Khawaja 2019; Mozetic 2020), with a specific concern for the strategies that high skill refugees put in place to reproduce the status they had in their home country before having to leave. Many of these studies conclude that refugees have high educational and occupational aspirations and are concerned with the factors behind them not achieving these high aspirations. Little is mentioned regarding the process of aspirations formation among refugees and what explains that these aspirations are high in the first place (Mozetič 2021). In addition, most of these studies were conducted with refugees, selected through resettlement programs and who haven't experienced asylum procedures (e.g., Shakya et al. 2010; Hebbani and Khawaja 2019).

This thesis builds on these findings but adopts a different perspective in three ways. First, I consider a broader sample of refugees, including all level of skills. Second, I explore the process of aspirations formation among refugees, and I look at the factors that influence these aspirations in the host country following a dynamic perspective to understand how these aspirations evolved with time. Third, while looking at the process of refugee aspirations formation, I focus on the role played by policy in shaping them. The focus on policy in the process of refuge aspirations formation doesn’t disregard the influence of other factors such trauma and mental health, age, gender, difficulty adjusting to a new culture etc.

In general, the role of policy in shaping aspirations has not been given a central place in the literature of aspiration formation, even though it was implicitly considered when discussing opportunities and constraints. When it comes to refugees, however, I have reasons to believe that public policies will play an important role in influencing how their aspirations are shaped and as a result, their integration trajectories. In fact, unlike other social groups, refugees live in a "policy-dense" environment. By this, I mean that they are regularly confronted with a range of policies that are likely to shape their aspirations. This includes asylum policy, which determines the right to remain, and the conditions attached to it, integration policy with its various programs, as well as standard policies such as education, social policy, and so forth.

Based on the above, this dissertation is guided by two overarching research questions namely: ***How do public policies such as asylum policy, integration policy and education policy influence on the formation of educational and occupational aspirations? And how do these policies influence which integration trajectories are favoured, and which are abandoned by refugees?***

With these two questions, I start with the above assumption that upon arrival to host society, refugees find themselves in a "policy dense" environment in which various policies at different levels interact to decide the course of their new life. I explore how three policies have influenced their educational and occupational aspirations, and also the influence this had on which integration trajectories they choose to pursue. I particularly look at policies directly related to refugees, such as asylum and integration policies. Because this project studies educational and occupational aspirations, I also include education policy. While I do analyse policy documents such as asylum law and integration policy documents (e.g., Swiss integration Agenda) in Switzerland, my understanding of policy is more concerned with the implementation level of policy. This is particularly the case with integration and education policies, as I study them through how refugees experienced them in their interactions with street level bureaucrats, in charge of implementation of these policies (e.g., social workers, university admission officers).

To that end, I investigate these two overarching questions in three parts, which are going to be materialized by the three articles, comprising this dissertation. The first part

is dedicated to exploring the perceived role of policy in shaping refugee aspirations, and it is based on qualitative interviews conducted with refugees in the canton of Vaud, Switzerland. In order to substantiate the findings of this first part, the second part of this project, combines the perspectives of policy and those in charge of its implementation with the lived experiences of refugees in the canton of Vaud, Switzerland. In the third part of this thesis, I adopt a comparative perspective to investigate the extent to which institutional differences between two countries with different human capital formation regimes, namely, Switzerland and Canada, take into consideration refugee aspirations and influence the implementation of integration policy taking into consideration refugee aspirations. I chose these two countries because, on one hand, Switzerland relies on its highly developed dual vocational training system to integrate youth into the labour force and assure low rates of unemployment. This system is employed by policymakers as an important tool in the implementation of refugee integration policy (see Swiss Integration Agenda). On the other hand, Canada is a country with a more traditional educational policy that is based on tertiary education as the main route to integrating the labour market. By comparing the implementation of integration policy in these two countries, I intend to increase my understanding of the various mechanisms influencing refugee aspirations and their integration paths.

I find, in paper I, that on the one hand, the three policies combined (asylum policy, integration policy and education policy) promote the quickest and most accessible integration paths in order to reduce refugees' dependence on the welfare state. On the other hand, the experience of forced migration combined with a "policy-dense" environment create a lot of uncertainty in the life of refugees and the urgency to find a lost "normality" at the expense of their aspirations. I refer to this dynamic as a "low ambition equilibrium". Further, in the second part of this thesis (paper II), results show that street level bureaucrats focus on attaining what it is described as "fast and sustainable integration" through promoting quick access to vocational training and employment. This often results in creating various tensions to both caseworkers who recognize the shortcomings of such approaches and refugees who either adapt to what is expected from them or rely on their own resources to gain support for their more ambitious projects.

Finally, from the last part of this thesis (paper III), I conclude that, in the context of refugee integration, integration support offered to refugees is similar regardless of institutional setting differences.

In the following sections, I start with providing more context to this thesis. In the first two sections, I present the asylum and integration policies in Switzerland and its evolution over the years, then provide more information about the education system in the country. Next, I discuss the existing literature and findings on refugee aspirations and related issues to provide my research with the relevant context. I continue with a discussion of my contribution and methodology, to then present the key findings and discuss their significance, policy implications, limitations, and new avenues for future research, before concluding this synthesis report. I then share the manuscript of single-authored paper I that was published in the Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies (JEMS) in July 2023. Further, I present a draft of my second paper, single-authored work on the tensions experienced during the implementation of integration policy. This paper is currently under review for publication in the special issue 1/2024 of the journal sozialpolitik.ch entitled "How Social Policies Shape Life Chances of Migrants". Finally, I include the draft of the manuscript co-authored with Prof. Giuliano Bonoli and focusing on the comparison of the implementation of integration policy by street level bureaucrats in both Switzerland and Canada.

Asylum and integration policy in Switzerland

Overview of migration and asylum streams to Switzerland

The end of the 19th century marked the transition of Switzerland from an emigration to immigration country. Today, Switzerland, a central European country with almost 9 million residents, has also one of the highest migration rates of the continent, most of whom are Europeans (Swissinfo 2017). In 2022, 40% of the permanent residents aged 15 and over has a migration background, representing around 2,951,000 with Four-fifths of this population belonging to the first generation, which is approximately 2,342,000 (Swiss confederation 2019).

In history immigration has significantly influenced economic and social life in Switzerland and different types of migrants moved to Switzerland and settled there for protection or better economic opportunities. Similarly, to other western countries, and starting from 1947 Switzerland has received guest worker migrants. However, contrary to neighbouring countries such as France, Germany and the Netherlands, who recruited their guest workers or seasonal workers from Turkey and the Maghreb region, Switzerland turned towards neighbouring European countries, namely, Italy, Spain and Portugal. For nearly 60 years, the seasonal worker regime required foreign workers to only stay nine months in Switzerland, under permit A, which was abolished in 2002. Since then, the situation has improved significantly for EU citizens, marking an important characteristic of today's Swiss migration system, its dual character.

Since the conclusion of the agreement on the free movement of people (ALCP) between the European Union (EU) and Switzerland, which entered into force on June 1, 2002, a distinction is made between people immigrating from the EU/EFTA area and those coming from third countries (SEM 2023). The agreement on the free movement of people simplifies the living and working conditions of nationals of EU member states in Switzerland and those of Swiss people living in the EU area. The law relating to the free movement of people is supplemented by the reciprocal recognition of professional diplomas, the right to acquire real estate and the coordination of social insurance systems. These same provisions also apply to nationals of EFTA countries. For foreigners coming from third countries, special provisions apply to them under the terms of the Federal Law on Foreigners (LEtr), making admission to the labor market reserved for highly qualified people and under yearly quotas. For example, in 2024, it set the maximum number of quotas at 8500 with 4000 short-term residence permits and 4500 year-round residence permits (Swiss Confederation, 2024).

While Switzerland has for long been a destination for employment-seeking migrants, especially from France, Germany, and Italy. It has also received different streams of migrants seeking protection during the second half of the 20th century and the 21st century. From 1947 to 1973, Switzerland had an open policy towards refugees. The

country accepted around 13765 refugees from Hungary (1956), around 1000 from Tibet (1962) and more than 17000 from Czechoslovakia (1968).

Swiss generosity was motivated by various factors. First, the desire of Switzerland to "make up" for its ambiguous and controversial position towards Jewish refugees during the second World War (Parini and Gianni 2005; Walther 2009). Second, in a context marked by the cold war and the perception of refugees as heroic victims of communism (Piguet 2009), allowed Switzerland to strengthen its membership to the western camp (Carloz-Tschopp 1982). Finally, this generosity was also motivated by the need for labour to support Swiss economic growth during the "glorious thirty" (Caloz-Tschopp1982; Parini and Gianni2005).

However, this open policy to migration started changing from 1970s and especially in the 1980s due to increased xenophobic movements and distrust towards asylum seekers (Bertrand 2017). This culminated with the Schwarzenbach[1] initiative of June 1970, and which was rejected by a majority of voters.

Starting from 1980s, distrust sets the tone for asylum policy. From the mid-1980s, asylum applications increased rapidly, and asylum seekers came mainly from the global south (Turkey, Sri Lanka and African countries) (OSAR n.d.). This was followed by controversial debates about asylum policy and the first partial revisions of asylum law in 1983 and 1986 (OSAR n.d.). In the 1990s, the number of requests reached a historic peak during the Balkan War (see *figure 1*). This decade also marked a constant tightening of asylum legislation and practices, especially with the electoral success of right-wing parties to power and the fear of *Überfremdung*[2]. Therefore, it was not only the increased

[1] One of the most controversial votes in 20th-century Swiss history, launched by James Schwarzenbach in 1968 and caused fear among guest workers at the time. The initiative stated that the proportion of foreigners in the Swiss population should not exceed 10%. Following the vote, the proposal had been rejected by all parties, including employers' organisations, trade unions and churches. Nevertheless, many people were in favour of the initiative, including workers who had close links to the Social Democratic Party and the trade unions.

[2] Überfremdung, in English translated 'over-foreignization', is a German-language term to reflect the sense of "too foreign" and "threatening", and is a term with negative connotation.

number of asylum applications which was behind the increasing restrictions towards people seeking protection, but the fear of foreigners and the ambiguity surrounding the profile of asylum seekers. Consequently, we then witness the emergence of debates about "good" and "bad" refugees and the suspicion towards the "abusers" of the system. During this time, Switzerland activated the temporary admission status. This measure prevented the administration from having to grant asylum to a large number of individuals, and hence committing the State to long-term reception, while at the same avoiding refoulement to dangerous zones, which is prohibited by international agreements (Parini and Gianni, 2005; Piguet 2009).

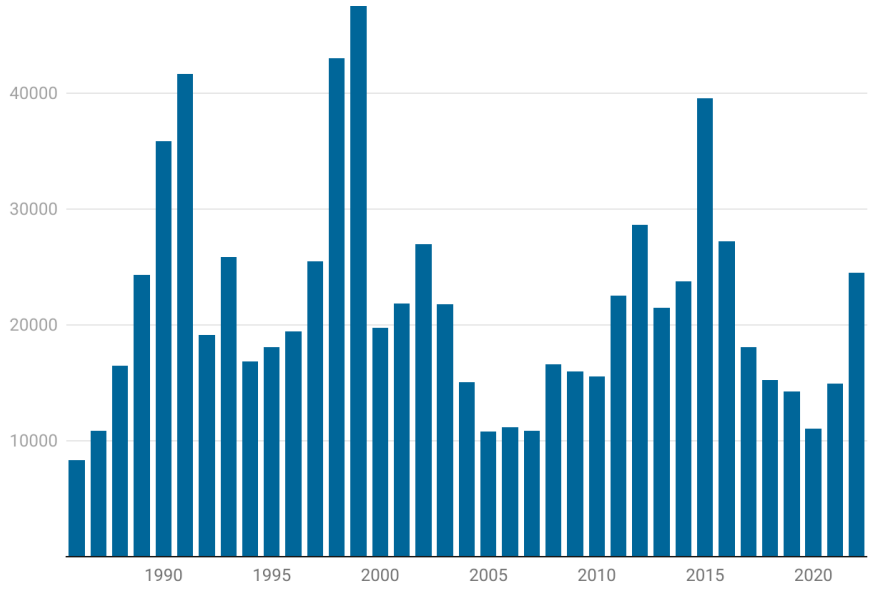
A turning point occurred after the ballot box of June 5, 2016, following which 11 revisions of asylum law were made, which supported the acceleration of asylum procedure, while guaranteeing asylum seekers free legal protection from the first day of their request until a decision was made. This constituted a clear improvement in the status of asylum seekers. The changes also focused on integration programs and highlighted the importance of investing more in this policy.

In 2022, a year marked by Russia's war on Ukraine, Switzerland activated for the first time the protection S[3]. Nearly 75,000 Ukrainians fled the war and applied for this protection. In addition, almost 25,000 people applied for asylum, mostly from Afghanistan, Eritrea, Syria and Turkey[4].

[3] Temporary protection, or S permit, has been included in the law on asylum (LAsi) since 1998, in response to the problems encountered in Switzerland regarding the arrival of people fleeing the war in former Yugoslavia. It aims to respond to an emergency and offer collective temporary protection to a specific population, in a non-bureaucratic manner. By decision of the Federal Council, it was activated for the first time on March 12, 2022, in order to allow a broad reception for Ukrainian nationals (and people with a stable permit in Ukraine and who cannot return in their country of origin) (Asile 2022). Holders of this permit can work but require a previous permission (SEM 2023).

[4] These countries represented the main origin country of refugees in Switzerland in the last decade (SEM 2022)

Figure 1: Asylum applications in Switzerland since 1986 (primary + secondary requests) with origin countries[5]



Source: asile.ch (2021)

Asylum procedure and legal status for refugees

The state secretariate for migration (SEM) is responsible for carrying out asylum procedures. After registration of asylum seekers, their application is initially checked to determine whether Switzerland is responsible for treating this application or another member state, following Dublin regulations[6]. If the country is in charge of this application, the procedure consists of checking whether the reasons given are credible and, and whether they fulfil the criteria for obtaining refugee status, set out in both the Geneva Convention of 1951, that Switzerland ratified and implemented in 1979, later revised in 1998 for the current Swiss asylum law (LAsi). According to *article 1* of the Geneva convention, a refugee is someone who can prove they have a *" well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular*

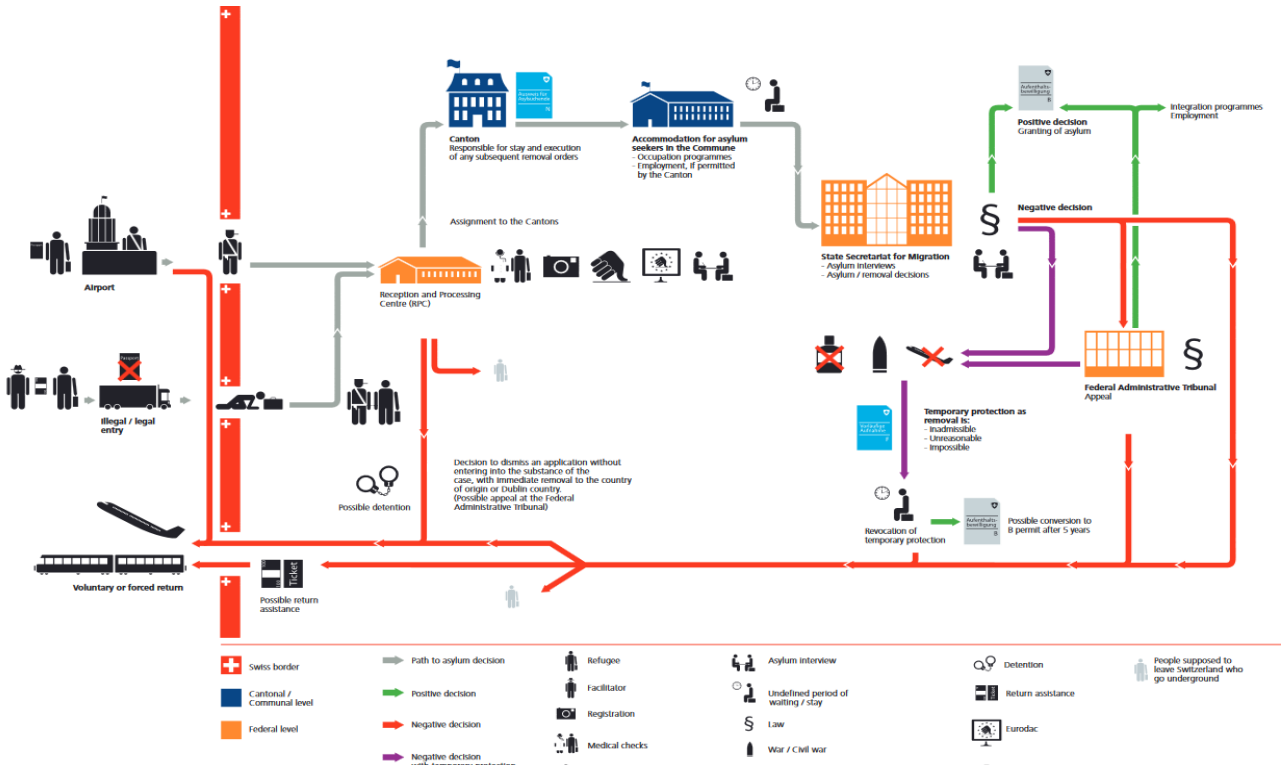
[5] S status requests are not yet included in the graph

[6] The main objective of the Dublin Agreement is to prevent applicants to file asylum applications in several European states. An applicant who has already launched a procedure in a State of the Schengen/Dublin area and files another request in a second State will be sent back to the first State where his request was made.

social group or political opinion, is outside the country of [their] nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail [themself] of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of [their] former habitual residence, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it". Therefore, if the individual seeking protection proves they have a well-founded fear of being persecuted they receive a permit B, which grants them refugee status with all attached rights according to both Geneva convention and LAsi. In some cases, a refugee is denied asylum according to LAsi but is instead admitted provisionally while enjoying refugee status defined by the 1951 Geneva Convention on refugees, the refugee receives a residence permit, called F refugee (guidesocial n.d.). It is the status that is granted to persons exposed to a "concrete danger" notably because of a situation of generalized violence in their country of origin or because of personal factors such as serious medical problems that cannot be treated locally. This type of protection is also referred to as subsidiary or humanitarian protection.

As a general rule, applicants whose application is rejected (couldn't prove refugee status under Geneva convention and LASi) must leave Switzerland. The cantonal authorities are then responsible for executing the return, often in collaboration with the federal services concerned. However, before the execution of the deportation order, it is necessary to examine whether there are reasons against it. If this is the case, the State Secretariat for Migration decides to temporarily admit the foreigner and grant them F permits. This happens when the execution of the deportation decision is impossible, for example because it is not possible to obtain travel documents for this person, it is unlawful because the execution would be contrary to the provisions of international law or it is unreasonable, for example due to a war or a situation of generalized violence in the country of origin. Finally, rejected asylum seekers can appeal against the negative decision rendered by the State Secretariat for Migration to the Federal Administrative Court (*see figure 2*)

Figure 2: Asylum procedure in Switzerland



Source: SEM

The different permits cited above provide rather different levels of rights. Those admitted with an F permit are not allowed to travel outside the country, for both F and F refugee permits they are not automatically entitled to family reunion and cannot move to a different canton from the one they have been assigned to. In contrast, refugees with a B permit have all these rights (guidesocial n.d.). Family reunion is a key issue. In fact, F permit holders can file a request for family reunion after 3 years of obtaining the permit on the condition that they do not rely on social assistance (guidesocial n.d.). As we will see later, this provision in the law puts pressure on F permit holders to become financially independent, to be able to benefit from family reunion. F permits can also be converted into B permits after some time but again financial independence from the state is required (asile 2021).

Finally, to make it easy on the reader, I use the term refugee to refer to individuals seeking protection or who have been granted protection. Nevertheless, when required I specify the differences between these different permits.

Integration Policy in Switzerland

Switzerland is a federal country, the responsibility for refugee integration policy is shared between the federal government and the cantons. The promotion of integration is primarily carried out by regular public structures, such as schools, vocational training institutions, health services, but also by civil society actors. Throughout this process, the cantons play an important role in promoting integration.

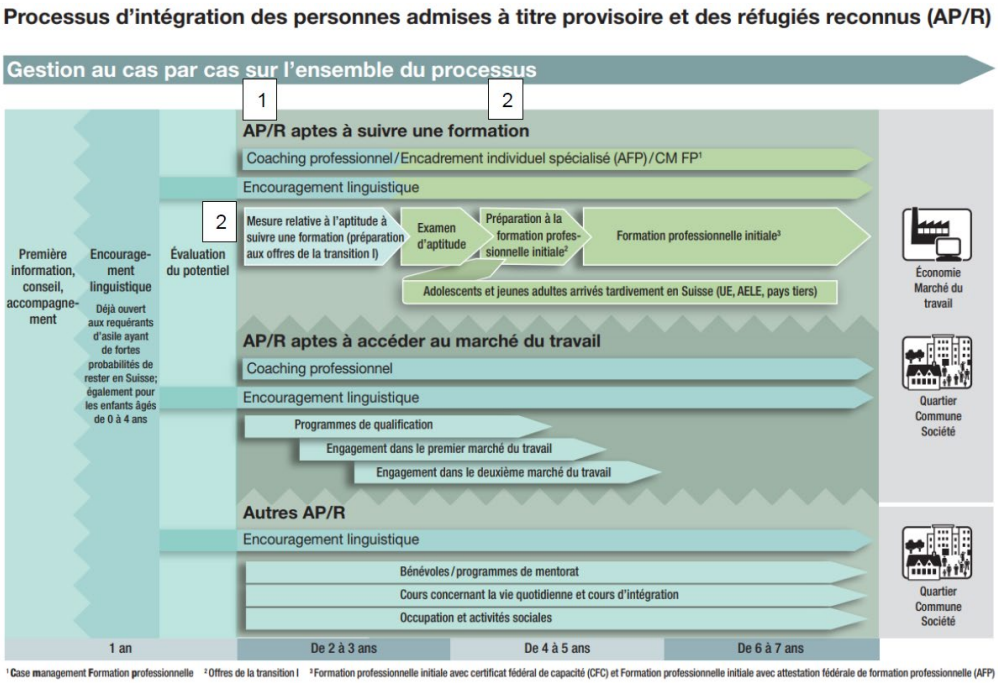
The choice of this study to focus on the canton of Vaud is motivated by the fact that Vaud is a good representation of the diversity of Swiss diversity. It is one of the largest and most diverse cantons in Switzerland. In fact, with more than 175 nationalities and 33% foreign population (Vaud Statistics 2023), the canton of Vaud is the second Swiss canton after Zurich to stand out for its great cultural diversity. It is also a canton that provides a large variety of career choices. In fact, it is neither predominantly rural nor urban. The canton, with its varied sectors of economy ranging from agriculture to advanced technology is expected to offer less career restrictions. Also, Vaud is one of the two cantons (the other is Zurich) with a large variety of educational institutes which include the university of Lausanne, schools of applied sciences, professional schools, and the federal institute of technology (EPFL). This is also expected to offer a wide range of educational and career choices to refugees living in the canton and promote their integration into different spheres of societies.

For several years, the Confederation and the Cantons have developed specific programs to promote integration efforts of refugees and reduce their dependence on social aid. This started out with programs for cantonal integration or PIC, launched in 2014. The canton of Vaud had actively participated in the implementation of these programs which were not forcefully dedicated to refugee but all foreigners and which focused on three pillars: Providing information for foreigners and protection against discrimination, education and employment and finally promoting living together (KIP-PIC n.d.).

In spring 2019, a program targeted to refugees (with refugee status and temporary admission), Swiss Integration Agenda (AIS), was launched. The national program set up by the confederation and the cantons aims at encouraging quick, efficient, intensive, and systematic integration. Under this light, integration is understood as a process that begins as soon as the person enters Switzerland or files an asylum application and which continues until the entry in a professional training or the exercise of a lucrative activity. Additionally, AIS is focused on enabling adolescents and young adults to learn a national language more quickly and to prepare themselves for a professional activity (see *figure 3*). The aim is to direct refugees to the labour market or a professional training that will enable them to attain financial independence. This is directly translated into reducing the costs of social assistance and strengthening social cohesion (Swiss confederation 2018).

To conclude, Swiss integration policy for refugees is highly focused on implementing measures that would enable refugees to regain financial independence. It relies to a large extent on the country's highly developed vocational education and training (VET) system. Even though the Swiss Integration Agenda does not directly rule out university education, the emphasis is clearly on promoting access to VET.

Figure 3: Paths to integration as shown in the publicity material for Swiss integration agenda



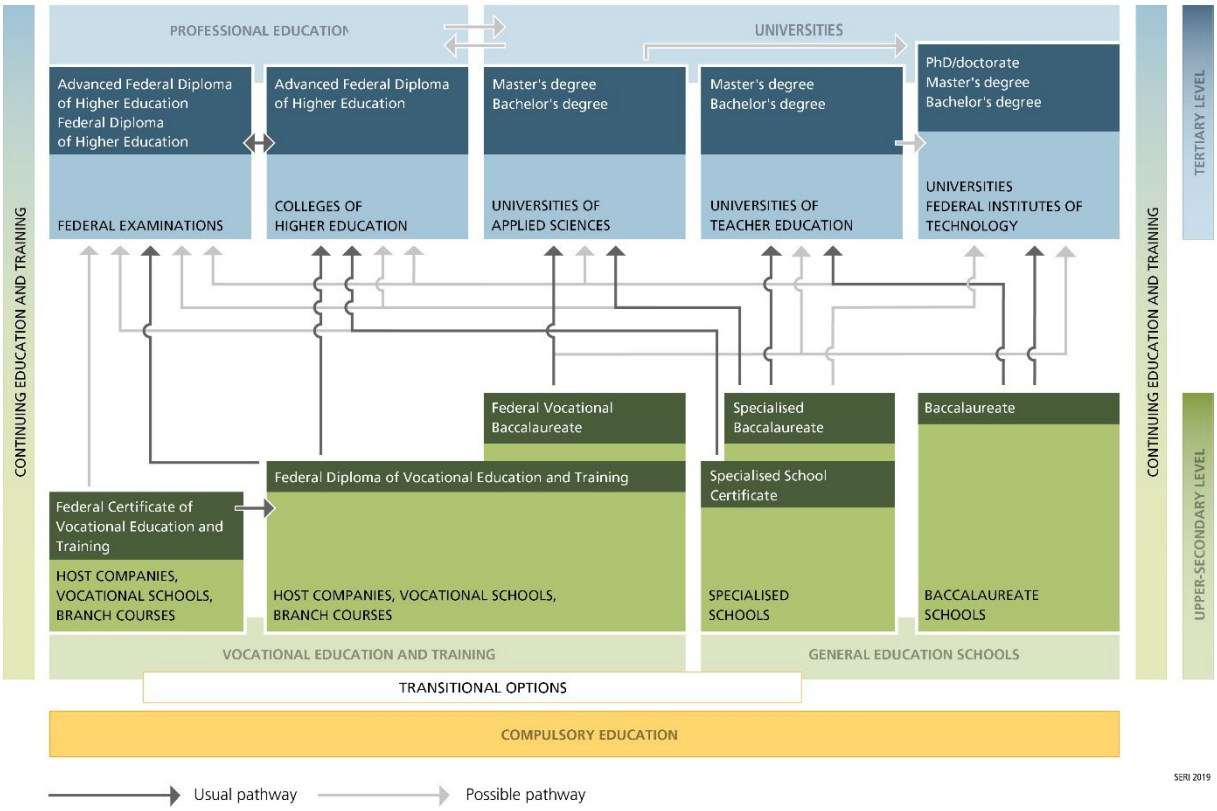
Source: SEM

Education system in Switzerland and refugees

Overview about the education system in Switzerland

The Swiss education system is characterized by its decentralized, diverse and dense nature (Bodenman 1980). The administration and regulation of the school system is under the responsibilities of the cantons while the central government, more precisely, the State Secretariat for Education, Research, and Innovation (SERI) sets the general framework and oversees this system. Compulsory education in Switzerland lasts for 11 years, after that, students, aged 14-15 years old make the choice to either pursue a dual vocational track or general education, with the later giving them direct access to tertiary education. The following graph summarizes the density and diversity of the Swiss education system.

Figure 4: The Swiss education system



Source: SERI 2019

One of the main characteristics of the Swiss education system is its dual vocational and educational training (VET) (see graph) which is based on the duality between theory and practice. Contrary to school based vocational training system, found in many countries around the globe, the dual VET system is organized so that students spend three to four days a week learning a profession in a company while the rest of the working days are spent in theoretical classes (Wettstein et al 2018). This system is also referred to as collective skill formation as it requires the cooperation and different stakeholders (employers, state and schools) for it to function (Wettstein et al 2018). Overall, there are VET programmes for around 250 professions in Switzerland (Orientation 2024). Two VET tracks can be followed, the federal vocational training certificate[7] (AFP) and the

[7] Attestation federal de formation professionnelle

federal certificate of competence (CFC)[8]. The AFP is the lowest VET track and is a form of apprenticeship which is primarily aimed at people with academic difficulties. The training lasts two years. After obtaining an AFP certificate, apprentices can continue training for a CFC. The latter is an upper track of VET. It is obtained after successful completion of initial professional training (also called apprenticeship), which lasts 3 to 4 years. This training provides apprentices with the knowledge and skills necessary to practice a profession. The CFC is a title protected and recognized by the Confederation (orientation 2024). These dual trainings present the advantage of giving students early access to the labour market and also the possibility to develop practical skills, that can directly be used in a job, without passing through tertiary education (Wettstein et al 2018). This can also be a good alternative for students who have little interest in theoretical or academic education and who prefer to have access to the labour market quicker and younger. Therefore, this contributed to the great reputation this system has worldwide, mainly because it was credited for the low unemployment rate in countries, such as, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, and Denmark.

Nevertheless, despite its great reputation worldwide, this system isn't without drawbacks. Research has shown that VET diplomas can become obsolete sooner and its holders earn substantially lower and are more vulnerable to technological changes, especially as they get older (e.g., Korber and Oesch 2019). Moreover, the early selection and segmentation of students into different tracks can be problematic for two reasons.

First, early track selection places students in homogenous tracks, which penalises weak ones as it offers them with less incentives to perform better (e.g., Felouzis and Charmilot 2013). While the density and permeability of the Swiss education system, as we can see in *figure 4*, is an argument that can be used to highlight the possibility of students to change tracks at a later stage, studies have shown that the situation is more complex. In fact, research in Switzerland stresses that ending up in the lowest tracks at 15 years old makes it less likely for students to make it to university degree, whereas it is more likely for those in higher tracks (Buchmann et al, 2016). Second, this system has been criticized

[8] Certificat fédéral de capacité

for reproducing and reinforcing social inequalities. Indeed, parents with more resources tend to provide their children with more materials and opportunities which positively impacts on their skills (Heckman 2006) and school performance (Barone 2006). Additionally, children with higher socioeconomic status tend to make more ambitious choices (e.g., Jackson 2013), which further reinforces the social-origin gap in track school (Combet and Oesch 2021).

Consequently, as migration background is an important component of social origin, especially in Switzerland, many studies focused on factors influencing migrants' preferences for VET or higher education (e.g., Bolli and Rageth 2022; Abrassart et al 2017) and highlighted the exclusionary potential of dual vocational education system (e.g., Nennstiel 2022; Tjaden 2017). It is important to mention however, that most of these studies focused on second generation migrants and there is still very little that is known about the educational pathways of refugees in Switzerland, with existing studies focusing mostly on non-accompanied minors (e.g., Bitzi and Landolt 2017; Lems 2021).

As presented in the previous section, the Swiss integration policy uses the VET system as an integration tool for the double advantage it offers, namely, quicker and more "sustainable" integration into the labour market. Also, despite the fact that most Swiss students start an apprenticeship in their teens, there is not maximum age for applying to a professional school. Therefore, refugees can apply for these training even if there are older. It is up to training firms to select their apprentices. Therefore, to maximize refugees' chances in securing an apprenticeship, a preparatory year was introduced under the name of Integration pre-apprenticeship (PAI[9] or INVOL[10] in German) to accompany refugees in their transition to a VET track. More on this program is expanded on next.

VET programs for refugees: Integration pre-apprenticeship (PAI)

The integration pre-apprenticeship (PAI) programme was launched in 2018 with the aim of preparing refugees with refugee status and temporary admission permits over a

[9] In French Prolongation d'apprentissage pour l'intégration

[10] In German Integrationsvorlehre

one-year period to facilitate their access to one of their VET tracks (AFP or CFC). The aim of this preparatory program is to provide refugees with an additional year in order to fill their gaps in French and other subjects in addition to acquiring the needed skills, necessary to secure an apprenticeship place (SEM 2024).

Overall, with this program, refugees would need 4 or 5 years to complete a CFC instead of three and three years for an AFP instead of two (Vaud 2024). The program at the vocational school follows the same schedule described before with 3 days spent training in a company and 2 days in a vocational school. During this one-year preparatory program, students focus business French, mathematics, practical courses about the and social skills (Vaud 2024).

As this program is part of the collective skill formation system, its success depended on the cooperation of all stakeholders involved. Indeed, between 2015 and 2018, the Swiss state (both federal and cantonal), employers and professional schools worked together to launch this initiative. Overall, during its first year, 800 refugees benefited from it. Today, the program is perceived to be an important step towards paving the way to the labour market integration of refugees through professional education. Furthermore, it is also considered to be a win-win example of a collective skill formation program due to its flexibility combined with the political salience of the topic of refugee integration to different stakeholders and the generous subsidy paid to cantons to carry out this program (Aerne and Bonoli 2023).

While dual VET is an important component of the education system in Switzerland, figure 1 shows that other educational pathways do exist, namely tertiary education. Despite the few attentions or even the absence of its mention in the Swiss integration policy programs, it is still a possible educational choice for refugees to make. Moreover, aside from acquiring new educational certificates and degrees, there is also the option of recognizing foreign diplomas for the purpose of practicing a profession. Next, information is provided about university access and degree recognition for foreign qualifications in Switzerland.

University access and degree recognition in Switzerland

In Switzerland, universities and federal institutes of technology are themselves responsible for the recognition of foreign degrees and have autonomy in admissions decisions. Overall, during the process of degree recognition and selection, candidates need to submit their original documents and certified copies with translations. In addition, fees need to be paid for this process to be carried out.

When it comes to refugees, same process needs to be followed for all foreigners (third country nationals), and there are few programs designed to accompany refugees during this process. On of the most successful programs in Switzerland is the "Horizon Académique", implemented by the university of Geneva. This one-year program in the canton of Geneva, aims at preparing refugees to tertiary education and accompanying them during the process of degree recognition. Nevertheless, it does not exempt them from providing the same documents and paying similar fees expected from regular candidates.

When it comes to the recognition of foreign degrees for the purpose of exercising a profession, the procedure differs according to the country in which a degree was obtained and the duration of the planned professional activity in Switzerland. It also differs according to the type of profession. Some professions are regulated, and others are not. For regulated professions, the State Secretariat for Education, Research, and Innovation (SEFRI) is the competent authority for the recognition of professions in the field of vocational education and training and for the recognition of university-level diplomas allowing the exercise of a regulated profession for example: architect, engineer or social worker. For non-regulated professions, there is no recognition of diplomas that gives direct access s to those professions. In this case, another organization, the peak association of Swiss higher education institutions (Swissuniversities/Swiss ENIC), establishes recognition recommendations for all university-level diplomas leading to a non- regulated profession in Switzerland. Throughout these different processes, refugees need to fulfil similar requirements as other candidates.

To conclude, despite the diversity and density of the Swiss education system, the focus of integration policy is narrowed to promoting professional education. While other pathways are not forcefully excluded, refugees are expected to fulfil similar requirements as foreign third country national students.

