‘Establishing agency within the migrant integration policy process.’
‘A comparison of political agency within refugee integration systems in the Netherlands and the United States of America.’

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Abstract

The politics around refugees has become one of the most emotive topics in modern times. Whether it is the call for wider humanitarian protection or the increased restriction of their movement, the debate is vigorously contested. The so called ‘refugee crisis’ of 2015 only exacerbated these debates in Europe and highlighted the deep political divisions within the European Union. Across the Atlantic in the United States there has been equally heated debates, which have only increased in intensity with the inauguration of President Donald Trump. The question of integration of refugees is often an afterthought for policy-makers who concentrate all their efforts on developing strong immigration legislation. However, in light of the 2015 crisis the integration of the internationally recognised refugees becomes a key political and practical issue. How countries tackle this issue is key for refugees and the wider society alike. Therefore, the aim of this study is to contribute to the understanding of refugee integration systems in both the United States of America and the Netherlands. By establishing the political agency of the multi-levels of governance in key integration domains, it will become apparent as to whether there are any lessons to be learnt from either system.

Refugee Integration - Multi-level Governance - Political Agency - The Netherlands - The United States of America
**List of Abbreviations**

**Conceptual:**

*ESS* - Economically Self-sufficient

*IGR* - Intergovernmental Relations

*LoG* - Level of Governance

*NSAs* - Non-state Actors

**The United States of America:**

*CRRA* - Carolina Refugee Resettlement Agency

*CWS* - Church World Service

*HIAS* - Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society

*IRC* - International Rescue Committee

*ORR* - US Office of Refugee Resettlement (US Department of Health and Human Services)

*PRM* - US Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (US Department of State)

*RAs* - Resettlement Agencies

*USRAP* - United States Refugee Admissions Program

**The Netherlands:**

*COA* - Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers

*DCR* - Dutch Council for Refugees

*IND* - Immigration and Naturalisation Service

*SL* - Stichting Lemat
Other:

*CEAS* - Common European Asylum System

*IOM* - International Organization for Migration

*UNHCR* - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
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1. Introduction

The topic of migration, and all the issues surrounding it, has become incredibly important and increasingly politicised over the last decade. One element of migration that has dominated the debate across Europe has been the challenges faced in adequately dealing with refugees. This has been the normative stance since the so called ‘refugee crisis’ in 2015, which saw the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) fail to adequately deal with a substantial increase in asylum applications and a wider increase in migration. The majority of academic literature on CEAS is heavily critical and accepts that there is a clear need for reform of key components of this system, most notably the Dublin Regulation. This critical view is summarised deftly by Jorrit Rijpma (2016) who explains that the ‘refugee crisis’ was in fact a crisis of policy not numbers of refugees.1 This assertion is the basis for my thesis as I aim to contribute reflective research centered around the integration system. This is in the hope that this work can build towards policy reform of the integration system in the EU. More specifically, I will be focusing on the Netherlands and how a comparison with the United States of America could help improve the Dutch system of integrating refugees.

The policy area of refugee integration is important in Europe given the context of integrating many refugees that arrived during the so called ‘2015 refugee crisis’. Eurostat now has the number of first time asylum applications (non-EU) at 580,000 in 2018 down from the peak 1.25 million in 2015.2 This research has added value due to the fact this area is significantly under-studied. There has been large amounts of research on migrant integration but far less on refugee integration specifically, and the research that has been completed focuses heavily on the national government's efforts. Peter Scholten (2016) conducted one of these studies around migrant integration and identifies a clear weakness in the Dutch integration system.3 His theory


of ‘decoupling’, discussed in detail later, is one element of an ineffective integration system in the Netherlands. However, despite these studies being useful they do not capture the practical day-to-day implementation of refugee integration policies. In this more frontline reality there is greater agency from a wider range of actors. My attempt at establishing agency within the different domains of the integration process, will hopefully highlight the effectiveness of the two countries strategies and offer solutions to improve the Dutch system.

It is important to address the wider political context that this thesis is embedded within and most affected by. Despite populists falling short of expectation in recent European Parliament elections (2019), “that right-wing populism has gained ground in Europe in recent years is a well-established fact”. Right-wing populism is a phenomena that is not just associated with Europe and has seen dramatic gains in support across the globe. It is a political movement that greatly affects refugees and their integration process as many populist right parties will shape their rhetoric and policies around an anti-immigrant stance. This has huge implications for the integration process in these countries due to the fact it encourages the implementation of more restrictive policies but also can negatively affect the general public’s perception of refugees and immigrants. Although the wider spread of populism is far too large to be incorporated into this thesis, it is important to acknowledge and helps to contextualize my findings.

1.1 Research Question

As stated above there is a clear need to contribute work to the research on refugee integration and a comparative study seemed most suitable. My choices of the Netherlands and the United States of America will be elaborated in further sections. This thesis will contribute to the understanding of political agency within the refugee integration process in both countries and offer a conclusion on how effective the two systems operate. Given the theoretical framework in Chapter 2 that consists of synthesising political agency in a multi-level governance structure; in

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combinations with the migrant integration domains, as a realm for this agency to operate, this led to the formulation of this research question:

‘Within refugee integration domains, what political actors retain agency during the policy-making stage and does it diverge or remain consistent throughout the implementation?’

This question offers an interesting contrast between the Netherland and the US, whilst outlining a plethora of issues that need further research. It is important to state from the outset that this research question and subsequent findings does not assume that refugees are wholly passive actors within the integration system. I acknowledge that the dynamics of individual refugees are completely different for each person but for the purpose of this study I will be focusing more on the policy domain, thus deeming refugees passive in this respect.

1.2 Hypothesis

The research completed by both Peter Scholten (2016)⁵ and Sarah Spence (2018)⁶, that will be addressed in more detail in further sections, concludes that there is a fundamental problem with the Dutch integration of migrants. They both identify differences of policy and implementation between the national government and the local/municipality government. I acknowledge and accept their conclusions but I aim to expand the analysis beyond the two levels of governance (LoG) and research the effects of non-state actors agency within refugee integration. With that in mind and the use of my initial data collected for my research, a hypothesis was conceptualised as:

‘Increased political agency of non-state actors in the domains of refugee integration, would improve the effectiveness of the Dutch system and utilise some of the successful aspects shown in the US’

1.3 Literature Review - Relevance of Project

Jeroen Doomernik and Birgit Glorius (2016) highlighted the fact that most work on refugee studies, migration for example, focuses predominantly on the national perspective, at least as a starting point. Although this is understandable as most policies on migration and integration will originate on the national level of governance, it is unwise to neglect the importance of subnational levels of governance. This thesis aims to research all tiers of governance to establish the key actors at work throughout the refugee integration process in the Netherlands and the United States. The thesis will distinguish the actors with the more substantial degree of agency within the key integration domains, whilst determining why this dynamic occurs. Agency is an important factor in how effective any policy domain works and integration is no different. Evidence of how efficient the two integration system operate can be enlightened by identifying the key actors at different stages, within a comparative analysis.

1.3.1 The “Local-Shift”

This work will contribute to the emerging academic consensus around a “local-shift” in integration politics across Europe. As Henrik Emilsson (2015) explains, this school of thought has recognised a distinctive shift towards the importance of local government in the policy domain of migrant integration. During the late 1970s and into the 1980s migration studies concentrated on the national level as the main actor. However, academic focus has increasingly turned to the local level of governance. Many have argued that there has been an emerging “entrepreneurship” from local governments in integration policies. This combined with the resilience of national policies and the importance of the EU institutions, suggests a multi-level governance approach would be best suited to analyse this field. This thesis will contribute to the dynamics around the concept of multi-level governance whilst also widening the knowledge of agency in European integration policy. There has been substantial work on the dynamics

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around the multi-level relations and how the different tiers interact, either leading to convergence or divergence of policies. However, there has been little attempt at combining the multi-level overview with the establishment of political agency within the key integration domains. This thesis aims to conduct a comparative analysis of two case studies and their refugee integration systems. In establishing agency within the different stages and domains of this process it will become clear how and why this process occurs. Subsequently these comparisons will contribute to the promotion of an ideal form of political agency for refugee integration.

1.3.2 Agency Lens

Henrik Emilsson’s (2015) study on, what he coined, a ‘national turn’ of local migrant integration concluded that power in the process still lay with national governments despite the “local-shift” in integration literature.12 Emilsson looked at multi-level governance of integration policies through a power lens, attempting to establish the power that local governments wielded in this policy field.13 The fact that his conclusion contradicts the majority of research in this field, highlights the importance of viewing all political phenomena through a variety of analytical lenses. With that in mind, this research looks at the multi-level governance of refugee integration policies through an agency lens. This will be focused on establishing which actors have political agency within the different aspects of the integration system. A substantial amount of research will be focused on comparing three levels of integration governance; national level, local/municipality level and non-state actors. In an attempt to distinguish which of these levels has the largest role in supporting refugees integration, then how this differentiates between my two case studies. In doing so the thesis will be contributing an extra theoretical and conceptual analysis for further research to build upon.

Overall once my research has been completed I hope to have enlightened the dynamics of refugee integration in my chosen countries and established agency between the different levels of

13 Ibid., p.2.

Power was operationalised as a measurement of the local government autonomy or compliance to national government initiatives.
governance. I hope that this would provide evidence to support a solution for the current asylum system in Europe and lead to reform along the lines of my suggestions.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

This contribution is structured as follows: after the introduction in the first chapter the theoretical framework will follow. This chapter begins by elaborating on my multi-level governance framework and its nuances, including the policy dynamics characterised by vertical and horizontal political interactions. The chapter then progresses to defining both political agency and the integration domains. My third chapter outlines the methodological elements of this thesis and begins by addressing the research question and sub-questions moving on to the research design. This will include a justification of my case selection as well as my operationalisation and reflections. The fourth chapter consists of four sections: introduction/contextualisation, national LoG, local LoG, and the NSA LoG. Each section is then split into the analysis of both countries, and the key elements of agency, then a comparing and contrasting summary. The final chapter will be concluding and discussing the findings, including suggestions for further studies and recommendations for reform.
2. Theoretical Framework

Hein de Haas (2011) criticised “neoclassical” migration theory for its naive “one-size fits all” approach that predominantly focused on push and pull factors.\(^{14}\) He claims that traditional ‘functionalist migration theories’ have not progressed the knowledge of how policies affect migration, whilst simultaneously ignoring the wider determinants; in what he describes as the need to “link the micro and macro levels”.\(^{15}\) The neoclassical approach, according to de Haas, had assumed far greater migrant passivity in its largely neo-economic analysis and that there was a need for more complex framework that covered all the aspects of the reality of migration. In line with de Haas I intend to establish a theoretical framework that captures every measurable element of agency within the integration process whilst also providing a structure for further analysis. This requires a theoretical framework that is complex enough to encompass many factors whilst also creating a clear outlook for explanation and further solutions.

2.1 Defining ‘Migrant’ and ‘Refugee’

Before I establish my framework it is necessary to define and acknowledge the distinct differences between the terms migrant and refugee; whilst also establishing the use of the two in my research. The UN Migration Agency (IOM) defines a migrant as:

“Any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person’s legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is”\(^{16}\)

This definition will be used for the purpose of this research. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) uses the 1951 Refugee Convention as the basis of its definition for a refugee. Stated by article 1 of the convention, as modified by the 1967 Protocol a refugee is defined as a person who:

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\(^{15}\) Ibid., p.25.