Literature review

In this section, I present a literature review. I draw from contributions made in the field of sociology in general, and more specifically from migration studies and street level bureaucrats' literatures. First, I discuss the concept of aspiration and provide a review on aspiration formation literature to conclude this part with a literature review on refugee aspirations. Second, I move to discussing the concept of integration and highlight the role played by policy in influencing integration outcomes to then explain how studying integration through the lens of aspirations increases our understanding of why certain integration paths are favoured while others are hindered. As I focus on the intersections between the implementation of integration policy and refugee aspirations, I also include a literature review on street level bureaucrats with a focus on social work with refugees.

Perspectives on aspirations

In this subsection, I start out with a short discussion of the term "aspiration" and then explain how I define it in the context of my PhD thesis by presenting my working definition of the term. Subsequently, I discuss the literature on aspiration formation before diving into the literature on refugee aspirations.

The concept of aspiration

The concept of "aspiration" originated in the field of psychology and was constructed following the experimental research on "level of aspiration"[11] conducted in the 1930s.

[11] The level of aspiration, first introduced by Frank (1935) following the earlier work of Hoppe (1930), is a method that experimentally studies goal-setting behaviour. For many personality theorists, the study of goal setting behaviour and how individuals adjust their goals based on their capabilities and resources constitutes one of the main aspects to understand the functioning of personality. More specifically, the level of aspiration technique has been used to investigate the problems that impact on the success and failure of goals setting-behaviours.

Similarly, to any other social construct, the concept of "aspiration" embodies a variety of meanings, definitions and interpretations.

Some scholars see aspirations as a representation of hopes and wishes. For example, Mickelson (1990) describes educational aspirations as a representation of individuals' hopes beyond what they can realistically achieve. Following a similar approach, Bohon et al (2006) see aspirations to be somewhat abstract, representing idealistic preferences for the future. Beyond this representation of aspirations as idealistic hopes and wishes, other scholars stressed that aspirations can also be realistic. In his essay on aspirations, the sociologist Haller (1968) extensively discusses aspirations and differentiates between "realistic" and "idealistic" aspirations. According to him and based on Lewin (1944), real or realistic aspirations refer to what the goals a person perceived to be able to attain while idealistic aspirations describe the hope to achieve if all went well. In his conceptual framework for the study of aspirations, Sherwood (1989) shifts the focus from the goals of individuals as presented by Lewin (1944) and Haller (1968) to the resources they possess and conceptualizes aspirations as future goals for which people are willing to invest resources such as time, effort and money in order to achieve.

In this thesis, I subscribe less to the conceptualization of aspirations as idealistic hopes and wishes and more to the understanding of aspirations developed in the conceptual framework developed of Sherwood (1989). Consequently, I view refugee aspirations as the sum of goals they are determined to achieve and for which they are willing to invest time, effort, and money. While I don't completely disregard idealistic aspirations in my study, the focus on realistic aspirations is particularly important to understand the ways in which public policies shape their educational and occupational aspirations as this study is more interested in those aspirations refugees are willing to invest various resources to achieve and less in hopes and wishes, which they believe they can't or don't have the needed resources to pursue.

In addition to the differentiation between realistic and idealistic aspirations, there are other dimensions I also take into consideration in the definition of the concept of aspiration. Here I first refer to the dynamic quality of aspirations, and second to its collective dimension that transcends the individual. In fact, the perception of aspirations

as a dynamic object means that they are not static. Instead, they are constantly changing and evolving (Hart 2004, 2014, 2016). Therefore, in my PhD thesis, I adopt a similar perspective as I don't approach aspirations from a static perspective but from a dynamic one. The study of refugee aspirations looks at how they evolve in different phases of their life and pays close attention to how they evolved between their arrival, now and the future.

Moreover, and when it comes to the collective dimension of aspirations, Hart (2014) stresses that individual aspirations vary depending on whether they are in conflict with others such as parents, teachers or coworkers. Therefore, and in contrast to psychologists and educational scientists, the author argues that "aspiration" is a concept that is not limited to the individual but transcends it to incorporate community and institutional aspirations. In referring to group aspirations, the author argues that "aspiration" itself doesn't matter, but it is its configuration inside a particular group or institution that gives it its significance. This perception of aspiration is particularly interesting to my PhD thesis. In my study, how refugee aspirations are shaped by public policies, paying particular attention to "institutional aspirations" is of utmost importance. Hence, I understand "institutional aspirations" as the "expectations" or "demands" the state puts on refugees for them to be considered integrated into the system. This can be particularly expressed in various programs aimed at integrating refugees into the labour market and society as whole. I argue that understanding these "institutional aspirations" is highly informative in the study of educational and occupational aspirations of refugees. I dive more into the concept of integration and integration programs in the next subsection.

Based on what precedes, the following working definition of "aspiration" will be guiding my PhD project:

"Aspiration reflects what a person thought he or she may be able to achieve. It represents future goals for which an individual is willing to invest resources such as time, effort and money to achieve it. Aspiration is dynamic, which means that it is changing and evolving with time. Finally, aspiration transcends the individual as it doesn't just reflect the individual's goals but also that of their community and institutions".

Aspiration formation literature

Aspirations have been widely studied in different fields of social sciences. In this thesis, I rely mostly on contributions made within the field of sociology. Sociologists have investigated how the process of aspiration formation plays an important role in the reproduction of social inequalities (see e.g., Blau and Duncan 1967; Sewell and Shah 1968; Halle 1968). Two main theoretical frameworks were developed, they are often referred to as the *social attainment theory* and the *blocked opportunities* framework.

The first theory developed by Blau and Duncan (1967) studies one's position in society and the different factors that influence social mobility. These factors are determined by a combination of individual achievement (e.g., educational attainment) and ascribed status (e.g., parents' social class, family income). The concept of educational aspirations was further developed with the Wisconsin model (Sewell et al.1970) which conceptualizes students' achievement as the outcome of their educational aspirations and how these were conditioned by the expectations of others and their mental ability (Trebbels 2015). Overall, studies conducted under the status attainment theory conclude that socioeconomic status and family background shape aspirations (e.g., Sewell, Haller & Portes 1969; Sewell and Hauser 1972; Sewell 1971) in addition to significant others such as parents, teachers, and peers. The later us found to have a major impact on aspiration formation (e.g., Haller and Portes 1973; Davies and Kandel 1981) because of the high control they exercise on financial and psychological resources (Kao and Tienda 1998).

Even though this theory doesn't study refugees, the factors related to family context and social origin that have been shown to matter are likely to continue to play a role. Moreover, as many refugees especially during their first years in host country have regular contact with social workers, who exercise an important control over various resources such as financial resources and access to information, it is expected that they would play a role similar to the one exercised by significant others and therefore have an important influence on aspiration formation process especially for young adult refugees who are still in the process of developing clear educational and occupational aspirations.

The second theoretical framework *blocked opportunities,* focuses on the role of structural barriers. This framework investigates the disparities in educational achievement between minority and majority groups, with a particular focus on white and black

Americans and studies how structure creates barriers to minority groups, which results in an environment characterized by blocked opportunities. This leads to two theoretically distinct and contradictory reactions. Either minority groups overcompensate for their group status by developing ambitious aspirations and overachieving scholastically, as has been hypothesized for members of the Asian minorities in the US (Sue and Okazaki 1990) or they will underperform denoting a lack of trust and skepticism towards the system run by the majority group (Fordham and Ogbu 1986; Ogbu 1991). Same as the previous theory, the *blocked opportunities* framework is highly focused on the US context and doesn't study refugees or policies such as integration and asylum policies. However, the mention of structure and how it creates an environment characterized by blocked opportunities offers great insights on the role policy plays in shaping aspirations. In the case of refugees, it is expected that settling in a whole new context with a new set of constraints, but also opportunities, will play an important role in shaping refugee aspirations and integration trajectories. Possibly and depending on other mechanisms related to the interactions between various policies such as asylum, integration and education policies and their personal characteristics and experiences of refugees, two scenarios may present themselves. On one hand, some refugees may perceive life in the host country as a new opportunity and overachieve to overcompensate for their refugee status, on the other hand, some may give up on their aspirations and adapt them to what is expected to be "a good integration" due to the challenges attached to both structural barriers and personal circumstances.

Refugee aspirations literature

When aspirations were studied in conjunction with migration, we come across two strands of literature. The first strand is conducted in developing countries and investigates potential migrants' aspirations to migrate and what motivates their decisions for mobility (Carling, 2002, 2014; De Haas, 2003, 2011; Kandal and Massey 2002; Rao 2014). The second strand of literature is more related to my topic as it studies educational and occupational aspirations of migrants in western host societies. However, this literature was not directly focused on refugees as briefly summarized next.

Indeed, many studies were conducted on migrants' aspirations, mostly in the US (See Portes, McLeod & Parker 1978; St-Hilaire 2002; Boccagni 2017) but also in Switzerland (e.g., Murdoch 2014; Schnell and Fibbi 2016). This research gives great insights on the different factors that impact on migrants' aspirations and how aspirations correlate with educational and occupational outcomes. More specifically, from this literature, we learn that historical circumstances associated with the country of origin, nationality (e.g., Portes et al. 1978; Bohon et al. 2006), experiences in home country (e.g., Portes et al. 1978) and language proficiency (Portes et al. 1978; Portes et al. 2013) have important impact on aspirations' formation among migrants. Additionally, this literature also gives important insights on the type of aspirations, migrants have. In fact, studies have found that migrants' aspirations are not the results of fantasy thinking, instead a rational assessment of costs and benefits (St Hillaire 2002; Portes et al. 2013, Boccagni 2017). Moreover, Boccagni (2017) also concludes that migrants' aspirations are not centred around self but include the aspirations of others, often family members.

While these are important insights, I choose to focus the rest of this thesis on studies directly related to refugee aspirations for several reasons. In fact, many of the studies conducted on migrants are conducted on second generation (e.g., Portes et al 2013; Schnell and Fibbi 2016) I contend that refugees remain a more vulnerable category and their experiences are way different from people who, for the most part, were born and socialized in the host country. Throughout their mobility experience, refugees struggle with the stability of their legal status or lack of, language skills and making sense of a new context with different written and unwritten rules. Moreover, when compared with other groups of immigrants such as students, workers and those who migrated for family reunification who for most part have planned their mobility (Hynie 2018), refugees clearly face different challenges due to the special circumstances leading to their migration and hence my choice to solely focus on the literature, studying refugee aspirations.

Studies on refugee aspirations are mostly qualitative and were conducted on small groups of refugees with specific characteristics (e.g., from a given country of origin, or within a given profession or skill level). We clearly lack the kind of broad vision that is

required to make generalizable hypotheses, however research on refugee aspirations has generated some interesting findings.

First, studies on highly skilled refugees have shown how important it is for them to preserve the profession they learned as far as possible, in general (Mozetič 2020; Cangià et al. 2021) and in specific fields (Pietka Niatzka 2015). There seems to be a strong attachment to the status afforded by a profession, and aspirations in the host countries are largely driven by the preservation of as much as possible of the professional status achieved in the country of origin. Of course, some compromises are sometimes needed, but there is a clear aspiration to remain within the same field, in the words of Pietka-Niatzka (2015), "… anything that is decent and relates to my profession".

Second, several studies conclude that refugees have high aspirations, especially educational ones. This is because they perceive education to be more valued in the host country than in their country of origin and a gateway to getting a good job in the future and hence to achieving a better socioeconomic status (e.g., Shakya et al. 2010). Another study found that education is important to refugees because it is their way to acquire a more privileged migration status and the opportunity to be perceived as more than just a "refugee" (Schneider 2018). The student title allows for this change in identity, as they perceived that international students are more respected and accepted than refugees.

Third, this research also highlights the gap between aspirations that are relatively high and the ability to fulfil them, which is hampered by various factors such as limited language skills (Tlhabano and Schweitzer 2007; Hebbani and Khawaja 2019), the lack of support and information on available educational opportunities and options (Stevenson and Willot 2007; Morrice et al 2020) and institutional barriers during asylum procedure (e.g., Van Heelsum 2017) in addition to "systematic inequalities" affecting young refugees' resilience by creating many barriers and negative experiences which impact their educational goals (Stevenson and Willot 2007; Morrice et al. 2020).

While the literature on refugee aspirations remains patchy, it shows consistently how big a place, aspirations hold in the definition of life after forced migration. In general, these studies don't explore how these high aspirations were formed (Mozetič 2021) and

most of them were conducted in Canada, the UK and Australia with refugees, selected through resettlement programs and who haven't experienced asylum procedures (e.g., Shakya et al. 2010; Hebbani and Khawaja 2019). More research on the topic is needed in continental Europe to understand the impact of integration policies on the aspirations of refugees. In a country like Switzerland with a developed dual vocational system, many policies have been implemented with the aim to integrate refugees into work and education. Even though previous studies have touched upon structural barriers in different context, more research is needed to understand the mechanisms underlying the implementation of integration policy with its different programs and measures and the role they have played in combination with other policies such as asylum policy and education policy to promote certain integration paths while hindering others. Furthermore, even though research on refugee aspirations has highlighted how the lack of information and support breeds frustration, which results in negatively affecting their aspirations. Regarding this point and as the first years in the host country are characterized with refugees' regular contact with street-level bureaucrats, more attention is required to investigate their role in influencing refugee aspirations and the dynamics surrounding the relation between these two parties in an environment characterized by various policy requirements.

Integration through the lens of aspirations

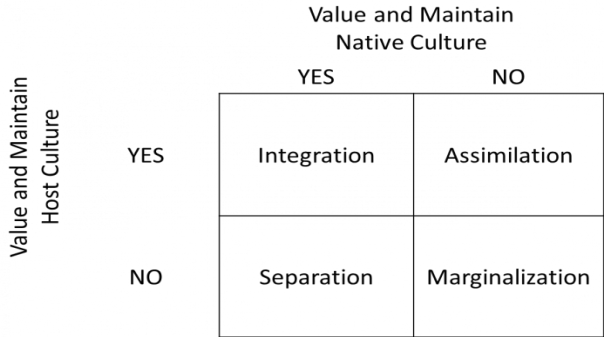
The concept of "Integration"

Sociologists have used various terms to refer to the process by which immigrants are incorporated into a host society, including assimilation, acculturation, integration, and inclusion. I focus on integration in this thesis as it is the definition widely used by policy makers in the European context. Indeed, as my work studies the influence of various policies, including integration policy on refugee aspirations, I will dedicate most of this section to the concept of integration. However, in doing so I start by presenting a historical overview of the development of this concept and its cognates.

Classical assimilation theories started in the 1920s with the Chicago school and described a linear path required for migrants to follow in order to become full members

of host society, a responsibility, that was fell solely on migrants (Alba & Nee, 1997). Moreover, this configuration implied that migrants are encouraged to disregard linguistic and cultural "deficits" or differences by learning the English language and incorporating themselves completely into American customs (Zhou, 1999; Rumbaut, 1997, Heisler, 2000). Starting from the 1960s and 1970s, classical assimilation theories were revised to include different paths to incorporation by acknowledging the influence of other factors such as race and ethnicity as important players in the dynamics surrounding the process of incorporation (Portes & Zhou, 1993), hence highlighting the interactions of migrant group characteristics with the host society context. This conception of migrants' incorporation is reflected in the current idea of integration as a two-way process. However, before discussion the European notion of integration, it is important to mention Berry's acculturation model (1980), who included integration is the four dimensions model of migrants' incorporation depending on migrants' level of identification with their native culture or host society culture as shown in *figure 5*.

Figure 5: Berry's (1980) acculturation model



From this model integration is presented as a balanced situation where migrants adopt the receiving culture while retaining the origin culture. In the European context, the definition of integration is not as straightforward and often a difficult task. Indeed, the concept itself has been largely discussed in the literature, and there is a consensus on its complexity. A summary of the main definitions of integration (e.g., Kuhlman 1991;

Robinson 1998; Favell 1998, 2001; Castles et al 2002; Zetter and Griffiths 2002; Sigona 2005; Ager & Strang 2008; Mulvey 2013; Hekchmann 2015) highlights three major points.

First, integration is a "two-way process" involving both the receiving society and refugees or migrants themselves (e.g., Ager & Strang 2008). Second, the concept of integration is contextual, meaning, the conditions and specificities of the locality (country, state, city, etc.) influence integration outcomes (e.g., Glorius and Doomernik 2020; Doomernik and Glorius 2016; Ager and Strang 2016). Third, integration as applied by policymakers is a set of normative practices and policies. The aim of these measures is to assess whether certain requirements have been attained for migrants to benefit from rights, such as permits, social benefits and citizenship (Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas 2016; Hinger and Schweitzer 2020). Therefore, while often described as a "two-way process" the concept remains highly contested and criticized because of its normative charge and this tendency to put the weight to integrate on refugees and migrants themselves (e.g., Mozetič 2022; Phillimore 2021; Favell 2019; Schinkel 2018; Scandone 2018; Dahinden, 2016; Mulvey 2015). Indeed, research on integration tends to focus on refugee characteristics, such as their motivation and human capital to explain integration outcomes (e.g., Mozetič 2022; Phillimore 2021; Mulvey 2015). There is no doubt that these individual characteristics related to refugee agency and various capitals such as previous qualifications, language skills and social networks will have an important influence on their integration trajectories as highlighted by many studies (e.g, Borselli and Van Meijl 2021; Udayar et al 2021; Auer 2017; Williams 2006).

Nonetheless, many researchers stress on the importance to shed more light on the different dynamics surrounding the structural aspects influencing integration trajectories and the ways in which restrictive migration policy creates an environment non-conducive to integration (Mulvey 2015). Lately, Phillimore (2021) highlights the importance to shift the focus on integration from refugee characteristics to studying how host societies "opportunities structures" shape their integration process. By "opportunity structures", she refers to different arrangements that promote or hinder refugee inclusion and focuses on five domains namely, locality or the influence of geographical location, discourse on

refugees in media and public opinion, relations or the degree to which host society is open to receiving refugees, structure or legal rights and finally initiative and support which describe the influence of both social networks and specific integration programs on refugee inclusion. The author also stresses the importance of adopting a comparative approach when studying opportunity structures in the context of refugee integration, as it is less common.

This thesis is embedded in this debate and contributes to it. While it doesn't study the discourse on refugees in media and public opinion, it does investigate how structure in the form of legal rights and state support through integration programs shape refugee integration trajectories. Through the lens of refugee aspirations and experiences of social workers, this thesis researches the different mechanisms in play during the process of refugee integration to understand how refugees perceived various public policies, namely asylum policy, integration policy and education policy, had influenced their educational and occupational aspirations of refugees and, as a result, their integration paths. Additionally, it also studies the challenges faced by social workers in the implementation of integration policy and the role they play in shaping refugee aspirations and their integration trajectories. Next, I discuss the interactions between the two concepts of aspiration and integration and how they related to each other with a focus on the role played by the three policies in this interaction.

Integration, policy, and aspirations

Various studies have pointed out to the negative impact of asylum procedures on refugees labour market integration (e.g,Hainmueller et al 2016, Baker et al 2014). As mentioned previously, unlike other groups of migrants (students, workers, family reunification), who for the most part have planned their mobility (Hynie 2018), refugees face more challenges due to the special circumstances leading to their migration and the uncertainties related to asylum procedure and their legal status (Hynie 2018). Therefore, refugees find it more challenging during the asylum procedure to project themselves into the future and form clear or ambitious educational and occupational aspirations (Van Heelsum 2014). It is possible that this situation changes after securing a permit that allows them to work and study, and therefore become capable of forming high educational and

occupational aspirations to achieve what they couldn't do during the asylum period. As we have seen in the previous section, studies have constantly shown that refugees have high educational and occupational aspirations (see e.g., Dryden-Peterson 2017; Morrice et al 2020; Shakya et al. 2010). However, the legal limbo (Marbach et al 2018; Luebben 2003) experienced during asylum procedure may continue to have an everlasting effect on most refugee aspirations, which may have translated into them giving up on many of their aspirations as a result of blocked opportunities (Fordham and Ogbu 1986; Ogbu 1991) and as a result adapting their educational and occupational aspirations to what is supported by various integration programs and measures and therefore, choosing certain integration trajectories over others.

In relation to the last point, various integration programs and measures have been implemented in different western countries with the idea of facilitating the inclusion of refugees into the labour market. Research on integration programs has shown that they highly focus on labour market access of refugees with the intention of alleviating pressure on the welfare state. Usually, designed similarly across countries, these programs offer integration packages, which include language courses and introduction programs to life in the host country with variations in their durations and the status of their recipients (Konle-Seidl 2018; Valenta and Bunar 2010). In most cases, participation in these measures is mandatory (Hinger and Schweitzer 2020; Konle-Seidl 2018; Valenta and Bunar 2010). In fact, 'promoting and demanding' labour market integration is the main principle guiding integration policies (Hinger and Schweitzer2020).

When refugees refuse to participate in these measures, they may face negative repercussions on their social benefits and legal status (Hinger and Schweitzer 2020; Valenta and Bunar 2010). Following the restrictive and mandatory nature of most of these programs and also their limited focus, it is expected that this may translate into putting extra pressure on refugees to adapt their aspirations to those trajectories, promoted as best and fastest ways to integrate by these programs. However, and despite this criticism, it is possible that these programs still offer the support and guidance refugees need to navigate life in their new country of residence host society. Thus, contributing to creating a stable foundation for them to form new educational and occupational aspirations which reflects

positively on their integration into the labour market (e.g., Bevelander and Pendakur 2014; Valenta and Bunar 2010).

Finally, refugees, especially educated and highly skilled ones, have to navigate a new environment with a new set of rules. This is the case when dealing with various institutions in the host country, including universities and other educational institutes, which have important powers in managing access to diverse resources and distribute individual opportunities of privileges (Piñeiro and Wagner 2022).

This can result in creating an environment characterized by structural discrimination against minorities, including refugees, which is well documented in western countries, including Switzerland (e.g., Auer and Fossati 2019; Bonilla-Silva 2012; Burns 2008; Rydgren 2004; Castles 1984). In the north American literature, structural discrimination can also take the form of structural racism, racial discrimination (e.g., du Bois around 1900; Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton 1985, 1988, 2001; Kamali 2010) and structural violence (Interiano-Shiverdecker et al 2022). These terms highlight the institutionalization of discrimination against of various groups including minorities such as migrants and refugees in different spheres of society, such as the labour market, the educational system, and the welfare bureaucracy (Interiano-Shiverdecker et al 2022). Structural discrimination is also deeply embedded in systems and laws in addition to written and unwritten policies and practices (Najcevska 2015). Structural discrimination manifests through processes of degree recognition, university access requirements and employment practices (e.g., requiring local experience or referees) which expect refugees to provide similar documentations, without attempting positive actions to facilitate their access to these different spaces (e.g., Campion 2018; Colic-Peisker and Tilbury 2007).

Indeed, in the context of forced migration, refugees are not just foreigners to a new complex system, which presents itself in a language they are not familiar with, but for most cases unprepared to tackle its complexities as their mobility was not planned to pursue employment and education purposes but to flee the unstable circumstances in their countries of origin (Hynie 2018). Consequently, it is expected that they may not be well prepared to tackle the complexities of administrative load related to job search, university access and often the demanding process of degrees and qualifications recognition (e.g.,

Sonntag 2018). Additionally their complex life situation combined with negative impact of structural discrimination on health and wellbeing (Braveman et al 2022), may put refugees in situations where they would more readily give up on those aspirations that require high investment in time and money, such as going to university or working in the same high skilled profession, and rather choose the ones that are quicker and easier to implement, and most importantly the ones that are already supported by integration policy as they present less structural barriers. On the contrary, and if we consider a more positive scenario, this new environment and despite its new rules, may provide refugees with resources and a more stable ground to develop and form ambitious aspirations that were hard to consider or pursue in a previous context characterized by war, lack of resources and instability.

Against this context, it is not clear how refugees perceive the role this "policy-dense" environment in the formation of their aspirations and thus, in shaping their integration trajectories. Additionally, more research is needed to understand the role played by the different agents in charge of the implementation of integration policy in influencing the formation of refugee aspirations and integration trajectories. As seen in the previous section on aspiration formation, it is expected that social workers play a role similar to that of significant others because of the regular contact they have with refugees and the possible control they exercise on their resources and access to information. Also, this aspect is of high importance to my work because refugees' main point of contact with policy is through street level bureaucrats, therefore, I include a literature review on street-level bureaucrats next, with a focus on the extent of their discretion, especially in the context of social work with refugees.

Social work with refugees during the implementation of integration policy

Street level bureaucrats (SLB) caught the attention of scholars with the work of Lipsky (1980). One major characteristic of these front-line workers is the face-to-face interaction they have with their clients (Lipsky 1980). Perceived as pivotal in the implementation of public policies because of the high level of discretion they exercise (Lipsky 2010; Davidovitz &Cohen 2020), Lipsky (1980) defines them as *"public service workers who interact directly with citizens in the course of their jobs, and who have substantial*

discretion in the execution of their work". They include teachers, policy officers, and other public employees who control access to public programs or who enforce laws and regulations (Meyers et al. 2007). Social workers with migrants and refugees fall into this category.

In the context of integration policy, social workers are at the forefront of its implementation and the ones in charge of translating policy requirement to policy takers, in this case refugees. In this process, we may wonder about the discretionary power of social workers and the extent to which their perceptions and decisions would weight on how integration policy is carried out. Research on street level bureaucrats in general and social work with refugees and migrants in particular acknowledge the existence of such a power, however, it comes with many limitations. Indeed, due to the face-to-face interaction they have with their clients, SLB can have high discretion in the implementation of policy (Lipsky, 1980, Berkowitz 1987; Derthick 1990). This is because the circumstances and characteristics of their clients may be so different that the rules and instructions implemented by SLBs differ accordingly (Lipsky 1980, Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003). Keiser (2010) argues that access to social welfare programs depends not only on the eligibility rules, but on how SLBs apply those rules to their clients. They have the power to decide which client to invest more time and energy in and who requires more allocation of resources (Baviskar and Winter 2017, Clark-Daniels and Daniels 1995; Keiser 2010; Baviskar and Winter 2017). This helps them define the categories to which their clients belong (Raaphorst and Groeneveld 2018) and their level of "deservingness" (Jilke & Tummers 2018).

In the case of social work with refugees and migrants and due to the discretionary power social workers have, they may decide the extent of resources, in terms of time and information to allocate to each individual and the level of investment required on each client based on their perceptions and assessment of the situation. In the context of integration policy implementation, and using the room of manoeuvre they have, it is possible that on the one hand, social workers adapt the requirements of integration programs to the needs of their clients or search other alternatives when what is in offer is not in line with refugees' aspirations and potential. On the other hand, adapting to the

aspirations and expectations of their clients may not be realistic due to limited resources. This leads us to discussing the limitations of this discretion, or the extent to which they can adapt the written policy to their real cases.

Many studies have shown that the extent of this discretionary power SLBs have, remains contested and limited by various factors, mostly related to their environment. In fact, organizational conditions (Cohen 2018; Cohen & Hertz 2020), such as the degree of power delegation (May & Winter 2009), the resources allocated to them (e.g., Lipsky 1980; Winter 2002) workloads and client mix all influences the discretion of SLB. Moreover, for those working with migrants and refugees, additional factors such as cultural differences (Nash et al. 2006; Nash 2005; Potocky-Tripodi 2002; Khan 2000) and rising nationalism and anti-refugee sentiments (Birger et al 2020; Libal and Berthold 2019) challenge the extent of their discretion and room of manoeuvre.

Indeed, research has shown that that social workers are frequently confronted with societies that are increasingly diverse (Hewitt 1993). For those working with migrants and refugees, this diversity adds layers of complexity to the work of social workers. Most research on this area highlights these challenges and stresses on the necessity of developing new skills to offer effective assistance to this population (Khan 2000; Nash 2005; Nash, Wong & Trlin 2006; Hugman 2012) and in Potocky-Tripodi (2002) words "*Social work practice with refugees and immigrants requires specialized knowledge of the unique issues of these populations".*

While this is an important aspect of social work with refugees which is expected to have important impact on how social workers conduct their mission and thus influence their room of manoeuvre, this thesis doesn't dive much into this aspect of social work as it chooses to focus on structural dimensions related to different policies influencing the extent of their discretion. Therefore, more attention is given to the impact of the challenging political environment social workers operate under, especially when working with refugees. In fact, many studies have found that because social work with refugees in the US and Europe takes place in an environment of rising nationalism and anti-refugee sentiments, these street-level bureaucrats face various tensions (e.g., Libal and Berthold

2019). In this context, social work with refugees is viewed negatively because they are perceived as refugee supporters.

Additionally, restrictive migration policy combined with limited resources have negative impact on social workers and increases their ethical dilemmas (Valtonen 2001; Masocha 2014). Overall, the tensions related to the political context of social work with refugees highly influence social workers' perceptions of their daily practice (Birger, Nadan & Ajzenstadt 2020) as it has both enhanced their political awareness but at the same time created "political fatigue" with the risk of emotional burnout. Consequently, we many expect that operating in such demanding political environment translate into a situation where social workers create a distance between them and their clients to protect themselves. Following Zacka's (2017) three pathological positions adopted by street level bureaucrats, this can be assimilated to the position of the "indifferent". This occurs when SLB focus on the rules and regulations that they need to implement without taking into consideration the specific needs of their clients. This is carried out by limiting hours of access and/or standardizing services when personalized services would have been more effective. According to Zacka (2017), by keeping a distance from clients' needs and not adapting the rules to their special circumstances, SLB persistently fail at seeing clients' needs. In the context of integration policy implementation and to protect themselves from "political fatigue", we may expect that one of the positions social workers adopt towards refugees is one similar to the "indifferent". Therefore, by distancing themselves as much as possible from their clients' needs and demands, they will invest as minimum resources as possible such as time and information to accommodate the aspirations and ambitions of their clients. As a result, they will either decentralize part of their responsibilities to other entities (civil society organizations, for example) or leave it to refugees to figure out by themselves ways in which to implement their aspirations and future plans.

On the contrary, and as a consequence of their enhanced political awareness, social workers may take up either the role of caregiver or activist. Therefore, the may either go extra miles to cater to the needs of refugees by using their own resources and contacts or advocate for more rights for refugees and thus, use their discretionary power to adapt the requirements of integration policy as much as possible to refugee aspirations.

Nevertheless, studies have shown that taking up these roles is not forcefully beneficial to SLB clients. In fact, in Zacka (2017), the role of caregiver is one of the pathological positions taken by SLB to cope with their moral dilemmas. In fact, he warns against this position because it reinforces the victim disposition of their clients by rewarding them for letting their despair be visible and encouraging them to position themselves in the most unfavourable way. In the context of social work with refugees, this was clearly illustrated in the study conducted by Birger and Nadan (2021) who found that when social workers are involved and concerned about their clients, this involvement takes the shape of a friend-like dynamic even a parent-child like dynamic which translated into increased power of dependency. This thesis builds on these findings but also attempts to fill in a gap regarding the mechanism of how these various challenge influence refugee aspirations and their integration trajectories in host society.

Indeed, studies on social work with refugees and migrants tend to focus on the experiences by social workers, the dilemmas they encounter and the coping mechanisms they adopt. Many of these studies are conducted with social workers dealing with refugee children or unaccompanied minors. Moreover, most studies touching on frustrations and challenges faced by both refugees and social workers tend to study these groups separately, focusing either on the side refugees, mostly high skilled (e.g., Mozetič 2022) or social workers (e.g., Birger et al. 2020). With few exceptions, for example a study conducted in Belgium on the impact of intensive case management and specialized educational/occupational orientation services on unaccompanied minors' agency to reach aspired life goals, found that social workers and refugees face various structural and interpersonal challenges that hinder the fulfilment of their aspired life goals (Van Raemdonck et al 2021). We need additional studies focused on adult refugees, not just limited to unaccompanied minors and children, and which explores these various challenges taking into consideration the combined perceptions and experiences of both social workers and refugees. This approach adds more depth to understanding the different mechanisms in play during the integration process of refugees, more specifically, how the policy dense environment of the global north shapes refugees educational and occupational aspirations and as result their integration paths. Also, diving into the

experiences of street level bureaucrats in charge of integration policy implementation is expected to provide us with a better feeling of policy, as it is experienced by policy takers.

My contribution

To conclude this literature review, I present a summary of the unresolved issues that this dissertation aims to address given the identified gaps in the literature and how they are addressed in the three papers.

Overall, research on refugee educational and occupational aspirations concludes that refugees have high aspirations, especially aspirations to access tertiary education. Nevertheless, little explanation is given on how these aspirations are formed and describe the various mechanisms in explaining why certain integration trajectories are favoured more than others. While the role of policy is mentioned when discussing opportunities and constraints, more attention is needed to understand the ways in which they informed refugee educational and occupational aspirations and ended up shaping their interaction trajectories. In my first paper, I rely on in-depth interviews with refugees to understand how they perceived, the role different policies had in influencing their integration trajectories. The main contribution of the first paper is introduction of the "low ambition equilibrium" concept. This means that various policies in combination with refugees' complex life circumstances contribute to creating a situation where high aspirations are managed to make sure they are redirected towards those integration paths that translate quicker into employment.

To substantiate the findings of the first paper and to further understand the various challenges and tensions surrounding the implementation of integration policy, I combine in my second paper, the perceptions, and experiences of both policy takers, in this case refugees, and those in charge of policy implementation, caseworkers. The literature on street-level bureaucrats and social work with refugees offers great insights on the discretion power of SLB, the factors influencing their decision and the challenges they face, especially when working in a politically tense environment like the one characterizing social work with refugees. The literature also shows that more research is needed to understand the relationship (interactions) between social workers and refugees. Additionally, and when it comes to the implementation of integration policy, most studies

investigating the challenges faced by both refugees and social workers tend to study these groups separately.

My main contribution with the second paper is to bring the experiences and perceptions of both refugees and social workers together and investigate how the focus on quick labour market integration of refugees, shapes both refugees' integration trajectories and social workers' understanding of their role and function. My main conclusion is that caseworkers are focused on attaining what is referred to in this paper as "fast and sustainable integration" through promoting quick access to vocational training and employment. This is often a source of tension to both caseworkers, who recognize the shortcoming of such approaches, and refugees who either adjust to the expectations of "fast and sustainable integration" or rely on their own resources to gain support for their more ambitious projects.

As Switzerland highly relies on vocational training educational as an integration tool, a third contribution of this thesis is to investigate whether differences in institutional setting, mainly, educational system, reflects on the ways social workers, advise refugees. As shown, studies are needed to explore this aspect of integration policy using a comparative perspective that goes beyond quantitative studies based on integration indicators. I contribute to this research gap in the third paper co-authored with Giuliano Bonoli. Using qualitative vignettes, we investigate how caseworkers in both Canada and Switzerland advise refugees and conclude that integration paths proposed to refugees are very similar, regardless of the institutional context. This is particularly due to the similarity in the overall orientation of integration policy (quick labour market insertion); the similarity of the policy problem (coaching recently arrived refuges while they renegotiate their aspirations) and by the fact that both countries are experiencing labour shortages in the low skill segment of the labour market.

Answers to all these questions contribute to an improved understanding of the various dynamics surrounding the inclusion or exclusion of refugees in western host societies, more specifically to why certain integration trajectories are favoured while hindering others. In the following sections I outline my methodological approach, summarize my

key findings, describe their significance and policy implications before discussing limitations of this thesis and avenues for future research.

Methodology

Before diving into the methodology, I bring back the research questions guiding my thesis, namely, the two overarching questions: *How do public policies such as asylum policy, integration policy and education policy influence on the formation educational and occupational aspirations?* And how *do these policies influence which integration trajectories are favoured, and which are abandoned by refugees?*

The two research questions can be investigated using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Nevertheless, I chose to only rely on qualitative methods for two main reasons. First, refugees are considered to be a hard-to-reach population (Enticott 2017; Tourangeau 2014; Harkness et al 2014; Shaghaghi 2011; Wahoush 2009). While there is no consensus on how to define hard to reach population, groups can be put in this category if they are more expensive to study (e.g., Brackertz 2007; Wilson 2001). What increases the cost of reaching such population is the difficulty to identify them, as they are small in number and dispersed among the general population (e.g., Enticott 2017). Additionally, they can be highly mobile and reluctant of participating in research projects, which present real challenges in constructing a sampling frame (e.g., Ngo- Metzger et al 2004). Moreover, language proficiency presents one of the main challenges in surveying hard to reach cultural minority groups (e.g., Ngo- Metzger et al 2004). In fact, during the design of questionnaires and survey materials for example, researchers should make sure that survey instruments in addition to consent forms are provided in the specific language of the group under study and that cultural differences don't affect the understanding of the questions. At the beginning of my thesis, I reflected on the possibility of adopting a mixed method, but the idea was fast abandoned when I approached the field. It became clear to me then that recruiting a large number of refugees for a survey is complicated, taking into consideration limited resources. Additionally, the second reason for me to rely solely on qualitative methods is related to the aim of this research. Indeed, as I spent more time developing my project and reflecting on my research questions, I was convinced that adopting a qualitative approach is most suitable to answer my research questions. In fact,

my main objective from this thesis is to investigate in depth, the lived experiences and perceptions of both refugees' and social workers. More specifically, my intention is to study the various dynamics in play during the process of refugee integration with a focus on public policies and how these various dynamics have played a role in informing their aspirations and thus deciding which integration paths are promoted and which are hindered.

Finally, while adopting a qualitative approach didn't erase the limitations attached to language proficiency, it reduced them significantly as I conducted all interviews myself, and whenever possible in the language of the participants (for Arabic) or a language they felt most comfortable in (English or French). The face-to-face interaction with refugees gave me space to use a simplified language and reformulate the questions whenever needed.

While I solely rely on qualitative methods in all three papers, these methods were employed in a variety of ways. *In paper I*, dedicated to studying how refugees perceived public policies had shaped their aspirations and consequently, which integration paths were followed, and which were abandoned, I used in-depth interviews with 29 refugees living in the canton of Vaud, Switzerland, and asked them about their educational and occupational aspirations in various phases of their life.

In paper II, in which I investigate the various tensions during the implementation of integration policy, I rely on the in-depth interviews I previously used in paper I but focus on the parts where refugees related their experiences with caseworkers. Also, I analysed policy documents such as the Swiss integration agenda to increase my understanding of the general orientation of integration policy in Switzerland.

Finally, paper III adds a comparative angle to my thesis and builds on the findings of paper I and II. In fact, from the two first papers, we learn that VET system is used as an integration tool in Switzerland, therefore, I was interested to know whether access to educational and occupational pathways, other than vocational training was easier for refugees in a country with a different institutional setting. For this purpose, I conducted my second field work in Canada (Québec) and used qualitative vignettes with social workers from both countries. This empirical strategy has the advantage to allow us to

observe without many variations in refugee profiles in both countries, how institutional settings shape street level bureaucrats' decisions. By focusing on these (simulated) choices, we are able to capture a more realistic view of the support given to refugees than analysing policy documents or directly interviewing policy makers. Next, I provide more details about my positionality as a researcher, data collection and data analysis.

Researcher's positionality

My positionality as an international student from the global south and hence as a migrant, combined with my gender has significantly reduced power dissymmetry between myself as a researcher and refugee participants. Additionally, throughout the interviews, great value was placed on non-hierarchical interactions and transparency. Before starting the interviews and to establish familiarity, I shared information about my migration background and journey in Switzerland. It was very important for me to give the control of the interview to participants as my previous experiences working with refugees in Germany as an interpreter made me aware of possible negative even traumatic impact of interview situations on refugees. During interviews, I tried to create an environment where refugee participants could decide by themselves which questions to answer and to end the interview whenever they felt so. Additionally, at the request of participants, I decided not to employ interpreter services (For Farsi/Dari and Tigrinya) because they preferred to have direct contact with the interviewer/researcher. Not using interpreters for most refugees was an empowering experience as they felt proud of themselves conducting a whole interview in French without much external help. There were some drawbacks to this approach, as some of them struggled with French, but overall, the interview situation ended up being an empowering experience instead of a traumatising one.

I believe that my positionality as a north African in Québec has positively contributed to the recruitment process of Canadian caseworkers, as many were originally from the MENA region. Therefore, they happily introduced me to their networks and also referred me to other social workers which made helped me reach most of my field work targets in shorter time.

Participants

- **Refugees**

At the time of the interview, participants were aged between 19 and 41 years old. Eight were aged below (or) 25 years old. Seventeen were between 25 and 35 years old (including 35) and four were aged between 35 and 41 years old. Twenty-three participants are men and six are women. Most participants come from Eritrea and Afghanistan, with eight from Eritrea, eight from Afghanistan, five from turkey, four from Syrian and the rest from different other countries including, Somalia, Iran, and Ethiopia. Out of the 29 participants, thirteen started or completed a university degree in their home country, five completed 12 grade or high school (Three of them had also completed a job training certificate), three started or completed the10th grade and the rest (seven participants) have not reached the 10th grade or didn't finish compulsory schooling. When it comes to their legal status, sixteen held a B refugee permit (refugee status), one participant held a B refugee resettlement permit, ten held an F permit (temporary admission) and two held an F refugee permit. Fifteen participants arrived between 2014 and 2015, four in 2016, five in 2017 and finally five in 2018.

- **Social workers**

For Switzerland, 23 caseworkers were recruited, 14 were generalist social workers, 8 were job coaches and one worked as an officer in a university program for refugees. Out of the 23 interviewees, eighteen worked in public organizations, four in NGOs mandated by the state to implement integration policy (External integration measures) and one in a university. When it comes to Canadian caseworkers, thirteen were recruited. Nine worked in Montréal, and four in the Québec region. Five were generalist social workers and eight job coaches.

In the Swiss case, almost all participants were born or grew up in Switzerland, some of them mentioned having a migration background during the interviews and only one participant clearly spoke about her own migration trajectory experience in Switzerland. For those with a migration background, only 3 had parents who migrated from the global south (Africa). The rest was either Swiss or originally from another European country. This is important to mention as the Canadian case was different in this regard and

presented more cultural diversity. Indeed, many caseworkers shared the same native language or origin than many refugee or migrant groups from the global south. During the interviews, more social workers from the Canadian case shared their own migration experiences, including experiencing with structural discrimination, especially during degree recognition.

Data collection

Refugee participants were recruited through migrants' NGOs and public institutions in charge of integration policy. During the recruitment process, gate gatekeepers were diversified as much as possible to avoid limiting the sample to one profile (e.g., nationality, education, age) and also for ethical reasons to make it more difficult to identify participants. Therefore, refugees were recruited from three NGOs, two of them mandated by the canton of Vaud for the implementation of integration policy while the third one, managed by independent volunteers, focused on promoting the social integration of refugees. In addition to these NGOs, two public organization in charge of refugees during asylum process and of integration policy implementation were also involved in the recruitment process. Moreover, snowballing and personal network was also used to reach participants. As the paper investigates the experiences of refugees with the public policies and its influence on their aspirations and integration trajectories, it was important to recruit refugees, who hold a permit (B or F) that allows them to study and work and also that gives them access to integration programs. Additionally, they had to be living in Switzerland for at least three years to allow enough time for them to stabilize their situation legally and to interact with the three policies (see Appendix). While we recruited 29 refugees for this study, only six participants were women, this is because it was more challenging reaching out to women as they were more reluctant to participate.

Throughout the interviews, great value was placed on non-hierarchical interactions and transparency as previously stated. After refugees gave their oral consent, interviews were audio recorded except for two. Interviews were conducted in English, French and Arabic. They were transcribed in the language of the interview except for Arabic ones which were instantly translated and transcribed into French by the researcher. The interviews were

conducted between October 2020 and March 2021. They lasted between half an hour and an hour and a half, with an average duration of 45 min.

When it comes to the 23 street level bureaucrats, recruited in the canton of Vaud, Switzerland. They were working in state and non-state organizations in charge of the implementation of integration policy (mandated by the state), one of them was working in a university for a program aimed at accompanying refugees interested in academic studies. Following meetings with these organizations, information about the project was communicated to their social workers and those interested were later contacted to set up a date for the interviews. Street-level bureaucrat interviewees occupied different positions, they were either generalist social workers who were responsible for managing various aspects of refugee life including accommodation, health, education, and employment, or specialized as they were more focused on education and employment and occupied the positions of job coaches (*conseiller en emploi*) and career counsellors (*conseiller en orientation*). Interviews lasted between 35 min and 2h30, with an average of 1h30.

During the interview, questions focused on understanding caseworkers' motivations to working with refugees, the challenges they encounter and their understanding of their mission and integration as a concept. They were also asked to talk about their experiences with the implementation of integration policy, their perceptions of refugee plans and aspirations in addition to the strategies they use to guide refugees towards a particular educational and occupational path. The interviews were divided into three parts. The first part focused on the profile of caseworkers, their motivations working with refugees and their understanding of their mission. During the second phase of the interviews, caseworkers were presented with four qualitative vignettes of fictitious refugee profiles and were asked to elaborate on their counselling strategy. Finally, the third part of the interview, focused on their perceptions of refugee aspirations (realistic/idealistic) and explaining the reasons behind this perception, additionally they were also asked to describe their counselling strategies and experiences with integration policy.

For Québec, I recruited 13 caseworkers through networking events, attending workshops organized by non-state organizations (Organismes Communautaire) or directly contacting gatekeepers and explaining the purpose of the study to then be put in

contact with social workers. I also used snow bowling to reach out to more caseworkers. While the initial goal of my research in Montréal was to interview both refugees and caseworkers. Due to limited time (3 months), I had to focus my recruitment efforts on street-level bureaucrats as they were easier to reach. Also, conducting field work with refugees in a new environment would require extended stay, which was not possible due to visa issues.

For paper III, which is a comparative study, data collected for this article is based on qualitative vignettes, both Swiss and Canadian caseworkers were presented with similar qualitative vignettes, with minor adaptations (e.g., type of permits, place of residence). Profiles were varied depending on profiles aspirations and potential. This empirical strategy has the advantage to allow us to observe without many variations in refugee profiles in both countries, how institutional settings shape street level bureaucrats' decisions. By focusing on these (simulated) choices, we are able to capture a more realistic view of the support given to refugees than analysing policy documents or directly interviewing policy makers. Despite its advantages, this method presents however one major limitation. Indeed, many participants found the vignette texts to be short and at time like personal information about the participants, which they believed to be important in order for them to provide more accurate responses such as, the marital and family status, number of children and more detailed information about their education and careers. While providing information about gender and family situation would have undoubtedly added more richness to the data and made the responses more specific, we decided to only provide information directly related to educational and occupational aspirations and potential of refugee profiles in order to keep the focus of the paper and not drift aways as these dimensions would require considering additional aspects such as cultural differences between origin and host country or reactions to gender norms that could be complex.

Data analysis

For paper I, Data was analysed following Braun and Clarke (2006) six steps in Nvivo 2020 to thematically analyse the data. I combined this with systematic coding (e.g., open, axial, and selective). After getting familiarized with the data, I identified and grouped

chunks of material into categories like ‘permits and legal status’, ‘Career counselling’, ‘social workers’, ‘types of jobs’, ‘studies’, ‘future plans’, ‘university’, ‘satisfaction/wellbeing’. Additional rounds of coding were performed, zooming into the different factors influencing refugee aspirations, with a focus on the policies influencing them. After this process, I could identify three policies that had an important influence on refugee aspirations mainly, asylum policy, integration focus and education policy with a focus on university access and degree recognition. After identifying the policies that influenced their aspirations, I then analysed in which ways they influenced their integration paths.

For refugee interviews used in Paper II, I followed the same strategy for data analysis mentioned above. However, I used interview parts where refugees relate their experiences with social workers and other streel-level bureaucrats, such as teachers. After grouping chunks of material into categories like “Career counselling”, “permit”, “social workers”, “future plans”, “satisfaction/wellbeing”, recurring themes summarizing refugee interactions with social workers, the perceptions they had of them and the frustrations they generated, were identified as follow: “perception of policy’s focus on fast integration”, “pressures of legal status on aspirations” and “realistic aspirations or pressure to adapt aspirations to policy requirements”.

When it comes to street-level bureaucrats’ interviews for paper II, Interviews were analysed thematically and followed a similar strategy as the one detailed above. After identifying chunks of material and grouping them into categories such as “Perceptions of refugee aspirations”, “Experiences with integration policy”, “Perceptions of their own role and mission”, “Factors for career orientation”, “vocational training”, “realistic aspirations”, “fast integration”. Additional rounds of coding were performed to finally identify recurring themes such as “mission of street-level bureaucrats”, “tensions resulting from fast integration and sustainable integration”, “tensions resulting from their perceptions of refugees’ aspirations: realistic or idealistic”, “tensions related to administrative load” and “tensions related to refugee profiles: cultural differences, qualifications, country of origin, language skills”.

In addition to in-depth interviews, I also analysed policy documents such as the Swiss integration agenda (AIS), and its different annexes, including the cantonal integration

programs[12] to increase my understanding of the general orientations of integration policy in Switzerland. After familiarising with the documents, I looked for information about the general orientations of integration policy, the type of integration offers directed to refugees, in addition to the main actors involved. I zoomed in at the parts concerning integration into education system and labour market. I also paid particular attention to the documents' sections where mentions to street level bureaucrats such as job coaches, social workers were made.

For paper III, I analysed the vignettes separately for each country and each profile, following the same strategy followed above. After getting familiarized with the data, I identified and grouped chunks of material (open coding) into categories for each profile, of each country like 'impressions about the profile', 'factors considered for counselling strategy', 'accommodating the profile choice', 'suggesting other alternatives', 'University education', 'Vocational training', 'realistic aspirations', 'idealistic aspirations. Then, I crossed and compared codes for profiles from them same country, and then same profiles from the two countries. Additional rounds of coding were performed (axial and selective), zooming into the impressions caseworkers had of the different profiles, their different counselling strategies reasons motivating them, to finally zoom in to the alternatives suggested to these profiles. After this process, I could identify the main counselling strategy used for each profile and the reasons motivating it as presented in the results section of Paper III.

Key findings

Paper I summary

Paper I studies the role of policy in influencing refugee educational and occupational aspirations and how this translates into promoting or hindering certain integration paths. It starts with the assumption that the policy dense environment policy characterizing host society will have an important influence on their aspirations and integration trajectories. The paper is based on refugees' perceptions and their experiences of various policies.

[12] In French Programmes d'intégration cantonaux

Following data collection and analysis of interviews conducted with 29 refugees in the canton of Vaud, Switzerland, three policies were identified as having an important influence on their aspirations' formation namely, asylum policy, integration policy in addition to university access and degree recognition policy. The literature review for this paper combines both the literature on aspirations formation and refugee integration and discusses how the two concepts of integration and aspirations relate, taking into consideration the influence of the three identified policies. By identifying which policies refugees perceived to have had most influence on the formation of their aspirations and analysing how they do so, I was able to capture in more depth the integration paths that are promoted and the ones that were hindered. The main finding of this paper is the introduction of the concept "low ambition equilibrium". This means that the three identified policies combined, contribute to creating a situation where on one hand these policies promote the quickest and most accessible integration paths to reduce refugees' dependence on the welfare state. On the other hand, the experience of forced migration combined with a "policy-dense" environment create a lot of uncertainty in the life of refugees and the urgency to find a lost "normality" at the expense of their aspirations. This paper is published in the Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies.

Otmani, I. (2023). Towards a 'low ambition equilibrium': managing refugee aspirations during the integration process in Switzerland. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 1-19.

Paper II summary

In Paper I, I rely on the experiences and perceptions of refugees to understand how various policies have shaped their aspirations and integration trajectories. Paper II continues to explore this question but complements it with the perceptions of policy and those in charge of its implementation. Consequently, in Paper II, I pay more attention to the implementation of integration policy, more specifically to the tensions experienced by both refugees and social workers resulting from the expectation to integrate fast. Indeed, various programs have been implemented with well-defined objectives cantered around promoting access to quick the labour market (e.g., Arendt 2020; Konle-Seidl 2018; Valenta and Bunar 2010). Therefore, it is expected that this focus on findings a job fast

generates various tensions for both social workers, in charge of the implementation of integration policy and refugees. Paper II explores these tensions, and they influence refugees' integration trajectories by relying on both interview data with 23 caseworkers and 29 refugees from the canton of Vaud, Switzerland, and the analysis of Swiss integration policy documents, namely, the Swiss integration Agenda (SIA). In this paper, I continue to engage with the literature of integration and refugee aspirations. I additionally include a short discussion on street level bureaucrats and social work with refugees. More specifically, I focus on the challenges accompanying social work in an environment characterized by various tensions such as the one surrounding social work and migration and discuss the extent of street level bureaucrats' discretion and the factors influencing it. The main conclusion of this article is Swiss integration policy and those in charge of its implementation, namely, caseworkers are focused on attaining what it is referred to in this paper as "fast and sustainable integration" through promoting quick access to vocational training and employment. This often generates various tensions to both refugees and social workers. In fact, having to fit into pre-defined integration paths is a source of tension to those refugees who decide, especially during their interactions with integration policy and those in charge of its implementation. When it comes to social, many recognize the challenging and at the same time paradoxical task of expecting both "fast" and "sustainable" integration from refugees.

Paper III summary

Paper III co-authored with Giuliano Bonoli continues to build on the findings of both Paper I and II by adding a comparative perspective. Both paper I and paper II show how Swiss integration policy in the canton of Vaud highly relies on the country's developed dual vocational training to integrate refugees fast and sustainably. Paper III investigates whether relying on the skill collective system limits refugees' educational choices. More specifically, it asks the following questions: *To what extent differences in the human capital formation regime that is predominant in a country impact on integration trajectories, proposed to recently arrived refugees?* To answer this question, the main hypothesis guiding paper III is: On one hand, in a country like Switzerland, which heavily relies on its dual vocational training system to integrate refugees, access to good quality

employment will be facilitated. On the other hand, more ambitious educational aspirations, such as accessing tertiary education, may be more difficult to achieve in this context. In order to test this hypothesis, we chose to compare integration paths proposed by caseworkers in two countries, which invest heavily in integration policy, but which differ in the nature of their human capital regimes, namely Switzerland (Vaud) and Canada (Québec). In order to collect comparable evidence, we decided to submit qualitative vignettes describing four hypothetical refugee profiles to 23 caseworkers from the Canton of Vaud, Switzerland and 13 caseworkers from the province of Québec, Canada. We asked these caseworkers in charge of the implementation of integration policy to describe the integration strategy they would adopt for each profile. For this paper, we continue to mainly rely on the literature related to integration and refugee aspirations, additionally, we also rely on contributions from the human capital formation regime literature to understand the differences between a liberal human capital regime and a collective skill formation one. Findings from paper III show that regardless of institutional differences, integration paths proposed by caseworkers in both countries are very similar as the main concern is to assure that refugees regain financial independence as soon as possible. We explain these results by various factors. First, the similarity in the overall orientation of integration policy in both countries, which is concerned with promoting quick access to the labour market. Second, the similarity of the policy problem, as caseworkers in both countries deal with recently arrived refugees and have to negotiate their aspirations and adapt them to local realities. Finally, both countries are experiencing labour shortages in the low skill segment of the labour market, and refugees are perceived as a possible labour force to fill in this shortage.

Summary of findings of additional papers

In addition to these three papers discussed above, I have contributed to published and unpublished papers over the course of my PhD that I will briefly discuss here.

In the paper, co-authored with Giuliano Bonoli and entitled *"Upskilling as integration policy: Making the most of the refugees' human capital in a context of skill shortage"*, we explore the ability of a refugee receiving country, Switzerland, to develop an integration policy based on upskilling in a context characterized by skill shortage. More specifically,

we focus on how the state uses education as social policy, and in the case of refugee integration, as an integration tool to remedy skill shortage. To investigate this, we decide to show four qualitative vignettes describing different refugee profiles to 22 caseworkers in the canton of Vaud, Switzerland and asked them to describe how they would advise them regarding their educational and occupational plans. Results show that no much evidence of a generalized upskilling strategy is found to being applied in Switzerland at implementation level. On the contrary, the main emphasis is on quick access to employment, supported by vocational training mostly in the low skill segment. The paper concludes that the lack of an upskilling strategy is due to lack of coordination among policy areas and limited interest in employers. The paper is published in the Journal Social Policy and Administration.

Bonoli, G., & Otmani, I. (2023). Upskilling as integration policy: Making the most of refugees' human capital in a context of skill shortage. Social Policy & Administration, 57(1), 51-66. https://doi.org/10.1111/spol.12868

Furthermore, I have also contributed to the paper entitled *"Moral dilemmas in the practice of aspiration management: coping strategies among street-level bureaucrats providing integration services to recently arrived refugees"* co-written with Giuliano Bonoli (University of Lausanne) and Miika Kekki (University of Eastern Finland). The paper investigates the challenges resulting from the moral dilemmas experienced by street level bureaucrats during their implementation of integration policy. More specifically, we start with the assumption that caseworkers will experience a dissonance between the legitimate educational and occupational aspirations of refugees and migrants who may have some potential for education and professional success and the overall orientation of integration policy, which in most European countries highly prioritizes quick access to the labour market, often in the low skill segment of the labour market. Relying on two different case studies, one carried out in the Swiss canton of Vaud, and is based on interviews with caseworkers and the other one is conducted with finish career counsellors working in an integration training program for adult migrants, located in urban municipalities in southern Finland. Findings show that aspiration management constitutes an important part of street level bureaucrats' function when working with refugees and

migrants. Additionally, we also find that moral dilemmas are present in their work and on occasions generated by aspiration management. In dealing with these dilemmas, street level bureaucrats adopt two possible strategies: owning or disowning the policy and its principles.

Finally, a third paper I contributed to is entitled *"The Gender Employment Gap among Refugees and the Role of Employer Discrimination: Experimental Evidence from the German, Swedish and Austrian Labour Markets"* and is co-authored with Flavia Fossati (University of Lausanne), Carlo Knotz (University of Stavanger) and Fabienne Liechti (Ecoplan, formerly University of Lausanne). The paper investigates the extent to which employers' discrimination is a possible explanation of the employment gap between male and female refugees. Using data from an original survey experiment administered in 2019 to online panels of recruiters in three major refugee-receiving countries (Germany, Austria, and Sweden), findings question the relevance of discrimination as an explanation for the employment gap between male and female refugees. On the contrary, our results show that recruiters prefer female refugees over their male counterparts across different job types, all else equal. Nevertheless, we find evidence that motherhood results in disadvantage among refugees. The paper is published in the Journal of International Migration Review.

Fossati, F., Knotz, C., Liechti, F., & Otmani, I. (2022). The Gender Employment Gap among Refugees and the Role of Employer Discrimination: Experimental Evidence from the German, Swedish and Austrian Labor Markets. International Migration Review, 01979183221134274.

Significance of findings

Most research on refugee aspirations is conducted in Canada, Australia and the UK and conclude that refugees have high educational and occupational aspirations, especially high aspirations to go to university. While these studies give great insights about what refugees aspire to do and the hurdles, they encounter to fulfill those aspirations, it is not clear how those high aspirations were formed, and which role various policies played in shaping those aspirations. This is specially the case in the "policy dense" environment characterizing the global north. Additionally, we clearly need more research from

countries in continental Europe with a different educational system, such as Switzerland, known from its highly developed dual vocational training system. Findings from the three papers, especially Paper I and II bring to the fore the highly complex and ambiguous integration policies refugees in Switzerland have to grapple with and the impact this has on their educational trajectories, that lead to what is described in paper I as "low ambitions equilibrium". While much has been written about Swiss educational approaches and attitude towards migrants and the exclusionary potential of the dual vocational education system (Nennstiel 2022; Tjaden 2017), still very little is known about the educational pathways of refugees in Switzerland. Findings from this thesis contribute to fill in an important gap (paper I and II), by contributing to a more detailed picture about the hurdles and expectations refugees have to navigate in the Swiss education landscape, and the ways the three policies limit refugee educational and occupational choices in Swiss society. Moreover, this thesis sheds light on the different tensions accompanying the implementation of refugee integration policy (paper II) by relying not just on refugee perceptions but also the perspectives of street level bureaucrats (social workers). Finally, an important contribution of this thesis to the literature on refugee aspirations is its investigation of the extent to which differences in education systems and institutional settings between two countries, namely Switzerland and Canada, influence the nature of "integration offers" provided to refugees (paper III).

In more details, findings from paper I show the significant role policies (asylum policy, integration policy and education policy) play in shaping refugee aspirations and more importantly how they do this. I explain how the interplay of these three policies with the personal situation of refugees, creates a an environment which promotes the quickest and most accessible integration trajectories to reduce refugees' dependence on the welfare state on the one hand, and how their need of finding a sense of "normality" on the other hand, conditions refugees to fit into this narrative, a mechanism I call "low ambition equilibrium". While apparently a convenient option for the two parts in the short run, I expect that "low ambition equilibrium" results in a loss of human capital and the reinforcement of existing inequality in the long run. Results from this paper also show that Swiss integration policy relies on the VET system and uses it as an integration tool.

Moreover, from paper I, it becomes evident that SLB in charge of the implementation of integration policy, play an important role in influencing refugee aspirations and shaping how they perceived which integration path to pursue and which to abandon.

Therefore, by combining both the perspectives of refugees and SLB, paper II shows that the aim of the policy is to attain a double goal, integrating refugees fast but also sustainably. In doing so, SLB are assigned an important role to translate the main requirements of integration policy to refugees through promoting access to dual vocational training education and managing refugee plans and aspirations to make sure they are "realistic" and implementable. While fast and sustainable integration is an idea that present itself with various merits, it remains paradoxical on many levels. Indeed, findings show that the implementation of this policy is a source of tension to both social workers and refugees, as it overlooks the complex realities of both refugees and social workers themselves. While SLB still have room of manoeuvre in the process of policy implementation, exploring and support "unconventional" paths is costly in terms of time and money. On the side of refugees, they are aware of policy expectations and know that they either fit in those predefined integration trajectories or rely on themselves.

Paper I and II clearly show that refugee aspirations are channelled towards direct employment or vocational training. Following these results, the question arose whether similar dynamics would be observed in a country with less developed dual VET education such as Canada and whether access to tertiary education will be more pathed in that context.

Interestingly, paper III finds out that when it comes to refugee integration and regardless of the institutional setting, the focus of integration policy is similar. Indeed, in spite of important differences in human capital formation policies, in welfare state type and in asylum policy, caseworkers in both countries reacted overall in similar ways to the different profiles of refugees. This shows that when it comes to refugee integration and regardless of institutional settings, the two countries pursue very similar objectives in terms of quick labour market integration and orientation of refugees towards low skilled segments of the labour market that are experiencing labour shortage.

Finally, findings from the papers that part of this thesis as well as additional collabourative work show how various policies shape refugee aspirations and promote certain integration paths while hindering others. It also demonstrated how the focus of integration policy, on promoting quick access to the labour market, limits refugee educational and occupational choices. This thesis also shows how legal status limits refugees. Many studies are concerned with the impact permits have in reducing refugee chances to get access to the labour market. This thesis substantiates these results by showing how precarious permits create a situation where refugees lower their educational and occupational aspirations, just to secure a job with the hope of improving their legal status. As a result, legal status reinforces existing inequalities and hinders refugees' integration in the sense that it limits their educational and occupational choices and keeps them stuck in low skilled segments of the labour market.

To conclude, in the context of migration, having an asylum background limits refugee educational and occupational aspirations to predefined paths, promoted by policymakers as the fastest and most sustainable ways to integrate. While these paths may be the fastest and most sustainable ways to reduce social aid for refugees, it is questionable whether it is the fastest and most sustainable option for the inclusion of refugees into different spheres of society.

Policy implications

Due to incessant conflicts around the globe, people will continue to move across borders and search for more stable countries, offering both safety and decent life perspectives. Regardless of increasingly restrictive migration polices, it is unlikely that people will change their mind about attempting to "make it" in a place, they perceive offers them both safety and a decent life. While return assistance programs have been designed and implemented in many western countries, very few choose to return. Consequently, integration policies will continue to occupy a high and prominent position in the agenda of policymakers. Additionally, societies are becoming increasingly diverse and the need to constantly evaluate and rethink existing policies, including integration policy, is of utmost importance.

The findings of paper I, as well as other papers, to which I contributed, clearly

highlight the role policy plays in shaping refugee aspirations and their integration paths. These results underscore the need for adopting more inclusive policies which take into consideration refugees as a heterogeneous group with different levels of capitals and experiences. Overall and as all papers show, integration policies are concerned with short term goals, namely getting refugees off social assistance, by limiting their educational and occupational choices, instead of adopting a more open and inclusive approach to people's aspirations. As illustrated in paper II, this breeds various tensions to both refugees and those in charge of implementing these policies. In the long run, this may present the risk of keeping refugees stuck in the low-skill job segments and fostering existing inequalities. While there is a need for developing and implementing integration policies that consider the diversity of profiles among refugees, this is not realistic without creating strong and lasting collaborations with other institutions, which may not be directly in charge of the implementation of integration policy but play a crucial role in its success. In fact, the inclusion of refugees is not solely the task of integration policy. Actively and consistently creating strong and lasting collaborations with major institutions in host society, especially universities and employers, is an important condition for a more inclusive integration policy. That is why, one of the most challenging but also important tasks, for those directly in charge of integration policy, is to develop a strong communication strategy aimed at sensitizing universities and employers to the importance of elevating stigmas attached to refugee population and also to update them continuously about the latest changes concerning this population.

The findings also raise an important point that is of high policy relevance. Indeed, we cannot dissociate integration policy from migration policy as promoting integration and inclusive societies with restrictive migration policies in place is challenged with the realities of the field. As shown in this thesis, especially Paper I and II, restrictive migration policies keep refugees in a state of survival, in which they readily reconsider their ambitious aspirations to acquire a more stable legal status. This is illustrated in the "Low Ambition Equilibrium" dynamics, where refugees, especially those with humanitarian permits or temporary admission, seeking financial independence at any cost to improve their chances to stay in Switzerland and be able to reunite with their families. Such

permits keep many people in a disempowered state, where they readily adapt to the impediments of their situation by aligning their aspirations to the limitations of both their environment and personal circumstances. It is in fact paradoxical to implement integration policies and expect those with temporary admission permits to be included in society. In fact, this indicates that restrictive migration policy and integration policy don't work together but against each other as one focuses on restricting refugee rights while the other claims the importance of including them into society. Therefore, another recommendation of this thesis is to revise the existence of such a permit and the limitations attached to it, as the perspectives of sending people back to their countries of origin after building a life in Switzerland is hardly implemented, especially in a global context where many conflicts have been ongoing for decades without any resolution perspectives.

The connection between policies can also be extended to education policy, which is used by integration policy as an important tool to integrate refugees. However, while these two policies work together when it comes to one educational pathway (e.g., dual vocational training), this relation is not extended when it comes to other educational pathways such as tertiary education which is highlighted in the three papers. Overall, findings highlight the need for integration policy to be paradoxically more inclusive. They clearly show that the main concern of these policies is short term and economical. Adopting more inclusive policies means accepting that refugees are not one solid entity but a heterogeneous group with different aspirations and capitals. It also stresses the importance of the three policies (e.g., migration (asylum), integration and education) to work together by making all actors, especially universities and employers, actively involved in promoting inclusive and diverse societies, as this is not the sole responsibility of integration policy and those in charge of its implementation but of society. The adoption of more inclusive policies also implies that migration policy and integration policy are considered in conjunction, as the spillovers from restrictive migration policies will continue to impact on the outcomes of integration policy and any attempts of including refugees and capitalizing on their potential in such a context would remain limited. The table below summarizes these various interactions between the three policies.

Figure 6: Interactions between asylum, integration and migration policies

Asylum policy	Integration policy	Education policy
• Manages access to both integration offers and education pathways: Gatekeeper role • Works against promoting "sustainable" integration for precarious permits • Impacts on which types of aspirations are posisble	•Highly focused on labor market integartion and vocational education •Provides many tools to those interested in the above options •Limits educational options for ambitious refugees •Promotes aspirations more in line with integration offers	• More opportunities for those interested in vocational education • Limited offers and options for refugees: Universities as gatekeepers. • Tertiary education not promoted or even mentioned as an option for refugees

Source: by author

Finally, another policy implication of this thesis is related to social work with refugees. Paper II illustrates the different tensions and dilemmas faced by social workers in charge of the implementation of integration policy. While the introduction of the Swiss Integration Agenda (SIA) has reduced the number of clients they take in charge, it has nonetheless increased their administrative load. Therefore, it is important to reflect on the priorities of social work in the context of integration policy and its long-term implications. As it is configured now, it prioritizes more monitoring and tracking policy indicators, which doesn't leave sufficient time for counselling refugees. While these two different objectives require different approaches and can be challenging to reconcile the two, it is important for these organizations to constantly evaluate and deconstruct their work, in order for them not to contribute knowingly or unknowingly to reinforcing existing inequalities through managing refugee aspirations. Indeed, social work with refugees is challenging on many levels, as social workers do not only deal with a policy that is highly

politicized and constantly changing but also with a population that is, for the most part, culturally different and vulnerable on many levels. Hence, the necessity to critically review their practices and collaborate with professionals who understand better the cultural background and experiences of refugees (Palattiyil 2021; Nash et al 2005).

Limitations and future research

This thesis is not without limitations. As described above, it adopts a qualitative approach. While this is the prominent approach in research to study refugees and allows to have a deeper understanding of the different mechanisms in play, that end up influencing their aspirations and integration trajectories, it is hard to generalize these findings or claim causality. As explained before, adopting a mixed approach was considered at the initial stages of this thesis. However, the idea was soon abandoned when approaching the field as it was complicated to recruit enough refugees for a quantitative study due to limited human resources and language barriers, which require face to face interactions in order to make sure that participants had grasped the meanings behind each question. Additionally, for work with refugees, face to face interactions are important to establish a foundation of trust, which is more complicated to do using quantitative methods.

One of the main contributions of this thesis is the introduction of the concept of "low ambition equilibrium". While it is based on an interesting mechanism, however refugee participants in this study have been living in Switzerland for less than ten years, it is therefore unclear whether the effects of this "low ambition equilibrium" would subside once they reach financial independence and therefore pursue more ambitious aspirations as they would be less pressure on them to find a job. Also, as I conceptualize aspirations to be dynamic and reflecting both individuals' goals and those of their environment. Acquiring more resources and "stability" may allow them to be less "monitored" and therefore escape the effects of this "low ambition equilibrium". Unfortunately, my current data doesn't allow me to verify this. Consequently, a new avenue for future research is to study the aspirations of those refugees who have been living in the host country for longer than 10 years and who have had a stable legal and financial situation for a while. This is also promising to implement, adopting a longitudinal approach, which highly relevant,

especially when approaching aspirations from a dynamic perspective.

Additionally, while I adopted a comparative approach in Paper III, it was not possible for me to do so for paper I and II, as I could only conduct interview with social workers in Canada. Due to limited field work time in Québec (3 months), I wasn't able to recruit enough refugees for a comparative study. Therefore, the perspectives of refugees are missing from the Canadian case. For future research it would be interesting to study the "Low ambition Equilibrium", by comparing not just social workers strategies but also refugee experiences from both Switzerland and Canada to see whether the mechanism described by the "Low ambition Equilibrium" is observed in Canada as well.