\(^{16}\) IOM - UN Migration, ‘Who is a Migrant’, Accessed: 27/05/2019, https://www.iom.int/who-is-a-migrant
“Owing to well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it”.

There is a clear overlap in these two definitions but as acknowledged by UNHCR “confusing them leads to problems for both populations (receiving and migrating)”. The main policy difference is that refugees are defined and protected by international law, thus are entitled to a certain level of protection and support. Migrants on the other hand, are dealt with by individual countries immigration laws so are not guaranteed the same reception. This distinction is fundamentally important to my research as a substantial amount of the analysed academic work focuses on immigrant and not specifically refugees. This work can be utilised if care is taken to distinguish the two. Additionally, the integration of immigrants has a significant impact on the integration of refugees.

2.2 Multi-level Governance Framework

The thesis will be embedded in the overarching concepts of multi-level governance (MLG) theory. As addressed by Sarah Spencer (2018), traditional MLG literature has focused on the “vertical” interactions between different tiers of governance in which they overlap in both policy or implementation. This vertical perspective focused, in Europe, on the interactions between the EU and its member states. However, in recent decades the focus shifted to the relations between national governments and the local level. In addition to this shift, concepts that researched “horizontal” relations between tiers of government and non-governmental actors

19 Ibid.
20 Spencer, ’Multi-level Governance’, p.2037.
started to emerge at the turn of the millennium. The current literature has begun to establish the growing interdependence of all actors within an MLG system.\textsuperscript{21}

An influential attempt at standardising and categorising inter-governmental relations into the ideal framework for MLG was defined by Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks (2003).\textsuperscript{22} Their two types laid the groundwork for further MLG research but ultimately were too simplistic and failed to capture the nuances of MLG for integration policy. Francesca Campomori (2017) conceptualised two updated types of ideal MLG in her research on immigrant integration policy-making in Italy. Her two types were as follows: \textit{Type I Control MLG}, characterised by top-down vertical relations and a distinctive separation from non-governmental organisations (NGOs), showing a lack of horizontal interactions; \textit{Type II Participative MLG}, characterised by bottom-up vertical relations and collaboration with NGOs showing an increased amount of horizontal relations.\textsuperscript{23} For my theoretical framework Campomori’s theory will be most suitable and effective in achieving my aim to establish the dynamics of agency in the refugee integration process. In relation to my case studies neither country fit perfectly into either type, but at the outset of research the Netherlands was viewed as similar to \textit{Type I} and the US is most associated with \textit{Type II}. However, it will be shown that in reality they are far closer in positioning than assumed.

In an attempt to nuance my theoretical framework further I will synthesize Campomori’s (2017) types of MLG in combination with Peter Scholten’s (2013) typology. Scholten developed four perspectives for how local, national and European governments interact with each other when creating policies in a multi-level system.\textsuperscript{24} First the \textit{centralist perspective}, assumes a top-down relationship and horizontal interactions occur between intergovernmental mechanisms.\textsuperscript{25} Second the \textit{multi-level perspective}, which emerged as a response to European involvement in national

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., p.2037. \\
\textsuperscript{25} This would likely be seen when an issue is perceived as a national problem.
\end{flushleft}
policy and is distinguished by some form of coordinated interaction between various levels of governance.\textsuperscript{26} Third the \textit{localist perspective}, which consists of a government approach devolving power to the regional or local levels of governance, requiring a bottom-up approach to vertical interactions and substantial horizontal interaction with non-state actors.\textsuperscript{27} Finally the \textit{decoupling perspective}, which is characterised as no meaningful interaction between the two levels and often involved contradictory or conflicting policies.\textsuperscript{28} For my work on the agency of refugee integration each chosen country at the outset of my research resonated with a different perspective: within the Netherlands the \textit{decoupling perspective} seems to have the most explanatory power and in the US the \textit{localist perspective} would be appropriate. However, after completing the research it became apparent that this typology was too simplistic and did not encapsulate the full variety of interactions at play. It also became apparent that my two case studies were not as far apart as assumed, as already indicated above.

To resolve the typology issue, this thesis attempts to expand on the role of non-state actors (NSAs). Although identified in Scholten’s typology as part of the local LoG this thesis establishes NSAs as their own political actor with distinctly different and unique vertical and horizontal interactions. Overall, this contribution would advocate, in regards to refugee integration policy, the Netherlands transition to \textit{Type II Participative MLG}, that is characterised by \textit{localist perspective}.

\textit{2.2.1 Policy Dynamics within a MLG System}

To adequately formulate the theoretical framework of integration policy agency within the MLG system the two main interactions need to be accurately identified. The two main interactions are ‘vertical’ and ‘horizontal’, and although they are intrinsically intertwined they take shape in distinctively different forms. They also both play a highly important role in how refugee integration is formed and implemented, thus require extra conceptual attention.

\textsuperscript{26} Tends to be seen when an issue is recognised as needing multi-levels and often depoliticised.
\textsuperscript{27} This is most likely to occur if the issue is considered to require local leadership and is a highly politicised problem.
\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Ibid.}, p.221. This is likely when a policy area has multiple levels of governance involved that disagree on the root causes of the issue.
2.2.1.1 Vertical Interactions

The vertical interactions consist of policy interaction between the higher and lower tiers of governance. This stretches from the international level of governance, to the national tier and then down to the local or regional levels of governance. The concept of ‘vertical venue shopping’ highlights the fact that vertical relations are not limited to interactions between levels directly above and below each other (see figure 1). This is interesting if viewed through an agency lens and will be further explained. The measurement of these interactions for the purpose of research will be addressed in Chapter 3 when discussing the operationalisation of my concepts.

![Figure 1: Framework for vertical interactions within integration policy. (Created on Google Doc Presentation)](image)

2.2.1.2 Horizontal Interactions

Horizontal interactions consist of the policy interactions between actors based in the same tier of governance. I have chosen not to include the international level for horizontal interactions as it

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goes beyond the scope of my research. I also adapted this mode of interaction to include NSAs interactions with both other tiers. I had difficulty establishing the NSA LoG within the traditional vertical interactions due to the fluidity of NSAs agency across the levels. NSAs are usually incorporated into the local LoG so the existing conceptual framework needed adapting. With no organizational or logistical restrictions NSAs act as a separate independent LoG without being positioned directly below the others. The majority of horizontal interactions take place in both the local tier and NSAs LoG, (see figure 2). It is with that framework in mind that initially the US became such an interesting case study as the national LoG seemed to have very little agency within refugee integration. However, after completing the research it became apparent that it was in fact the local LoG in the US that had limited agency. The majority of the work is being conducted through horizontal interactions at the NSAs LoG whilst vertical interactions seem to be limited to financial grants and support. Also the US seems to have developed a system where NSAs have agency at the local level of governance, in regards to organisations that are inter-state; these lines of argument will be developed further in the analysis. Equally interesting is the city-to-city partnerships in Europe such as, CLIP and Eurocities partnerships on integration policies. In regards to the Netherlands this framework portrays a relationship where most of the agency is congregated around the national and local levels of governance, with the most common interaction being vertical. However, the research will identify examples of NSAs having far greater agency than previously considered at different stages of the integration process. These areas will produce interesting findings when viewed through the agency lens advocated in this thesis. Figure 2 is a simplified visual illustration of how this sort of MLG framework would work between the two countries.

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30 The EU for example has negotiated with other international actors (EU-Turkey deal), however to research the agency within such a large field of policy would require a far more expansive research design.
2.3 Political Agency

The philosophical definition of agency is “the capacity of an actor to act in a given environment”. This definition resonates with the use of political agency in this research and facilitates the operationalization of the concept, outlined in Chapter 3. However, to definitively establish agency within the integration process a wider framework needs to be distinguished. Without such a framework a comprehensive analysis of agency becomes increasingly difficult. The basis of my agency framework is built upon the work completed by Jouni Hakli and Kirsi Kallio (2014). They attempted to synthesize political theory and philosophy to establish a political agency framework that could be operationalised for further research and analysis. They see political agency as a coming together of three elements: political subject, political action and polis. Political subject is defined as an individual or group involved in the analysis; political action is any activity that is deemed political, which they understand as any action “concerned

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with addressing problems of living together in a shared world”. Finally, polis is viewed “as a relational realm of everyday politics”, in which the subject’s actions can be contextualised and constrained. Hakli and Kallio (2014) claim that this approach can help the study of political agency determine why certain actions are undertaken by particular subjects. This covers the intimate personal experiences in the private sphere; and the local/regional activism, in the public sphere. This framework will push me to identify not only the actors involved in policy but also the environment and conditions that explain their actions. The concept of political agency will be at the heart of my analysis into the refugee integration policies and help me establish which actors or subjects are most involved within the different domains.

2.4 Integration Domains

An important element of my research is contributing a solution to the current difficulties in refugee integration by making judgements on the effectiveness of the systems used by my case studies. This requires me to assess the effectiveness of the actions taken in the different domains of integration by the different LoG. Alastair Ager and Alison Stang (2008), identified four overall themes that connected different domains of integration, which are shown in figure 3.

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33 Ibid., p.183.
34 Ibid., p.184 and p.195.
These themes consist of: (1) **Markers and Means**, which include the public domains/indicators of employment, housing, education and health. (2) **Social Connections**, which is social connections at a local level and include three categories; **social bonds** (family and communities groups, often revolved around links to culture), **social bridges** (connections between the local community groups and refugees groups), and finally **social links** (social links between certain individuals). (3) **Facilitators**, which are barriers to integration that governments traditionally try to tackle that include; **language and cultural knowledge** plus safety and stability. (4) **Foundations**, which is the final step for integration and has just one domain; **rights and citizenship**. The theory behind this is that **Social Connections** and the removal of the barriers in the **Facilitators** theme will be part of the process that mediates between the public outcomes, from the first theme and the foundational principles, in the last theme. This framework is useful for my research and analysis in establishing agency within the integration system. It also allows me to identify and then standardise examples of successful refugee integration. Additionally, I

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37 Ibid., p.170.
38 Ibid., p.166-186.
39 Ibid., p.177.
will utilize the work conducted by Jini Puma et al (2018), who operationalised the integration framework of Ager and Strang by developing a reliable and valid quantitative measure for assessing refugee integration.\[^{40}\]

2.5 The Synthesized Framework

The theoretical framework for this contribution will synthesize the concepts of MLG, political agency and the integration domains. The MLG establishes vertical and horizontal interactions between the actors when dealing with refugee integration. The actions of the political actors will be assessed in each of the different integration domains. This will establish the agency within each of these domains and the wider efforts of policy-making and policy implementation.


Their method was to perceive the domains as pathways which had contributing ‘objective’ items, based on an individual’s behaviour. Puma’s methodology was extensive and used for a far greater study, hence I will be utilising the basic framework and strategy but on a far smaller scale.
3. Methodology

The research aims to establish what actors have political agency within the different domains of refugee integration. This aim is operationalised in my overarching research question which outlines the comparison between the policy-making stage and the policy implementation stage.

Main question:

‘Within the refugee integration domains, what political actors retain agency during the policy-making stage and does it diverge or remain consistent throughout the implementation?’

The question was conceptualised from the initial literature analysis, outlined in the chapter 1 literature review, in combination with my initial findings. Further sub-questions emerged from this analysis that will help focus the research and enlighten the political agency in refugee integration.

Sub-question 1:

‘What political agency differences are observed between the Dutch and the US refugee integration systems?’

Sub-question 2:

‘What, if any, lessons can the Dutch system take from analysis into the US refugee integration system?’