Also, it would be interesting for future research on migrant's aspirations to investigate whether a "low ambition Equilibrium" is observed in the case of other migrants' groups who, supposedly, had planned their mobility, such as students and workers. As these groups don't have access to social assistance, and therefore are less monitored by policies such as integration policies, it is interesting to study whether they also experience similar dynamics as the ones described in the "low ambition equilibrium"? Is their experience of integration different from that of refugees, as they are not the main "target" of integration policy? At least this is the case in Switzerland, where the Swiss Integration Agenda (SIA) doesn't mention or refer to these groups. What impact would this have on their educational and occupational aspirations? To what extent they need to reconsider their aspirations when compared to refugees? What do the differences between these two migrant groups tell us about integration policy in the global north?

Finally, what we learn from Paper II and III is that the permeability of education system is used as a main argument by social workers to justify their lack of support to refugees' plans to go to university. In their words *"in Switzerland, we can do many things later as well, so why not after she is financially independent"* or "*I also tell them that Switzerland has a training system that is extremely dense and very mobile, which is not set in stone. I often emphasize that"*. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to verify the extent to which the education system in countries with dual VET system like Switzerland provide refugees access to universities after completing a VET diploma. Therefore, this can be a promising avenue for future research. As mentioned earlier, while much has been written

about factors influencing migrants' preferences for VET or higher education (e.g., Bolli and Rageth 2022; Abrassart et al 2017) and the exclusionary potential of dual vocational education system (e.g., Nennstiel 2022; Tjaden 2017), still very little is known about the educational pathways of refugees in Switzerland. Therefore, investigating the permeability of education system in the context of refugee access to higher education is an important avenue for future research, as it will further substantiate the findings of this thesis and be the basis to developing more inclusive education policies.

Finally, one of the limitations of this thesis is related to gender, as most participants are male. In fact, recruiting women refugees was more challenging as they are less accessible and willing to participate in this type of research. When it comes to the qualitative vignettes used in paper III, we opted for only male refugee profiles because otherwise, it would require an ad hoc treatment that could be rather complex, though certainly very interesting. Nevertheless, this remains a limitation of this thesis, as the gender dimension is extremely important. Exploring this dimension in future research will add great insights to the results of this thesis.

Concluding remarks and outlook

While this thesis cannot claim a causal relationship between the three policies (asylum, integration, and education) and refugee educational and occupational aspirations, it does improve our understanding of the mechanisms shaping refugee aspirations and their integration paths. To do so, I first studied how refugees' perceived, the influence the three policies had on their aspirations and integration paths (paper I), then I investigated the tensions experienced by refugees and social workers during the implementation of integration policy (paper II), to finally, I include a comparative dimension in this study to explore whether institutional difference between two countries with different educational systems (Canada and Switzerland) made a difference in the support refugees received from social workers (paper III).

Overall, the results show that the objectives of integration policy are more economical and less concerned with a sustainable inclusion of refugees in society or reducing inequalities. As a result, aspirations are channelled towards pre-determined integration paths, promoted as the fastest and most sustainable options for refugees to gain financial

independence and stabilize their situations. Due to their personal circumstances and desire to seek a sense of normality where they are reunited with their families and have a more secure financial and legal situation, they adapt their aspirations and plans to what is expected from them (paper I and II). Further, I also show that various tensions govern social work with refugees due to both the traditional challenges attached to social work with refugees and the paradoxical, often unrealistic expectations attached to the objectives of integrating refugees fast and sustainably. In general, due to increased pressure and limited resources, social workers find it easier to "manage" the aspirations of refugees and adapt them to the requirements of integration programs, as this is perceived to be the most beneficial solution to all parties involved, at least in the short run (paper II). When it comes to refugee integration, differences in human capital regime doesn't seem to make a big difference in how they are counselled. This suggests that concerns attached to refugee integration are quite similar in both countries (paper III).

Finally, the advantage of researching integration through the lens of aspirations is that it captures the depths of the various mechanisms in place and that had influenced refugees' choices in pursing certain integration trajectories over others. Future research on migrants of all status including refugees would highly benefit from a longitudinal approach as it captures more closely the dynamic aspect of aspirations and hence would provide us with more nuanced interpretations of the results. Also, further research on the permeability of educational institutions in a country with collective skill formation system is highly relevant in a context, where refugee access to education is limited to few alternatives.

References

Abrassart, A., Busemeyer, M. R., Cattaneo, M. A., & Wolter, S. C. (2017). Do migrants prefer academic to vocational education? The role of rational factors vs. social status considerations in the formation of attitudes toward a particular type of education in Switzerland. Economics of Education Working Paper Series, 128.

Ager, A., & Strang, A. (2004). The Experience of Integration: A qualitative study of refugee integration in the local communities of Pollockshaws and Islington. Research Development and Statistics Directorate, Home Office.

Ager, A., & Strang, A. (2008). Understanding integration: A conceptual framework. Journal of refugee studies, 21(2), 166-191.

Arendt, J. N. (2020). Labour market effects of a work-first policy for refugees. Journal of Population Economics, 1-28.

Asile.ch. (2021). Évolution des demandes d'asile. Retrieved from https://asile.ch/prejuge/invasion/evolution-des-demandes-dasile/

Asile.ch. (2021). Procèdure, statut et permis. Retrieved from https://asile.ch/procedure-dasile-permis-et-droits/permis/

Asile.ch. (2022). Permis S | Vers une meilleure protection pour tou·tes ? retrieved from https://asile.ch/2022/04/04/permis-s-vers-une-meilleure-protection-provisoire-pour-tou%C2%B7tes/#:~:text=La%20protection%20provisoire%2C%20ou%20permis,la%20guerre%20en%20ex%2DYougoslavie.

Auer, D. (2018). Language roulette–the effect of random placement on refugees' labour market integration. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 44(3), 341-362.

Bakker, L., Dagevos, J., & Engbersen, G. (2014). The importance of resources and security in the socio-economic integration of refugees. A study on the impact of length of stay in asylum accommodation and residence status on socio-economic integration for the four largest refugee groups in the Netherlands. Journal of International Migration and Integration, 15, 431-448.

Barone, C. (2006). Cultural capital, ambition and the explanation of inequalities in learning outcomes: A comparative analysis. Sociology, 40(6), 1039-1058.

Berkowitz, Edward (1987). Disabled Policy: Americas Programs for the Handicapped. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Berthold, S. Megan, and Kathryn R. Libal, (2019). Supporting refugees and asylum seekers in an era of backlash. Refugees and asylum seekers: Interdisciplinary and comparative perspectives, 1-14.

Bertrand, A.L. (2017). Réfugiés en Suisse: trajectoires d'asile et intégration professionnelle. PhD diss. Retrieved from https://access.archive-

ouverte.unige.ch/access/metadata/2f1102a9-97e5-4e52-8c41-88ee409ee262/download.

Bevelander, P., & Pendakur, R. (2014). The labour market integration of refugee and family reunion immigrants: A comparison of outcomes in Canada and Sweden. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 40(5), 689-709.

Birger, Lior and Yochay Nadan (2021). Social workers and refugee service users (re) constructing their relationships in a hostile political climate. Journal of Social Work.

Birger, Lior, Yochay Nadan, and Mimi Ajzenstadt (2020). Politicisation processes in everyday practice with refugees: The experiences of Israeli and German social workers. European Journal of Social Work, 23(6), 1019-1031.

Bitzi, B., & Landolt, S. (2017). Unaccompanied minor asylum seekers–processes of subject formation and feelings of belonging in the context of educational experiences in Switzerland. Geographica Helvetica, 72(2), 217-226.

Blau, P. M., and Duncan, O. D. (1967). The American occupational structure

Boccagni, P. (2017). Aspirations and the subjective future of migration: Comparing views and desires of the "time ahead" through the narratives of immigrant domestic workers. Comparative Migration Studies, 5(1), 1-18.

Bodenman, P. S. (1980). The Educational System of Switzerland. Education around the World.

Bohon, S. A., Johnson, M. K., & Gorman, B. K. (2006). College aspirations and expectations among Latino adolescents in the United States. Social problems 53(2): 207-225.

Bolli, T., & Rageth, L. (2022). Does Time Since Arrival have an Effect on Immigrants' Preferences for Vocational Education and Training Programs in Switzerland? International Migration Review, 01979183221139137.

Bonet, S. W. (2018). So Where are the Promises of This America? Where is the democracy and where are the human rights?: Refugee youth, citizenship education, and exclusion from public schooling'. Curriculum Inquiry 48(1): 53-69.

Borselli, M., & van Meijl, T. (2021). Linking migration aspirations to integration prospects: the experience of Syrian refugees in Sweden'. Journal of Refugee Studies 34(1): 579-595.

Borselli, Marco, and Toon van Meijl (2021). Linking migration aspirations to integration prospects: the experience of Syrian refugees in Sweden. Journal of Refugee Studies 34(1): 579-595.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. Qualitative research in psychology 3(2): 77-101.

Brell C, Dustmann C and Preston I. (2020). The Labour Market Integration of Refugee Migrants in High-Income Countries. Journal of Economic Perspectives 34: 94-121.

Brell, Courtney, Christian Dustmann, and Ian Preston (2020). The Labour Market Integration of Refugee Migrants in High-Income Countries. Journal of Economic Perspectives 34: 94-121.

Caloz-Tschopp, M.-C. (1982). Le Tamis helvétique : des réfugiés politiques aux nouveaux réfugiés. Lausanne : Editions d'en bas.

Cangia, F., Davoine, E., & Tashtish, S. (2021). (Im) mobilities, waiting and professional aspirations: The career lives of highly skilled Syrian refugees in Switzerland. Geoforum, 125, 57-65.

Chetail, V., & Bauloz, C. (2011). The European Union and the challenges of forced migration: from economic crisis to protection crisis? European University Institute Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies EU-US Immigration Systems Research Paper, (2011/07).

Cohen, Nissim (2018). How Culture Affects Street-Level Bureaucrats' Bending the Rules in the Context of Informal Payments for Health Care: The Israeli Case. The American Review of Public Administration 48 (2): 175–187.

Cohen, Nissim, and Uri Hertz (2020). Street-Level Bureaucrats' Social Value Orientation On and Off Duty. Public Administration Review 80 (3): 442–453

Combet, B., & Oesch, D. (2021). The social-origin gap in university graduation by

gender and immigrant status: a cohort analysis for Switzerland. Longitudinal and life course studies, 12(2), 119-146.

Dahinden, J. (2016). A plea for the 'de-migranticization'of research on migration and integration. Ethnic and Racial Studies, 39(13), 2207-2225.

Davidovitz, Maayan, and Nissim Cohen (2020). Playing defence: The impact of trust on the coping mechanisms of street-level bureaucrats. Public Management Review, 1-22.

Davies, M., and Kandel, D. B. (1981). 'Parental and peer influences on adolescents' educational plans: Some further evidence'. American journal of Sociology 87(2): 363-387.

Derthick, Martha (1990). Agency under Stress: The Social Security Administration in American Government. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.

Dryden-Peterson, S. (2017). Refugee education: Education for an unknowable future. Curriculum Inquiry, 47(1), 14-24.

Enticott, J. C., Shawyer, F., Vasi, S., Buck, K., Cheng, I. H., Russell, G., ... & Meadows, G. (2017). A systematic review of studies with a representative sample of refugees and asylum seekers living in the community for participation in mental health research. BMC medical research methodology, 17(1), 1-16.

Etat de Genève (GE) (2021). L'Agenda Intégration Suisse. Retrieved June 28, 2021, from https://www.ge.ch/dossier/geneve-soutient-integration-etrangers/agenda-integration-suisse/agenda-integration-suisse-ais

Etat de Vaud (2024). Prolongation d'apprentissage pour l'intégration. Retrieved January 15, 2024, from https://www.vd.ch/themes/formation/formation-professionnelle/prolongation-dapprentissage-pour-lintegration-pai

Favell, A. (2019). Integration: twelve propositions after Schinkel. Comparative Migration Studies, 7(1), 1-10.

Felouzis, G., & Charmillot, S. (2013). School tracking and educational inequality: A comparison of 12 education systems in Switzerland. Comparative Education, 49(2), 181-205.

Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E., Loescher, G., Long, K., & Sigona, N. (Eds.). (2014). The Oxford handbook of refugee and forced migration studies. OUP Oxford.

Fordham, S., and Ogbu, J. U. (1986). Black students' school success: Coping with the burden of acting white. The urban review 18(3): 176-206.

Frank, J. D. (1941). Recent studies of the level of aspiration. Psychological Bulletin, 38(4), 218.

Glorius, B., & Doomernik, J. (2020). Geographies of asylum in Europe and the role of European localities (p. 268). Springer Nature.

Grüttner, M., Schröder, S., Berg, J., & Otto, C. (2018). Refugees on Their Way to German Higher Education: A Capabilities and Engagements Perspective on Aspirations, Challenges and Support. Global Education Review 5(4): 115-135.

Guide social. (n.d). Droit d'asile et statut de réfugiés. https://www.guidesocial.ch/recherche/fiche/generatepdfAll/90

Hainmueller, J., Hangartner, D., & Lawrence, D. (2016). When lives are put on hold: Lengthy asylum processes decrease employment among refugees. Science advances, 2(8), e1600432.

Haller, A. O. (1968). On the concept of aspiration. Rural sociology 33(4): 484-487.

Haller, A. O., and Portes, A. (1973). Status attainment processes. Sociology of education: 51-91.

Hamburger, A., Hancheva, C., Özcürümez, S., Scher, C., Stankovic, B., and Tutnjevic, S. (Eds.). (2018). Forced Migration and Social Trauma: Interdisciplinary Perspectives from Psychoanalysis, Psychology, Sociology and Politics. Routledge.

Hart, C. S. (2016). How do aspirations matter? Journal of human development and capabilities, 17(3), 324-341.

Hebbani, A., & Khawaja, N. G. (2019). Employment aspirations of former refugees settled in Australia: A mixed methods study. Journal of International Migration and Integration, 20(3), 907-924.

Heckman, J. J. (2006). Skill formation and the economics of investing in disadvantaged children. Science, 312(5782), 1900-1902.

Hewitt, M. (1993). Social Movements and Social Need: Problems with Postmodern Political Theory. Critical Social Policy 37: 52-74.

Hinger, S., & Schweitzer, R. (2020). Politics of (dis) integration (p. 217). Springer Nature.

Hugman, R. (2012). Culture, values and ethics in social work: Embracing diversity. Routledge.

Hynie, M. (2018). Refugee integration: Research and policy. Peace and Conflict. Journal of Peace Psychology 24(3): 265.

Iversen, T., & Stephens, J. (2008). Partisan politics, the welfare state, and three worlds of human capital formation. Comparative political studies, 41(April), 600-637.

Jackson, M. (Ed.). (2013). Determined to succeed? performance versus choice in educational attainment. Stanford University Press.

Kao, G., and Tienda, M. (1998). Educational aspirations of minority youth." American journal of education 106(3): 349-384.

Keiser, Lael R (2010). Understanding Street-Level Bureaucrats' Decision Making: Determining Eligibility in the Social Security Disability Program. Public Administration Review 70 (2): 247–257.

Khan, Parves (2000). Asylum-seekers in the UK: implications for social service involvement. Social Work & Social Sciences Review, 8(2), 116-129.

KIP-PIC. (N.d). L'intégration, une tâche commune. retrieved from https://www.kip-pic.ch/fr/pic/

Konle-Seidl, R. (2018). Integration of refugees in Austria, Germany and Sweden: Comparative analysis. Retrieved from European Parliament, Policy Department A: Economic and Scientific Policy website: http://www. europarl. europa. eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/614200/IPOL_STU (2018) 614200_EN. pdf.

Labovitz, E. M. (1975). Race, SES contexts and fulfillment of college aspirations. Sociological Quarterly 16(2): 241-249.

Labovitz, Eugene. M (1975). Race, SES contexts and fulfillment of college aspirations. Sociological Quarterly, 16(2), 241-249.

Lems, A. (2020). Being inside out: the slippery slope between inclusion and exclusion in a Swiss educational project for unaccompanied refugee youth. Journal of ethnic and migration studies, 46(2), 405-422.

Lewin, K., Dembo, T., Festinger, L., & Sears, P. S. (1944). Level of aspiration.

Ligabue, S. (2018). Forced migration and refugees: Trauma experience and participatory care. Transactional Analysis Journal 48(2): 166-180.

Lipsky, Michael (1980). Street-Level Bureaucracy. Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Luebben, S. (2003). Testimony work with Bosnian refugees: living in legal limbo. British Journal of Guidance &Counselling, 31(4), 393-402.

Marbach, M., Hainmueller, J., & Hangartner, D. (2018). The long-term impact of employment bans on the economic integration of refugees. Science advances, 4(9), eaap9519.

May, Peter J., and Søren C. Winter (2009). Politicians, managers, and street-level bureaucrats: Influences on policy implementation. Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 19(3), 453-476.

Maynard-Moody, Steven Williams, and Michael Craig Musheno (2003). Cops, teachers, counselors: Stories from the front lines of public service. University of Michigan Press.

Meyers, Marcia K., and Vibeke Lehmann Nielsen (2007). Street-level bureaucrats and the implementation of public policy. The handbook of public administration, 153-163.

Morrice, L., Tip, L. K., Brown, R., and Collyer, M. (2020). 'Resettled refugee youth and education: aspiration and reality'. Journal of Youth Studies 23(3): 388-405.

Mozetič, K. (2021). 'Cartographers of their futures: the formation of occupational aspirations of highly educated refugees in Malmö and Munich'. International Migration 59(4): 127-140.

Mozetič, K. (2022). 'A help or hindrance? Highly educated refugees' perceptions of the role of civic integration programmes in accessing the labour market in Oslo, Malmö and Munich'. Comparative Migration Studies 10(1): 1-18.

Mulvey, G. (2015). 'Refugee integration policy: the effects of UK policy-making on refugees in Scotland'. Journal of Social Policy 44(2): 357-375.

Nash, Mary (2005) 'Responding to Settlement Needs: Migrants and Refugees and Community Development', in M. Nash, R. Munford and K. O'Donoghue, Social Work Theories in Action. London, Philadelphia, PA: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Nash, Mary, John Wong, and Andrew Trlin (2006). Civic and social integration: A new field of social work practice with immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. International Social Work, 49(3), 345–363.

Nennstiel, R. (2022). Explaining ethnic differences in access to VET in German-speaking Switzerland: the effects of application behavior and resources. Zeitschrift für Soziologie, 50(6), 396-414.

Ngo-Metzger, Q., Kaplan, S. H., Sorkin, D. H., Clarridge, B. R., & Phillips, R. S. (2004). Surveying minorities with limited-English proficiency: does data collection method affect data quality among Asian Americans? Medical Care, 42(9), 893–900.

Ngo-Metzger, Q., Kaplan, S. H., Sorkin, D. H., Clarridge, B. R., & Phillips, R. S. (2004). Surveying minorities with limited-English proficiency: does data collection method affect data quality among Asian Americans? Medical Care, 42(9), 893–900.

Ogbu, J. U. (1991). 'Minority coping responses and school experience'. The Journal of Psychohistory 18(4): 433.

Organisation suisse d'aide aux réfugiés (OSAR). (n.d). 'Histoire'. Retrieved from https://www.osar.ch/a-notre-sujet/histoire#:~:text=En%201946%2F47%2C%20le%20SFZ,ainsi%20un%20pays%20

d'accueil

Orientation (2024). Professions CFC et AFP. Retrieved January 15, 2024 from https://www.orientation.ch/dyn/show/1973

Palattiyil, G., Sidhva, D., Seraphia Derr, A., & Macgowan, M. (2022). Global trends in forced migration: Policy, practice and research imperatives for social work. International Social Work, 65(6), 1111-1129.

Parini, L. et M. Gianni (2005). Enjeux et modifications de la politique d'asile en suisse de 1956 à nos jours. In H. Mahnig (Ed.), Histoire de la politique de migration, d'asile et d'intégration en Suisse depuis 1948, pp. 189–252. Zurich : Springer.

Phillimore, Jenny (2021). 'Refugee-integration-opportunity structures: shifting the focus from refugees to context'. Journal of Refugee Studies 34(2): 1946-1966.

Piętka-Nykaza, E. (2015). 'I want to do anything which is decent and relates to my profession: refugee doctors' and teachers' strategies of re-entering their professions in the UK'. Journal of Refugee Studies 28(4): 523-543.

Piguet, E. (2009). L'immigration en Suisse : Soixante ans d'entrouverture'. Le savoir suisse. Lausanne : Presses polytechniques et universitaires romandes.

Portes, A., McLeod Jr, S. A., & Parker, R. N. (1978). Immigrant aspirations. Sociology of Education, 241-260.

Portes, A., Vickstrom, E., Haller, W. J., & Aparicio, R. (2013). Dreaming in Spain: parental determinants of immigrant children's ambition. Ethnic and Racial Studies, 36(4), 557-589.

Potocky, Miriam, and Mitra Naseh (2020). Best practices for social work with refugees and

Scandone, B. (2018). Re-thinking aspirations through habitus and capital: The experiences of British-born Bangladeshi women in higher education. Ethnicities, 18(4), 518-540.

Schinkel, W. (2018). Against 'immigrant integration': For an end to neocolonial

knowledge production. Comparative migration studies, 6(1), 1-17.

Schneider, L. (2018). 'Access and aspirations: Syrian refugees' experiences of entering higher education in Germany'. Research in Comparative and International Education 13(3): 457-478.

Schnell, P., & Fibbi, R. (2016). Getting ahead: Educational and occupational trajectories of the 'new'second-generation in Switzerland. Journal of International Migration and Integration, 17, 1085-1107.

Schnell, P., & Fibbi, R. (2016). Unequal Pathways. School-to-Work Trajectories for Children of Turkish and Western-Balkan Origin in Switzerland and Austria. Swiss Journal of Sociology, 42(2), 266-290.

Sewell, W. H. (1971). 'Inequality of opportunity for higher education'. American Sociological Review 36(5): 793-809.

Sewell, W. H., and Hauser, R. M. (1972). 'Causes and consequences of higher education: Models of the status attainment process'. American Journal of Agricultural Economics 54(5): 851-861.

Sewell, W. H., and Shah, V. P. (1968). 'Parents' education and children's educational aspirations and achievements'. American sociological review: 191-209.

Sewell, W. H., and Shah, V. P. (1968). 'Social class, parental encouragement, and educational aspirations'. American journal of Sociology 73(5): 559-572.

Sewell, W. H., Haller, A. O., and Ohlendorf, G. W. (1970). 'The educational and early occupational status attainment process: Replication and revision'. American sociological review: 1014-1027.

Shaghaghi, A., Bhopal, R. S., & Sheikh, A. (2011). Approaches to recruiting 'hard-to-reach'populations into research: a review of the literature. Health promotion perspectives, 1(2), 86.

Shakya, Y. B., Guruge, S., Hynie, M., Akbari, A., Malik, M., Htoo, S., ... and Alley, S. (2010). Aspirations for higher education among newcomer refugee youth in Toronto: Expectations, challenges, and strategies. Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees 27(2):

65-78.

Sherwood Jr, R. A. (1989). 'A Conceptual Framework for the Study of Aspirations'. Research in Rural Education 6(2): 61-66.

Sontag, K. (2018). Highly skilled asylum seekers: Case studies of refugee students at a Swiss university. Migration letters, 15(4), 533-544.

Special Issue Editors: Birgit Glorius and Jeroen Doomernik, Doomernik, J., & Glorius, B. (2016). Refugee migration and local demarcations: New insight into European localities. Journal of Refugee Studies, 29(4), 429-439.

State secretariat for migration (SEM). (2023). 'Archives dès 1994'. Retrieved from https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/fr/home/publiservice/statistik/asylstatistik/archiv.html

State secretariat for migration (SEM). (2023). Free Movement of Persons Switzerland – EU/EFTA. Retrieved January 23, 2014 from https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/themen/fza_schweiz-eu-efta.html

State secretariat for migration (SEM). (2023). Permit S (people in need of protection). Retrieved January 23, 2014 from https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/themen/aufenthalt/nicht_eu_efta/ausweis_s__schutzbeduerftige.html

State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) (2019). Swiss Education System. Retrieved January 15, 2024 from https://www.sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/en/home/bildung/swiss-education-area/das-duale-system.html

Statistiques Vaud. (2023). Intégration. Retrieved from https://publication.vd.ch/publications/dgaic/aide-memoire/administration-communale/integration

Stevenson, J., & Willott, J. (2007). 'The aspiration and access to higher education of teenage refugees in the UK'. Compare 37(5): 671-687.

Stevenson, Jacqueline, and John Willott (2007). 'The aspiration and access to higher education of teenage refugees in the UK'. Compare 37(5): 671-687.

St–Hilaire, A. (2002). The social adaptation of children of Mexican immigrants: Educational aspirations beyond junior high school. Social science quarterly, 83(4), 1026-1043.

Sue, S., & Okazaki, S. (1990). Asian-American educational achievements: A phenomenon in search of an explanation. American psychologist 5(8): 913.

Swiss confederation. (2019). Switzerland – land of immigration. Retrieved from https://www.bar.admin.ch/bar/en/home/research/research-tips/topics/auf-den-spuren-von-aus--und-einwanderern/einwandererland-schweiz.html#:~:text=After%201947%2C%20companies%20in%20Switzerland,industry%20depended%20on%20these%20workers

Swiss confederation. (2022). Die grösste Flüchtlingswelle seit Jahrzehnten. Retrieved from https://migration.swiss/migrationsbericht-2022/asyl-und-schutzstatus-s/asylstatistik-2022

Swiss confederation. (2024). Federal Council makes no changes to 2024 quotas for third countries. Retrieved from https://www.admin.ch/gov/en/start/documentation/media-releases.msg-id-99039.html

Swissinfo. (2017). Switzerland, land of European immigration. Retrieved from https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/willkommen-bienvenue_switzerland-land-of-european-immigration/42941390#:~:text=Switzerland%20has%20one%20of%20the,years%20of%20immigration%20to%20Switzerland

Tjaden, J. D. (2017). Migrant background and access to vocational education in Germany: self-selection, discrimination, or both?. Zeitschrift für Soziologie, 46(2), 107-123.

Tjaden, J. D., & Scharenberg, K. (2017). Ethnic choice effects at the transition into upper-secondary education in Switzerland. Acta Sociologica, 60(4), 309-324.

Tlhabano, K. N., & Schweitzer, R. (2007). A qualitative study of the career aspirations of resettled young Sudanese and Somali refugees. Journal of Psychology in Africa, 17(1-

2), 13-21.

Tourangeau, R., Edwards, B., Johnson, T. P., Bates, N., & Wolter, K. M. (Eds.). (2014). Hard-tosurvey populations. Cambridge University Press.

Trappenburg, M., Kampen, T., & Tonkens, E. (2022). Street-level bureaucrats in a catch-all bureaucracy. Administration & Society, 54(10), 2021-2047.

Trebbels, M. (2015). The transition at the end of compulsory full-time education: Educational and future career aspirations of native and migrant students. Springer-Verlag: 37-45.

Udayar, S., Fedrigo, L., Durante, F., Clot-Siegrist, E., & Masdonati, J. (2021). Labour market integration of young refugees and asylum seekers: A look at perceived barriers and resources. British Journal of Guidance & Counselling, 49(2), 287-303.

Ullmann, E., Barthel, A., Taché, S., Bornstein, A., Licinio, J., & Bornstein, S. R. (2015). Emotional and psychological trauma in refugees arriving in Germany in 2015. Molecular Psychiatry 20(12): 1483-1484.

Valenta, M., & Bunar, N. (2010). State assisted integration: Refugee integration policies in Scandinavian welfare states: The Swedish and Norwegian experience. Journal of refugee studies 23(4): 463-483.

Valtonen, Kathleen (2001). Immigrant integration in the welfare state: Social work's growing arena. European Journal of Social Work, 4(3), 247–262

Van Heelsum, A. (2017). 'Aspirations and frustrations: experiences of recent refugees in the Netherlands'. Ethnic and Racial Studies 40(13): 2137-2150.

Van Raemdonck, Laura, Noel Clycq, and Rilke Mahieu (2021). Using the capability approach in social work with unaccompanied young adult refugees. Journal of Social Work

Wahoush, E. O. (2009). Reaching a hard-to-reach population such as asylum seekers and resettled refugees in Canada. Bulletin of the World Health Organization, 87, 568-568.

Walther, M. (2009). 'Ils étaient une fois des réfugiés. Genève : Slatkine.

Weatherley R., Lipsky M. (1977). Street-level bureaucrats and institutional innovation: Implementing special-education reform. Harvard educational review, 47(2), 171–197.

Williams, L. (2006). Social networks of refugees in the United Kingdom: tradition, tactics and new community spaces. Journal of ethnic and migration studies, 32(5), 865-879.

Willott, J., & Stevenson, J. (2013). 'Attitudes to employment of professionally qualified refugees in the United Kingdom'. International Migration 51(5): 120-132.

Wilson, D (2001) Consulting Hard to Reach Groups, Local Authorities Research & Intelligence Association (LARIA) seminar, 15 November.

Winter, Søren C (2002). Explaining street-level bureaucratic behavior in social and regulatory policies. In annual meeting of the American Political Science Association in Boston (Vol. 29).

Zacka, B. (2017). When the state meets the street: Public service and moral agency. Harvard university press.

UNIL | Université de Lausanne

Paper I: Towards a "low ambition equilibrium": managing refugee aspirations during the integration process in Switzerland

Ihssane Otmani[1]

Paper published in the Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies (JEMS)

[1]Swiss Graduate School of Public Administration (IDHEAP), University of Lausanne

Acknowledgements: I immensely thank Giuliano Bonoli for his precious comments and guidance which were of tremendous help in the processes of data collection, data analysis and writing of this paper. I am also grateful to the comments and constant support I received from the members of the GOVPET project namely, Justin J.W. Powell, Patrick Emmenegger, Marius R. Busemeyer, Cathie Jo Martin, Lina Seitzl and Annatina Aerne. I am also grateful to the members of the NCCR on the move namely, Flavia Fossati and Katrin Sontag for their feedbacks and comments on the paper.

Disclosure statement: No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author (s)

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2023.2235902

UNIL | Université de Lausanne

Abstract

This article explores the role of policy in influencing refugee educational and occupational aspirations and how this translates into promoting or hindering certain integration paths. 29 refugees in the canton of Vaud in Switzerland were interviewed and asked about their educational and occupational aspirations. Three policies were identified as having an important influence on their aspirations formation namely, asylum policy, integration policy in addition to university access and degree recognition policy. Findings show that the three policies combined contribute to creating what I refer to as 'Low Ambition Equilibrium'. This means that on one hand these policies promote the quickest and most accessible integration paths to reduce refugees' dependence on the welfare state. On the other hand, the experience of forced migration combined with a 'policy-dense' environment create a lot of uncertainty in the life of refugees and the urgency to find a lost 'normality' at the expense of their aspirations.

Keywords: Refugee integration, Aspirations, Integration policy, Access to education, Labour market integration

Introduction

In this article, I examine the role of public policies in shaping refugees' integration paths through the lens of aspirations. By identifying which policies refugees perceived to have had most influence on the formation of their aspirations and analysing how they do so, I was able to capture in more depth the integration paths that are promoted and the ones that were hindered. In this paper, I use integration paths to mean educational and occupational trajectories in host society.

The focus on the link between aspirations and policy to understand the integration trajectories of refugees is motivated by three reasons. First, aspirations are an important determinant of achievement. Early research on aspiration formation highlighted the important role this process plays as a determinant of status attainment and in the reproduction of social inequalities (see e.g., Blau and Duncan 1967; Sewell and Shah 1968). More recently, aspiration formation research has highlighted the obstacles and difficulties that disadvantaged groups, such as ethnic minorities, face in planning their future and in developing ambitious and realistic aspirations (e.g., Kao and Tienda 1998). Even though this literature didn't study refugees and doesn't directly relate aspirations to policy, it clearly highlights the role social milieu plays in shaping aspirations. In the case of refugees this is particularly interesting to explore because of the circumstances of their mobility which leads me to the second motivation to conduct this study. In fact, forced migration is very likely to constitute a major disruption in the life course of refugees, which may require a profound redefinition of objectives in potentially all realms of life. Additionally, unlike other social groups, refugees live in a "policy-dense" environment. By this, I mean that they are confronted with a range of policies that are likely to shape their aspirations. This includes asylum policy, which determines the right to remain, and the conditions attached to it, integration policy with its various programs, as well as standard policies such as education, social policy, and so forth. Building on this last point, the third reason for developing this study is motivated by addressing the limitations or balancing the current debate on refugee integration, which is characterized by its high focus on refugee characteristics to explain integration outcomes. Mulvey (2015) stresses that the focus on human capital alone doesn't give us a general picture of what impacts

the life of refugees. The author argues that policy should be given more attention to understand how refugee integration is shaped. Recently, Phillimore (2021) highlights the importance for migration scholars to shift the focus from refugee characteristics to studying how host societies opportunity structures shape their integration trajectories. Drawing from this perspective, I contend that studying how policy takers, in this case refugees, perceive the influence public policies had on the formation of their current educational and occupational aspirations would help gain in-depth understanding of their integration trajectories and hence contribute to fill in this gap.

To enhance insights into this topic, I interviewed 29 refugees who arrived in Switzerland between 2014 and 2018. I asked them about their educational and occupational aspirations and their overall life satisfaction in Switzerland. Using an inductive approach, I paid special attention to which policies influenced their aspirations and how. By investigating these aspirations, it was possible to determine how they perceived these policies influenced their aspirations and in which way it ended up shaping their integration paths.

The main conclusion is that on one hand three policies combined namely (1) asylum policy, here I refer to types of permit and the influence of asylum procedure length; (2) integration policy with a focus on its programs and those in charge of their implementations, mainly caseworkers and teachers; (3) the policy that determines access requirements to university and degree recognition, contribute into creating a situation where high aspirations are discouraged as the overall system requirement is geared towards promoting integration paths that translate quicker into employment. On the other hand, this colluded with the desire of many refugees to quickly attain financial independence, which translates into generating a "Low Ambition Equilibrium". This may result in a significant loss of potential human capital, especially for those with high potential.

The article begins with a literature review on aspirations' formation, with a focus on its interplay with refugee integration. Then, I briefly discuss the implementation of the three policies in Switzerland, before presenting the methodology and results to finally discuss and conclude.

Refugee Integration Through the Lens of Aspirations

The process of aspiration formation plays an important role in the reproduction of social inequalities (see e.g., Blau and Duncan 1967; Sewell and Shah 1968; Halle 1968). Various factors are found to influence this process, including socioeconomic status and family background (e.g., Haller and Portes 1969; Sewell and Hauser 1972; Sewell 1971), significant others (e.g., Haller and Portes 1973; Davies and Kandel 1981; Kao and Tienda 1998) and finally structural barriers. The latter results in an environment characterized by blocked opportunities. This environment leads to two theoretically distinct and contradictory reactions. Either minority groups overcompensate for their group status by developing ambitious aspirations and overachieving scholastically (Sue and Okazaki 1990) or they will underperform, denoting a lack of trust and scepticism towards the system run by the majority group (Fordham and Ogbu 1986; Ogbu 1991).

Even though this theory doesn't study refugees or systematically relate aspirations to policy, this perspective on aspiration formation is helpful in generating insights with regard to how this process is likely to play out in relation to refugees and how it may influence their integration trajectories in host societies. While factors related to family context and social origin are likely to continue playing a role, we may expect that settling in a whole new context with a new set of constraints and opportunities will play an important role in shaping refugee aspirations and integration trajectories.

While the term, "integration" is often defined as a "two-way process" involving both the receiving society and refugees themselves (e.g, Ager & Strang 2008), the concept remains highly contested due to its normative nature and tendency to put the responsibility to integrate on migrants or refugees themselves (e.g, Mozetič 2022; Phillimore 2021; Favell 2019; Schinkel 2018; Scandone 2018; Dahinden, 2016; Mulvey 2015) or what Schinkel (2018) refers to as the "Individualization of integration". There is no doubt that individual characteristics related to refugee agency and various capitals such as previous qualifications, language skills and social networks play an important role in defining their integration trajectories (e.g, Borselli and Van Meijl 2021; Udayar et al 2021; Auer 2017; Williams 2006). Nonetheless, I further stress that structural aspects or what Phillimore (2021) refers to as "opportunity structures" require more attention, not to

minimize the role played by refugee agency in their integration trajectories but to balance this discussion. Consequently, in this paper and based on refugees' perceptions, I highlight how this "policy-dense" environment had informed their educational and occupational aspirations and as a result their integration paths.

Starting with asylum policy, various studies have pointed out to the negative impact of asylum procedures on refugee labour market integration, also documented in Switzerland (e.g, Hainmueller et al 2016). Unlike other groups of migrants (students, workers, family reunification), who for the most part have planned their mobility (Hynie 2018), refugees face more challenges due to the special circumstances leading to their migration and the uncertainties related to their legal status (Hynie 2018). Therefore, refugees find it more challenging during the asylum procedure to project themselves into the future and form clear or ambitious educational and occupational aspirations (Van Heelsum 2014). It is possible that this situation changes after securing a permit that allows them to work and study, and therefore become capable of forming high educational and occupational aspirations to achieve what they couldn't do during the asylum period.

Research on refugee aspirations consistently shows that refugees have high employment and tertiary educational aspirations. For example, many aspire to become entrepreneurs (Hebbani and Khawaja 2019) or wish to regain as much as possible the professional status they enjoyed previously in their country of origin (Pietka-Nykaza 2015). In relation to education specifically, studies suggests that refugees have high aspirations to access tertiary education (see e.g., Dryden-Peterson 2017; Morrice et al 2020). This is often explained by the higher value associated with education in host society compared to their country of origin (Shakya et al. 2010) or the wish to leave the status of refugee behind and identify with a profession instead of a legal status (Schneider 2018).

It is worth noting that these studies don't explore how these high aspirations were formed (Mozetič 2021) and most of them were conducted with refugees, selected through resettlement programs and who haven't experienced asylum procedures (e.g., Shakya et al. 2010; Hebbani and Khawaja 2019). Therefore, I expect that in the case of Switzerland, the legal limbo (Luebben 2003) associated with asylum policy will have an everlasting

effect on most refugee aspirations, which may translate into them adapting their educational and occupational plans to what is supported by various integration programs and measures.

In relation to the last point, this "policy-dense" environment is also characterized by the implementation of various integration programs and measures. In Switzerland, usually used as a social policy field of action (Prodolliet 2006), it is possible that these programs offer the support and guidance refugees need to understand the new rules and customs of the host society. Thus, contributing to creating a stable foundation for them to form new educational and occupational aspirations (e.g., Bevelander 2014; Valenta and Bunar 2010). However, these programs have been criticized for their restrictive and mandatory nature, in addition to their tendency to follow the same logic of "promoting and demanding" quick labour market integration (e.g., Arendt 2020; Hinger and Schweitzer 2020; Konle-Seidl 2018). This may translate into putting extra pressure on refugees to adapt their aspirations to those trajectories, promoted as "best ways to integrate" by these programs.

Finally, finding themselves in a policy dense environment also implies that host country institutions, including universities and other educational institutes, manage access to diverse resources and distribute individual opportunities of privileges (Piñeiro and Wagner 2022). In the context of migration, especially when mobility was not planned as is often the case with forced migration, previous degrees and qualifications are even harder to recognize (e.g., Sonntag 2018). This may translate into refugees giving up on those aspirations that require high investment in time and money and choosing the ones that are easier to implement. For those who arrived as unaccompanied minors, school environment and teachers are found to play an important role in shaping their experiences and future educational possibilities, often referred to in the Swiss school system as "aspirations cooling" (e.g., Lems 2019; Bitzi and Landolt 2017). On the contrary, this new environment may provide refugees with resources and a stable ground to develop and form ambitious aspirations that were hard to consider in a previous context characterized by war and instability.

Against this context, it is not clear how refugees perceived the role this "policy-dense" environment, had on the formation of their aspirations and thus, in shaping their educational and occupational pathways. This study attempts to fill in this gap using an inductive approach. I interviewed 29 refugees living in the canton of Vaud, Switzerland and I asked them about their aspirations, I expand more on this point in the methodology section.

The Encounter of Policy and Refugees

In this section, I present the general orientation and main actors involved in the three policies, refugees perceived as having most influence on the formation of their aspirations, namely asylum policy, integration policy with its various programs in addition to those in charge of its implementation and finally education policy with a focus on university access and degree recognition policy.

Asylum Policy

In Switzerland, most refugees receive one of three types of residence permits. First, if they are recognized as refugees under the 1951 Geneva convention, they receive a proper residence permit, called B permit. Second, if a refugee is denied asylum but is instead admitted provisionally while enjoying refugee status defined by the 1951 Geneva Convention on refugees, the refugee receives a residence permit, called F refugee (Guidesocial 2021), also referred to as subsidiary or humanitarian protection. Third, if the application of an asylum seeker has been rejected and s/he simultaneously doesn't enjoy refugee status as defined by the 1951 Geneva Convention on refugees but cannot be deported from Switzerland, the refugee receives a temporary permit, a document called F permit (Guidesocial 2021).

The three types of permits provide rather different levels of rights. Refugees with an F permit are not allowed to travel abroad. For both F and F refugee permits they are not automatically entitled to family reunification and cannot move to a different canton from

the one they have been assigned to. In contrast, refugees with a B permit have all these rights[13].

As we will see in the results section, this provision in the law puts pressure on F permit holders to become financially independent, to be able to benefit from family reunification. F permits can also be converted into B permits after some time, but again financial independence from the state is required (Asile 2021).

Integration Policy in Switzerland

Switzerland is a federal country, the responsibility for refugee integration policy is shared between the federal government and the cantons. The promotion of integration is primarily carried out by existing public structures, such as schools, vocational training institutions, health services, but also civil society actors (SEMa, 2021).

For several years, the Confederation and the Cantons have noted that a significant proportion of refugees are "unable to integrate" socially, find employment and provide for themselves independently (GE 2021). Hence, specific programs were developed since then to remedy these shortcomings (GE 2021)

In spring 2019, Swiss Integration Agenda (AIS), a national program set up by the Confederation and the Cantons, was introduced. AIS aims at encouraging quick, efficient, intensive, and systematic integration. Under this light, integration is understood as a process that begins as soon as the person enters Switzerland or files an asylum application and which continues until the entry in a professional training or the exercise of a lucrative activity (KIP-PIC 2021). The aim is to direct refugees to the labour market or a professional training that will enable them to attain financial independence. This is directly translated into reducing the costs of social assistance and strengthening social cohesion (KIP-PIC 2021).

To conclude, Swiss integration policy for refugees is highly focused on implementing measures that would enable refugees to regain financial independence. It relies largely on

[13] Except for changing cantons.

the country's developed vocational education and training (VET) system. Even though the Swiss Integration Agenda does not directly rule out university education, the emphasis is clearly on promoting access to VET.

Access to University and Recognition of Degrees in Switzerland

In Switzerland, there is no central office responsible for degree recognitions. There are, however, various organizations in charge of this process. A degree is only recognized for the purpose of exercising a profession and continuing education. In the first case, the procedure differs according to the country in which a degree was obtained and the duration of the planned professional activity in Switzerland. It also differs according to the type of profession. Some professions are regulated, and others are not.

For regulated professions, State Secretariat for Education, Research, and Innovation (SEFRI) is the competent authority for the recognition of professions in the field of vocational education and training and for the recognition of university-level diplomas allowing the exercise of a regulated profession.

For non-regulated professions, there is no recognition of diplomas that gives direct access to those professions. In this case, another organization, the peak association of Swiss higher education institutions (Swissuniversities/Swiss ENIC), establishes recognition recommendations for all university-level diplomas.

Regarding university access, universities and federal institutes of technology are themselves responsible for the recognition of foreign degrees and have autonomy in admissions decisions.

During the process of degree recognition either for regulated/non-regulated professions or university access, candidates need to submit their original documents and certified copies with translations. In addition, fees need to be paid for this process to be carried out.

Refugees wishing to attend tertiary education need to follow the same process for degree recognition described above, just like anyone else. Except for one program, "Horizon Académique", a one-year program in the canton of Geneva, aimed solely at

preparing refugees to access university without exempting them from following the same procedure as regular candidates.

Methodology

In this study, I focus on the ways refugees perceived public policies influenced the formation of aspirations and how these shapes their integration trajectories. I conceptualise aspirations as dynamic in the sense that they constantly change and evolve (e.g., Frank 1941; Hart 2014). They represent both the reflection of individuals' goals, for which they are willing to invest resources (e.g., Lewin et al 1944; Haller 1968; Sherwood 1989), and the expectations of their communities and institutions' (e.g., Hart 2014). I adopted a qualitative approach based on semi-structed interviews with 29 refugees living in the French-speaking canton of Vaud, Switzerland.

Switzerland has one of the highest migration rates of the continent, most of whom are Europeans (Swissinfo 2017). The canton of Vaud is a good representation of Swiss diversity. It is one of the largest and most diverse cantons in Switzerland. It is also a canton that provides a large variety of career choices. In fact, it is neither predominantly rural nor urban. The canton, with its varied sectors of economy ranging from agriculture to advanced technology is expected to offer less career restrictions. Also, Vaud is one of the two cantons with a large variety of educational institutes which include the university of Lausanne, schools of applied sciences, professional schools, and the federal institute of technology (EPFL). This is also expected to offer a wide range of educational and career choices.

Migration streams to Switzerland and Vaud have changed over the decades. While Switzerland has for long been a destination for employment-seeking French, Germans, and Italians. It has also received different streams of refugees during the second half of the 20th century and from beginning of the 21st century. Refugees came from Eastern Europe (e.g., Yugoslavia), Africa (e.g., Eritrea) and Asia (e.g., Syria, Turkey, Afghanistan, and Sri Lanka). In the last decade Eritrea, Afghanistan, Syria, and Turkey represent the main origin countries of refugees in Switzerland (SEMb 2022). While recruiting the 29 participants, I made sure that their origin countries reflected the composition of refugee

arrivals in the last decade. Participants arrived in Switzerland between 2014 and 2018. Table 1 in the Appendix provides detailed information about interviewees.

Eleven have been living in the country for more than five years and nine for more than 4 years. To assess the perceived role of policy on aspirations' formation, participants had to be living in the canton for at least 3 years[14] and possess a permit that allows them to work and study. This was an important criterion in the selection, as refugees could experience and perceive the role of different policies on their aspirations' formation only if they had been living in the country for a while, have had regular contact with their social workers and have participated in language courses and integration measures.

Participants were recruited through migrants' NGOs and public institutions in charge with refugee policy after obtaining ethical approval. Preliminary meetings were organized with gatekeepers to explain the purpose of the study and the conditions in which interviews will be held. Gatekeepers presented the study to refugees. Those who agreed to participate were later contacted by the author. During the whole process, participants were provided with the possibility to enquire about the study and to ask questions whenever needed. Throughout the interviews, great value was placed on non-hierarchical interactions and transparency. Before starting the interviews and to establish familiarity, I shared information about my migration background and journey in Switzerland. After giving their oral consent, interviews were audio recorded except for two. Interviews were conducted in English, French and Arabic. They were transcribed in the language of the interview except for Arabic ones which were instantly translated and transcribed into French by the author. The interviews were conducted between October 2020 and March 2021. Due to COVID situation and participants' preferences, 12 interviews out of the 29 were conducted via Zoom. I have adopted the same interview strategy mentioned above with online interviews and haven't noticed that the interview mode has had major

[14] Except Turkish refugees (5 participants) who have been in the country for two years at the time of the interview. They were included in the sample because their asylum procedure was very short compared to other participants. For Turkish participants it took them between 2 months and 6 months to receive a permit (in all cases refugee status). Therefore, they could quickly participate in integration programs. At the time of the interview, they have had access to such programs for more than a year.

implications on interview conditions. Interviews lasted between half an hour and an hour and a half with an average duration of 45 min.

The interviews had traits of life-course interviews. Participants were asked to talk about their educational and occupational aspirations and experiences in four phases: Life in Switzerland recently and in the future, life during the first year in Switzerland, life in the home country and life in a transit country[15]. For each phase, questions focused on relating different trainings, education and employment positions occupied in Switzerland with their aspirations. In my inductive approach, I followed Braun and Clarke (2006) six steps in Nvivo 2020 to thematically analyse the data. After getting familiarized with the data, I identified and grouped chunks of material into categories like "permits and legal status", "Career counselling", "social workers", "types of jobs", "studies", "future plans", "university", "satisfaction/wellbeing". Additional rounds of coding were performed, zooming into the different factors influencing refugee aspirations, with a focus on the policies influencing them. After this process, I could identify three policies that had an important influence on refugee aspirations mainly, asylum policy, integration focus and education policy with a focus on university access and degree recognition. After identifying the policies that influenced their aspirations, I then analysed in which ways they influenced their integration paths. Findings were finally compared to those from previous research and theories. Results and their discussion are presented next.

Results

In this section, the stage is given to the 29 participants to talk about their educational and occupational aspirations and how policy informed them. We first start with asylum policy and permits to then move to integration policy with a focus on career guidance and finally conclude with university access and degree recognition.

Asylum Policy and Permits

[15] Questions on transit countries were asked to participants who lived for more than six months in these countries.

Asylum policy informs refugee aspirations formation in two ways. First, while refugees are waiting for a decision concerning their asylum application, it is very difficult for them to make future plans. Many participants have reported living in bunkers or remote areas for months, and sometimes more than a year. During this time, they lived in complete isolation and were only in contact with other refugees or people working in these facilities. Under such circumstances, the process of aspiration formation is inevitably stalled. Second, the limited rights associated with temporary admission permits (F) put substantial pressure on holders of such permits to quickly find a job and end their dependency on social assistance. These two effects of legal status are discussed next.

First, the uncertainty experienced while awaiting a decision on an asylum application can have a long-lasting impact and possibly dampen the formation of their aspirations. For example, **Petros**, worked as an accountant in his home country for four years. Once in Switzerland, he had to wait for three years to receive his permit. During this time, he could only take part in French language courses. With the help of a coach, he's been looking for a job for more than a year. He did a couple of internships in logistics (i.e., warehouse work) and is currently looking for an apprenticeship position in either logistics or other fields. In describing the three years waiting time, he said:

'During this time, it was difficult in Switzerland because they could "throw" us at any time… this is the problem. We always think about the future, or we have been thinking about the future for three years. Are they going to "throw" us? We used to think about this all the time'

Second, refugees with temporary admission (F), tend to be under pressure to reach financial independence from the state as quickly as possible in order to obtain a residence permit that enables them to travel and benefit from family reunification. As a result, many of them opt for redirecting their educational aspirations away from the more ambitious (and inevitably longer) educational and training paths, towards those that promise rapid entry to the labour market, which usually translates into low skill jobs.

Samir, holder of a F permit, explains in his words:

'I would like to study for a trade job and complete an apprenticeship, it is my dream. But in Switzerland, I must have a B permit [i.e. a residence permit] *I must be financially independent, if I find a job now, after two years I can have the permit ..However, if I finish CFC* [the standard vocational training degree] *and then work I will get the B permit after five years which means, now I have been here for five years so it will be ten years in total [before he gets the B permit], it is hard for me, it feels like prison really, now I can't travel'*

When **Ali** was asked if he ever thought or plans to go to university, he responded:

'No, never. Because I have many problems in my life. I have someone in my life. She has been waiting for me for five years in Afghanistan. Now with F permit, I cannot leave Switzerland. It is very difficult for me, now I stay like that, I work a little to get B permit, then I will bring my girlfriend here, it's a bit ...for me it's a bit difficult, because of that I didn't think about that'

Legal status and the rights associated with a given permit have a substantial impact on aspiration formation. The issue is not only limited to the uncertainty and isolation experienced during asylum procedure but extends to the limitations attached to temporary admission permits (F). Its effect is intensified when combined with other demographic characteristics, mainly age, as many of them perceive themselves to be old for pursuing more demanding or longer educational paths. Additionally, for those who haven't seen their family for a long time, family reunification and the ability to travel abroad are often pressing needs that inhibit the process of aspiration formation, which often results in a substantial dampening of aspirations for those with F permits.

Integration Policy with a Focus on Career Guidance

Integration policy is highly focused on promoting access to apprenticeships. Career counselling starts as early as the arrival in the country. During the first year in Switzerland, refugees receive information about professional opportunities from caseworkers and French teachers in refugee centres. Both introduce them to vocational education training (VET) system and provide them with information about apprenticeships' requirements and future career options. Most participants aspire to either start or complete an apprenticeship. The majority have a positive view of the VET system.

They perceive it as a good opportunity to get a diploma in shorter period of time when compared to academic education, and a quicker way to achieve financial independence. The ones who showed no or less interest in apprenticeships belong to two categories. They were either above 30 and prefer to find a job right away instead of spending more time in training, or they started or completed a degree in their countries of origin, and therefore prefer to pursue the academic path or directly finding a job after recognizing their degrees.

The conventional route to apprenticeship begins with short internships. This allows refugees to familiarize themselves with different professions. Interview data shows that most refugees were advised by their caseworkers to take up professions with relatively low skill content. Women are often directed towards elderly care jobs, while men towards logistics or other relatively low skill occupations.

Most participants were encouraged to consider short term trainings (less than a year) or apprenticeships in low skill occupations. I was able to observe two types of reactions to this implementation of integration policy. In a first scenario, participants accepted the guidance they received and felt it was appropriate for various reasons. First, they aspired to work in a similar field and the options available to them worked just well. For example, **Sara** always wanted to work in the health sector, therefore she is content about pursuing an apprenticeship as a health assistant. Second, available options mirrored similar tasks or functions they occupied in their home country. In the case of **Faven,** who is currently looking for an apprenticeship position in a retirement home, taking care of elderly people reminds her of her taking care of her grandparents. Third, available options are perceived to be a reasonable choice because participants believe they don't possess the language skills to pursue higher aspirations or because they were made to understand by their teachers, caseworkers, and friends that other options were more difficult to pursue. As a result, the profession they were invited to consider was not their first choice, but "realism" convinced them otherwise. **Petros**, is currently looking for an apprenticeship in logistics because he believes it is easier than other options such as accounting, for example. In his home country, he completed a training as accountant and worked for four years in his field. However, his perception of his own French skills and the specificities of accounting

in Switzerland made him reconsider his first choice. Similarly, **Marjani** worked for three years in a day-care in her country of origin but upon the suggestion of her caseworker, she is now considering the option of working in a retirement home as a health assistant:

'I am looking for an apprenticeship in a day-care, it is a bit difficult. My caseworker suggested I consider the job of health assistant in a retirement home. Well, I tried but it was difficult, I prefer to find something in a day-care. But if this doesn't work then it is not a problem for me to go for health assistant even though it is difficult'

In a second scenario, some participants had a different reaction as they felt the profession, they were invited to consider did not match their aspirations at all. **Farid** wanted to become an electrician. At the beginning his teacher was not convinced with his choice because she thought he doesn't have the skills needed to succeed, she suggested he tries another job such as carpenter. Nevertheless, Farid persisted in his choice and despite the difficulties he faced, he is now completing an apprenticeship as an electrician and happy about his choice. A similar story was shared a few times. For example, **Nadia** said:

'I never in my life thought about working in sales. One day my teacher asked me would you like to try the job of a salesperson in retail? I answered no never. Then almost everyone in my class went to work in a retail store except me. My teacher asked me again, I persisted. I said no because I always thought that the job of a salesperson is nothing. In my country it is like this. if you are a salesperson, it means you have nothing, you don't have a job. What I want is to do is work in the health sector, I tried several times to find an internship as a pharmacy assistant or something similar, but it never worked'

Interview data confirms that the overall orientation of integration policy is to favour educational options that assure quick labour market access. Within the sa*mple, refugees are often advised to go for low skill occupations (i.e., Health assistant in retirement* homes, warehouse). This approach suits many participants, who are eager to quickly attain financial independence, and start some kind of "normal" life for various factors such as age, family situation, or the perception they often have of lacking skills and qualifications to pursue more demanding educational paths. However, not all of them are

content with this approach. A few participants resisted the guidance they received and managed to develop an alternative plan more in line with their own aspirations.

Access to Higher Education and Degree Recognition

Out of 29 participants, only five showed direct interest in academic studies. The rest expressed no intention in going to university for several reasons. First, participants perceive admission into university to be difficult and highly demanding. It requires high investment in time and money, which doesn't go well with many participants' desire to be financially independent as quick as possible. Second, age is perceived as an obstacle, and many believe they were too old to go to university. Finally, academic studies require some stability and clarity of mind, which many are still struggling to find.

In contrast to apprenticeships, most participants report having received no information about academic studies from their caseworkers. Aspiring to go to university is not an easy task for refugees as they must negotiate with their caseworkers and explain the relevance of such choices to their future career. **Ahmet** who worked for several years as a judge in his home country shares his experience convincing his caseworker to back up his academic ambitions:

'It was a bit difficult, I think this is a new path for them [Caseworkers] because there is a need for a budget to send refugees to university, or there is a system for example you reach level B1 [in French] and then you find a job, something like this…But I told them, if you want I can continue my education because I have a very big background from Turkey, if you want I can do it like that and I can be more beneficial for Switzerland and they accepted'

Many participants may not have the negotiation skills or the experience of Ahmet to back up their academic ambitions. They report being discouraged to pursue such aspirations despite their high motivation. The reason given to them was that they don't fulfil the requirements to go to university. As an alternative, they were advised to go for an apprenticeship. **Nadia** explains her situation:

'When I first came to Switzerland, I was thinking that it is like Iran, once you finish high school you go to university. I tried to speak to my teachers about going to university,

but they told me that it is difficult and that I don't have the skills to go there. I tried several times, but it didn't work'

Others were discouraged because they couldn't afford the fees required by universities for degree recognition and bridge years. **Taim**, started a degree in Telecommunications in another country. In Switzerland, he first aspired to go to university and complete his degree, but everything was so complicated for him. Now he is doing an apprenticeship in logistics:

'In fact, I studied one year in telecommunications so when I asked if there was an office in Lausanne to continue university, they told me my certificate is not recognized in Switzerland and if I have to study the same thing, I have to start everything from zero in addition to a bridge year. When I looked into that with my caseworker, it was not covered, and I had to pay myself almost 1400 Francs'

For participants who managed to go to university, one is pursuing a master's degree in information technology and four are participating in a one-year preparatory course[16] offered in another canton. The five participants had either completed or started university in their countries of origin. Pursuing the academic path was initiated by the participants themselves and the process was not always a smooth one. For **Omer** who holds a master's degree in economics from Turkey and who worked as a researcher for several years in a Turkish university before coming to Switzerland, going to university was not his first choice. He first aspired to find a suitable job. After trying a couple of options suggested by his social worker, he decided it was best for him to continue his studies. He first tried to enrol in a PhD program but the requirement of providing recommendation letters presented a huge obstacle. He explains:

'I applied to a graduate program in economics in another canton, but they usually ask for recommendation letters from past professors. For refugees they are already politically discriminated in their countries, nobody wants to recommend you, that is for most a very

[16] In this one-year program, participants take courses exams and receive virtual ECTS credits. This will allow them to "save time" and get ahead in their future studies.

stupid and very dangerous situation for you. I ended up asking a friend to recommend me, but I got rejected anyways'

He then applied for a master's program in another university and managed to get admission with the condition of completing a bridge year. He shares his experience with the admission process:

'I was lucky because my degree was in English, I also had a second diploma from a US institution which is probably why it was easier for me in Switzerland, but I know for many refugees, it can be extremely difficult. My current university didn't ask for recommendation letters. In that regard, the application process was easier. However, it was a regular application process, in the sense that there was no quota or facility for refugees as I heard it is the case in other countries'

Admission requirements present huge obstacles to refugees. Another participant was less lucky than Omer as she didn't have her documents with her. For **Aya** who studied economics for two years in a Syrian university but quit because of war, going to university was her aspiration. Nevertheless, when she tried to apply, she was hit with a wall.

'I applied for three universities; I got rejected in all of them. Two were ok, but there is this one university that incapacitated me really. In that university I tried for two years straight, but they closed all the doors. It was shocking'

Aya enrolled in an institute for French language and culture and is now attending a one-year preparatory course in another university. She aspires to complete a degree in translation and work for an international organization. If her plan doesn't work, she is open to go for apprenticeship as a florist.

It seems that aspiring to study in university is not an easy ride for refugees. They are left by themselves to navigate university requirements and deal with conditions that can feel incapacitating. For people already burdened by the experience of war and persecution, aspiring to study in university is a process that requires a lot of patience and strength that many may lack.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study explored how refugees perceived the role the policy dense environment they live in had on their aspirations' formation, and to what extent this promoted certain educational and occupational paths while hindering others. Findings show that three policies, namely asylum policy, integration policy and education policy with a focus on university access and degrees recognition, have substantial impact on the process of aspirations formation among refugees. These three policies combined contribute into creating what I refer to in this paper as “low ambition equilibrium”. This means that the overall system requirement to limit public expenses colluded with the desire of most refugees to quickly attain financial independence, results in creating an environment that promotes less ambitious educational and occupational aspirations and perpetuates similar integration paths.

As shown in this paper, asylum policy affects refugee aspirations in two ways. First, the longer it takes the more uncertainty asylum procedure creates which makes it difficult for refugees to form clear educational and occupational aspirations. This often contributes into limiting their language skills and shrinking their social network to other refugees, resulting in reproducing similar aspirations and integration trajectories such as finding a job as soon as possible or working in particular professions perceived as more accessible (e.g., health assistant, logistics). Second, for temporary permit holders, the uncertainty attached to legal status extends beyond the asylum procedure. This reflects on their aspirations, as their focus is on those trajectories that assure quicker financial independence and therefore, allowing them to upgrade their legal status to a more stable one. For many, this motivation is often rooted in the desire for many to reunite with their families, they haven’t seen for years. In this situation, they tend to sacrifice high educational aspirations especially academic ones to opt for the easiest and most available option, usually a low skill job to break free from the restrictions of their permit.

When it comes to integration policy, data shows that there is a high emphasis on apprenticeships and quick labour market integration. Within the sample, low skill occupations and apprenticeships are favoured. During their first years in Switzerland, participants lacked information and language skills to navigate the educational and

occupational system in the country. In addition to their social networks, their educational and occupational choices have also been shaped by their interactions with caseworkers and teachers who highly focus on promoting apprenticeships and short-term trainings. Therefore, creating an environment geared towards "aspirations cooling" (e.g, Lems 2020; Schnell and Fibbi 2016). I further show in this article, that certain education paths are not even presented or discussed as possible alternatives.

Indeed, when it comes to university access, the majority report having received no information about this possibility. For those who managed to enrol in an academic program, the path was filled with frustration due to long and complicated procedures they had to navigate alone with little or no support. Interestingly and in contrast to previous research, I didn't find that many refugees have high aspirations to go to university (Shakya et al 2010; Schneider 2018; Grüttner et al 2018; Morrice 2020). In addition to the difficulties above, this can be explained by several factors, mainly legal status, as many of these studies were conducted with resettled refugees (e.g, Shakya et al 2010; Morrice 2020) who hadn't been through asylum procedure. The focus on one group of refugees such as Syrians (e.g., Schneider 2018; Borselli and Meijl 2021), youth (e.g., Morrice 2020) or High skilled (e.g., Mozetič 2021). The number of years spent in host society as some of these studies were conducted with refugees who spent less than one year in the receiving country (e.g., Borselli and Meijl 2021) which for many, is a short time to develop a clear understanding of the educational system and the opportunities available to them. Finally, the differences in the education system may have played an important role in explaining these results. Most studies on refugee aspirations were conducted in Canada, Australia, and the UK. In these countries, the path to labour market integration is usually paved by university, which explains relatively well the high aspirations to go to university. The Swiss education system is characterized by its permeability and dual vocational educational training (VET) system. The latter offers a variety of tracks, and training takes place both in both a training company and school. Therefore, assuring quicker access to the labour market. Additionally, and as shown in this article, Swiss integration policy is highly emphasized on promoting educational and

occupational paths, that would allow refugees to "quickly integrate" into the labour market, and higher may not be perceived quick enough.

While the policy dense environment has played an important role in influencing their aspirations and informing their educational and occupational choices, their personal characteristics have also contributed in the extent to which they challenged the general orientations of these policies especially integration policy. Here, I refer mainly to family situation and previous qualifications. The more stable their personal situation was and more educated they were, they more negotiation power they had to influence their social workers, suggest alternative plans, and navigate the complexities of a "policy-dense" environment as shown in the cases of Ahmet and Omer.

However, and overall, few participants have shown resistance to the options offered to them, the majority displays a tendency to adapt to the impediments of their situation by aligning their aspirations to the limitations of both their environment and personal situation. Seeking quick financial independence and starting a "normal life" seems to be the main aspiration for many, at least for now.

To sum, the interplay of the three policies discussed in this paper with the personal situation of refugees, creates a situation where refugees and policy meet at what I call "low ambition equilibrium". On one hand, these policies create an environment where the quickest and most accessible integration trajectories are promoted to reduce refugees' dependence on the welfare. On the other hand, the experience of forced migration combined with a policy dense environment create a lot of uncertainty in the life of refugees and an urgency to find a lost "normality". A "normality" where they are financially independent, reunited with their families, and capable of expressing themselves fluently in the local language. Finding this lost stability may occur at the expense of their educational and professional aspirations. While apparently a convenient option for the two parts, I expect that "low ambition equilibrium" results in a loss of human capital and the reinforcement of existing inequality.

Finally, as interviewees have been living in Switzerland for less than 10 years, it is unclear whether the effects of this "low ambition equilibrium" would subside once they

reach financial independence. Additionally, as I conceptualize aspirations to be dynamic and reflecting both individuals' goals and those of their environment. Acquiring more resources and "stability" may allow them to be less "monitored" and therefore escape the effects of this "low ambition equilibrium". Unfortunately, my current data doesn't allow me to verify this.

References

Ager, A., & Strang, A. (2008). Understanding integration: A conceptual framework. Journal of refugee studies, 21(2), 166-191.

Asile (2021). Procèdure, statuts et permis. Retrieved January 30, 2021, from https://asile.ch/permis/#toc1

Arendt, J. N. (2020). 'Labour market effects of a work-first policy for refugees'. Journal of Population Economics: 1-28.

Auer, D. (2018). Language roulette–the effect of random placement on refugees' labour market integration. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 44(3), 341-362.

Bitzi, B., & Landolt, S. (2017). Unaccompanied minor asylum seekers–processes of subject formation and feelings of belonging in the context of educational experiences in Switzerland. Geographica Helvetica, 72(2), 217-226.

Blau, P. M., and Duncan, O. D. (1967). 'The American occupational structure'

Bohon, S. A., Johnson, M. K., & Gorman, B. K. (2006). 'College aspirations and expectations among Latino adolescents in the United States'. Social problems 53(2): 207-225.

Bonet, S. W. (2018). 'So Where are the Promises of This America? Where is the democracy and where are the human rights?: Refugee youth, citizenship education, and exclusion from public schooling'. Curriculum Inquiry 48(1): 53-69.

Borselli, M., & van Meijl, T. (2021). 'Linking migration aspirations to integration prospects: the experience of Syrian refugees in Sweden'. Journal of Refugee Studies 34(1): 579-595.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). 'Using thematic analysis in psychology'. Qualitative research in psychology 3(2): 77-101.

Brell C, Dustmann C and Preston I. (2020). 'The Labour Market Integration of Refugee Migrants in High-Income Countries'. Journal of Economic Perspectives 34: 94-121.

Dahinden, J. (2016). A plea for the 'de-migranticization'of research on migration and integration. Ethnic and Racial Studies, 39(13), 2207-2225.

Davies, M., and Kandel, D. B. (1981). 'Parental and peer influences on adolescents' educational plans: Some further evidence'. American journal of Sociology 87(2): 363-387.

Etat de Genève (GE) (2021). L'Agenda Intégration Suisse. Retrieved June 28, 2021, from https://www.ge.ch/dossier/geneve-soutient-integration-etrangers/agenda-integration-suisse/agenda-integration-suisse-ais

Favell, A. (2019). Integration: twelve propositions after Schinkel. Comparative Migration Studies, 7(1), 1-10.

Fordham, S., and Ogbu, J. U. (1986). 'Black students' school success: Coping with the burden of acting white'. The urban review 18(3): 176-206.

Frank, J. D. (1941). Recent studies of the level of aspiration. Psychological Bulletin, 38(4), 218.

Grüttner, M., Schröder, S., Berg, J., & Otto, C. (2018). 'Refugees on Their Way to German Higher Education: A Capabilities and Engagements Perspective on Aspirations, Challenges and Support'. Global Education Review 5(4): 115-135.

Guide Social Romand Adresses /(2021). Droit d'asile et statut de réfugiés. Retrieved June 28, 2021, from https://www.guidesocial.ch/recherche/fiche/droit-d-asile-et-statut-de-refugie-90

Hainmueller, J., Hangartner, D., & Lawrence, D. (2016). When lives are put on hold: Lengthy asylum processes decrease employment among refugees. Science advances, 2(8), e1600432.

Haller, A. O. (1968). 'On the concept of aspiration'. Rural sociology 33(4): 484-487.

Haller, A. O., and Portes, A. (1973). 'Status attainment processes'. Sociology of education: 51-91.

Hamburger, A., Hancheva, C., Özcürümez, S., Scher, C., Stankovic, B., and Tutnjevic, S. (Eds.). (2018). 'Forced Migration and Social Trauma: Interdisciplinary Perspectives from Psychoanalysis, Psychology, Sociology and Politics'. Routledge.

Hart, C. S. (2016). How do aspirations matter?. Journal of human development and capabilities, 17(3), 324-341.

Hebbani, A., and Khawaja, N. G. (2019). 'Employment aspirations of former refugees settled in Australia: A mixed methods study'. Journal of International Migration and Integration 20(3): 907-924.

Hynie, M. (2018). 'Refugee integration: Research and policy. Peace and Conflict'. Journal of Peace Psychology 24(3): 265.

Kao, G., and Tienda, M. (1998). 'Educational aspirations of minority youth." American journal of education 106(3): 349-384.

KIP-PIC (2018). Agenda Intégration Suisse. Retrieved June 28, 2021, from https://www.kip-pic.ch/media/1357/integrationsagenda_bericht_180301_f.pdf

Konle-Seidl, R. (2018). 'Integration of refugees in Austria, Germany and Sweden: Comparative analysis'. Retrieved from European Parliament, Policy Department A: Economic and Scientific Policy website: http://www. europarl. europa. eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/614200/IPOL_STU (2018) 614200_EN. pdf.

Labovitz, E. M. (1975). 'Race, SES contexts and fulfillment of college aspirations'. Sociological Quarterly 16(2): 241-249.

Lems, A. (2020). Being inside out: the slippery slope between inclusion and exclusion in a Swiss educational project for unaccompanied refugee youth. Journal of ethnic and migration studies, 46(2), 405-422.

Lewin, K., Dembo, T., Festinger, L., & Sears, P. S. (1944). 'Level of aspiration'.

Ligabue, S. (2018). 'Forced migration and refugees: Trauma experience and participatory care'. Transactional Analysis Journal 48(2): 166-180.

Luebben, S. (2003). Testimony work with Bosnian refugees: living in legal limbo. British Journal of Guidance &Counselling, 31(4), 393-402.

Morrice, L., Tip, L. K., Brown, R., and Collyer, M. (2020). 'Resettled refugee youth and education: aspiration and reality'. Journal of Youth Studies 23(3): 388-405.