Sub-question 3:

‘In what way does increased horizontal interactions impact the effectiveness of integration policies?’

3.1 Research Design

The research will undertake a mixed-methods approach, utilising both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis to further the understanding of agency within the refugee integration process. This design is appropriate as the variety of data at hand requires a diverse data collection design that will encapture all aspects of agency within the chosen field. The
research will follow a convergent design mixed-method approach as defined by John Cresswell and Vicki Plano-Clark (2018). They state that “the convergent design is a mixed methods design in which the researcher collects and analyses two separate databases”, often qualitative and quantitative. The researcher then merges the two databases for the purpose of either comparing or combining the results for further interpretation. I have conceptualised an interpretation of this process as represented in figure 4. This figure clearly shows a progression of both forms of data collection to analysis to a merger/integration of that data and finally the interpretation of the findings. It also includes a passback mechanism between the quantitative data analysis to the qualitative data collection. This passback relates to the fact that the quantitative data collected will ultimately help shape the direction the qualitative collection proceeds. For a more detailed description of the research design, which includes a breakdown of the qualitative and quantitative aspects and overall diagram, refer to appendix 3 (and figure 8).

Figure 4: My mixed-method convergent research design. Based on diagram by Cresswell and Plano-Clark (Created on Google Doc Presentation)

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42 Ibid., p.76.
3.2 Case Selection

The two countries have been chosen for their comparative relevance because they each offer a different perspective and contrasting refugee integration system. John Gerring and Jason Seawright (2007) have categorised the process of case-selection into nine different techniques.\(^{43}\) I used these techniques in selecting the individual case studies for my research. Additionally, both countries offer accessible data for collection due to practical considerations of location and available contacts.

3.2.1 The Netherlands

The Netherlands will be used as the focus of my study as it offers a unique situation and issue to tackle. The Netherlands is a unitary but decentralised state, where the municipalities have responsibility over key areas, such as housing, healthcare and social welfare. However the municipalities have to work within the national policy framework, which includes migrant integration initiatives, and are heavily reliant on national funding.\(^{44}\) Peter Scholten’s (2016) extensive research, into the Dutch system, identifies that over the last decade there has been significant contradictions between the national government policies and the municipality level implementation.\(^{45}\) As the Netherlands has exhibited different degrees of agency from different levels of governance it offers an incredibly interesting case study in this field. Due to practical considerations it also allows for extensive research, as it is my country of residence. Additionally, once I commenced my research I realised that there was significant amounts of agency for NSAs, at various stages of the integration process, from asylum application to finding housing. The extent of this agency was unexpected and resulted in interesting findings. Gerring and Seawright’s (2007) ‘most-different’ comparative cases can be defined as; cases that are different on specified variables, for this thesis that variable would be the type of governance.\(^{46}\) That is what led to the comparison between the Netherlands and the US; however the results from my data collection proved that the two cases were far more similar than first anticipated.

\(^{44}\) Spencer, ‘Multi-level Governance’(2018), p.2044.
\(^{46}\) Ibid., p.90.
3.2.2 United States of America

The US was originally chosen as an ‘extreme case’ which is defined, by Gerring and Seawright (2007), as a case that exemplifies extreme or unusual values, in this case a lack of the national government in refugee integration policy. The US’s refugee integration is largely completed by NGOs and other non-state actors, making the agency in this policy field completely different to their European counterparts. In relation to my theoretical framework (see figure 2), the US, seemed to not have a national LoG as the responsibility is passed straight to NGOs. However, the findings from the research proved that the national government did in fact have more ‘indirect’ agency within the domain of refugee integration that originally assumed.

The US will also act as a non-European, and crucially non-EU, comparison. The effects that the European Union can have on policy governance is addressed in the work of like Adam and Eve Hepburn (2018). This led to the conclusion that having a non-EU case study would add wider diversity to the comparison.

3.3 Operationalisation

A key element of any methodology is to sufficiently operationalise all the key concepts and measurable variables. This allows for increased accuracy and reliability of findings extrapolated from the research data.

3.3.1 Political Agency

The main challenge in this thesis is to operationalise political agency in a way that allows me to both measure the phenomena accurately whilst allowing me to make concerted conclusions from the results. As stated earlier, there is a significant lack of research into political agency within refugee integration thus there is no established method of measuring agency in this domain. This lack of academic work was acknowledged by Roberto Franzosi et al (2012), who’s research analysed various ways of measuring agency. Franzosi stated “rich as the theoretical work on

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47 like Adam and Eve Hepburn, ‘Intergovernmental Relations on Immigrant Integration in Multi-level States. A Comparative Assessment’, in Regional & Federal Studies, (2018), p.20. Their study on inter-governmental relations managed to highlight that EU integration had changed the internal political dynamics of their European case studies, although the extent of change depended on the prior political system.
agency has been, methodological developments has lagged behind”. Thus it requires the conceptualization of a new framework for measuring political agency. Franzosi’s (2012) study aimed to develop an alternative way of measuring agency for both quantitative and qualitative methods. Although their approach was complex and focused on other forms of social science agency not political agency, the key aspects can be utilised for use in my research. By exploring the links between agency, action and narrative they developed an approach called quantitative narrative analysis (QNA). This approach made agency measurable “by focusing systematically on actors, their actions and, critically, their spatio-temporally situated interactions”. QNA and the three aspects of actors, actions and interactions can all be synthesized into this research to measure political agency within refugee integration.

The focus, in this thesis, when analysing the data will be on identifying actors and what political actions they take, whilst also observing interactions between actors, in an attempt of establishing agency. The actors will be identified as organisations or other political entities from within the three levels of governance that are specified in the theoretical framework in Chapter 2 (see figure 2). This will include: (1) national government departments; (2) local level government agencies or municipality councils; and (3) the organisations affiliated with the government or civil society groups. The actions will be identified through two methods: (1) first-hand accounts collected through qualitative interviews; (2) document analysis of policy briefs and official websites. The interactions are categorised as vertical and horizontal, both are defined in Chapter 2, and can be identified in a similar process to actions. The process will include recording every interaction between levels of governance, vertical, or any interactions within the same level, horizontal.

3.4 Reflection and Limitations

Whilst completing my research I will be acutely aware of the research process in an attempt to keep my conclusions and interpretation as accurate and reliable as possible. An important part of any accurate research is to maintain both internal and external validity. I have taken care to

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49 Ibid., p.5.
50 Ibid., p.5.
define and outline how I will be ensuring that my project is valid, see appendix 4.

In order to further maintain validity I have identified what my limitations may be during the research. The most obvious, is the lack of scope in both time and thesis size. I was unable to encapsulate all the aspects involved in refugee integration due to the short time and the limited word count as well as other practical issues. As stated earlier the international tier of governance will remain untouched by this research, despite clearly playing a crucial role. This is a fact I will have to accept and outline further areas for study in the future. Another significant limitation is resources in both my qualitative and quantitative aspects of research.

3.4.1.1 Qualitative Interviews

The interviews posed a difficult challenge, especially as a masters student, to interview the actual policy makers in the national governments which is a limitation to this thesis. The respondents are a mixture of academics, integration policy professionals and employees of refugee support organisations. The use of snowball sampling method to foster contacts in the relevant field facilitated a more reliable and accessible amount of recipients. However, the cost of using the snowball method must be acknowledged as it can often lead to results that become hard to generalise.51 It is important to acknowledge that to gain consent for the interviews many asked to be anonymous, thus all the names of the interviewees have been changed. For a list of the interviews see Appendix 1.

Key organisations in the Netherlands that were focused on include: COA, Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND)52, the Dutch Council for Refugees, and Stichting Lemat. Ideally, I would have interviewed an employee on the local LoG tier in the Netherlands, but this proved difficult due to the busy nature of their work and gaining official permission. Additionally, I was limited to email exchanges from employees from both COA and an organisation that works with unaccompanied minor refugees. This was partly due to ethical issues, as both were unable to talk

This is because it can be hard to prove that the sample has no bias and is in fact reliable.
52 Obtaining an interview with an IND employee, provided an invaluable insight into the view of the national government.
to me without prior permission from their respective organisations.  

In the US it proved difficult to develop a wider range of contacts due to my location. However, employees in organisations devoted to refugee integration were interviewed and American migration academics. I was unable to obtain anyone from the US that worked for the Department of Health and Human Services, which had multiple subsidiaries, including US Office of Refugee Resettlement, that dealt with a large part of the refugee integration system.

Another ethical considerations that limited my research was the interviewing of refugees. Due to these considerations it was difficult to obtain interviews from recently arrived refugees. I was able to interview a refugee in the US who had started working for refugee integration organisation, he then gave me the contact of a refugee in the Netherlands. This interview also provided an interesting insight despite the fact he had arrived over a decade ago. This does means I have to acknowledge a lack in temporal validity.

The aim was to use the interviews to gain insight into the refugee integration system to distinguish where the agency lies within the different domains. This insight will not only supplement my quantitative research and literature reviews but also help shape my overall theory, in line with the principles of grounded theory.

3.4.1.2 Quantitative Research

Access to online statistical data can also be a challenge, especially in a controversial and heavily debated policy area such as refugees. This limited my quantitative research element but overall did not impact my research massively. The main use of the quantitative element was to assist in supplementing, directing, and proving or disproving any evidence from the interviews.

It is also important to acknowledge the fact that originally I had anticipated including a second European country in my research. This is explained in detail in appendix 4.

53 The regulation is heightened further with organisations that have custody over unaccompanied minor refugees.
54 The two organisations were the Carolina Refugee Resettlement Agency, Inc (CRRA) and the US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants - Albany Field Office. The American academic is a professor at the Rochester Institute of Technology.
55 I wanted to gain an insight from refugees themselves on how the integration system had worked.
4. Analysis

4.1 Introduction

The integration of refugees is becoming an increasingly difficult yet vitally important challenge for countries across the world. Despite the fact that the UNHCR claims that 85% of the world’s displaced people reside in developing countries, the majority of media coverage focuses on the issues that Europe and the wider ‘western’ world has to tackle.\(^\text{56}\) As argued in Chapter 1 the failure to deal with refugees effectively does not stem from numbers of refugees but rather from policy and structural issues. The United States of America and the Netherlands were chosen in order to highlight two different strategies of dealing with the integration of refugees.\(^\text{57}\) The analysis of these two systems has allowed me to draw conclusions on the more effective and ineffective elements of each system. I will accomplish this by using my agency lens to analyse the three levels of governance for each of the two case studies. In each section I will utilise Ager and Strang’s (2008) conceptual framework to analyse the type of governance that is dealing with the different themes and domains of refugee integration. However, before this I will embed this analysis in the wider context by acknowledging the political and social circumstances of the two countries and outline the basics of the integration systems in use.

4.1.1 Contextualising: United States of America

The US has a long and complicated history with migration and refugees. It is beyond the scope of this research to identify the historical elements but it is important to acknowledge the current situation and the growing influence of the Trump administration. His overall anti-immigrant rhetoric affects the wider attitude of the American public towards refugees and other immigrants alike. The full impact of Trump, and his executive federal power, over the refugee integration will be analysed in further sections.

It is equally important to distinguish the fundamental differences between the US refugee policy and that of European countries; namely, where are refugees from and how do they arrive? The majority of official refugees in the US gain access through the United States Refugee

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\(^{57}\) For a more detailed justification for the two countries, refer back to Chapter 3, and case selection.
Admissions Program (USRAP). However, the actual number of refugees is massively affected by migrants fleeing from Latin America, who are not acknowledged by the States as official refugees and have an ambiguous legal status in the US and therefore this group are not considered in this contribution. The wide geographic spread of origin location is shown in Figure 5 below.