Mozetič, K. (2021). 'Cartographers of their futures: the formation of occupational aspirations of highly educated refugees in Malmö and Munich'. International Migration 59(4): 127-140.

Mozetič, K. (2022). 'A help or hindrance? Highly educated refugees' perceptions of the role of civic integration programmes in accessing the labour market in Oslo, Malmö and Munich'. Comparative Migration Studies 10(1): 1-18.

Mulvey, G. (2015). 'Refugee integration policy: the effects of UK policy-making on refugees in Scotland'. Journal of Social Policy 44(2): 357-375.

Ogbu, J. U. (1991). 'Minority coping responses and school experience'. The Journal of Psychohistory 18(4): 433.

Phillimore, J. (2021). 'Refugee-integration-opportunity structures: shifting the focus from refugees to context'. Journal of Refugee Studies 34(2): 1946-1966.

Piętka-Nykaza, E. (2015). 'I want to do anything which is decent and relates to my profession: refugee doctors' and teachers' strategies of re-entering their professions in the UK'. Journal of Refugee Studies 28(4): 523-543.

Piñeiro, E., & Wagner, C. Introduction: Ethnicity and Public Service. How the State Deals with Ethnic Differences. Swiss Journal of Sociology, 48(3), 449-463.

Portes, A., McLeod Jr, S. A., and Parker, R. N. (1978). 'Immigrant aspirations'. Sociology of Education: 241-260.

Prodolliet, S. (2006). Zauberwort „Integration "–Paradigmenwechsel in der schweizerischen Politik. Internetdokument: www. ekm. admin. ch/de/themen/doku/ref_prs_paradigma. pdf (Zugriff: 18. 10. 2011).

Scandone, B. (2018). Re-thinking aspirations through habitus and capital: The experiences of British-born Bangladeshi women in higher education. Ethnicities, 18(4), 518-540.

Schinkel, W. (2018). Against 'immigrant integration': For an end to neocolonial knowledge production. Comparative migration studies, 6(1), 1-17.

Schneider, L. (2018). 'Access and aspirations: Syrian refugees' experiences of entering higher education in Germany'. Research in Comparative and International Education 13(3): 457-478.

Schnell, P., & Fibbi, R. (2016). Getting ahead: Educational and occupational trajectories of the 'new'second-generation in Switzerland. Journal of International Migration and Integration, 17, 1085-1107.

Sewell, W. H. (1971). 'Inequality of opportunity for higher education'. American Sociological Review 36(5): 793-809.

Sewell, W. H., and Hauser, R. M. (1972). 'Causes and consequences of higher education: Models of the status attainment process'. American Journal of Agricultural Economics 54(5): 851-861.

Sewell, W. H., and Shah, V. P. (1968). 'Parents' education and children's educational aspirations and achievements'. American sociological review: 191-209.

Sewell, W. H., and Shah, V. P. (1968). 'Social class, parental encouragement, and educational aspirations'. American journal of Sociology 73(5): 559-572.

Sewell, W. H., Haller, A. O., and Ohlendorf, G. W. (1970). 'The educational and early occupational status attainment process: Replication and revision'. American sociological review: 1014-1027.

Sewell, W. H., Haller, A. O., and Portes, A. (1969). 'The educational and early occupational attainment process'. American sociological review: 82-92.

Shakya, Y. B., Guruge, S., Hynie, M., Akbari, A., Malik, M., Htoo, S., ... and Alley, S. (2010). 'Aspirations for higher education among newcomer refugee youth in Toronto: Expectations, challenges, and strategies'. Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees 27(2): 65-78.

Sherwood Jr, R. A. (1989). 'A Conceptual Framework for the Study of Aspirations'. Research in Rural Education 6(2): 61-66.

Sontag, K. (2018). Highly skilled asylum seekers: Case studies of refugee students at a Swiss university. Migration letters, 15(4), 533-544.

State Secretariat for migration (SEMa) (2021). Politique suisse en matière d'intégration. Rretrieved June 28, 2021, from https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/fr/home/integration-einbuergerung/integrationsfoerderung/politik.html

State Secretariat for migration (SEMb) (2022). Archives dès 1994. Retrieved March 01, 2022, from https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/fr/home/publiservice/statistik/asylstatistik/archiv.html

Stevenson, J., & Willott, J. (2007). 'The aspiration and access to higher education of teenage refugees in the UK'. Compare 37(5): 671-687.

Sue, S., & Okazaki, S. (1990). 'Asian-American educational achievements: A phenomenon in search of an explanation'. American psychologist 5(8): 913.

Swissinfo (2017). Switzerland, land of European immigration. Retrieved March 01, 2022, from https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/willkommen-bienvenue_switzerland-land-of-european-immigration/42941390#:~:text=Switzerland%20has%20one%20of%20the,years%20of%20immigration%20to%20Switzerland

Trebbels, M. (2015). 'The transition at the end of compulsory full-time education: Educational and future career aspirations of native and migrant students'. Springer-Verlag: 37-45.

Udayar, S., Fedrigo, L., Durante, F., Clot-Siegrist, E., & Masdonati, J. (2021). Labour market integration of young refugees and asylum seekers: A look at perceived barriers and resources. British Journal of Guidance & Counselling, 49(2), 287-303.

Ullmann, E., Barthel, A., Taché, S., Bornstein, A., Licinio, J., & Bornstein, S. R. (2015). 'Emotional and psychological trauma in refugees arriving in Germany in 2015'. Molecular Psychiatry 20(12): 1483-1484.

Valenta, M., & Bunar, N. (2010). 'State assisted integration: Refugee integration policies in Scandinavian welfare states: The Swedish and Norwegian experience'. Journal of refugee studies 23(4): 463-483.

Van Heelsum, A. (2017). 'Aspirations and frustrations: experiences of recent refugees in the Netherlands'. Ethnic and Racial Studies 40(13): 2137-2150.

Williams, L. (2006). Social networks of refugees in the United Kingdom: tradition, tactics and new community spaces. Journal of ethnic and migration studies, 32(5), 865-879.

Willott, J., & Stevenson, J. (2013). 'Attitudes to employment of professionally qualified refugees in the United Kingdom'. International Migration 51(5): 120-132.

UNIL | Université de Lausanne

Appendix

Table 1: Profile of participants

Participant[17]	Age	Gender	Type of permit	Country of origin	In Switzerland since	Qualifications
Faven	28	F	F refugee	Eritrea	2014	8th grade
Fatimeh	25	F	B	Somalia	2017	First year university
Ali	22	M	F	Afghanistan	2015	10th grade
Jemal	40	M	B	Eritrea	2016	Bachelor's degree in medical sciences
Samir	19	M	F	Afghanistan	2015	Primary school
Mussawa	36	M	B	Eritrea	2015	Completed the 12th grade
Marjani	31	F	B	Ethiopia	2015	Completed the 12th grade
Nadia	19	F	F	Afghanistan	2015	Primary school

[17] Fictitious names. Participants' names were changes to protect their identity.

Aymen	23	M	F	Afghanistan	2015	First year university interrupted because of war
Youssef	25	M	F	Syria	2017	2nd year bachelor's in economics interrupted because of war
Nawaz	23	M	F	Afghanistan	2015	Primary school
Aya	32	F	F	Syria	2017	2nd year bachelor's in economics interrupted because of war
Sara	22	F	F	Afghanistan	2015	Primary school
Farid	26	M	F	Afghanistan	2015	Primary school
Omer	41	M	B	Turkey	2018	Master's degree in economics
Murad	34	M	B resettlement	Syria	2016	Engineering degree
Tesfay	35	M	B	Eritrea	2014	8th grade
Petros	29	M	B	Eritrea	2016	Completed 12th grade+ one-year

						training certificate in accounting
Bassel	29	M	B	Syria	2015	First year university interrupted because of war
Robel	29	M	B	Eritrea	2015	Completed 12th grade+ one-year training certificate in medical sciences
Nijaz	32	M	B	Turkey	2018	Completed a bachelor's/master's degree in his country. Worked in his field in his home country
Samuel	32	M	B	Eritrea	2017	11th grade
Farzad	29	M	B	Afghanistan	2017	Completed 12th grade+ one-year training as a policeman

Burak	26	M	B	Turkey	2018	Started but didn't finish high school in his home country
Ahmet	38	M	B	Turkey	2018	Completed master's degree in law and public administration and worked as a judge in his home country
Taim	27	M	F	Country not specified	2014-2015	Completed one-year bachelor's degree
Omari	26	M	B	Eritrea	2014	Didn't finish compulsory school
Anwar	29	M	F refugee	Iran	2016	Completed a degree in engineering in his home country
Yildiz	35	M	B	Turkey	2018	Completed a master's degree in criminal sciences, worked as army officer.

Source: Table constructed from own data by author

UNIL | Université de Lausanne

Paper II: Tensions during the implementation of integration policy in Switzerland: The challenges surrounding "fast and sustainable" integration.

Ihssane Otmani[1]

***Paper under review for the special issue 1/2024 of the journal sozialpolitik.ch entitled *"How Social Policies Shape Life Chances of Migrants"* ***

[1]Swiss Graduate School of Public Administration (IDHEAP), University of Lausanne

Abstract

This paper explores the various tensions at play during the implementation of integration policy in Switzerland. Relying on the experiences and perceptions of 23 caseworkers and 29 refugees in the canton of Vaud in Switzerland, the article identifies important dynamics at play during the process of integration, namely, how the focus on quick labour market integration of refugees, shapes both refugees' integration trajectories and social workers' understanding of their role and function. Close attention was paid to the various tensions experienced by both parts during the implementation of integration policy and the challenges attached to the expectation of "fast" integration. Findings show that caseworkers are focused on attaining what it is referred to in this paper as "fast and sustainable integration" through promoting quick access to vocational training and employment. This is often a source of tension to both caseworkers who recognize the shortcoming of such approaches and refugees who either adapt to the expectation of "fast and sustainable integration" or rely on their own resources to gain support for their more ambitious projects.

Keywords: Integration, refugees, social workers, aspirations, labour market

Introduction

In this article, I examine the different tensions at play during the implementation process of integration policy in Switzerland. By relying on the experiences and perceptions of both those in charge of the implementation of integration policy, namely caseworkers and policy takers, in this case refugees, I was able to identify important dynamics at play during the process of integration and how this may have shaped refugees' integration trajectories.

An important aspect that characterizes the integration experiences of refugees in the global north is the policy-dense environment refugees live in. This means that they are confronted with a myriad of policies that play an important role in shaping which integration paths are favoured and which are not (Otmani 2023). This includes standard policies such as education, social policy, and so forth. In addition to more specific ones such as asylum policy and integration policy.

In relation with integration policy, various programs have been implemented with well-defined objectives cantered around promoting access to the labour market (e.g., Arendt 2020; Konle-Seidl 2018; Valenta and Bunar 2010). Moreover, these programs usually follow the same logic of "promoting and demanding" quick Labour market integration (e.g., Arendt 2020; Hinger and Schweitzer 2020; Konle-Seidl 2018). In Switzerland, the Swiss integration agenda (SIA), has established various integration measures and programs aimed at refugees, which also adopt a similar logic. For the implementation of these programs, social workers have been assigned an important role in "managing" refugee integration and accompanying them in this process (SEM 2021).

Consequently, it is expected that this focus on quick labour market generates various tensions for both social workers and refugees during the implementation of integration policy for various reasons. First, refugees are a heterogeneous group with multitudes of backgrounds and aspirations. Research on refugee aspirations shows that they have high occupational and educational aspirations (see e.g., Morrice et al. 2020; Hebbani and Khawaja 2019; Dryden-Peterson 2017), with many of them having high aspirations for tertiary education (Morrice et al. 2020; Schneider 2018; Shakya et al. 2010) or to maintain a similar professional status they previously enjoyed in their countries of origin (e.g., Pietka-Nykaza 2015). This is expected to add layers of complexities to the work of those

in charge of the implementation of integration policy and create different tensions for both refugees and social workers during this process. Second, social workers may face various moral dilemmas during their implementation of integration policy between what is expected from them, from both the state and their clients and the realities of their function. While state rules are often seen as ambiguous for both those subject to it and those in charge of their implementation (Das 2004), which gives social workers a large room of manoeuvre an important say in policy implementation (e.g., Lipsky 2010; Davidovitz and Cohen 2020), the extent of this power remains highly debatable and in the case of integration policy implementation, may be remain limited because of the highly politicized environment, characterizing social work with refugees.

Using in-depth interviews with asked 29 refugees and 23 social workers in the canton of Vaud, Switzerland, this article investigates the tensions during the implementation of integration policy in Switzerland, which dynamics lie behind these tensions and how these two actors position themselves regarding these tensions.

The main conclusion of this article is that various tensions accompany the implementation of integration policy. The expectation to integrate fast but also sustainably can be challenging and paradoxical to both refugees and social workers. While many believe in the importance of promoting more sustainable integration paths taking into consideration the diversity of refugees as a group, the realities of legal status, labour market and limited resources create an environment where aspirations need to be adapted redirected towards short vocational tracks or directly finding a job. Refugees either adapt their aspirations to what is expected from them or end up relying on themselves when they aim to pursue more ambitious or "unrealistic" projects.

The article begins with a literature review focused on tensions experienced during the integration process. I then briefly discuss the implementation of integration policy in Switzerland. Next, I present the methodology and results to finally conclude.

Tensions during the process of refugee integration

The concept of integration remains highly contested and debatable. Often described as a two-way process that involves both the host society and migrants or refugees themselves (e.g., Ager & Strang 2008), the term is criticized for its normative nature and tendency to

put the weight to integrate on migrants or refugees themselves (e.g., Mozetič 2022; Phillimore 2021; Favell 2019; Schinkel 2018; Scandone 2018; Dahinden, 2016; Mulvey 2015). Indeed, the later are constantly evaluated through various criteria, aimed at assessing whether certain requirements have been attained for migrants to benefit from rights, such as permits, social benefits and citizenship (Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas 2016; Hinger and Schweitzer 2020). While the personal characteristics of refugees such as previous qualifications, language skills, social networks and their agency or capacity to fulfil their aspirations are shown to play an important role in shaping their integration experiences (e.g, Borselli and Van Meijl 2021; Udayar et al 2021; Auer 2017; Williams 2006) I further stress that structural aspects or what Phillimore (2021) refers to as "opportunity structures" require more attention to balance the discussion on integration. With opportunity structures she refers to different arrangements that promote or hinder refugee inclusion such as the influence of geographical location, discourse on refugees in media and public opinion, discrimination, legal rights and finally initiative and support which describe the influence of both social networks and specific integration programs on refugee inclusion. Consequently, in this paper and based on refugees' and social workers' perspectives and experiences, I investigate how the state defines and expects integration to be carried out, in addition to how these two actors, namely refugees and social workers position themselves vis-a-vis state expectations.

In various countries of Western Europe, including Switzerland, many integration programs have been developed following a similar logic. Indeed, these programs offer similar packages such as language courses, introductory courses to life in the host society and focus on quick labour market integration to alleviate pressure on the welfare state (Konle-Seidl 2018; Valenta and Bunar 2010). Research in this area has found that these programs can have a positive influence on the employment rate of refugees (Bevelander and Pendelkar 2014; Valenta and Bunar 2010). Nevertheless, they are often criticized for their restrictive nature and high focus on promoting quick labour market integration and thus limiting refugees educational and occupational choices (e.g., Arendt 2020; Hinger and Schweitzer 2020; Konle-Seidl 2018).

While Integration programs tend to follow a similar logic and focus on those integration trajectories that offer quicker access to the labour market (Otmani 2023;

Bonoli and Otmani 2023), research on refugee aspirations found that refugees have different aspirations, often described as high. Many refugees develop strong aspirations for higher education as they perceive education to be the gateway to getting a good job in the future and hence to achieving a better socioeconomic status (see e.g., Schneider 2018; Dryden-Peterson 2017; Morrice et al 2020). Other studies highlight the entrepreneurial aspirations of refugees and their high motivation to create their own business (see e.g., Hebbani and Khawaja 2019), in addition to how important to them, especially the high skilled refuges, to reproduce a similar social status to the one they had in their country of origin through preserving the profession they learned as far as possible, in general (Mozetič 2020) and in specific fields (Pietka Niatzka 2015). As a result of these aspirations, it may be the case that various tensions would arise during the implementation of integration policy due to the expectation and/or the requirement to follow a predefined integration path, namely to find a job fast, when many refugees, may want to pursue different paths or need more time and resources to implement more ambitious projects, such as starting a business or going to university.

As social workers are at the forefront of integration policy implementation and the ones in charge of translating policy requirement to policy takers, in this case refugees, it is expected that the tensions resulting from the expectation to integrate fast will be materialized during the various interactions between refugees and social workers and will affect not just refugees but also how social workers view and carry out their function. While it can be argued that the latter have important room of manoeuvre in policy implementation (e.g., Lipsky 1980; Berkowitz 1987; Derthick 1990 Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003; Keiser 2010) and can for example adapt the requirements of integration programs to the needs of their clients or search other alternatives when what is in offer is not in line with refugees' aspirations and potential, research on street level bureaucrats shows that the extent of this power remains contested (Meyers et al 2007). Indeed, the complexity of their function constantly challenges the outreach of this discretion. Factors related to organizational conditions (Cohen 2018; Cohen and Hertz 2020) such as the degree of power delegation (May & Winter 2009), resources allocated to them (e.g., Lipsky 1980; Winter 2001), workload and client mix all determine the extent of their discretion (Davidovitz and Cohen 2020). Additionally, for those working with migrants

and refugees, external factors such as rising nationalism and anti-refugee sentiments (Birger et al 2020; Libal and Berthold 2019) in addition to cultural differences (Nash et al 2006; Nash 2005; Potocky-Tripodi 2002; Khan 2000), challenge the extent of their discretion and room of manoeuvre. All these factors may create moral dilemmas to social workers, as it is possible, they find themselves caught between the requirements of their function and expectations of their clients, and thus create additional tensions during their implementation of integration policy.

Most studies touching on frustrations and challenges faced by both refugees and social workers tend to study these groups separately focusing either on refugees, mostly high skilled (e.g., Mozetič 2022) or social workers (e.g., Birger et al 2020). Most attention is put on the hurdles accompanying asylum procedure and the frustrations related to legal status or the absence of it (e.g., Hynie 2018; Van Heelsum 2014). The main contribution of this paper is that it explores the tensions experienced by refugees and social workers by combining their perceptions and experiences. Additionally, although legal status is still present in this analysis, the focus is put more on those tensions attached to the implementation of integration policy by social workers. This approach adds more depth to understanding the different mechanisms in play during the integration process of refugees, more specifically, how the focus of policy on quick integration shapes refugees educational and professional choices, on one hand, and creates more limitations to social workers in fulfilling their functions, on the other hand.

Integration policy in Switzerland

Switzerland is a federal country, the responsibility for refugee integration policy is shared between the federal government and the cantons. It is carried out by existing public structures such as schools, health services, civil society actors and vocational training institutions (SEMa, 2021).

Before diving into integration policy in Switzerland, an overview of permit types is presented next.

Legal status and rights attached to it

In Switzerland, and following asylum procedure, asylum seekers may end up with one of these permits, to which are associated different rights and obligations. First, if they are

recognized as refugees under the 1951 Geneva convention and Swiss national law, they receive refugee status and a residence permit, called B permit. Second, if an asylum seeker is denied asylum by Switzerland but is instead admitted provisionally while enjoying refugee status defined by the 1951 Geneva Convention on refugees, the person receives a residence permit, called F refugee permit (Guidesocial 2021), also referred to as subsidiary or humanitarian protection. Third, if the application of an asylum seeker has been rejected and s/he simultaneously doesn't enjoy refugee status as defined by the 1951 Geneva Convention on refugees but cannot be deported from Switzerland, the asylum seeker receives a temporary permit, a document called F permit (Guidesocial 2021).

The three types of permits come with different levels of rights. Those with an F permit are not allowed to travel abroad and are not automatically entitled to family reunification. Those with refugee status or B permit have access to all these rights. In order for F permit holders to enjoy these rights, they have to first become financially independent in order to convert their F permits to B permits (Asile 2021). This limitation may be a source of tension for many refugees with such permits. It is expected that this limitation will push them towards lowering their aspirations and expectations and therefore accept any job in order to fulfil integration requirements and thus upgrade their permits to gain more rights.

Integration policy of refugees in Switzerland

For several years, the Confederation and the Cantons have noted that a significant proportion of refugees have difficulties to integrate socially, find employment and provide for themselves independently of social aid (Etat de Genève 2021). Hence, refugees were considered as the main group in need of specific measures and programs to mitigate these shortcomings. The analysis of Integration policy documents both at the federal, namely the Swiss integration agenda (SIA) (SEMb) and cantonal levels (Integration cantonal programs with a focus on the canton of Vaud) show that they widely employ the term "encouraging integration" to refer to the integration process of refugees that is expected to be rapid, efficient, intensive, and systematic. Based on these documents, it is expected that the implementation of different integration measures or programs to start as soon as refugees arrive and until their "sustainable integration". The latter is achieved when refugees enter the labour market or adhere to a professional training. Dual Vocational

Education and Training is also presented as the gateway to "sustainable integration" into the labour market and an excellent and well-tested tool, Switzerland possesses to integrate young people into the labour market.

Following the implementation of the Swiss integration agenda (SIA) in spring 2019, the notions of "case by case management" and "evaluation of potential" have also been introduced as central tools to achieving "sustainable integration". Through these tools, an "integration objective" is defined, which should reconcile refugee resources with the requirements or limitations of the labour market and society as a whole. In carrying out this assessment, the role played by "professional coaching" is highlighted and is defined as accompanying refugees in adhering to an integration path that will translate to either admission into a Vocational school or finding a job.

To conclude, Swiss integration policy is highly focused on implementing measures and programs that promote quick access to the labour market. Vocational training is perceived as an important tool and the most privileged educational path for refugees, as tertiary education is not emphasized or seldom cited in these policy documents. For the implementation of integration policy, job coaches and social workers are expected to play a crucial role in translation these guidelines into reality and accompanying refugees towards those integration paths promoted by the Swiss integration policy.

Methodology

In this study, I adopted a qualitative approach and relied on semi-structured interviews with 29 refugees living in the French-speaking canton of Vaud, Switzerland, and 23 additional interviews with social workers working in public organizations and NGOs or external integration measures in charge of the implementation of integration policy in the canton of Vaud. Switzerland has one of the highest migration rates of the continent, most of whom are Europeans (Swissinfo 2017). The canton of Vaud is a good representation of Swiss diversity. It is one of the largest and most diverse cantons in Switzerland. It is also a canton that provides a large variety of career choices. In fact, it is neither predominantly rural nor urban. The canton, with its varied sectors of economy ranging from agriculture to advanced technology, is expected to offer less career restrictions. Also, Vaud is one of the two cantons with a large variety of educational institutes which include

the university of Lausanne, schools of applied sciences, professional schools, and the federal institute of technology (EPFL). This is also expected to offer a wide range of educational and career choices[18]. I start by giving more details about recruitment, interviews, and data analysis with refugees before diving into presenting the different circumstances and conditions surrounding field work and data analysis of interviews conducted with social workers.

Field work with refugee participants and interview data analysis

While recruiting the 29 refugee participants, I made sure that their origin countries reflected the composition of refugee arrivals in the last decade. Participants arrived in Switzerland between 2014 and 2018. In fact, migration streams to Switzerland and Vaud have changed over the decades. While Switzerland has for long been a destination for employment-seeking French, Germans, and Italians. It has also received different streams of refugees during the second half of the 20th century and from the beginning of the 21st century. Refugees came from Eastern Europe (e.g., Yugoslavia), Africa (e.g., Eritrea) and Asia (e.g., Syria, Turkey, Afghanistan, and Sri Lanka). In the last decade Eritrea, Afghanistan, Syria, and Turkey represent the main origin countries of refugees in Switzerland (SEMb 2022) and also the main origin countries of participants. Table 1 in the Appendix provides detailed information about interviewees.

The 29 refugee participants were recruited through migrants' NGOs and public institutions in charge with refugee policy. During the recruitment process, it was important to diversify gatekeepers as much as possible to avoid limiting the sample to one profile (e.g., nationality, education, age). Additionally, I tried to have a sample that is representative of the main origin countries of refugees in Switzerland (e.g., Eritrea, Afghanistan, Syrian and Turky). Therefore, refugees were recruited from three NGOs, two of them mandated by the canton for the implementation of integration policy while the third one, managed by independent volunteers, focused on promoting the social integration of refugees. In addition to these NGOs, two public organization in in charge of refugees during asylum process and of integration policy implementation were also

[18] This section draws on material published as Author

involved in the recruitment process. In addition to gatekeepers, snowballing and personal network was also used to reach participants. To assess how their interactions with social workers and teachers had influenced their aspirations and future plans, participants had to have been living in the canton of Vaud for at least 3 years and possess a permit that allows them to work and study (Permit F or permit B). This was an important criterion in the selection as I could observe the role of integration policy on their aspirations and future goals only if participants have been living in the country for a while, have had regular contact with their social workers and have participated in language courses and integration measures (see Appendix).

Throughout the interviews, great value was placed on non-hierarchical interactions and transparency. Before starting the interviews and to establish familiarity, then I shared information about my own migration background and journey in Switzerland. After giving their oral consent, interviews were audio recorded except for two. Interviews were conducted in English, French and Arabic. They were transcribed in the language of the interview except for Arabic ones which were instantly translated and transcribed into French by the author. The interviews were conducted between October 2020 and March 2021. They lasted between half an hour and an hour and a half, with an average duration of 45 min.

During the interviews, participants were asked to talk about their educational and occupational aspirations and experiences in four phases: Life in Switzerland recently and in the future, life during the first year in Switzerland, life in the home country and life in a transition country. For each phase, questions focused on relating different trainings, education and employment positions occupied in Switzerland with their aspirations. In this paper, I use parts of the interview where refugees relate their experiences with social workers and other streel-level bureaucrats, such as teachers. For data analysis, I followed Braun and Clarke (2006) six steps in Nvivo 2020 to thematically analyse the data. After getting familiarized with the data, I identified and grouped chunks of material into categories like “Career counselling”, “permit”, “social workers”, “future plans”, “satisfaction/wellbeing”. Additional rounds of coding were performed, zooming into refugees’ interactions with social workers and experiences with legal status and integration policy and how this may have played a role in shaping their aspirations and

future plans. Then I identified recurring themes summarizing these interactions, focusing on the perceptions refugees had of them and the frustrations resulting from not just the circumstances surrounding these interactions but also the kind of counselling provided to them by street-level bureaucrats. During this process I could identify themes related to "perception of policy's focus on fast integration", "pressures of legal status on aspirations", "realistic aspirations or pressure to adapt aspirations to policy requirements". Findings are presented in the results section.

Field work with social workers and interview data analysis

To complete data collected from refugees and get a better understanding on the tensions resulting from the implementation of integration policy, it was also important to include the experiences and perceptions of social workers, directly working with refugees. Between March and June 2021, I interviewed 23 caseworkers working in state and non-state organizations in charge of the implementation of integration policy (mandated by the state). In total, two state and two non-state organizations were approached directly by the researcher, meetings were organized to present the research project and its purpose. Following these meetings, the organizations communicated information about the project to their social workers and those interested were later contacted to set up a date for the interviews. Interviewees occupied different positions, they were either generalist social workers who were responsible for managing various aspects of refugee life including accommodation, health, education, and employment, or specialized as they were more focused on education and employment and occupied the positions of job coaches (*conseiller en emploi*) and career counsellors (*conseiller en orientation*). Interviews lasted between 35 min and 2h30, with an average of 1h30. Table 2 in the Appendix offers additional details on caseworker participants.

During the interview, questions focused on understanding the profile of social workers (e.g., education, work experience in general and with refugees, motivations for working with refugees). They were also asked to talk about the challenges they face doing their job and those attached to working refugees. Additionally, questions also dealt with their experiences with the implementation of integration policy, their perceptions of refugee

plans and aspiration in addition to the strategies they use to guide refugees towards a particular educational and occupational path.

Interviews were analysed thematically and followed Braun and Clarke (2006) six steps using Nvivo 2020. After getting familiarized with the data, chunks of material were identified and grouped into categories like "Perceptions of refugee aspirations", "Experiences with integration policy", "Perceptions of their own role and mission", "Factors for career orientation", "vocational training", "realistic aspirations", "fast integration". Additional rounds of coding were performed to finally identify recurring themes such as "their perceptions of their role and the kind of tensions", tensions resulting from "fast and sustainable integration" resulting from it various tensions experienced by street-level bureaucrats during the function, such as "mission of street-level bureaucrats", "tensions resulting from fast integration and sustainable integration", "tensions resulting from their perceptions of refugees' aspirations: realistic or idealistic", "tensions related to administrative load" and "tensions related to refugee profiles: cultural differences, qualifications, country of origin, language skills".

Policy documents analysis

In addition to in-depth interviews, I also analysed policy documents such as the Swiss integration agenda (AIS), and its different annexes, including the cantonal integration programs[19] to increase my understanding of the general orientations of integration policy in Switzerland. After familiarising with the documents, I looked for information about the general orientations of integration policy, the type of integration offers directed to refugees, in addition to the main actors involved. I zoomed in at the parts concerning integration into education system and labour market. I also paid particular attention to the documents' sections where mentions to street level bureaucrats such as job coaches, social workers were made.

[19] In French Programmes d'intégration cantonaux

Results

In this section, the main results of qualitative interviews with social workers and refugees are presented. Before diving into the experiences and challenges with the implementation of "fast" integration, I first present the motivations and tensions surrounding social work with refugees, as this provides important information about the general context surrounding social worker with refugees and the conditions influencing the implementation of integration policy.

Motivations and tensions surrounding social work with refugees

Most social worker participants graduated in social work or another discipline of social sciences such as psychology, anthropology and political sciences. Some of them have a migration background, and few migrated themselves. Interestingly, many participants were more interested in working with refugees than social work itself. This often stems from both the curiosity to know more about middle eastern or another culture that is different from theirs and the interest to work in a multicultural environment.

*I find it really interesting to work with this population. In fact, working with this population in particular is what interested me and not especially only the work of social worker….I will not be interested to work as a social worker in another organization [Not working with refugees] (***Caseworker 8)**

Many are clear about their mission and what is expected from them, as summarized by Caseworker 3.

[Our mission] is integration, that people become independent as quickly as possible, whether socially or financially or ideally both….it is about giving them the tools, helping them to understand the administration, to understand the system in which they are, Swiss customs and rules (**Caseworker 3)**

For many social workers, working with refugees is not only interesting but also very challenging. The contact with a vulnerable and culturally different population adds more pressure. This often pushes them to question their mission, especially when it comes to labour market integration and the expectation to make a choice or have a clear choice in mind about what refugees intend to do.

*They are in another country, in another system. It's good that they obviously understand the system, but on the other hand I tell myself, but should I really insist on this notion of choice? Is it not a violence that I impose? Yes, a violence, a symbolism that I impose on people at this level. Is this a question that I should address or not? So, it raises a few ethical questions for me. I mean, I want to know if I am doing things right (***Caseworker 20)**

In addition to challenges related to the population they work with; the institutional context social workers operate under breeds various tensions. Caseworkers often feel overwhelmed by administrative load, the pressure to wear many hats at the same time, and the constant change in law and practices related to asylum and integration.

*It's a difficult job I would say with an important mental load not always because of the migrants but rather because of the system itself, the organization or the lack of internal organization, the incessant change of practices …….so we are always learning we can never rest on very solid knowledge, that is why we always have the impression that we are just beginning… (***Caseworker 6)**

To sum, caseworkers are motivated and highly interested in their job, especially working with refugees and in a multicultural environment. Nevertheless, they also face many challenges and tension related to both the population they work with and the institutional setting they operate under.

Tensions between "fast" and "sustainable" integration

To fulfil institutional requirements during the implementation of integration policy, many social workers view their work similarly to a project that needs to be managed. During this process, a monitoring system is established with various indicators aimed at optimizing available resources in order to achieve the ultimate outcome, namely, for refugees to regain their financial autonomy as quickly as possible. Due to the complex life course of many refugees, this situation is a source of tension to many social workers who are often caught between the institutional framework they operate under and the realities of their clients.

I think it's, what's complicated, is to talk about integration to people who come from very far away and who are still very fragile. And who certainly have a health to rebuild

*and then immediately, we are already talking about integration project, professional project. Yes, that's mostly it. They are in a phase of mourning for their past. The argument of the host country is, and we have this pressure behind, is to put in place integration measures so that they quickly find a job... or training. And that's what I find very, very complicated (**Caseworker 4)***

Many refugees sense the tension attached to the expectation of finding a job in order to integrate "fast". This is often experienced during their interactions with social workers, as many refugee interviewees feel that same strategies are being employed with everyone, with the goal to get them out of social assistance as soon as possible.

I personally think that [an organization in charge of refugee integration] have a method to integrate faster or to go to work faster, it is not about the quality of integration or quality of work, that's not the goal… For example, if I tell them I would like to work as carpenter or something like this, they will say ok, you can go as fast as possible… So there is nothing about my story, my experiences, my studies in Turkey it's not... they think that education in Turkey is not good, migrants' education is not good. **(Nijaz, 32, Turkey)**

When reflecting on their implementation of integration policy, caseworkers highlight the contradictions between policy expectations and the reality. This contradiction stems from the expectation that refugees need to regain financially independent and become well-integrated "fast" while at the same time assure that this integration is sustainable. Fulfilling these two conditions is perceived by many caseworkers as highly challenging.

We know that in Switzerland, given that the injunction we receive is to integrate people as quickly but also as sustainably as possible, it's a bit contradictory ….we need to find a middle between the fast and the sustainable ***(*****Caseworker 6)**

For many caseworkers, finding a middle ground between "fast" and "sustainable" integration is possible through promoting access to dual vocational training. Dual vocational training, considered by the Swiss Integration Agenda (SIA) as one of the main integration tools for refugees, is perceived to provide the latter with a Swiss diploma that assures quicker and more sustainable access to the labour market. This high focus on vocational training is reflected in the various measures and integration programs available to refugees. Although this could present many refugees with the opportunity to gain a Swiss diploma or certificate in a shorter time and therefore access the labour market

quicker, this focus on one integration path is often frustrating to highly qualified refugees or those with different aspirations. Indeed, when it comes to pursuing academic studies and other ambitious projects, the initiative has to come from refugees themselves who need to have the necessary negotiation skills to gain the support of social workers for their projects.

You have to somehow know yourself, because you know …. there is like a 30-minute conversation with them……. I mean [an organization in charge of refugee integration], so, basically, they will orient you, but they would orient you into a certain category if I would say. So, basically, if you have something in your mind, you have to orient them, it is like this, I mean….if you want to do something different, you have to orient them. So…..after I wrote them to see if there is a possibility for them to favour my application in the university, they realized that I am trying to do something, and then they assigned a "real" social worker, and we started talking about the things **(Omer, 41, Turkey)**

At times not everyone is successful in their negotiations with their caseworkers and end giving up on their ambitions to follow the path, that has been already paved for them, at least for a moment.

When I first came to Switzerland, I was thinking that it is like Iran, once you finish high school you go to university. I tried to speak to my teachers about going to university, but they told me that it is difficult and that I don't have the skills to go there. I tried several times, but it didn't work **(Nadia, 19, Afghanistan)**

To sum, both social workers and refugees experience tensions from the expectation to integrate fast. For social workers, the expectation to integrate refugees fast but also sustainably is paradoxical at time. Nevertheless, the country's developed VET system is perceived as an important tool to achieve this goal. While not all refugees would aspire to fit into a VET track, many adapt their expectations accordingly or decide to rely on themselves and use their negotiation skills when they have more ambitious aspirations.

Legal status, realistic aspirations and fast integration

Fulfilling the requirements of "Fast" integration is not only the concern of caseworkers, but many refugees as well. Participants are often concerned with finding a job as quickly as possible and becoming financially independent. For many, it is a

pressing goal to attain in order to upgrade their legal status from a temporary one (F permit) to a more stable permit (B permit), which enable them more freedom of movement and the possibility to apply for family reunification.

I would like to study for a trade job and complete an apprenticeship, it is my dream. But in Switzerland, I must have a B permit [i.e. a residence permit] I must be financially independent, if I find a job now, after two years I can have the permit .. However, if I finish CFC [the standard vocational training degree] and then work I will get the B permit after five years which means, now I have been here for five years, so it will be ten years in total [before he gets the B permit], it is hard for me, it feels like prison really, now I can't travel **(Samir, 19, Afghanistan)**

It is then no surprise that caseworkers often describe their clients' aspirations as realistic. Realistic in the sense that refugee usually demonstrate a good understanding of the system and what is expected from them, namely, the predisposition to find a job and fit into the various programs and measures put in place for this purpose.

*It's quite concrete… uh it's more like "I want to do this job", we rarely have people who say "I dream of doing this job, it's the dream of my life and so on"… what we often hear is" I want to work to change my permit and then have a stable situation" It is rather the economic situation that sets the objective than an idealized dream job and so on (***Caseworker 18)**

The tendency towards developing realistic aspirations, as explained by social workers, is the result of understanding the realities of the labour market and how society functions in Switzerland. The country is characterized with a heavy administrative system that is often difficult to navigate for many newcomer refugees. Caseworkers often highlight the gap between refugee competencies and their realistic aspirations, as many underestimates themselves and their competencies.

*I tend to have people who fit into the mold, who know that they are arriving in this system ….who are aware that they come from afar, that they are foreigners, and then that it is as if they are trying to stay in their place. So, you see, it's like, yeah, they leave with a feeling of inferiority, I don't know. Vis-à-vis other people who grew up here, so they do not dare to come forward and claim to go for tertiary education (***Caseworker 6)**

Staying in their place is often instilled through various experiences refugees have faced in their life, and further reinforced during their early years in Switzerland. Many refugee participants have had difficult times during asylum procedure and were unable to project themselves into the future during the uncertainties attached to their legal status and the life condition in refugee accommodations. During this time, many have received early messages from their teachers and social workers of what is possible and what is expected from them. Later, this sets the tone to the direction, their future educational and occupational plans would take. Later, the experiences with other institutions such as universities and entities in charge of degree recognition reinforced the idea that certain paths are more complex and better not pursued.

I never in my life thought about working in sales. One day my teacher asked me would you like to try the job of a salesperson in retail? I answered no never. Then almost everyone in my class went to work in a retail store except me. My teacher asked me again, I persisted. I said no because I always thought that the job of a salesperson is nothing. In my country it is like this. If you are a salesperson, it means you have nothing, you don't have a job. What I want is to do is work in the health sector, I tried several times to find an internship as a pharmacy assistant or something similar, but it never worked **(Nadia, 19, Afghanistan)**

As a result of the various complications attached to pursuing more ambitious aspirations, many caseworkers adopt a paternalistic attitude towards refugees with the intention to protect them from further disappointments and rejections. Therefore, they themselves promote more realistic aspirations. This is especially the case when dealing with young refugees, who, many caseworkers believe, have higher aspirations than others. This is often done through "awareness raising work" (Bonoli and Otmani 2022). The latter implies explaining "the reality" to them by providing them with information about the Swiss education system, the labour market and how it functions. It also entails, in many cases, not questioning the plans directly but making refugees realize by themselves through short term internships of what is easier to implement.

When I say realistic and achievable [project or aspiration], that is to say that …we have the dream and the reality. Clients [refugees] must not say: "I want this project" and that we tell them: "okay" without weighing the pros and cons ……to afterward come to

*the disillusion: "but I did not expect that at all" and that we start all over from scratch. This is very bad for the mental health of people (***Caseworker 15)**

To sum, the complex experiences attached to forced migration, limitations of legal status and institutional hurdles experienced during their first years in the host country create an environment where refugees tend to develop realistic aspirations and therefore adhere easier to the expectation of finding a job fast.

Discussion and conclusion

It seems that the main goal of integration policy in the canton of Vaud, Switzerland is to achieve what it is referred to in this paper as fast and "sustainable" integration. This implies that refugees need to achieve financial independence as quick as possible, but also make sure they maintain it. In doing so, social workers play an important role in translating the main requirements of integration policy to refugees through promoting access to dual vocational training education and managing refugee plans and aspirations to make sure they are "realistic" and implementable.

While the idea of fast and "sustainable" integration appears to be a good one, the implementation of this policy is a source of tension for both social workers and refugees, as it is often challenged when faced with the realities of the field. Indeed, reconciling the fast and the "sustainable" when implementing integration policy can be both frustrating and paradoxical, as it overlooks the complex realities of both refugees and social workers themselves.

For social workers, the realities of their job, namely increased administrative load, the pressure to monitor and report their daily activities leaves them with little time to actually do social work. Indeed, a lot of time is often spent in making sure that the objectives of integration policy are followed and quantified, which leaves less time for people's stories. This situation often breeds tensions because of limited resources at their disposal, not just in relation to time but also money. The catalogue of integration measures they work with is geared towards promoting quick labour market integration and access to VET system. When they are in front of a client with different ambitions, they are aware that their resources are limited to support such projects. It is true that caseworkers are not passive agents in the process of policy implementation, and they do have an important room of

manoeuvre to decide whether to explore and support other venues leading to more ambitious projects. Nonetheless, this route is more challenging as it usually implies more time to negotiate with and convince their superiors at work and also more money to support "unconventional" paths such as tertiary education.

When it comes to refugees, during the first years in host country many are still struggling with the aftermaths of forced migration such as unstable family situation, weakened physical and mental health which makes it harder for many to project themselves into the future and implement future plans that allow to fulfil the requirements of fast and "sustainable" integration. Still, many refugees express their motivation to fit into the narrative of fast integration and find a job quickly in order to stabilize their situation. This is often the case when their legal status comes with limited rights (F permit) and when they are pressed to reunite with their family left abroad, as the requirement to apply for family reunification is to provide proofs that they are financially independent and can fend for themselves and their family members. Others, however, point out the exclusionary and limiting nature of fast and "sustainable" integration. Indeed, they find it problematic that refugees are treated like a homogeneous group, who is expected to integrate fast and follow predefined paths that limit their choices and may not forcefully align with their previous qualifications and current aspirations. What is in offer is highly focused on encouraging refugees to find placement in vocational schools or become employed fast. It is true that vocational education has a good image in Switzerland when compared to many other countries around the globe, and offers sustainable and quicker access to a Swiss diploma and a job, Nevertheless interviews with refugees show that most of them are concentrated in those training that are unattractive or require low skills, such as working in a warehouse for men or taking care of elderly people in retirement homes or care services for women.

Having to fit into pre-defined integration paths is a source of tension to those refugees who decide to pursue more ambitious projects, especially during their interactions with integration policy and those in charge of its implementation. While few of them decide to rely on their social and cultural capital to stand strong and use negotiations skills to gain support for their ambitious plans, many prefer to fit into the mold designed for them and

adapt their aspirations to what is expected from them, as fighting another battle may not be a preferable option, at least for now.

Finally, the idea of fast and "sustainable" integration has its merit and good intentions, nevertheless it remains a simplistic attempt to deal with a complex issue and hence ends up creating various tensions for both refugees and social workers during the process of implementation of integration policy. With the arrival of more skilled refugees from Turkey and Ukraine, the tendency to view refugees as a "homogenous" group is challenged, along with the integration offers in place.

While integration policy is clearly geared towards favouring fast integration rather than "sustainable" integration or otherwise put, is focused on getting refugees out of social assistance as soon as possible. Both social workers and refugees perceive the limiting nature of this focus and would rather operate in an environment where various options are equally supported, to reflect the heterogeneity of refugees as a group. Nevertheless, institutional structures related to legal status, limited resources combined with the complexities surrounding the life of many refugees make the intention of implementing "sustainable" integration offers more challenging.

Moreover, the idea of expecting fast and "sustainable" integration is paradoxical. In fact, the implementation of sustainable integration, aimed at providing refugees with access to educational and occupational options more in line with their aspirations and potential, requires time. If we take for example refugees with temporary permits (F permit), implementing more sustainable option, in line with their aspirations and potential, is conditioned upon overcoming many structural hurdles which takes time that many don't have as they are pressured by the state and their personal circumstances to become financially independent as soon as possible. It is important to recognize however, that introducing the idea of sustainability in the Swiss integration policy is a positive step as the general tendencies of integration policies in the global north are embedded in the promotion of quick labour market integration to refugees as the ultimate goal of integration. Nevertheless, the issue remains the understanding made of sustainable integration which is narrow and requires extending a deeper understanding of both diversity of refugees as a group and the complexities resulting from forced migration which needs a different focus that goes beyond labour market integration.

Indeed, the main challenge with the implementation of integration policy, especially when including the notion of "sustainability" is that it is not solely the task of those organizations in charge of its implementation but of society as a whole. Therefore, mobilizing important stakeholders such as universities and employers appears to be one important challenge to overcome, especially when the latter may not feel directly concerned with the implementation of integration policy and expect refugees to fulfil similar requirements, regardless of their complicated life circumstances.

References

Auer, Daniel (2018). Language roulette–the effect of random placement on refugees' labour market integration. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 44(3), 341-362.

Berkowitz, Edward (1987). Disabled Policy: Americas Programs for the Handicapped. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Birger, Lior, Yochay Nadan, and Mimi Ajzenstadt (2020). Politicisation processes in everyday practice with refugees: The experiences of Israeli and German social workers. European Journal of Social Work, 23(6), 1019-1031.

Birger, Lior and Yochay Nadan (2021). Social workers and refugee service users (re) constructing their relationships in a hostile political climate. Journal of Social Work.

Bonoli, Giuliano and Ihssane Otmani (2022). Upskilling as integration policy: Making the most of refugees' human capital in a context of skill shortage. Social Policy & Administration, 57(1), pp.51-66.

Borselli, Marco, and Toon van Meijl (2021). Linking migration aspirations to integration prospects: the experience of Syrian refugees in Sweden. Journal of Refugee Studies 34(1): 579-595.

Brell, Courtney, Christian Dustmann, and Ian Preston (2020). The Labour Market Integration of Refugee Migrants in High-Income Countries. Journal of Economic Perspectives 34: 94-121.

Cohen, Nissim (2018). How Culture Affects Street-Level Bureaucrats' Bending the Rules in the Context of Informal Payments for Health Care: The Israeli Case. The American Review of Public Administration 48 (2): 175–187.

Cohen, Nissim, and Uri Hertz (2020). Street-Level Bureaucrats' Social Value Orientation On and Off Duty. Public Administration Review 80 (3): 442–453

Dahinden, Janine. (2016). A plea for the 'de-migranticization'of research on migration and integration. Ethnic and Racial Studies, 39(13), 2207-2225.

Davidovitz, Maayan, and Nissim Cohen (2020). Playing defence: The impact of trust on the coping mechanisms of street-level bureaucrats. Public Management Review, 1-22.

Derthick, Martha (1990). Agency under Stress: The Social Security Administration in American Government. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.

Etat de Genève (GE) (2021). L'Agenda Intégration Suisse. Retrieved June 28, 2021, from https://www.ge.ch/dossier/geneve-soutient-integration-etrangers/agenda-integration-suisse/agenda-integration-suisse-ais.

Favell, Adrian. (2019). Integration: twelve propositions after Schinkel. Comparative Migration Studies, 7(1), 1-10.

Hebbani, Aparna, and Nigar G. Khawaja (2019). Employment aspirations of former refugees settled in Australia: A mixed methods study. Journal of International Migration and Integration, 20(3), 907-924.

Hinger, Sophie, and Reinhard Schweitzer (2020). Politics of (dis) integration (p. 217). Springer Nature.

Keiser, Lael R (2010). Understanding Street-Level Bureaucrats' Decision Making: Determining Eligibility in the Social Security Disability Program. Public Administration Review 70 (2): 247–257.

Khan, Parves (2000). Asylum-seekers in the UK: implications for social service involvement. Social Work & Social Sciences Review, 8(2), 116-129.

Konle-Seidl, Regina (2018). Integration of refugees in Austria, Germany and Sweden: Comparative analysis. Retrieved from European Parliament, Policy Department A: Economic and Scientific Policy website: http://www. europarl. europa. eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/614200/IPOL_STU (2018) 614200_EN. pdf.

Labovitz, Eugene. M (1975). Race, SES contexts and fulfillment of college aspirations. Sociological Quarterly, 16(2), 241-249.

Berthold, S. Megan, and Kathryn R. Libal, (2019). Supporting refugees and asylum seekers in an era of backlash. Refugees and asylum seekers: Interdisciplinary and comparative perspectives, 1-14.

Lipsky, Michael (1980). Street-Level Bureaucracy. "Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services." New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

May, Peter J., and Søren C. Winter (2009). Politicians, managers, and street-level bureaucrats: Influences on policy implementation. Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory, 19(3), 453-476.

Maynard-Moody, Steven Williams, and Michael Craig Musheno (2003). Cops, teachers, counselors: Stories from the front lines of public service. University of Michigan Press.

Meyers, Marcia K., and Vibeke Lehmann Nielsen (2007). Street-level bureaucrats and the implementation of public policy. The handbook of public administration, 153-163.

Morrice, Linda, Linda K. Tip, Rupert Brown, and Michael Collyer (2020). Resettled refugee youth and education: aspiration and reality. Journal of Youth Studies, 23(3), 388-405.

Mozetič, Katarina. (2020). Cartographers of their Futures: The Formation Of Occupational Aspirations of Highly Educated Refugees in Malmö and Munich. International Migration.

Mozetič, Katarina. (2022). A help or hindrance? Highly educated refugees' perceptions of the role of civic integration programmes in accessing the labour market in Oslo, Malmö and Munich. Comparative Migration Studies, 10(1), 8.

Nash, Mary (2005) 'Responding to Settlement Needs: Migrants and Refugees and Community Development', in M. Nash, R. Munford and K. O'Donoghue, Social Work Theories in Action. London, Philadelphia, PA: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Nash, Mary, John Wong, and Andrew Trlin (2006). Civic and social integration: A new field of social work practice with immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. International Social Work, 49(3), 345–363.

Otmani, Ihssane (2023) Towards a 'low ambition equilibrium': managing refugee aspirations during the integration process in Switzerland, Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, DOI: 10.1080/1369183X.2023.2235902

Phillimore, Jenny (2021). 'Refugee-integration-opportunity structures: shifting the focus from refugees to context'. Journal of Refugee Studies 34(2): 1946-1966.

Piętka-Nykaza, Emilia (2015). 'I want to do anything which is decent and relates to my profession': refugee doctors' and teachers' strategies of re-entering their professions in the UK. Journal of Refugee Studies, 28(4), 523-543.

Potocky, Miriam, and Mitra Naseh (2020). Best practices for social work with refugees and immigrants. Columbia University Press.

Potocky-Tripodi, Miriam (2002). Best social work practice with immigrants and refugees. New York.

Schinkel, Willem (2018). Against 'immigrant integration': For an end to neocolonial knowledge production. Comparative migration studies, 6(1), 1-17.

Schneider, Lynn (2018). Access and aspirations: Syrian refugees' experiences of entering higher education in Germany. Research in Comparative and International Education, 13(3), 457-478.

Shakya, Yogendra B., Sepali Guruge, Michaela Hynie, Arzo Akbari, Mohamed Malik, Sheila Htoo, Azza Khogali, Stella Abiyo Mona, Rabea Murtaza, and Sarah Alley (2012). Aspirations for higher education among newcomer refugee youth in Toronto: Expectations, challenges, and strategies. Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees, 27(2), 65-78.

State Secretariat for migration (SEMa) (2021). Politique suisse en matière d'intégration. Rretrieved June 28, 2021, from https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/fr/home/integration-einbuergerung/integrationsfoerderung/politik.html

State Secretariat for migration (SEMb) (2022). Archives dès 1994. Retrieved March 01, 2022, from https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/fr/home/publiservice/statistik/asylstatistik/archiv.html

Stevenson, Jacqueline, and John Willott (2007). 'The aspiration and access to higher education of teenage refugees in the UK'. Compare 37(5): 671-687.

Sue, Stanley, and Sumie Okazaki (1990). 'Asian-American educational achievements: A phenomenon in search of an explanation'. American psychologist 5(8): 913.

Swissinfo (2017). Switzerland, land of European immigration. Retrieved March 01, 2022, from https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/willkommen-bienvenue_switzerland-land-of-european-immigration/42941390#:~:text=Switzerland%20has%20one%20of%20the,years%20of%20immigration%20to%20Switzerland

Udayar, Shagini, Laurence Fedrigo, Federico Durante, Eva Clot-Siegrist, and Jonas Masdonati (2021). Labour market integration of young refugees and asylum seekers: A look at perceived barriers and resources. British Journal of Guidance & Counselling, 49(2), 287-303.

Valenta, Marko, and Nihad Bunar (2010). State assisted integration: Refugee integration policies in Scandinavian welfare states: The Swedish and Norwegian experience. Journal of refugee studies, 23(4), 463-483.

Valtonen, Kathleen (2001). Immigrant integration in the welfare state: Social work's growing arena. European Journal of Social Work, 4(3), 247–262

Van Heelsum, Anja (2017). Aspirations and frustrations: experiences of recent refugees in the Netherlands. Ethnic and Racial Studies, 40(13), 2137-2150.

Van Raemdonck, Laura, Noel Clycq, and Rilke Mahieu (2021). Using the capability approach in social work with unaccompanied young adult refugees. Journal of Social Work

Winter, Søren C (2002). Explaining street-level bureaucratic behavior in social and regulatory policies. In annual meeting of the American Political Science Association in Boston (Vol. 29).

Appendix

- *Table 1: Profile of participants*

Participant[20]	Age	Gender	Type of permit	Country of origin	In Switzerland since	Qualifications
Faven	28	F	F refugee	Eritrea	2014	8th grade
Fatimeh	25	F	B	Somalia	2017	First year university
Ali	22	M	F	Afghanistan	2015	10th grade
Jemal	40	M	B	Eritrea	2016	Bachelor's degree in medical sciences
Samir	19	M	F	Afghanistan	2015	Primary school
Mussawa	36	M	B	Eritrea	2015	Completed the 12th grade

[20] Fictitious names. Participants' names were changes to protect their identity.

Marjani	31	F	B	Ethiopia	2015	Completed the 12th grade
Nadia	19	F	F	Afghanistan	2015	Primary school
Aymen	23	M	F	Afghanistan	2015	First year university interrupted because of war
Youssef	25	M	F	Syria	2017	2nd year bachelor's in economics interrupted because of war
Nawaz	23	M	F	Afghanistan	2015	Primary school
Aya	32	F	F	Syria	2017	2nd year bachelor's in economics interrupted because of war
Sara	22	F	F	Afghanistan	2015	Primary school
Farid	26	M	F	Afghanistan	2015	Primary school
Omer	41	M	B	Turkey	2018	Master's degree in economics

Murad	34	M	B resettlement	Syria	2016	Engineering degree
Tesfay	35	M	B	Eritrea	2014	8th grade
Petros	29	M	B	Eritrea	2016	Completed 12th grade+ one-year training certificate in accounting
Bassel	29	M	B	Syria	2015	First year university interrupted because of war
Robel	29	M	B	Eritrea	2015	Completed 12th grade+ one-year training certificate in medical sciences
Nijaz	32	M	B	Turkey	2018	Completed a bachelor's/master's degree in his country. Worked in his field in his home country

Samuel	32	M	B	Eritrea	2017	11th grade
Farzad	29	M	B	Afghanistan	2017	Completed 12th grade+ one-year training as a policeman
Burak	26	M	B	Turkey	2018	Started but didn't finish high school in his home country
Ahmet	38	M	B	Turkey	2018	Completed master's degree in law and public administration and worked as a judge in his home country
Taim	27	M	F	Country not specified	2014-2015	Completed one-year bachelor's degree
Omari	26	M	B	Eritrea	2014	Didn't finish compulsory school
Anwar	29	M	F refugee	Iran	2016	Completed a degree in engineering in his home country

Yildiz	35	M	B	Turkey	2018	Completed a master's degree in criminal sciences, worked as army officer.

Source: Table constructed from own data by author

- *Table 2: List of case workers interviewed in Switzerland (Vaud)*

Case worker designation	**Position**	**Organization type**
Caseworker S1	Social worker	**Public organization in charge of refugee status**
Caseworker S2	Social worker	**Public organization in charge of refugee status**
Caseworker S3	Social worker	**Public organization in charge of refugee status**
Caseworker S4	Social worker	**Public organization in charge of refugee status**
Caseworker S5	Social worker	**Public organization in charge of refugee status**
Caseworker S6	Social worker	**Public organization in charge of refugee status**
Caseworker S7	Social worker	**Public organization in charge of refugee status**
Caseworker S8	Social worker	**Public organization in charge of refugee status**

Caseworker S9	Social worker	**Public organization in charge of refugee status**
Caseworker S10	Social worker	**Public organization in charge of temporary humanitarian status**
Caseworker S11	Social worker	**Public organization in charge of temporary humanitarian status**
Caseworker S12	Social worker	**Public organization in charge of temporary humanitarian status**
Caseworker S13	Social worker	**Public organization in charge of temporary humanitarian status**
Caseworker S14	Social worker	**Public organization in charge of temporary humanitarian status**
Caseworker S15	Job coach and career orientation	**Public organization in charge of temporary humanitarian status**
Caseworker S16	Job coach and career orientation	**Public organization in charge of temporary humanitarian status**
Caseworker S17	Job coach and career orientation	**Public organization in charge of temporary humanitarian status**
Caseworker S18	Job coach and career orientation	**Public organization in charge of temporary humanitarian status**
Caseworker S19	Job coach and career orientation	**NGO in charge of the implementation of integration measures**
Caseworker S20	Job coach and career orientation	**NGO in charge of the implementation of integration measures**
Caseworker S21	Job coach and career orientation	**NGO in charge of the implementation of integration measures**
Caseworker S22	Job coach and career orientation	**NGO in charge of the implementation of integration measures**

UNIL | Université de Lausanne

Paper III: Do institutions matter for refugee integration? A comparison of case worker integration strategies in Switzerland and Canada

Ihssane Otmani[1] and Giuliano Bonoli[2]

[1]Swiss Graduate School of Public Administration (IDHEAP), University of Lausanne

[2]Swiss Graduate School of Public Administration (IDHEAP), University of Lausanne

UNIL | Université de Lausanne

Abstract

In this paper we explore the extent to which differences in institutional settings, with a focus on the human capital formation regime, shape the integration trajectories proposed to recently-arrived refugees. To do so, we compare two countries, Switzerland and Canada, which are committed to implementing integration policy for refugees and belong to two different human capital formation regimes. We investigate whether ending up in a country with a collective skill formation system (Switzerland) limits refugee integration paths but "managing" their aspirations and directing them towards predefined options compared to a country with a more liberal human capital formation regime (Canada) where refugees may have more room of manoeuvre to fulfil their aspirations. In order to test this hypothesis, we used qualitative vignettes and compared integration paths proposed by case workers to refugees in a Swiss Canton (Vaud) and in a Canadian Province (Québec). We found that overall, the integration paths proposed are very similar, regardless of the institutional context. We reason that this largely unexpected result is due to the similarities in the overall orientation of integration policy; the similarity of the policy problem and labour market shortage in the low skill segment experienced in both countries.

Keywords: Refugees, Aspirations, Integration policy, education system, Street level bureaucrats

Introduction

This paper contributes to the current debate on refugee integration in the global north by examining how differences in institutional settings, with a focus on the human capital formation regime, influence the ways in which refuges are supported in defining which integration path to pursue and which to reconsider. Most refugee receiving countries have developed integration policies that aim at promoting access to employment. These policies include various measures, such as training, coaching, work experience schemes and so forth. The objective of these interventions is to provide the skills that will allow refugees to integrate the labour market quicker.

Refugee integration policy relies on existing institutional structures. In this paper we are particularly interested in the human capital formation regime (Iversen and Stephens 2008), that is generally largely mobilised to provide refugees with marketable skills. More specifically, we are interested in contrasting refugee support in a country with a collective skill formation system (Trampusch and Busemeyer 2012), where dual vocational training plays a predominant role in generating the human capital the country needs, i.e., Switzerland, versus one with a liberal human capital formation system, where tertiary education plays a considerably bigger role, i.e., Canada (Iversen and Stephens 2008).

Collective skill formation systems (CSFS) rely on the cooperation of various actors, most notably employers, their representatives, the state, and the trade unions. Together, these actors run the vocational training system where training is provided partly in schools, and partly in firms. That is why collective skill formation systems are also known as dual vocational training systems. The involvement of employers has several advantages. First, since they participate in the elaboration of the curricula, employers can make sure that the skills taught reflect well their needs. Second, by providing work-place based training, CSFS make sure that trainees learn not only professional skills but the non-cognitive skills that are so important for succeeding in the labour market (Kautz et al 2014). One consequence of this way of organising vocational training is that the countries, which run a collective skill formation system have some of the lowest youth unemployment rate in the OECD.

Given the above, it is not surprising that countries with a collective skill formation system tend to rely on it for refugee integration. This is the case in Germany, which developed an elaborated support system for facilitating access to VET for recently arrived refugees. This included among other things, preparatory pre-apprenticeship programmes, help in finding an apprenticeship position, and social support throughout the duration of the apprenticeship (Jørgensen et al 2021). Austria and Denmark have also used the VET system to promote refugee integration, though with less adaptations in comparison to Germany (Jørgensen et al 2021). Similarly, Switzerland has also invested considerably in a VET based refugee integration strategy, most notably with a pre-apprenticeship programme designed specifically for refugees (Anonymous Reference 1).

In this paper, we are interested in investigating how differences in the human capital formation regimes between two countries, committed to an integration policy for refugees and put substantial efforts in promoting it, shape the support refugees receive, particularly in the ways their educational and occupational aspirations are accommodated. We argue that is an important aspect to be considered when studying refugee integration as it enlightens us about the different mechanisms in play that may explain why certain integration trajectories are more favoured than others. In fact, earlier research on aspirations highlighted that understanding how aspirations are formed play an important role in shedding light on social inequalities and how they continue to be reproduced (see e.g., Blau and Duncan 1967; Sewell and Shah 1968). While research on refugee aspirations conclude that refugees have high occupational and educational aspirations, especially when it comes to tertiary education (e.g., Shakya et al. 2010; Schneider 2018), little is known about how these aspirations are accommodated during the implementation of integration policy and whether major differences are observed depending on institutional settings in place. Our hypothesis is that the type of the human capital formation regime in a country will highly influence how refugee aspirations are considered. Indeed, it may be the case that ending up in a country with a collective skill formation system such as Switzerland would translate into channelling educational aspirations towards vocational training, making it difficult for refugees who wish to pursue tertiary education to do so. On the contrary, in countries such as Canada, refugees

may not have access to a highly performant dual vocational training similar to Switzerland, nonetheless, we expect that in a liberal human capital formation regime, they will have more freedom and support to pursue ambitious educational aspirations, such as tertiary education.

In order to explore this question, we decided to compare the refugee integration strategies devised by case workers in two settings that reflect well the opposition between a collective and a liberal skill/human capital formation system: the Swiss canton of Vaud and the Canadian province of Quebec. In order to collect comparable evidence, we submitted identical qualitative vignettes describing four hypothetical refugee profiles to case workers in charge with supporting refugees in the two countries, and asked respondents to explain how they would support the integration for each hypothetical refugee profile. Our expectation is that in Switzerland, most/all profiles would be directed towards vocational training and therefore their aspirations would be "managed" towards this direction while in Canada refugee aspirations will be more accommodated and hence, they will be given more freedom in choosing their integration path, with university education clearly being one possible option.

The paper is structured in the following way. First, we elaborate on our theoretical expectations and specifically on the reason why we expect aspirations management, in the sense of negotiating and redirecting aspirations towards pre-defined options supported by integration policy, to play out differently in Switzerland and in Canada. Second, we provide some contextual information by presenting integration policy in the two countries. We then move on to discuss our methodology. The next section presents the results obtained in the interviews with case workers, and the final section concludes.

Theory

Research on refugee integration has shown that in most western countries, refugees are one of the groups that is most at risk of permanent exclusion from the labour market (e.g.Brell et al 2020, Bevelander and Pendakur 2014). For certain, this outcome is the result of various factors related to refugees' personal characteristics such as mental health, lack of marketable human capital, the capacity to learn a language and adjusting to a new culture (e.g., Morice et al 2021; Ligabue 2018; Hamburger et al 2018, Ullman et al 2015;

Phillimore 2011). Moreover, structural factors related to legal status and asylum procedure are also found to have a negative impact on refugees' employment prospects as it makes it harder for them to project themselves into the future due to the uncertainties of their status (e.g., Hainmueller et al 2016; Hynie 2018; Van Heeslum 2018). In addition, research has also pointed out to the negative impact of institutional hurdles attached to degree recognition and access to higher education (e.g., Sonntag 2018) which end up limiting both refugees' access to the labour market and their choices to unskilled and unattractive jobs (Colic-Peisker and Tilbury 2006).

Difficulties notwithstanding, host countries have developed various integration programs targeted towards supporting refugees in their integration process and overcoming the above-mentioned barriers. These programmes offer similar packages such as language courses, introductory courses to life in the host society and focus on achieving quick labour market integration (Konle-Seidl 2018; Valenta and Bunar 2010). While they are found to have a positive impact on employment rate of refugees (Bevelander and Pendelkar 2014; Valenta and Bunar 2010), these programs are often criticized for their restrictive nature and limiting refugees' educational and occupational choices to finding a job quickly (e.g., Arendt 2020; Hinger and Schweitzer 2020; Konle-Seidl 2018).

One important and under researched aspect of integration policy is the accommodation of refugee aspirations. Studies of refugee aspirations have shown that often refugees have high aspirations in relation to their integration. For example, many aspire to run an own business (Hebbani and Khawaja 2019) or wish to regain as much as possible of the professional status they enjoyed in the country of origin (Pietka-Nykaza 2015). In relation to education specifically, the available research suggests that refugees have high aspirations in this area too, with many refugees aspiring to access tertiary education, but then having to confront substantial challenges (see e.g., Dryden-Peterson 2017; Morrice et al 2020).

We are interested in finding out how these relatively high aspirations are accommodated in two different human capital formation regimes. In a collective skill formation regime, we expect refugees' aspirations to be shaped by integration policy so

as to fit into one of the highly structured programmes that are on offer in the vocational training system. To this effect, case workers may put in a non-negligible effort in managing aspirations so that they become compatible with what is on offer.

In contrast, in a liberal human capital formation regime we expect support to be limited to the acquisition of basic skills, and then access to more advanced education and training depends largely on refugees' own capacity to mobilise the (financial) resources needed. This expectation reflects the predominant features of the Canadian (liberal) human capital formation regime, based largely on tertiary education, but characterised by high levels of inequality. In Canada, like in other liberal human capital formation countries, individuals prefer to invest in general skills given the low level of protection guaranteed by the welfare state and employment law (Estevez-Abe et al 2001; Iversen and Stephens 2008). As a result, Canada is among the OECD countries with the least developed systems of vocational training (Estevez-Abe et al 2001: 178; Busemeyer 2015:191).

In this paper, we focus mostly on the difference in skill formation regimes, but we recognize that Switzerland and Canada differ also in other respects. Other differences, however, are the result of institutional complementarities (Estevez-Abe et al 2001) and hence can be expected to reinforce the supposed effect. For example, the two countries have different welfare states. Switzerland, which is generally considered a conservative-corporatist type, provides refugees with income support benefits that are unlimited in time. In contrast, in Canada, public support is less extensive, and many refugees are not supported by the state at all (they have a private sponsor, see below).

Additionally, another important difference between the two countries is related to asylum policy and the predominant legal status of refugees. In fact, as many refugees enter Canada through state or private sponsorships programs, many don't spend years in asylum procedure and come to the country with a permanent residence permit that gives them the same rights as Canadian citizens except for voting. In the case of Switzerland, resettled refugees are a minority (SEM 2022). Many come to the country as asylum seekers and end up with temporary permits (F permit) that give them less rights. In such a context, refugees (with F permits) have a strong incentive to quickly enter the labour market so as to secure their position in the country. As a result of these institutional

differences, we may expect that for many refugees in Switzerland, their aspirations will be directed towards vocational training or direct employment in order to secure a more stable legal status. In Canada however, and as a result of having a more secure legal status, refugee aspirations will be more accommodated and access to tertiary education for example will be more encouraged.

Therefore, we first hypothesise that case workers in Switzerland will be playing a more proactive role in shaping refugee aspirations, in order to make them compatible with what is on offer in the vocational training system. In addition, given the high costs for the public purse, refugees will be put under pressure by case workers to take the shortest possible route to employment. In Canada, instead, we expect regulation to be performed by the market. Case workers are likely to provide limited support to refugee aspirations as they are expressed, without necessarily trying to direct them in given directions. This of course does not mean that the aspirations will be fulfilled, as refugees will have to rely on their own resources or other private resources, they are able to mobilise. Put it another way, in the Swiss CSFS combined with a conservative-corporatist welfare state and less stable legal status for refugees, we expect aspirations to be regulated by hierarchy. For refugees with high aspirations, case workers will engage in aspiration management with a view to re-direct their ambitions towards vocational training. In Canada, instead, we expect aspirations to be regulated by the market. Refugees with high aspirations will not be discouraged from pursuing ambitious academic studies but will be largely on their own in finding the necessary funds (e.g., a scholarship, family, NGOs, side-jobs, etc.).

However, as refugees in both countries share similar challenges related to structural discrimination, low employment rate, psychological health, language difficulties etc (e.g., Kirmager et al 2000; Shakya et al 2010; Krahn et al 2000), a second alternative hypothesis would be that institutional differences between the two countries wouldn't have much impact on how refugees are advised by social workers. The latter would rather direct refugees towards those options that provide quicker financial independence instead of encouraging them to pursue longer studies for example, which require high financial investment without the guarantee of find a job after graduation.

Migration and Integration policy in Switzerland and Canada

Case selection

We selected Switzerland and Canada as two federal countries that are committed to an integration strategy, i.e., countries that put in a substantial effort in promoting refugee integration in the labour market and in society at large. We chose to focus our comparison on the French speaking canton of Vaud and the province of Québec. These two regions share many similarities such as the langue, French, which makes the comparison more possible as caseworkers will be comparing refugee profiles who are expected to learn the same language with same level difficulty. Additionally, both Vaud and Québec provide a large variety of career and education choices. In fact, it is neither predominantly rural nor urban. In fact, their varied sectors of economy ranging from agriculture to advanced technology is expected to offer less career restrictions. Also, both Vaud and Québec offer a large variety of educational institutes such the university of Lausanne, schools of applied sciences, professional schools, and the federal institute of technology (EPFL) in Vaud and the University of Montréal, University of McGill, University of Quebec in Montreal (UQAM) among others in Québec. In addition to these similarities, what makes this comparison interesting is that the two countries differ in relation to their skill formation system, welfare regime, asylum policy and how they go about promoting refugee integration. We dive more into these differences in this section.

Switzerland

Switzerland is a federal country and the responsibility for refugee migration and integration policy is shared between the federal government and the cantons[21]. The Federal government shapes the main framework of these policies, provides a large part of the financing, and defines broad objectives. The cantons are responsible for the implementation of the policy.