![Where America's Refugees Come From](image)

Source: [Refugee Processing Center](https://www.amnestyusa.org/fleeing-for-our-lives-central-american-migrant-crisis/)

**Figure 5: Origin countries of US refugees. (Accessed: 07/06/2019)**

The geographic spread of refugees is in contrast to the European situation. Eurostat (2019) has the three largest citizenships of first time asylum applications in the EU in 2018: Syrian 13.9%,

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59 The number of refugees from Syria and Iran dropped considerably in 2018 due to the ‘travel ban’ imposed by the Trump administration, these two countries are now now longer in the top 10.


61 Syrians have been the largest nationality since 2013.
Afghan 7.1% and Iraqi 6.8%. This shows a consistency of general geographic origin for refugees entering Europe.

This difference is predominantly due to the extensive use of refugee relocation in the United States. The States operates the world's largest refugee resettlement program and how it is managed has a vitally important effect on refugee integration. In brief, a refugee is identified and then referred for resettlement in the States by either UNHCR, a US embassy or other designated NGOs. Once vetted and having passed the security checks each refugee is matched to one of nine resettlement agencies (RAs), who then match the case with an affiliate in a local community with the best suited resources to support that refugee. This is all done before the refugee reaches the US, and once everything is ready, the refugee has a local organisation employee ready to greet them at the airport. This process poses an ontological challenge between my two comparative case studies because it becomes difficult to compare the success of the integration systems if the US is choosing their refugees. It is therefore necessary to identify the criteria for relocation before beginning my analysis of the integration system.

The US’s refugee admissions criteria can be identified through the document analysis of the UNHCR and the US State Department policies on refugee admissions. The UNHCR states that resettlement can be acquired for individuals “for whom resettlement is the most appropriate durable solution”. Described as an “ongoing, active and systematic process”, by the UN organisation, who have established seven resettlement categories for submission of resettlement application. The three categories used by the State Department to establish eligibility for access

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66 The travel is facilitated through IOM who loan money to refugees for the travel and arranging transportation.
69 See Appendix 5. UNHCR, ‘Information on UNHCR Resettlement’.
to USRAP are similar. Both include practical safety and protection considerations and both fail to identify any characteristics that may improve the chances of successful integration (except possibly family reunification). However, unofficially the criteria may have greater impact on later integration, therefore it is important to acknowledge that it could weaken my assessment of the success of the integration systems in the US and the Netherlands. However, the criteria will not impact the assessment of political agency within the key integration domains, which is the primary aim of this contribution.

4.1.2 Contextualising: The Netherlands

The Netherlands is one of the most densely populated countries in the European Union and the world. The World Bank estimates the Netherlands has 508 people per square km in 2017, compared to the EU with 121 and the world with an average of 59. It is often assumed that an overcrowded country leads to a negative reception to immigrants and refugees alike from the wider population, due to competition for resources and jobs. However, the Dutch have traditionally disproved that assumption and are renowned for their multiculturalism and tolerance. However, the Netherlands has experienced some significant changes over the past couple of decades that have seen a shift in attitudes towards immigrants and sparked wider debates in society.

At the beginning of 2018 nearly 17.18 million people lived in the Netherlands, a rise of approximately 100,000 from 2017. Amid an ageing population and low birthrates, common in

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74 This attitude has been attributed to a wide range of historic factors that stem from the aftermath of the seventeenth century religious wars and the subsequent reformation. Van Selm, ‘Migration in the Netherlands’ (2019)
75 Van Selm, ‘Migration in the Netherlands’ (2019)
76 This debate centred on: limiting asylum seekers whilst trying to increase humanitarian assistance, place of Islam in European society, dual nationality and the very nature of Dutch society.
many European countries, this rise has also been fuelled by immigration.\textsuperscript{76} This can be seen by the steady increase in percentage of the population with a migration background,\textsuperscript{77} now standing at 23.1\% in 2018.\textsuperscript{78} The changing debate over Dutch tolerance, was informed by several incidents: the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the 2002 assassination of Pim Fortuyn\textsuperscript{79} and the murder of Theo van Gogh.\textsuperscript{80} These events have been preyed upon by far right political figures and their parties such as Geert Wilders’ Freedom Party (PVV) and more recently Thierry Baudet’s Forum for Democracy (FvD).\textsuperscript{81} Both have made significant gains in Dutch politics over the last decade and have solidified the position of anti-immigrant rhetoric on the national scene. This rise of alt-right and far-right political parties has had a dramatic impact on both the national and local LoG which is explained in further detail in appendix 6. Before I can effectively analyse the agency within the Dutch integration system, I need to briefly outline how the current system operates.

Peter Scholten (2013) explains that migrant integration, including refugee policies, in the Netherlands has experienced dramatic policy frameshifts over the past decade. This has seen a challenge to the traditional idea that national models of integration prevail, as the local level takes on an increasingly prominent role.\textsuperscript{82} He outlines that during the 70s and 80s a centralist mode of policy formation, explained in Chapter 2, was in use with strong vertical and horizontal interactions.\textsuperscript{83} However, by the 90s Scholten observes a weakening of this approach as much of the agency was delegated to multiple national departments and devolved down to the local level. Into the twenty-first century centralist approach took on a new national dimension after 9/11, and at the same time it increased in importance on a local level. During this time Scholten identified policy decoupling between the two levels.\textsuperscript{84} Currently the generally accepted interpretation is that the Netherlands is a unitary but decentralised state in regards to refugee

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{76} Van Selm, ‘Migration in the Netherlands’ (2019)
\item \textsuperscript{77} At least one migrant parent.
\item \textsuperscript{78} CBS, ‘Population Key Figures’.
\item \textsuperscript{79} Fortuyn was the first mainstream anti-immigrant politician in the Netherlands.
\item \textsuperscript{80} Van Gogh was murdered by a Dutch-born Muslim of Moroccan origin.
\item \textsuperscript{81} Van Selm, ‘Migration in the Netherlands’ (2019)
\item \textsuperscript{83} Ibid., p.233.
\item \textsuperscript{84} Ibid., p.233.
\end{itemize}
integration.\textsuperscript{85} Officially, municipalities have responsibility over key areas including housing, health and social care and education, but within a national framework and heavily reliant on governmental funding.\textsuperscript{86}

4.2 National Level of Governance

In this section I will outline my findings in relation to the political agency from the national LoG in my case studies. I will briefly compare the two cases whilst linking it back to the societal themes and domains outlined by Ager and Strang (2008).

4.2.1 The United States of America

The Refugee Act of 1980 formalised refugee resettlement in the US and created the multiple national organisations that would deal with refugee integration.\textsuperscript{87} The two most prominent of these is the US Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR),\textsuperscript{88} and the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM).\textsuperscript{89} From my analysis I have established two major forms of agency that originates from the national level in the US. Firstly, access to the United States through the resettlement scheme. This has been briefly outlined earlier but as it is fundamentally important to the refugees integration, it needs addressing in full. The second form, is funding and the influence that accompanies it. I will then address the consequences of this agency on the integration domains focusing on one issue in particular: an overemphasis on refugee’s economic self-sufficiency as an indicator of successful integration. Overall, contrary to my initial assumptions, there is clear evidence illustrating substantial ‘indirect’ political agency from the national LoG in the policy field of refugee integration.

4.2.1.1 Gaining Access

It is seen as a fundamental component of sovereignty to withhold the right of access and retain control of a nation's external borders.\textsuperscript{90} Therefore it is unsurprising that the national LoG in the

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., p.2044.
\textsuperscript{88} A subsidiary of the US Department of Health and Human Services.
\textsuperscript{89} A subsidiary of the US Department of State.
US would hold agency over refugees access to the States. This topic was addressed in my interview with Isabel, an ex-employee of the *US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants*, Albany Branch. Isabel explained that despite other agencies (such as UNHCR) controlling the process of applying for refugee resettlement, it was the Federal Government who have the final say on access into the country.\(^{91}\) The security checks were enforced on “each individual refugee, making sure they are not a threat to the general US public”.\(^{92}\) This process does not constitute direct policy on refugee integration, however it impacts heavily on the refugees and the organisations involved with their support. For example, when asked what impact the Trump administration had on refugee integration Isabel explained “we just didn't have any refugees coming in (to integrate)”.\(^{93}\) The US had been seen as a largely successful example of refugee resettlement and integration, however the national LoG had enough agency to dramatically reduce the amount of refugees there is to integrate when the political climate changed. This suggests a high degree of agency within the domain of *safety and stability*.

I put the question, of reducing numbers of refugees, to Maria who is an American professor who has worked in the refugee field in many capacities in both the US and in Europe. She played down the impact of the Trump administration and the dramatic reduction in refugee numbers.\(^{94}\) Maria did not deny there was a decline but claimed that “his (Trump) policies are not a lot different from what we have seen from Clinton, Bush and Obama” she continues “we have been steadily,...,declining (the amount of) refugees we allow in and steadily creating a policy that makes certain things (refugee access) more difficult”.\(^{95}\) This reduction is also highlighted in policy analysis; the 2018 cap on refugee resettlement being the lowest in history.\(^{96}\) This is evidence of a weakness inherent in national LoG agency within the refugee field, namely that this level is vulnerable to political change.

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91 Interview with Isabel, 11/04/2019, min 1.11.
92 Ibid., min 1.20.
93 Ibid., min 28.30.
94 Interview with Maria, 03/05/2019, min 26.30.
95 Ibid., min 24.50.
96 HIAS, ‘Advocacy….’
4.2.1.2 Federal Government Funding

One theme that became apparent throughout my research was the financial role played by the US national government in the undertaking of refugee integration work. During the interview with Maria she explained that the federal funding given to refugee NGOs was significant but unlike in the EU it was not accompanied by high levels of governmental involvement. This thesis argues Maria’s assessment is too simplistic. Despite not going directly to the refugees these federal grants, do in fact, facilitate national LoG agency within this domain. This was an area I chose to research further to establish just how important this financial support was to the integration of refugees and whether the money came with political influence.

I took two refugee resettlement agencies (RAs) as a starting point for my analysis into federal funding. All RAs have an agreement with the State Department “to provide reception and placement services for refugees on arrival into the US”. I chose the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) due to the fact that the RAs are a mixture of secular and religiously affiliated organisations. The IRC and HIAS, on their respective websites, address the fact that they receive grants from the government for their refugee support work. The IRC states that they are a charity organisation that receives grants from the ORR. Similarly, HIAS claims its main source of funding is from the PRM, however they both fail to address exactly how much is granted. It is important to understand the extent of this financial support as it directly affects the amount of agency the national government has in integrating refugees.

To distinguish this I completed a document analysis on the financial reports of the IRC and HIAS. Figure 6 shows that HIAS receives contributions from both the US Department of Health and Human Services and the US Department of State, with a combined total of $20.3m in 2015

97 Maria, min 3.30.
99 See Appendix 7, List of RAs
101 HIAS, ‘About the Hebrew....’
then $24.4m in 2016. This consists of the majority of the overall revenue for each year that was set at $37.5m and $43.7m for 2015 and 2016 respectively.