Migration streams to Switzerland and Vaud have changed over the decades. While Switzerland has for long been a destination for employment-seeking French, Germans,

[21] This section draws on material published as (Author and Author 2023)

and Italians. It has also received different streams of refugees during the second half of the 20th century and from beginning of the 21st century. Refugees came from Eastern Europe (e.g. Yugoslavia), Africa (e.g. Eritrea) and Asia (e.g. Syria, Turkey, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka). In the last decade Eritrea, Afghanistan, Syria and Turkey represent the main origin country of refugees in Switzerland[22]. In Switzerland, refugees can have one of the following legal status, if they are recognized as refugees under the 1951 Geneva convention and Swiss national law, they receive refugee status and a residence permit, called B permit. If not but can be admitted provisionally for humanitarian reasons, they receive a permit called F permit (Guidesocial 2021). The type of permit come with different levels of rights. While those with those with B permit have access to most rights, same as citizens, holders of F permit are more restricted as many are not allowed to travel abroad and are not automatically entitled to family reunification (Asile 2021) which is expected to have an important influence on the aspirations and integrations paths.

Indeed, when it comes to integration policy, several initiatives have been adopted in order to better structure integration policy, while leaving an ample room for manoeuvre to the cantons. Since 2014, cantons are required to develop cantonal integration programs that provide some structure to the various integration policies and interventions. More recently, in spring 2019, the Federal government and the cantons launched jointly a high-profile initiative known as the Swiss Integration Agenda (SIA). SIA aims to encourage quick and systematic integration. In this context, integration efforts are supposed to start as soon as the person enters Switzerland or files an asylum application and which continues until the entry in vocational training or employment[23]. The aim is to direct

[22] See https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/fr/home/publiservice/statistik/asylstatistik/archiv.html, visited 01.03.2022

[23] See https://www.kip-pic.ch/media/1357/integrationsagenda_bericht_180301_f.pdf, visited 28.06.2021.

refugees to the labour market or a vocational training that will enable them to attain financial independence[24].

Whether at the Cantonal or at the Federal level, Swiss integration policy emphasizes access to vocational training as the main route towards labour market integration. The biggest efforts in promoting the upskilling of refugees have gone clearly in this direction, for example with the introduction in 2018 of an "integration pre-apprenticeship" programme generously financed by the federal government (Anonymous Reference 1). This programme came in addition (and to an extent substituted) existing cantonal initiatives.

Higher education does not feature prominently among the options that are considered for the integration of refugees. Tellingly, in the publicity material used to present the Swiss integration agenda, there is no mention of tertiary education as a route to integration. Only direct access to work or apprenticeships are mentioned (see figure 1, appendix). With very few exceptions, Cantons have not developed dedicated programmes aiming to facilitate access to university education. Such access is (in theory) possible, but little is made explicitly to promote this path towards integration. Refugees who want to pursue tertiary education have to apply to individual higher education institutions and submit recognised degrees that allow them to fulfil the formal requirements of university admission. For refugees, this standard path is often unavailable because certificates have been lost or are not formally recognised.

This brief overview of Swiss refugee integration policy shows that there is a strong focus on promoting access to the VET system. Other routes to labour market integration are less prominent. Direct access to the labour market is considered as a strategy for individuals who are considered unable to succeed in vocational training, i.e., a sort of

[24] See https://www.kip-pic.ch/media/1357/integrationsagenda_bericht_180301_f.pdf, visited 28.06.2021.

second-best option. The promotion of access to tertiary education, instead, is virtually inexistent.

Canada

Canada is a long-time multicultural federal country with a liberal welfare state and a more traditional education system geared towards tertiary education. We focus on the province of Québec, that is given most freedom because of its special status as a minority in the country, which makes it to be likely most sensitive to questions of identity.

While the federal government maintains control over citizenship and is the final authority on immigrant selection, Canada has developed a highly decentralized system of immigration and integration, with provinces increasingly engaged in attracting and selecting immigrants to their region and providing settlement and integration services and with Quebec having a special status within the country which translate into a significant power over its migration and integration policy.

Through the Canada-Québec Accord (1991), Quebec acquired powers over the selection, recruitment, reception, and settlement of new immigrants, going well beyond that of any other Canadian province. This significant control of the province is based on the argument that Quebec is a distinct society in need to protect its language and culture from anglophone dominance (Paque and Xhardez 2020). Immigrant selection and integration in Quebec is rooted in the idea that the province requires a high level of control over this policy area to assure that whoever comes into the province is predisposed to adhere to the uniqueness of the Quebecoise society (Paque and Xhardez 2020). Consequently, immigration and integration have consistently been approached as part of society-building (Gagnon and Larios 2021).

Refugees in Canada arrive through three main channels: the private sponsorship programme, resettlement refugees or individuals who enter Canada and then submit an asylum application. It is worth noting that only those belonging to the latter two categories are eligible for public help for living expenses. Since 2013, more refugees arrive in Canada through the private sponsorship programme than through one of the government's supported programmes (Van Haren 2021). The situation is similar in Québec (Arsenault

2021). This means that most refugees in Canada (and in Quebec) are not in receipt of public cash benefits. One of the particularities of the reception of refugees in Canada and Quebec, is their access to permanent residence, which allows them to benefit from all the services offered to the population and having quick access to citizenship (in three years). This proves to be an added value compared to other western countries (e.g., Aranki and Kalis 2014; Baban et al., 2017).

The Québec government is strongly committed to refugee integration. In 2019 it launched a "*Programme d'accompagnement et de soutien à l'intégration*" that determines where refugees with public support are going to live and contracts NGOs to provide them with services (Arsenault 2021). Indeed, Emploi-Québec and the Ministry of Immigration, Francisation, and Integration (MIFI) mandate more than 140 specialized community organizations to carry out the responsibilities related to the reception and integration of immigrants (refugees and others) in Montreal and in the other regions of Quebec. These community organizations offer reception services, integration support, job search assistance, housing search assistance, French courses, etc. All these services are not focused or oriented towards one migrants' group as it is the case in Switzerland with the Swiss integration agenda which focuses mostly on refugees. Indeed, most of these community organizations provide their services to all immigrants including refugees (recognized refugees).

Methodology

In this paper, we focus on the impact of institutional structures, mostly the skill formation regime, on the support provided to refugees in their integration path. Instead of studying official documents or interviewing policy makers, and thus run the risk to obtain official answers that may differ from what goes on in the real world of policy implementation, we decided to interview those responsible for the last ring of the policy implementation chain, i.e., case workers who provide support to refugee in their integration process. In the Swiss canton of Vaud, social workers were recruited from two public institutions which oversee different aspects of refugees' life (e.g., accommodation, education, employment etc..) in addition to non-state organizations in charge of the design

and implementation of integration measures targeting refugees. In the Canadian province of Québec, social workers were recruited from community organizations contracted by the state to host and accompany refugees and immigrants in their integration process in Québec. In both countries, case workers occupied either the position of a social worker and were generalists responsible for managing various aspects of refugee life including accommodation, health, education, and employment, or the position of job coaches (*conseiller en emploi*) and career counsellors (*conseiller en orientation*) and were more focused on education and employment.

To each case worker, we submitted four vignettes depicting four different refugee profiles. The vignettes were adapted according to the country and type of organizations. For example, permits varied from F permit[25], B permit[26] in Switzerland to refugee status (recognized refugee) in Canada. The vignettes also displayed variation on two dimensions: potential and aspiration as shown in table 2. Aspiration refers to the level of educational and professional aspirations of refugees (high or low). Potential describes their educational level, work experience and language skills. The vignettes also included information about the legal status. The profiles were adapted according to the type of status catered for by the case workers of each organization. Participants were then asked to describe the integration strategy they would consider most appropriate for each of the four profiles.

Table 2: Dimension of variation of the four vignettes

	Aspiration – High	Aspiration – Low
Potential – High	Profile 1	Profile 3
Potential – Low	Profile 2	Profile 4

[25] Delivered for persons whose asylum application got rejected but could not be sent back because the enforcement of this order is unlawful (SEM, 2023)

[26] Recognised refugees

This empirical strategy has the advantage to allow us to observe without many variations in refugee profiles in both countries, how institutional settings shape case workers' decisions. By focusing on the (simulated) choices made by case workers, we are able to get a more realistic view of the support given to refugees than analysing policy documents or interviewing political and administrative actors. In short, our approach focused on simulated decisions, gets us closer to what really goes on in refugee integration.

In this study only male profiles were shown. The gender dimension is undoubtedly interesting, but its treatment could be rather complex as it would require considering additional aspects such as cultural differences between origin and host country or reactions to gender norms, which may drift us away from the focus of this paper.

Results

In this section, the main results of our qualitative vignette study from Canada (province of Québec) and Switzerland (Canton of Vaud) are presented per profile. We introduce each profile first and then we summarise the main strategies adopted by case workers in both countries while highlighting the role of institutional settings in influencing their decisions.

Profile 1: High potential and high aspirations

"Nadir, 24, is a Syrian refugee. He has a B / F permit/is a recognized refugee and has been living in Switzerland /Québec for the last 3 years. In addition to his native language, he speaks French level B2 and English level C1. In Syria, he started studying medicine but had to interrupt his studies in the second year because of the war. In Switzerland/Québec, he would like to continue his studies in medicine or biology. What would you advise him to do? "

This profile was designed to imply that this person possesses the skills and motivation to pursue highly competitive studies. The aim is to see to what extent caseworkers would accompany similar profiles in achieving their ambitious goals, the tools they possess to

do so, and the role played by the differences in institutional settings in influencing their strategies.

In both countries, Nadir is an unfamiliar, even a confusing profile. His project is considered ambitious and challenging to implement for different reasons. First, while more Swiss caseworkers are doubtful about his abilities to pursue medical studies, their Canadian counterparts have more faith in his competencies but are less confident about his financial capacities to afford such expensive studies:

*"We don't know what they learn in Syria anyway, that's why we need to go through an evaluation of an equivalence to see what the university recognizes and what not and if it's not medicine because we know the level of students doing medicine "**Caseworker S14***

*"It is sure that once accepted, the study costs here compared to the United States are much less but on the other hand in medicine the costs are higher than in other fields for example and then the university needs to make sure that the student has the financial capacities and that is not to discourage people, but it is to tell them what reality looks like" **Caseworker C9***

Additionally, the legal status is a determining factor in Switzerland as Swiss case workers pay great attention to this before assessing the feasibility of any project. This is less the case in Canada where refugee status translates directly into permanent residency which gives refugees the same rights as Canadian citizens except for voting. For Swiss caseworkers, when candidates have temporary protection, their integration strategy is more motivated by finding a path that provides their client with more legal stability in less time, or what some refer to as "sustainable integration", in this case, vocational training education is perceived as an important tool to achieve this double goal. Additionally, it is more difficult to gain access to universities with a temporary status, a situation that limits both caseworkers and refugees in defining the right integration strategy.

"If his goal is to stay in Switzerland and settle down, he must first take the steps to obtain a more secure permit. If his goal is to study medicine and he is ok with the fact of

going back to Syria when the war is over, I think it's very good to study medicine directly" **Caseworker S10**

While legal status is not of a concern for Canadian caseworkers, the role played by educational institutions, in this case universities, in addition to financial requirements for such studies is decisive in developing their strategy. Aware of the high requirements and costs of medical studies and despite having less doubts than their Swiss counterparts in Nadir's capacities, they also agree on the need of doing "awareness raising work" and developing alternative projects. "Awareness raising work" is a common strategy adopted by caseworkers in both countries to assess Nadir's motivations and introduce him to other alternatives. It often implies explaining the Swiss and Canadian education systems, emphasise on the magnitude of investment required in terms of money and time.

In both countries, Nadir is advised to opt for a less challenging path while still exploring other possibilities offered by the health sector such as biology, nursing or another technical level diploma (as a lab technician for example). In Switzerland, a high emphasis is put on the permeability of the Swiss education system and the possibility of pursuing his ambitious plans later. Therefore, at this stage of his life acquiring a vocational training diploma in the heath sector such as a labouratory technician is considered to be a good compromise that may open more doors to him later. In Québec, caseworkers are more willing to offer additional support in searching for information and contacting universities to get the proper knowledge required to support him. However, they believe it is better for him to first stabilize his financial situation before pursuing such ambitious projects which why considering vocational options in the health sector is considered a good option that provides the benefits of both acquiring a diploma and accessing the labour market in less time. After all, same as their Swiss colleagues, most of the financing they receive is geared towards promoting employment and less towards supporting long and demanding educational paths.

"We must not lose sight of the fact that we are funded to provide employability services so the people who come to see us are not encouraged to go for academic education, no that's not what I mean, but what I mean is that all the work we do is related to employment, so someone who has no objective of integrating the labour

market, we will not enrol him/her in a program which is financed by a funder[public organization], so in his case if the person had decided, he really wants to study have a goal to work then we'll support ….we can guide people but only we do not accompany them until the end, what does it mean accompany them? Like search for information in universities etc, we let the person do the procedures by himself because our main role is limited to job search" ***Caseworker C6***

To conclude, while there is more flexibility and assistance to pursue academic studies in Canada, not necessarily medicine. Due to institutional limitations caseworkers in both countries are generally more inclined towards exploring other alternatives in the health sector that are more "realistic.

Profile 2: High potential and low aspirations

"Anwar, 29, is an Iranian refugee. He has a B / F permit/ is a recognized refugee and has been living in Switzerland/ Québec for the last 4 years. In addition to his native language, he speaks French level B2 and English level B2. In Iran, he completed a civil engineering degree and worked for 2 years in his field. He wants to become financially independent and is looking for an AFP [Short track Apprenticeship]/professional training in a retirement home because he thinks it is the easiest way to enter the job market. What would you advise him to do? "

While not surprised by this profile decision, case workers in both countries showed interest in digging deeper to understand the real motivations behind this profile's drastic career change. While caseworkers in both countries made different hypotheses to explain such a decision by citing examples of similar profiles among their clients, this profile resonated more with Canadian social workers who were shared their experiences with migration and how many had to let go of their old careers.

In both countries, participants were aware of the institutional limitations related to degree recognition and their decisions were highly influenced by this. While some of them contemplated this possibility, they were hesitant to pursue it because of the length and complexity of such procedures. Caseworker C3 from Montréal shares her own

experience with degree recognition to illustrate the reasons why this may not be the best option to follow.

"I have known people, with whom, precisely they are doctors who converted to work as care takers in retirement homes, I studied with them to prepare for my exams (to be recognised as a doctor) so I know that degree recognition is really hard... here, is the country where there is the greatest number of medical doctors who became taxi drivers, so working as care takers is already good, I know it's a job who pays fairly well, you don't get rich but you are financially independent" **Caseworker C3**

The pressing need for financial independence was not a surprising factor and a clear argument adopted by many case workers to support Anwar in his plans but for different reasons. While Canadian case workers perceive financial urgency as a main reason to find a job and provide for family, Swiss case workers point out to another layer of complexity, often hidden under financial urgency and that is the legal status. With temporary protection, seeking financial independence at any cost is often a driving force behind such drastic career changes. The limitations related to legal status often influence case workers' decisions to focus their efforts on accompanying their clients in finding the quickest and most efficient way to achieve this goal, going for degree recognition in these cases is often not the best way to go.

"If he has the energy to go further, this person can really end up very far. There are some who started like that and who are today, I don't know, nurses or whatever they want and had obtained a B Permit to afterwards be able to do other training peacefully if they wish. At least he has a foundation, an experience that can open other doors for him" ***Caseworker S11***

While supporting Anwar in his choice is surely perceived as a quick alternative to avoid institutional limitations and make sure he achieves his goal of financial independence while gaining local work experience, caseworkers especially in Québec were not always convinced this was the best route to take. Canadian caseworkers were more inclined to support him prepare for a short-term certificate namely, Quebec

Attestation of College Studies (AEC)[27], in a field related to civil engineering as a good alternative to degree recognition, not forcefully to work as an engineer but more as a technician.

"Would he be interested in working as a technician instead of an engineer? does he want to have work experience in Quebec in his field but also start really at the bottom of the ladder as a labourer? ... because here it is, currently they say that there is labour shortage but I do not know because when I discuss with my colleagues they tell me yes there are jobs but these are manual jobs in manufacturing, professional jobs (jobs requiring more qualifications) are not that many and here employers always ask for at least two years of work experience in Quebec, when you have just arrived you cannot have two years of work experience in Quebec" ***Caseworkers C9***

In Switzerland, while at times, not completely convinced that Anwar's choice is the most sustainable option, it is perceived as a good for now alternative because the permeability of the Swiss Education System, allows him to do better later when he has a more stable situation:

"Anyways, in Switzerland, we can do many things later as well, so why not after she is financially independent (talking about a similar case to Anwar)" **Caseworker S1**

To sum, due to institutional limitations attached to degree recognition, case workers in both countries are less inclined to pursue this path and would either support Anwar in his choice of working as caretaker in a retirement home (mostly in Switzerland) or accompany him to acquire a short-term technical certificate in his field of civil engineering (in Canada).

Profile 3: Low potential and high aspirations

Vignette text:

[27] The programs leading to an Attestation of Collegial Studies or AEC are short-term technical study programs (between 4 and 24 months) and include only specific training. Therefore, there are no general education courses (French, philosophy, physical education, English, complementary). They are issued by the college or CEGEP (public school that provides students with the first level of post-secondary education).

"Farid, 31, is an Afghan refugee. He has a B / F permit/is a recognized refugee and has been living in Switzerland/ Québec for the last 5 years. In addition to his native language, he speaks French level A2 and English level A2. In Afghanistan, he completed police training for 8 months after high school. Then he joined the police and worked as a policeman for 4 years. In Switzerland/Québec, he would like to study law to become a lawyer. What would you advise him to do? "

This profile combines limited skills with high aspirations. The aim is to see the extent to which caseworkers are willing to accommodate high aspirations in a context characterized by various institutional and legal limitations, and what strategies they adopt.

While caseworkers in both countries agree that this is an ambitious project and that Farid doesn't have the required skills to pursue such demanding academic studies, those in Switzerland were quicker to disregard the project for being too ambitious, because of both limited skills and institutional barriers attached to the requirements of universities. Canadian caseworkers shared the same concerns regarding his abilities and the long time it would take him to fulfil universities requirements, however they tried to dig deeper, not necessarily to accompany him in his ambitions, but more to understand the real motivations behind them. According to them, such ambitions often represent a deep need of seeking justice. Consequently, instead of accompanying him in his academic ambitions, voluntary work, is perceived as alternative for cases like Farid to make them feel more in control of their lives and useful to society as explains Caseworker C4:

"He can volunteer...volunteering is something very important, it helps make peace with oneself... it's good, it's like a cure ... I know many people who in their country had very good professions and everything, but they started by volunteering, and they found a way to work but not like the same job as they had" **Caseworker C4**

French language is a major limitation and is used by caseworkers in both countries to justify the need to do "awareness raising work" as explained previously. This often entails putting him in contact with lawyers or legal professionals who can explain to him the challenges of his choice. The aim is to make him come to the realisation by himself that his project is difficult to implement and requires high investment in time and money

which, in his case are going to be hard to overcome especially if Farid has a family to provide for. As with other cases and in addition to institutional and financial limitations, legal status is a decisive factor in the Swiss context.

> *"He may need to do an internship with a lawyer, it is better when a professional tells him this is long and complicated than when it comes from us"* **Caseworker S19**

Despite differences in institutional settings, caseworkers in both countries suggest relatively similar alternatives, such as working as a security agent or policeman (in the Canadian case) or seeking direct employment regardless of the field. In both Switzerland and Canada, vocational and short-term trainings are highly considered for this profile as well for similar reasons such as improving his language skills and giving him quicker access to the labour market.

To conclude, for this profile as well, differences in the human capital regime doesn't seem to have a considerable change on the decision of caseworkers in both countries. Vocational education and short-term trainings are privileged regardless of the context.

Profile 4: Low potential and low aspirations

Vignette text:

"Tesfay, 35, is an Eritrean refugee. He has a B / F permit/is a recognized refugee and has been living in Switzerland/ Québec for the last 6 years. In addition to his native language, he speaks French level B1 and English level A2. In Eritrea, he did not complete compulsory school. He left school to help his family with farming. In Switzerland/Québec, he has been looking for a job for the last 2 years. What would you advise him to do? "

Caseworkers in Switzerland were more familiar with such profiles. However, in both countries, this was the easiest profile to deal with as his low aspirations also implies that caseworkers don't have to navigate institutional complications to accommodate his plans. Despite its familiarity, it didn't fail to raise questions to understand the reasons behind his two years unemployment as similar profiles are usually in high demand especially in Québec where general work is highly sought after by employers.

"There is a strong demand in the field of general work… the current context in Quebec is very favourable to professional integration, especially for jobs at the bottom of the ladder" ***Caseworker C5***

"Why hasn't he found a job when he's been looking for 2 years? so I would ask myself that. Are there other things that are preventing him from finding work? Does he manage to write a cover letter? Is his CV correct? Did he really search? Because there are many who find work. After that, it's not necessarily… let's say that it remains "small" jobs for many. Whether it's cleaning, delivery, taxi, taxi-uber unfortunately but they find it. If they search, they find. That's mostly what I notice" ***Caseworker S 10***

Caseworkers developed various hypotheses to understand the reasons behind his unemployment, citing for example mental health, physical disabilities, and discrimination as possible culprits. Otherwise, caseworkers were inclined to help him find direct employment by working on his CV and motivation letter through an external integration measure (Switzerland) or a placement firm (Québec).

"It's a simple profile like, when we receive people like that, often it's people who want to work, so they ask us to help them with their job search, prepare their CV to demonstrate the skills they have so they can search" ***Caseworker C7***

In both countries, the possibility of training was encouraged. The option of completing a short-term training, usually between 3 months and one year, was highly appreciated and easier to for professions that are highly in demand such as care or logistics. The possibility of longer trainings, namely, starting an apprenticeship in Switzerland or going back to school (finishing secondary education) in Canada were considered but after contemplation not very popular choices because of the high investment they require in time and money.

"Well, I think it would be necessary to find internships in different fields, so it can go from agriculture to other jobs that are accessible such as cleaning, maybe work in a store etc, it would be necessary to do several internships to see in which field, he would like to work in… Then, it is also to do short-term training in certain fields, but there are

not many options, it could usually be in logistics or a caretaker in a retirement home"

Caseworker S21

To conclude, profiles like Tesay are easier to accompany as they don't ask for much and therefore, do not challenge much the institutional settings in place. In both countries, the most popular strategy is to opt for short-term training or find direct employment. A more ambitious strategy such as apprenticeship or longer studies is difficult to implement regardless of the human capital regime in place.

Discussion and conclusion

The most striking finding from our comparative qualitative vignette study is the extent of similarity between the two countries. Caseworkers reacted overall in similar ways to the four different fictitious refugee profiles. This despite important differences in human capital formation policies, welfare state type and asylum policy.

We first expected aspiration management to be more prevalent in Switzerland than in Canada, because of the relevant differences in skill formation/educational institutions, welfare state and asylum policy. In reality, aspiration management was observed in each of the two countries. In both settings, a mention was made to the notion of "awareness raising work" referring to the idea of highlighting the difficulties involved in opting for more ambitious integration paths and making sure that refugees are made aware of such difficulties. Awareness raising work is an important part of aspiration management and does not seem to differ substantially between the two countries.

Our main hypothesis on institutionally driven differences in the way case workers advise refugees is mostly contradicted by the interview data we collected. There might be a slightly stronger inclination of Canadian caseworkers to consider university as a possible integration path to pursue. However, their responses to the two profiles with high ambitions were strikingly similar, and in both cases the efforts of the caseworkers went into finding a path that, while broadly in the same field, would be more accessible and where financial independence would be quicker to attain. In addition, the notion that the high costs of university may constitute a serious obstacle to studies did come up in relation to the first profile in the Canadian interviews, as expected. However, most of the

integration plans suggested were very similar across the two countries, as were the justifications provided. Can be added here

Why do we not see bigger differences in the way refugee integration is supported in two such different countries? We can formulate a number of possible hypotheses.

First, in both countries, refugee integration policy pursues a similar objective, i.e., fast integration in the labour market. This objective acts as a constraint on the work of the caseworkers if they would like to support more ambitious integration tracks. As our alternative hypothesis suggests, their work is clearly geared towards directing refugees towards the path that allows the fastest route to financial independence. On occasions, for high potential refugees, this strategy seems inadequate, and in the Swiss case, mention is often made of the opportunities offered by the permeability of the vocational training system. However, in general, case workers seem to have accepted that their role is to support fast labour market integration, regardless of the institutional context. Overall, achieving financial independence is perceived as an important step toward successful integration. Due to institutional hurdles attached to degree recognition and university access in both countries, caseworkers tend to privilege those paths that fulfil the requirements of fast integration which is another way to say faster access to financial independence.

Second, the type of problem these caseworkers have to deal with is also rather similar in the two countries. Refugees arrive with a set of aspirations that needs to be entirely renegotiated because of the total change of context. As seen above, refugees tend to have high aspirations, and fulfilling them is often problematic because of the existence of considerable obstacles (see e.g., Dryden-Peterson 2017; Morrice et al 2020). Against this background and without a mandate to support refugees in their ambitious projects, aspiration management and “awareness raising work” are the natural responses that case workers can develop. This happens regardless of the institutional context.

Third, both countries are experiencing labour shortages in various segments of the labour market, including the low skill one. Often the advice given to our fictitious refugees was to undergo short term vocational training allowing them to work in the

health care sector (as a health care assistant), in logistics, security or other low skill occupations. This is also an observation that applies equally to each of the two countries. While Canada relies more on university education for creating human capital than Switzerland, it has also developed short term programmes (less than a year) that are also used for refugees (*Attestation d'études collégiale*) and similarly to Switzerland, are perceived as a good alternative to gain a Canadian certificate in shorter time and hence have better chances to find a job with better prospects than unskilled alternatives.

Our conclusion is that the way in which refugee integration policy is implemented, as made visible by simulated decisions taken by caseworkers in relation to individual integration plans, is very similar despite the considerable institutional differences that exist between Switzerland and Canada. We explain this result with reference to the fact that institutional differences notwithstanding, the two countries pursue very similar objectives in terms of quick labour market integration and orientation of refugees towards low skilled segments of the labour market that are experiencing labour shortage. Also, comparison of the two educational systems in both countries (regions), shows that regardless of the differences in the two human capital formation regimes, they share similar structural barriers, reinforcing existing inequalities. While the Swiss collective skill formation system offers educational pathways that assure effective transitions to work, it limits educational choices for refugees with higher educational ambitions. The expectation that the Canadian education system is more comprehensive and flexible couldn't be verified as both education systems share similar structural barriers when it comes to entry to higher education, and which is strongly associated with social selection.

References

Aerne, A., & Bonoli, G. (2021). Integration through vocational training. Promoting refugees' access to apprenticeships in a collective skill formation system. Journal of Vocational Education & Training, 1-20. https://doi.org/10.1080/13636820.2021.1894219

Aranki, Dalia et Kalis, Olivia (2014) Limited legal status for refugees from Syria in Lebanon. Forced Migration Review, vol. 47, p. 17-18.

Arendt, J. N. (2020). Labour market effects of a work-first policy for refugees. Journal of Population Economics, 1-28.

Arsenault, S. (2021). L'accueil des réfugiés pris en charge par l'État dans les régions du Québec. Canadian Ethnic Studies, 53(2), 1-21.

Bevelander, P., & Pendakur, R. (2014). The labour market integration of refugee and family reunion immigrants: A comparison of outcomes in Canada and Sweden. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 40(5), 689-709.

Brell, C., Dustmann, C., & Preston, I. (2020). The Labour Market Integration of Refugee Migrants in High-Income Countries. Journal of Economic Perspectives, 34(1), 94-121. doi: 10.1257/jep.34.1.94

Bevelander, P., & Pendakur, R. (2014). The labour market integration of refugee and family reunion immigrants: A comparison of outcomes in Canada and Sweden. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 40(5), 689-709.

Busemeyer, M. (2015). Skills and inequality. Partisan politics and the political economy of education reforms in western welfare states. Oxford University Press.

Busemeyer, M., & Trampusch, C. (Eds.). (2012). The political economy of collective skill formation. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Colic-Peisker, V., & Tilbury, F. (2006). Employment niches for recent refugees: Segmented labour market in twenty-first century Australia. Journal of refugee studies, 19(2), 203-229.

Dryden-Peterson, S. (2017). Refugee education: Education for an unknowable future. Curriculum Inquiry, 47(1), 14-24.

Estevez-Abe, M., Iversen, T., & Soskice, D. (2001). Social Protection and the Formation of Skills: A Reinterpretation of the Welfare State. In P. A. Hall & D. Soskice (Eds.), Varieties of Capitalism. The Institutional Foundations of Comparative Advantage (pp. 145-183). Oxford University Press.

Gagnon, A., & Larios, L. (2021). The politicization of immigration and integration at the subnational level: electoral campaigns in Ontario and Quebec. Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique, 54(3), 696-716.

Hamburger, A., Hancheva, C., Özcürümez, S., Scher, C., Stankovic, B., and Tutnjevic, S. (Eds.). (2018). 'Forced Migration and Social Trauma: Interdisciplinary Perspectives from Psychoanalysis, Psychology, Sociology and Politics'. Routledge.

Hebbani, A., & Khawaja, N. G. (2019). Employment aspirations of former refugees settled in Australia: A mixed methods study. Journal of International Migration and Integration, 20(3), 907-924.

Hainmueller, J., Hangartner, D., & Lawrence, D. (2016). When lives are put on hold: Lengthy asylum processes decrease employment among refugees. Science advances, 2(8), e1600432.

Hinger, S., & Schweitzer, R. (2020). Politics of (dis) integration (p. 217). Springer Nature.

Hynie, M. (2018). Refugee integration: Research and policy. Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology, 24(3), 265.

Iversen, T., & Stephens, J. (2008). Partisan politics, the welfare state, and three worlds of human capital formation. Comparative political studies, 41(April), 600-637.

Jørgensen, C. H., Hautz, H., & Li, J. (2021). The role of vocational education and training in the integration of refugees in Austria, Denmark and Germany. International journal for research in vocational education and training, 8(3), 276-299. https://doi.org/10.25656/01:23753

Kautz, T., Heckman, J. J., Diris, R., Weel, B. t., & Borghans, L. (2014). Fostering and measuring skills: improving cognitive and non-cognitive skills to promote lifetime success. NBER working paper 20749.

Konle-Seidl, R. (2018). Integration of refugees in Austria, Germany and Sweden: Comparative analysis. Retrieved from European Parliament, Policy Department A:

Economic and Scientific Policy website: http://www. europarl. europa. eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/614200/IPOL_STU (2018) 614200_EN. pdf.

Ligabue, S. (2018). 'Forced migration and refugees: Trauma experience and participatory care'. Transactional Analysis Journal 48(2): 166-180.Morrice, L., Tip, L. K., Brown, R., & Collyer, M. (2020). Resettled refugee youth and education: aspiration and reality. Journal of Youth Studies, 23(3), 388-405.

Paquet, M., & Xhardez, C. (2020). Immigrant integration policies when regions decide 'who comes in': the case of Canadian provinces. Regional Studies, 54(11), 1519-1534.

Phillimore, J. (2021). 'Refugee-integration-opportunity structures: shifting the focus from refugees to context'. Journal of Refugee Studies 34(2): 1946-1966.

Piętka-Nykaza, E. (2015). 'I want to do anything which is decent and relates to my profession: refugee doctors' and teachers' strategies of re-entering their professions in the UK'. Journal of Refugee Studies 28(4): 523-543.

Schneider, L. (2018). 'Access and aspirations: Syrian refugees' experiences of entering higher education in Germany'. Research in Comparative and International Education 13(3): 457-478.

Sontag, K. (2018). Highly skilled asylum seekers: Case studies of refugee students at a Swiss university. Migration letters, 15(4), 533-544.

State Secretariat for migration (SEM) (2022). Resettlement programmes since 2013. Retrieved October16, 2023, https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/asyl/resettlement/programme.html

Ullmann, E., Barthel, A., Taché, S., Bornstein, A., Licinio, J., & Bornstein, S. R. (2015). 'Emotional and psychological trauma in refugees arriving in Germany in 2015'. Molecular Psychiatry 20(12): 1483-1484.

Valenta, M., & Bunar, N. (2010). 'State assisted integration: Refugee integration policies in Scandinavian welfare states: The Swedish and Norwegian experience'. Journal of refugee studies 23(4): 463-483.

Van Haren, I. (2021). Canada's private sponsorship model represents a complementary pathway for refugee resettlement (No. aqw4m). Centre for Open Science.

Van Heelsum, A. (2017). 'Aspirations and frustrations: experiences of recent refugees in the Netherlands'. Ethnic and Racial Studies 40(13): 2137-2150.

Appendix

- *Table A1: List of case workers interviewed in Switzerland (Vaud)*

Case worker designation	Position	Organization type
Caseworker S1	Social worker	**Public organization in charge of refugee status**
Caseworker S2	Social worker	**Public organization in charge of refugee status**
Caseworker S3	Social worker	**Public organization in charge of refugee status**
Caseworker S4	Social worker	**Public organization in charge of refugee status**
Caseworker S5	Social worker	**Public organization in charge of refugee status**
Caseworker S6	Social worker	**Public organization in charge of refugee status**
Caseworker S7	Social worker	**Public organization in charge of refugee status**
Caseworker S8	Social worker	**Public organization in charge of refugee status**
Caseworker S9	Social worker	**Public organization in charge of refugee status**
Caseworker S10	Social worker	**Public organization in charge of temporary humanitarian status**
Caseworker S11	Social worker	**Public organization in charge of temporary humanitarian status**
Caseworker S12	Social worker	**Public organization in charge of temporary humanitarian status**

Caseworker S13	Social worker	**Public organization in charge of temporary humanitarian status**
Caseworker S14	Social worker	**Public organization in charge of temporary humanitarian status**
Caseworker S15	Job coach and career orientation	**Public organization in charge of temporary humanitarian status**
Caseworker S16	Job coach and career orientation	**Public organization in charge of temporary humanitarian status**
Caseworker S17	Job coach and career orientation	**Public organization in charge of temporary humanitarian status**
Caseworker S18	Job coach and career orientation	**Public organization in charge of temporary humanitarian status**
Caseworker S19	Job coach and career orientation	**NGO in charge of the implementation of integration measures**
Caseworker S20	Job coach and career orientation	**NGO in charge of the implementation of integration measures**
Caseworker S21	Job coach and career orientation	**NGO in charge of the implementation of integration measures**
Caseworker S22	Job coach and career orientation	**NGO in charge of the implementation of integration measures**

- *Table A2: List of case workers interviewed in Canada (Québec)*

Case worker designation	**Position**	**Organization type**
Caseworker C1	Job coach and career orientation	**NGO in charge of the implementation of integration measures in Montréal**
Caseworker C2	Job coach and career orientation	**NGO in charge of the implementation of integration measures in Montréal**
Caseworker C3	Social worker	**NGO in charge of the implementation of integration measures in Montréal**

Caseworker C4	Social worker	**NGO in charge of the implementation of integration measures in Montréal**
Caseworker C5	Job coach and career orientation	**NGO in charge of the implementation of integration measures in Montréal**
Caseworker C6	Job coach and career orientation	**NGO in charge of the implementation of integration measures in Montréal**
Caseworker C7	Job coach and career orientation	**NGO in charge of the implementation of integration measures in Montreal**
Caseworker 8	Job coach and career orientation	**NGO in charge of the implementation of integration measures in Quebec region**
Caseworker C9	Social worker	**NGO in charge of the implementation of integration measures in Montréal**
Caseworker C10	Social worker	**NGO in charge of the implementation of integration measures in Montréal**
Caseworker C11	Orientation counsellor	**Orientation counsellor in a public school (in charge of international students) in Québec region**
Caseworker C12	Job coach and career orientation	**NGO in charge of the implementation of integration measures in Québec region**
Caseworker C13	Social worker	**NGO in charge of the implementation of integration measures in Québec region**