HIAS, Inc.
Consolidated Statements of Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For the Years Ended</th>
<th>December 31, 2016</th>
<th>December 31, 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unrestricted</td>
<td>Temporarily Restricted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributions</td>
<td>$ 4,709,624</td>
<td>$ 2,116,187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating grants</td>
<td>8,233,298</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requests</td>
<td>55,898</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governmental and intergovernmental agencies:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Department of Health and Human Services</td>
<td>3,250,000</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Department of State</td>
<td>21,434,494</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migrant loan processing fees and repayments</td>
<td>608,398</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment Income (Note 9)</td>
<td>2,456,531</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service for revenues and other revenues</td>
<td>893,083</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net assets released from restriction</td>
<td>2,212,066</td>
<td>(2,213,066)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Revenues and Other Support</td>
<td>$ 43,704,191</td>
<td>(96,079)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6: HIAS financial reports on revenue for the year ending 2016 and 2015, p6. (Accessed: 07/06/2019)102

Further analysis into HIAS’s expenses show that in reality a substantial amount of this funding goes on international projects outside of the US, although the amount spent domestically does disproportionately increase in 2016 from the previous year.103 The domestic payments include supporting resettling communities as well as the transportation of refugees to the country.104 This support encompasses work at different domains of integration, it could include everything from the social connections to the markers and means, outlined in Ager and Strang’s (2008) framework.

IRC finances appear to be similar. ‘Grants and Contracts’, which include the federal funding, make up the biggest proportion of their operating revenue, $54.46m in 2018 of an overall

103 Ibid., p.7.
104 Ibid., p.8.
revenue of $74.44m. However, figure 7 shows that when this investment is broken down the foreign grants consist of the larger sum, despite the federal and local agency contributing substantial amounts. The US government grants total $10m of the approx $44m received or receivable in 2018.

![IRC Financial Statement](https://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/document/3566/fy2018financialstatements.pdf)

**Figure 7:** IRC Financial Statement for FY2018, breakdown of ‘Grants and Contracts’, p.19. (Accessed: 07/06/2019)

This would suggest that the agency held by the Federal Government is not quite as substantial for the IRC as it is for HIAS. Despite this difference, both show evidence of considerable financial

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106 Ibid., p.19.

107 Ibid., p.19.
support given to the refugee relocation organisations from the national tier suggesting a significant amount of dependency and agency.

However, this evidence fails to definitively support the assertion that this money comes with any additional political influence. This idea was addressed in an interview with Tim, who worked as a case manager at Carolina Refugee Resettlement Agency, Inc (CRRA), and was also a refugee himself who moved to the US eight years ago. CRRA is an affiliate for HIAS in North Carolina, who provide refugee resettlement services, that cover a range of domains from housing to employment to children's schooling and language classes.¹⁰⁸ Tim acknowledged the significant role played by the Federal Government funding for the CRRA, which is facilitated through ORR. ¹⁰⁹ I then asked him whether the funding came with any political influence from the national government. Tim made it very clear that when the CRRA received federal grants their organisation became “an entity that would execute what the fed recommendations are” although he elaborated that in terms of execution “we (CRRA) have some flexibility”.¹¹⁰ He stated that they could still work around local needs but have to abide by the federal initiative guidelines. When I then asked “do these initiatives restrict your effort (to integrate refugees) in anyway?” he replied firmly “it does not”.¹¹¹ The only complaint he had was a lack of general funding which he assumed was the same for any non-profit around the world. Despite the fact Tim did not feel like these federal grants were restricting his work, the reliance on the funding and the initiative that comes with it is evidence of national LoG agency. I put it to Tim that this use of grants was the Federal Government “indirectly” dealing with refugee agency, to which he replied “yeh, you could say that”.¹¹²

4.2.1.3 Economic Self-sufficiency

The Federal Government has shown signs of significant agency in the refugee integration process and in an interview with Tim I enquired about why this might be problematic. Whilst explaining the guidelines set by the Federal Government for their grants he explained that

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Tim, 02/05/2019, min 6.55.
¹¹⁰ Ibid., min 11.40.
¹¹¹ Ibid., min 12.45.
¹¹² Ibid., min 6.20.
refugees were required to become economically self-sufficient (ESS) within 90 days.\textsuperscript{113} This issue is addressed in previous academic literature, which argues that there is a general overemphasis on ESS as an indicator of successful integration and that this leads to a neglect of social and cultural aspects.\textsuperscript{114} In terms of Ager and Strang’s (2008) this would suggest the national LoG deals with the domains such as: employment, education and language.\textsuperscript{115} These domains assist a refugee’s economic standing but neglect the social connections. I asked Maria about this issue and she concluded that this attitude originates from the American mindset and the importance given to “the ability to provide for one’s self”.\textsuperscript{116} However, Tim believed that it had been “over-played” as a problem and that from his experience refugees felt that it was important to get a job as soon as possible “because people want to move on”.\textsuperscript{117} This argument is common and promotes the idea that with a job comes more social and cultural integration.\textsuperscript{118} However, Catherine Tyson’s (2017) study highlights the need to take care in generalising that to all groups of refugees. Her study looked at different refugee nationalities entering the US and highlights the wide disparities of integration aims.\textsuperscript{119} For some groups language and ESS is vitally important but others focused more on cultural integration or preservation.\textsuperscript{120} The evidence suggests that a system that promoted more than just ESS would have wider reach and be more effective in integrating refugees. This issue will arise and be analysed in further sections.

4.2.2 The Netherlands

One fundamental difference in national LoG between the Netherlands and the US that needs clarification, is the Dutch European Union membership. The EU has initiated various ambitious policies that impact the integration system in all of its member states.\textsuperscript{121} Despite this, Joanne van Selm claims, in reality “how policy is implemented and the precise handling of......asylum cases, as well as integration approaches, remain national sovereign matters and very much in the Dutch

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., min 17.16. \\
\textsuperscript{114} Catherine Tyson, 'Towards a new framework for Integration in the US', in \url{www.fmreview.org/resettlement} pp:48-49. \\
\textsuperscript{115} Ager and Strang, 'Understanding Integration', p.170. \\
\textsuperscript{116} Maria, min 6.40. \\
\textsuperscript{117} Tim, min 1.40. \\
\textsuperscript{118} Tyson, 'Towards a new', p.48. \\
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., p.48. \\
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., p.49. \\
\textsuperscript{121} Van Selm, 'Migration in the Netherlands' (2019)
\end{flushright}
government’s hands”. As stated earlier, in the past the Dutch national government has taken an active role in integration, far more so than the Federal Government in the US. This would lead to an assumption that there would be far greater direct agency in the Netherlands. The research in this section will show that there is indeed significant agency from the Dutch national LoG, but with greater similarities to the ‘indirect’ agency seen in the States. This will be shown by analysing two main domains of agency: the asylum application period and the subsequent role of COA (Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers). I will then briefly outline the negative impact of national LoG agency, in line with Peter Scholten’s (2016) ‘decoupling’ argument and what affect that has on refugee integration.

4.2.2.1 Asylum Application

In the Netherlands, unlike the US, a substantial amount of a refugees initial experience is spent going through the asylum application process. This fails to come under the realm of integration policy, however it does have a substantial impact on the refugee’s integration process, as shown by Linda Bakker’s (2016) compelling research into obstacles for refugees in the Netherlands. She begins by criticizing the focus in migration studies on researching the pre-migration impact on refugee’s mental health and instead shifts the focus to incorporate the post-migration period. Bakker claims that the initial experience is characterised by “insecurity, lack of privacy, state dependency and segregation” which ultimately fails to prepare an individual for the future or recover from their previous trauma. In an interview I brought this topic to the attention of Kevin, who is an employee of IND (Immigration and Naturalisation Service) as a naturalisation case-worker who deals with asylum applications for the Dutch national government. Kevin fully acknowledges the fact that the application process is too long; he stated that from arriving in the Netherlands it takes “seven to eight months” simply to start the asylum procedure. Linda Bakker elaborates that a prolonged stay in the asylum reception centres can lead to serious

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122 Ibid.
125 Ibid., p. 132.
126 Ibid., p.132.
127 Interview with Kevin, min 7.50.
mental health issues which will hinder participation in the labour market. She asserts that this “shows how the first period of stay in the destination country has long-term effects for refugee integration” and that the integration process begins on arrival.  

This assertion was supported by the qualitative research conducted for this thesis. Eline is an employee of the Dutch Council for Refugees (DCR), which is the main organisation that works with refugees in the Netherlands. Eline commented that the time-frame for an asylum seeker to be in a reception centre was “now, very long” and “you can wait one or two years for a decision and could be longer”. She goes on to assert “the only integration (steps),......,are for asylum seekers from Syria and Eritrea”, the rest are unable to hold employment in any capacity during this initial period. All three, Bakker, Kevin and Eline, agree that this period needs to be shortened to increase the chances of successful integration. They all acknowledged that the isolation of the reception centre is a form of segregation that deeply impacts a refugee’s mental health, which then has wider consequences for their integration into society. The overall duration of this process is controlled by the national LoG thus giving them agency within the affected integration domains. This evidence suggests during this initial period there are significant negative effects on the domains of employment and wider social connections, due to the restrictions on jobs and the isolation of the reception centres.

The role of IND during this period, acting as the national LoG actor, needs to be explored. Kevin explains his view on the integration of refugees in the Netherlands; “as a person I can see that I think it is a two-way process.” He elaborates by stating that this process consists of the government requiring the refugee to engage in integration into Dutch society, whilst simultaneously the government should be making an effort to accommodate the individual. Kevin asserted: “integration is not,...,only about efficiency”, “human rights and humanity is important”. As the IND employees are the only governmental face an asylum seeker will encounter, he believes that they should operate a personal and sensitive approach, which

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128 Bakker, Seeking Sanctuary..., p.132.
129 Interview with Eline, 3.10 and 4.12.
130 Ibid.,
131 Bakker, Seeking Sanctuary... p.132.
132 Kevin, min 15.43.
133 Ibid., min 16.06.
134 Ibid., min 20.09
currently is not always the norm.\textsuperscript{135} This personal approach from the IND would be affiliated with the safety and stability domain, due to its effect on a refugee’s sense of safety. Thereby, the national LoG has the capacity to improve this domain through its approach to the asylum procedure, resulting in more government agency.

Linda Bakker established a second dimension within her analysis, in which the national LoG holds agency over refugee integration and the domain of safety and stability. This dimension is the residential status granted by the national government, which has a substantial impact on the integration of refugees.\textsuperscript{136} Currently the majority of refugees will be granted a temporary residence permit for five years, that requires an eligibility test and successful completion of the civic integration exam to extend.\textsuperscript{137} Bakker claims that this system creates an unstable situation for refugees and hampers resources by reducing their employability and their motivation to learn Dutch.\textsuperscript{138} This evidence highlights further IND agency within the domains of employment and language, although again with a negative impact on overall refugee integration.

\textit{4.2.2.2 COA Agency}

The Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA) defines itself as an “independent administrative body”.\textsuperscript{139} Despite being independent there is also an acknowledgement, on their website, of being the “political responsibility of the State Secretary for Justice and Security”.\textsuperscript{140} This ambiguous position was made apparent by two of my interviewees who both described COA as “a semi-governmental organisation”.\textsuperscript{141} One of those interviewees was Richard, who is a refugee, a human rights activist, and a refugee community leader living in the Netherlands since 2002. I asked Richard how COA compared to other organisations working with refugee integration, to which he asserted that other organisations are

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., min
\textsuperscript{136} Bakker, \textit{Seeking Sanctuary}..., p.133.
\textsuperscript{138} Bakker, ‘Seeking Sanctuary....’, p.133.
\textsuperscript{140} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{141} Interview with Richard, min 8.50, and Interview (via Whatsapp voice note) with Olivia, min 1.20.
\end{footnotesize}
on the side of the refugees.\textsuperscript{142} Whereas, he was adamant that “COA implement agency of the government”.\textsuperscript{143} The position of COA has some similarities with the ‘indirect’ support given to organisations in the States.

Sarah Spencer (2018), in her research into migrants with irregular status in Europe, expands on this “indirect” approach taken by the Dutch government. She defines one tactic used to avoid controversial support for refugees, termed “low-visibility provision”.\textsuperscript{144} This involves the national government overlooking support being given to refugees, often using NGOs to implement the support.\textsuperscript{145} This is similar to the federal grants given to organisations in the States to deal with integration. Kevin, the IND employee, also claimed that “most of them (NGOs) are controlled or funded by the government” in the Netherlands.\textsuperscript{146} When I then suggested that “this might be a way the government can control integration without being directly involved, so indirectly?”, Kevin replied: “yes, exactly”.\textsuperscript{147} This suggests that the actions of COA must be analysed as a form of national LoG.

To establish the role of COA I completed a document analysis of the “COA Act”, ratified in 1994 by the national government. This act established the responsibilities and tasks for the organisation which was defined as the privatisation of asylum seeker reception.\textsuperscript{148} Under article 3 of the COA Act, the organisation’s responsibilities include: the maintenance and placement within the asylum reception centres; placement of asylum seekers in the municipalities and associated payment of costs; and payment of a weekly allowance to asylum seekers.\textsuperscript{149} This important role of COA, and extensive agency, is supported by my qualitative data and findings. Although I was unable to arrange an official interview with an employee of COA due to the organisation’s internal policies, I was able to contact one employee through email. Miriam, is a supervisor of Dutch language and culture training at COA. She outlined her role as a teacher in

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{142} Interview with Richard, min 10.39
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid., min 10.59.
\textsuperscript{144} Spencer, ‘Multi-level Governance’, p.2047.
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., p.2047.
\textsuperscript{146} Kevin, min 55.11.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid., min 55.30.
\textsuperscript{149} Full responsibilities and tasks see Appendix 8.
\end{flushleft}
lessons with newly arrived asylum seekers, that covered history, finding employment, schooling, and financial matters. She also stated that she believed “it is important they start as soon as possible with the integration”, from language to cultural norms. Eline, DCR employee, also outlined the importance of COA. She explained that COA are in control of the location that refugees are settled in the Netherlands, “all with (the) aim of helping integration” This role for COA in placement of asylum seekers was a percing theme when discussing with Richard about his experiences. He described numerous occasions where he was moved from different COA reception centres and that he was required to report to COA employees weekly, throughout the first period of his arrival. COA also gave him money and practical support including: setting up bank accounts and registering for a general practitioner. This is all evidence of a wide range of agency, for COA, within the first period of refugee integration. This agency predominantly covers the housing domain but have significant role in safety and stability, health, employment and even in language and cultural knowledge.

This agency has its weaknesses and issues, as addressed by Kevin, who explained that he witnessed issues within COA, revolving around their struggle to deal with the departure of asylum seekers. This is one of the responsibilities allocated to the organisation but Kevin asserts that this can be hard for COA employees because they “want to be friends with asylum seekers”. However, it is important to acknowledge that Kevin is an employee of IND working as the official government actor in this sector and when asked what was the solution he asserted that “if the national government says they have to leave, they have to leave”. Further problems with COA were also addressed when I interviewed Olivia, who is the co-founder of Stichting Lemat a small organisation that works with Eritrean refugees in the Netherlands. She previously worked for COA and has Eritrean heritage, she said that she witnessed some key issues within the organisation when dealing with refugees, especially from the Eritrean community. On the one-hand, COA colleagues were asking her “why are they not looking me in the eyes” or “why

150 Interview (email) with Miriam, Q1.
151 Ibid., Q1.
152 Eline, min 7.53.
153 Richard, 21.00 (but also between 13.00-25.00)
154 Ibid., 13.50.
155 Kevin, min 40.58 and 55.55.
156 Ibid., 43.02
don’t they ask questions?”, and on the other-hand Eritreans would ask her about the Dutch culture.\textsuperscript{157} This lack of cultural understanding or considerations led Olivia to worry about the refugees when they left COA for life in the municipalities.\textsuperscript{158} This gap between the two cultures inspired Olivia to set up her organisation providing support for this refugee community, to be explored in further sections. The evidence would suggest that increased agency to smaller more specialised organisations would lead to more effective integration of refugees from different cultures. This would then be a catalyst for wider improvements in different integration domains.

4.2.2.3 Policy ‘Decoupling’

Peter Scholten’s (2016) work on policy framing of refugee integration in the Netherlands has been useful in developing the theoretical framework and research design, see chapters 2 and 3. However, it is also a further example of the negative impact of increased national LoG political agency on the refugee integration domains. Scholten’s study focused on a comparison between the national LoG and cities/regional administrations in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.\textsuperscript{159} He found no evidence, from either case, of “top-down” coordination that created policy alignment between the national LoG and the local LoG.\textsuperscript{160} In regards to the Netherlands, Scholten explains that despite the Dutch government having influence in every political sphere, integration has seen a wide divergence “with two of its most diverse cities, Rotterdam and Amsterdam, developing remarkably dissimilar approaches”.\textsuperscript{161} National LoG agency had decreased since peaking during the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the emphasis had shifted to the individual refugee to stimulate integration. During this period Scholten records a divergence in policies from both Amsterdam and Rotterdam and an “absence of vertical relations” between the two LoG.\textsuperscript{162} This topic was brought up in the interview with Kevin. He explained that ‘decoupling’ is unlikely, asserting that it was “almost forbidden that municipality conflicts with the national state”.\textsuperscript{163} Despite this, Kevin does acknowledge that in his capacity

\textsuperscript{157} Interview with Olivia, min 9.30.
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., min 10.18.
\textsuperscript{159} Scholten, ‘Between National Models’, p.973.
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., p.973.
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid., p.986.
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid., p. 973.
\textsuperscript{163} Kevin, min 36.51.
working on the national state level, on occasion he does experience conflict from the city mayors, often against any notice to forcibly remove asylum seekers. He also brings up a well-documented example of municipalities, predominantly Amsterdam and Utrecht, protesting against ‘illegal’ residents being removed which resulted in the cities frustrating national policies.

Sarah Spencer (2018) attempts to explain the ‘decoupling’ effect by highlighting the conflicting political frames of the two tiers. She explains that the national level concentrates on establishing control over a policy area like integration, motivated by political gains. In contrast, the local level is predominantly focused on cohesion, as they are tasked with dealing with the day-to-day issues of local politics and a cohesive community has far greater benefits. Both Kevin and Olivia perceived the issue in a similar light. Kevin explains that the national view, on removing failed asylum seekers, was “if they always stay, then no one leaves”. He understood that the local level deals with these people more regularly and “they know the faces”, thus ask “why should they leave” as they can be useful and contribute to society. For Olivia, the biggest difficulty with the national tier was the fact they lacked the personal references of the refugees themselves. She advocates for a system that “creates space for people to make policies not only from their own reference” but with acknowledgement of the refugee perspective.

Scholten concludes by claiming that this level of policy-frame “decoupling”, has significant negative consequences for integration. He explains that a lack of alignment leads to contradictory policies and even conflict between the two tiers of governance. Within my theoretical framework, ‘decoupling’ is an example of the gap between policy-making and policy implementation that is growing due to increased agency from the national LoG. This suggests

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164 Ibid., min 37.36.
165 Ibid., min 38.30.
This example will be explored in more detail in the local LoG section.
166 Spencer, ‘Multi-level Governance’, p.2042.
167 Ibid., p.2042
168 Kevin., min 40.20.
169 Olivia., min 23.15.
that a form of integration governance that derives its initiative and agency from the lower LoG would be more effective.

4.2.3 Comparing and Contrasting

4.2.3.1 Similarities

During the analysis of agency within the national LoG in the US and the Netherlands two overriding similarities became apparent. The national LoG, in both cases, has outright agency in regards to border control and refugee acceptance. This is unsurprising as in most countries the national government reserves the right to deny or accept immigrants into its internationally defined territory. As discussed, this fails to come under the jurisdiction of refugee integration policy but has huge impacts in both countries on the integration domains, thus justifying its attention in this thesis. The second overarching similarity between the two cases involves ‘indirect’ support of refugee integration. In the US, through federal grants, the national LoG could wield enough agency to exert a substantial amount of influence on the integration domains, as highlighted by Tim’s testimony. In the Netherlands this ‘indirect’ agency was facilitated through COA, which acts like an NSAs but on behalf, and in collusion with the national LoG. This was an unexpected finding but significant in regards to agency within the refugee integration system.

When comparing the two cases in more detail there are further similarities. The US national LoG ‘indirect’ support results in organisations such as the CRRA helping in the domains of housing, employment, education and language and cultural knowledge. This is similar to the domains dealt with by COA and its support from the Dutch national LoG. However, the two case studies have national LoG that fail to offer agency within the Social Connections tier of integration. In the US the promotion of ESS as the best form of integration leads to a neglect of developing social bonds, bridges or links within the community. In the Netherlands we see the example of Olivia who felt the need to create her own organisation to combat this lack of initiative in developing social bridges, between the Eritrean and Dutch communities.
4.2.3.2 Differences

The Netherlands has seen a significant case of policy ‘decoupling’ which is not apparent, to the same extent, in the States. It is an example of the breakdown of vertical interactions between the national and local/regional LoG. In the US the vertical interactions seem to be minimal but there were some examples of State Governments allocating the wider federal grants. In terms of horizontal interactions my research failed to establish any significant interactions between nation states, although this was partly due to the limited scope of my research design. This evidence suggests that a refugee integration system that derives its agency from lower levels of governance would be more effective at dealing with all required domains.

4.3 Local Level of Governance

In this section I will outline my findings in relation to the political agency from the local LoG in both case studies. I have defined local LoG in the US as a combination of State Government and the regional administrations. This is a simplification as there are often at least two tiers of regional governance below the state which vary in responsibilities.\(^{171}\) As the Netherlands is considerably smaller the definitions were easier, thus the municipality governments were used to represent local LoG.

4.3.1 The United States of America

During my research into the refugee integration system in the US it became apparent that there is important but relatively limited agency applied by local LoG. The lack of evidence is in part due to the research limitations of this thesis including: a limited amount of online resources relating to the local tier in the US and difficulty supplementing this resource shortage with employee interviews, due to my location. It is also important to acknowledge that many of the NSAs perform their roles on a State level. However, for the purpose of this research I have separated


The two lower tiers are: counties and municipalities, additionally some states include townships. The simplification was due to the size of the US and the scope of my analysis.
the two entities into two distinct LoG. As explained in the research design this is due to the independence and unique form of agency in the integration field possessed by the NSAs tier.

Despite these restrictions there is evidence of local level agency in the refugee integration domains. Firstly, I will outline the importance of geographic location a refugee is resettled within the US. Secondly, I will delve deeper into the specific State level initiatives that have developed autonomously of the national LoG.

4.3.1.1 Geographic Location

Nadwa Mossad’s et al (2018) study focuses on the determinants of refugee naturalisation in the US. Mossad uses administration data on naturalisation rates (arriving between 2000-2010) as the indicator of refugee integration. The study found that the refugee citizenship rate was significantly higher than other immigrants in the same period, standing at 66% by 2015.172 The study establishes three main conclusions: first, “sociodemographic characteristics condition the likelihood of naturalisation”.173 Second, the refugee’s country of origin plays a significant role in long term integration.174 Finally, that integration depends on the ‘local context’ that the refugee is situated within. The final point is interesting for this thesis because it would include many aspects controlled by the state LoG. Thus making the local tier an important actor for refugee integration, however further analysis is required to distinguish the extent of this agency.

Mossad et al (2018) began by assessing the impact of urbanised areas.175 The study then explored the differences in naturalisation rates on an interstate level. The study outlines the variety of naturalisation rates between the states; with a 19% difference between Minnesota (highest rate) and Connecticut (lowest rate).176 The divergence of states integration rates is supported by data from my qualitative interviews, specifically with Maria. When asked whether there was a significant difference between states integration of refugees she replied, “absolutely”.177 Maria,

172 Mossad, 'Determinants of Refugee…..', p.9175. (For full reference look at footnote 63)
Mossad justifies his use of naturalisation by explaining that scholarly literature has identified naturalisation as a “key measure of political, civic and social integration”. p.9176.
173 Ibid., p. 9175.
174 Ibid., p.9176.
175 See Appendix 6.
176 Ibid., p.9177.
177 Maria, min 11.59.
Samuel Harwood (12250740)

claimed that there is a standard federal law in regards to certain criteria of integration support but that each state has its “own jurisdiction (on) how they operate things”.\textsuperscript{178} She explained that this led to a wide range of standards for refugee support which then affects their long term integration into the US society. I suggested that this might be improved by some sort of interstate initiative, involving like-minded states and cities working in collaboration to improve standards, a similar suggestion having been made in Europe.\textsuperscript{179} Maria, disregarded this suggestion as “difficult” because previously, similar projects had proven to be problematic due to a lack of “information sharing”.\textsuperscript{180} She explained that this is a result of a long standing attitude against large inter-state organisations, describing politics in the US as “isolationist” and “anti-organisation”.\textsuperscript{181} This evidence suggests that the US local LoG has some significant political agency within refugee integration.

Another example of substantial local LoG agency is also addressed by Claire Felter and James Mcbride in their assessment of the US refugee system.\textsuperscript{182} They explain that part of the process that RA’s undertake, when establishing where to relocate refugees in the US, is to “consult with local authorities including law enforcement, emergency services and public schools”.\textsuperscript{183} This is facilitated through the local LoG in the form of State Governments and their governors. This became an issue in the wake of the 2015 Paris terrorist attacks, which saw thirty US governors protested the resettlement of any Syrian refugees to their jurisdiction. While the states cannot directly block a Federal Government decision on refugees, due to the 1980 Refugee Act, “they can complicate the process by directing state agencies to refuse to cooperate”.\textsuperscript{184} This is an example of local LoG asserting its agency within the refugee integration field and again negatively impacting on refugees integration.

\textsuperscript{178} Ibid., min 12.05.
\textsuperscript{180} Maria, min 22.58.
\textsuperscript{181} Ibid., min 21.30.
\textsuperscript{183} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{184} Ibid.
The Mossad (2018) study criticises the local government for focusing too heavily on tracking employment and ESS of refugees in their communities. This assertion is supported by Isabel, the ex-employee of a refugee integration organisation, when she agreed that ESS is overemphasized on the municipal LoG. She explains that “economic self-sufficiency (for a refugee) is one thing but that doesn’t mean much to someone who doesn't feel comfortable”. The local LoG has neglected some key areas of refugee integration, in a similar way to the national LoG. The Mossad study concludes by advocating for a targeted approach that dealt with certain groups of refugees in certain regions. This approach suggests that despite the issues identified there is a need for an increased and improved role for the local LoG.

4.3.1.2 State-level Initiatives

During this research, state-led initiatives undertaken independently of the national LoG were identified in the US. This policy differentiation failed to match the extent of the ‘decoupling’ identified in the Netherlands, but it is still significant and needs addressing.

These initiatives are observed in a study into ‘Immigrant Families and Child Welfare Systems’, completed by the Migration Policy Institute. The authors, Mark Greenberg et al (2019), were tasked with assessing the emerging needs for immigrant child support, including refugees. The study resulted in analysis of nine “policy and practice issues”. Within these issues the study identifies multiple areas that feature examples of State Governance’s political agency. For example, when researching ‘organisational structure’ they explain that some states “have developed specialised staffing or structures to more effectively serve immigrant children and their families”. The fact that these structures are not universal suggests they have developed

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186 Isabel, min 27.00.
187 Ibid., min 27.40.
188 Mossad, ‘Determinants of Refugee…’, p.9179.
189 The Migration Policy Institute is a Washington DC based think tank that supports liberal immigration policies, founded in 2001. Also have a Brussels office.
191 Ibid., p.2.
192 Ibid., p.2.
out of agency from the local LoG who identify specific areas that need improving. The study also highlights State Governance vital role in regards to language courses and training frontline workers on immigration and integration problems.\textsuperscript{193} This evidence suggests that within certain domains of integration the local LoG has facilitated its own initiatives independently from the national tier.

The research conducted by Els de Graauw and Floris Vermeulen (2016) supports the assertion that there is policy divergence between the local LoG and national LoG, in the US. Their study was focused on the city's role in immigrant integration politics by comparing four cities in the US and Europe.\textsuperscript{194} The study found that both NYC and San Francisco focused on disadvantaged foreign born immigrants, including refugees, offering support that dealt with the lack of federal welfare.\textsuperscript{195} Both managed to develop these initiatives despite no national LoG agency support, although they were affected by the restrictive immigration controls imposed by the national level. The study concludes that this level of divergence from national policies stems from two factors: a left-leaning municipal government and a politically well-represented migrant community.\textsuperscript{196}

The qualitative research for this thesis highlighted similar levels of agency within the local LoG. Local tier agency was addressed during the interview with Isabel. She explains that after the initial period of care provided by the NGOs,\textsuperscript{197} refugees essentially take on regular immigrant status resulting in the responsibility of care shifting to the state.\textsuperscript{198} Refugees are then eligible to the range of social support offered to all Americans. However, it is important to note that Isabel questioned the effectiveness of this support. When I asked her to confirm that what she had explained equated to official responsibility of refugee integration support shifting to the State Government, she disagreed. She explained that in reality the refugees “don’t really have anyone

\textsuperscript{193} Ibid., p.2.
\textsuperscript{195} Ibid., p.1006.
\textsuperscript{196} Ibid., p.989.
\textsuperscript{197} Ibid., p.989.
\textsuperscript{198} Isabel, min 5.15.
to talk to (from the state)” so will return to the NGO for support even after the initial period permitted.199 Ultimately, this suggests that after the permitted 90 days of NSAs support, organisations are still being required to fill the gaps left by local LoG agency.

Tim, who works for CRRA, explained the role of the state government from his experience. He asserts that usually “within ten days”, of arriving in the US, refugees will be signing up for social services and benefits that they are eligible to receive from the State Government.200 This support is valid for up to “three to four months” in addition to “Medicare for up to eight months”, again provided by the state.201 This support is incredibly important for the relocation of refugees and shows a significant level of agency from the local LoG. Although the agency may be flawed in practice it provides a degree of support in the integration domains of health, safety and stability and housing.

The interview with Isabel identified further local LoG agency in a different form. She explained that both the municipality mayor and municipal police force had reacted very positively to the task of refugee integration, in Albany.202 They organised community meetings and events to bring people together and foster relations between the two communities within their neighbourhood. It is important to note that Albany is an area renowned for its liberal immigration stance therefore, these findings may not generalise to the wider country. However, this is an example of local LoG acting independently within the social connections tier of refugee integration. I then asked Isabel to explain the relationship between her NGO and the local LoG, in an attempt at distinguishing any horizontal political interactions. I asked her to compare the relationship between her organisation and both the local LoG and national LoG. She replied: “there is so much more interaction (with the local LoG)”, the “(national) state department (only) comes in like twice a week” whereas she explained they are in daily contact with the city mayor’s department.203 She continued by saying the State Government is as high as her NGO would go when looking for grants and assistance for integration of refugees.204 This contradicts

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199 Ibid., min 6.00.
200 Tim, min 2.20.
201 Ibid., min 2.50.
202 Isabel, min 13.10.
203 Ibid., min 17.50.
204 Ibid., min 18.07.
the evidence shown in the section 4.2.1.2, that shows organisations receiving federal grants, however it can be explained. The State Government is often used to facilitate the distribution of federal grants in their region.205 This is predominantly due to the fact that state refugee programs can differ significantly, thus the funds need to be distributed appropriately.206 The evidence suggests that there is significant horizontal interactions between the NSAs and the local LoG. It also highlights that the federal grants, that are vital for refugee integration organisations on the grass-roots level, are often facilitated through local LoG agency.

4.3.2 The Netherlands

In the Netherlands refugee studies have traditionally taken the national level as a starting point for further research.207 Jeroen Doomernik and Birgit Glorius (2016) aptly argue that this focus is logical yet flawed, as “admission policies tend to be a national affair” however, “this should not obscure subnational differences” and the importance of the lower LoG.208 Therefore, in this section I will analyse the evidence and data that suggests significant Dutch local LoG agency within refugee integration domains. This will be divided into three sections. First, the evidence of a local shift in integration policy will be assessed by outlining the academic literature and the data from qualitative interviews. Second, analysis of the effectiveness of this increased local tier agency. Finally, analysis of suggested refugee integration reforms in the Netherlands. This evidence will highlight the fact that there is a substantial amount of local LoG agency in the Netherlands, especially in regards to policy implementation in key integration domains.

4.3.2.1 Shift to Municipalities

The ‘local shift’ in integration politics has already been addressed in the literature review in chapter 1. In addition, Peter Scholten’s (2016) theory of policy ‘decoupling’ was outlined in the critique of national LoG, in section 4.2.2.3. This theory highlights a distinctive form of

205 Ibid., min 4.45.
206 Ibid., min 4.50.
208 Ibid., p.433.
municipality agency predominantly within the integration domains of *housing* and *employment*. 209

Sarah Spencer’s (2018) article explores the consequences of this local shift and the differing local and national mandates for policies.210 She explains that: “national governments bear primary responsibility for immigration controls while local tiers bear a greater responsibility for service provision (for migrants)”.211 This divergence in mandate led Peter Scholten (2016) to observe what he deems as the origin of this agency shift and framing ‘decoupling’.212 In his analysis of Amsterdam municipality he saw a persistence of a pragmatic problem-solving approach that was absent in the national tier of governance.213 He observed that the national policies dramatically changed depending on the political climate in the Netherlands, the initiatives from the Amsterdam local level stayed true to the ‘practical solutions’ mantra. Scholten, also observes this in Rotterdam where the municipality had consistently been focused on combating social deprivation and housing rather than the cultural aspects of integration.214 He even asserts that the initiative in Rotterdam had a bottom-up vertical interaction in which the local LoG changed the national policies. This suggests a strong degree of political agency from the local LoG.

To many academics the extent of agency from the municipalities is no surprise considering the reality of integration policy on the ground. Joanne van Selm (2019) acknowledges that “cities find themselves on the frontline of the implementation of (national) integration plans”.215 This implies that at the policy-implementation stage the local LoG has the majority of the agency in the Netherlands. This ‘frontline’ role of municipalities is supported by the empirical data collected for this thesis. Richard, a refugee living in the Netherlands, explained that in his experience once COA had located accomodation the responsibility of refugee care and

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209 Relating to the instances of policy decoupling between municipalities and the national government - predominantly over the housing and care of failed asylum seekers.
211 Ibid., p.2034.
213 Ibid., p.989.
214 Ibid., p.990.
integration was passed onto the local municipality.\textsuperscript{216} He elaborated that the local government provided support such as: civic integration courses and exams; payment of rent and bills through social security; and payment of school and language education.\textsuperscript{217} It is important to note that Richard was going through the Dutch integration system during 2003 and that the system has taken on multiple reforms since then. He also had a hugely positive attitude about the Netherlands, he even claimed that the municipality helped him set up his restaurant and, however his experience does not represent all refugees.\textsuperscript{218} Overall, this evidence highlights a trend that has seen the local LoG in the Netherlands gain more agency in different integration domains. These domains include: housing, employment, education, safety and security, language and cultural knowledge, and even to progress towards rights and citizenship.

Not all academics agree on the ‘pragmatic’ or ‘frontline’ explanation for the increase in agency of the local tier across Europe. Martin Bak Jorgensen (2012) researched the diverging logics of integration policies of the national and city levels in Denmark. He agreed that “policies are conceived at the national level, but problems are felt at the local level” leading to a growing role for local LoG.\textsuperscript{219} However, he claims that the idea that cities are driven by “pragmatic problem solving” is too simplistic and that many cities will use cultural diversity as a brand to develop a city’s identity.\textsuperscript{220} He claims that for some cities the image of inclusion becomes a societal asset for the city.\textsuperscript{221} The key element of Jorgensen’s argument is the importance of the city's participation in a European network of cities. These projects include the CLIP and Eurocities which both help increase and protect the autonomy of the local LoG in each country by increasing the political influence of each local policy.\textsuperscript{222} They also highlight a clear examples of strong horizontal interactions on the local tier in the domestic but also EU spheres.

\textsuperscript{216} Richard, min 25.50.
\textsuperscript{217} Ibid., min 26.30.
\textsuperscript{218} Ibid., min 45.10 and min 33.50.
\textsuperscript{220} Ibid., p.253.
\textsuperscript{221} Ibid., p.267-268.
Jorgensen studied the cities of Copenhagen and Arhus, in Denmark.
\textsuperscript{222} Ibid., p.254.
The CLIP (Cities for Local Integration Policies, 2006) was an EU initiative that set up a network of thirty cities working together to support social and economic integration of migrants. Amsterdam was a key member city and the aim of the project was bringing city officials together to learn from each other and ultimately develop and implement a more effective integration policy. This project covered four research areas that relate to the integration domains identified in this thesis, they included: housing; equality and diversity; intercultural policies in cities; and ethnic entrepreneurship. These areas not only cover domains from the markers and means tier but include the social connections. Eurocities is a larger EU initiative that was created in 1986 and now includes 140 of Europe’s largest cities, with wide ranging aims of increasing the economic, political and social development of their member cities. It was founded by six mayors of large European cities, which included Rotterdam, they produce annual reports on the progress of their multiple initiatives. This includes the ‘Integrating Cities’ project, created in 2006, which implemented local migrant integration initiatives. These two projects are examples of a multitude of inter-city partnerships that have developed in the EU to tackle challenges related to refugee integration. These projects not only show strong horizontal political interactions on the local LoG, but also highlight the increased agency within the field of refugee integration.

4.3.2.2 Effectiveness of Local LoG

The qualitative aspect of this research allowed for assessment of the effectiveness of the shift to local LoG agency in the Netherlands. A common pattern developed from my data analysis which is best highlighted in the interview with Eline, from the Dutch Council for Refugees. When we discussed the role of the municipalities, in regards to refugee support, she explained

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225 Ibid.
227 Ibid.
the crucial input they provide. However, she did addressed an issue with this input, that “every municipality has other (different) policies”.228 She elaborated that where a refugee is located is vitally important as there is such a wide difference in support.229 She explains that this difference is very dependent on the political landscape inside the municipality “very different in right-wing (municipalities)”.230 This is a similar opinion as Anne, who works for an NGO in the Netherlands that deals with the refugee integration. She explained, in an email, that in her experience refugees were offered better integration support by larger, often multi-cultural municipalities, than in smaller regions.231

The differing standards of integration support for refugees, across the different Dutch municipalities, is a factor that is acknowledged by many with experience of the system. Richard, who is a refugee, adamantly said that the support given to integrate differs depending on the region you reside, asserting: “it depends where you are”.232 He talked about how easy his brother had settled in Friesland, in the north of the Netherlands, where people were “warmer” to refugees and the local government was helpful, “that’s the best integration, as my brother doesn’t want to leave”.233 This was in comparison to some of the experiences he had heard of in the larger cities in the South. This contradicts the evidence from Anne, because Friesland is not as urbanised as other regions, however it does still highlight a difference of integration support between municipalities. Kevin, who works for IND, was discussing the language course that are organised by the local municipalities and an integral element of refugee integration.234 He asserted that there are significant differences between the “effort they (municipalities) want to do”, in organising the courses.235 He continues: “For example, the city of Amsterdam, also offers language courses parallel to the obligated integration course, so they are doing more (than other municipalities)”.236

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228 Eline, min 11.50.
229 Ibid., min 12.00.
230 Ibid., min 12.30.
231 Interview with Anne, Q2.
232 Richard, min 53.40.
233 Ibid., 51.20-53.25.
234 Kevin, min 24.20.
235 Ibid., 24.32.
236 Ibid., 24.36.
The differing of standards between the municipalities efforts in supporting refugees to integrate is having a negative impact on the overall standards of refugee integration in the Netherlands. This is despite the fact that clearly in some areas, Amsterdam and Friesland, the increased agency of the local LoG is having positive effects on the amount of refugee support. This suggests that increased local LoG agency requires a degree of national tier oversight to function on an effective and equal platform.

There was a second theme that became apparent from the research. The overemphasis on economic self-sufficiency as an indicator of successful integration was observed. Anne, explained that if financially a refugee is safe, that the “municipality believes that the integration has been successful however, I believe that integration should be broader”.237 This difference in perception was also addressed by Eline. She asserted that “refugees (do) want to have a job as soon as possible,......,but they want to have a job on their level”238, however this is not always the case because “municipalities, sometimes force them to get every (any) job they can,.....,(because it is) the social benefit they want to stop”.239 This is a theme that has been observed at the national LoG in both the Netherlands and the US and clearly proves problematic for refugee integration. However, perceived through the agency lens it highlights increased importance of local LoG agency. In the next section I will analyse an attempted reform bill, in the Netherlands, that aims to tackle the issues of ESS and the differing standards outlined above.

4.3.2.3 Refugee Integration Reform?

“The problem in Holland is we have had many, many changes in this area, in civic integration”, this was what Eline from the Dutch Council for Refugees explicitly outlined in her interview.240 Prior to the interview with Eline she sent a copy of a letter, dated 2nd July 2018, from the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment (Wouter Koolmees) to the House of Representatives.241 In this letter he outlined the proposed reforms of the civic integration system. It is important

237 Anne, Q1.
238 Eline, min 44.28.
239 Ibid., min 44.42.
240 Ibid., min 17.03.
241 Letter of 2 July 2018 from the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment to the House of Representatives on the main outlines of the process to reform policy on civic integration', as received by Eline, via email.
to acknowledge that the letter is a proposal and cannot be equated to the present system, however its findings and suggestions offer a good insight into the current agency within the field of refugee integration. Thus a document analysis was completed on the letter to establish how the two issues identified above will be reformed.

As part of tackling the standards gap the letter suggests initially that the role of municipalities needs to be increased and synthesized. They state that “it is essential for the municipal authorities to be given more control over its (reformed integration policy) delivery”.242 It is important to note that this included provisions ensuring national LoG enforced standards, whilst acknowledging that this had failed to happen under the current system.243 This is supported by Olivia, co-founder of Stichting Lemat, who when asked for her opinion on this aspect of reform stated, “I think that’s not a bad idea”.244 She explained that the municipalities needed to retain more control as the current situation had seen a “worrying” increase of privatisation of many of the integration elements, especially the language courses.245 She continues by explaining some very positive examples of municipalities organising community initiatives, such as events for Dutch and refugee students.246 She said this was a step in the right direction but still required some more substantial reform and increased agency for local LoG. Eline, also agreed with the increased level of agency for municipalities due to the fact that currently “refugees are responsible to pass the (civic integration) exam, they don’t get support from the municipalities”, at least officially.247 However, she emphasised that the DCR see the importance of decreasing and ultimately abolishing the differences between the regions, “that must be national policy” led.248

In regards to tackling the over emphasis on ESS as a tool for guiding refugees to successful integration there was one main suggestion. This reform recommends a ‘Personal Civic Integration and Participation Plan’ (PIP).249 PIP would be the strategy of dealing with each individual refugee in a unique and flexible way; from the intake procedure all the way through to

242 Ibid., p.2.
243 Ibid., p.2.
244 Olivia, min 24.20.
245 Ibid., min 24.43.
246 Ibid., min 29.00
247 Eline, min 18.20.
248 Ibid, min 18.40.
gaining citizenship.\textsuperscript{250} PIP consists of a three pronged approach between: (1) an individually tailored civic integration course leading to an exam, (2) voluntary work that then leads to paid employment, (3) and personal budget management support which then leads to self-sufficiency.\textsuperscript{251} This idea would see the one size fits all approach be reformed into a flexible two-way process of integration that adapts to the individual and has less emphasis on solely ESS. This reform is strongly supported by Miriam, the COA employee. She works with refugees during their civic integration courses and believes an individual flexible approach is what is needed “instead of using the same protocol for everyone”\textsuperscript{252} This opinion is shared by Anne, who explains that within her work she sees a variety of refugees from different backgrounds. She claims that education, country of origin, and cultural differences make a huge impact in the integration process.\textsuperscript{253} This suggests a need for individual approaches based on a refugee’s unique context and situation. This letter recommends combining these two initiatives, among others, which would result in increased local LoG agency in multiple domains of integration. This agency would cover all tiers of domains from \textit{markers and means}, to \textit{social connections} to \textit{facilitators} and even the \textit{foundation}.

These reforms are proposals but do highlight two things that make them useful to this research. Firstly, they enlighten the current integration system, by highlighting the challenges and issues that require attention and reform. These issues include who possesses agency in the different domains of integration. The second useful aspect of this letter is that it also highlights the reforms advocated by people working within the support system. This last point is important for any piece of academic work that aims to suggest a solution for the future of refugee integration. This is because it is the individuals that work within the current system that offer the most accurate insight into how it should be improved.

\textsuperscript{250} Ibid., p.6.
\textsuperscript{251} Ibid., p.6.
\textsuperscript{252} Miriam, Q3.
\textsuperscript{253} Anne, Q1 and Q2.
4.3.3 Comparing and Contrasting

4.3.3.1 Similarities

When comparing the agency of the local LoG in the US to that of the Netherlands two areas of similarities become apparent: policy factors and the integration domains. The most obvious political similarity is that of increased independence, from the national LoG when implementing policy, referred to as a ‘local shift’. In the US the research highlighted examples of states and their officials compromising federal initiatives and regaining some political agency when implementing integration policy. This is similar, although not to the same extent, as the policy ‘decoupling’ observed in the Netherlands. In the Dutch system there has been a substantial divergence in policy implementation from the local LoG. Additionally, it has been shown that the local LoG has gained agency within the realm of policy-making, in both countries. In the US there has been multiple state-led initiatives, involving strategies for improving migrant child welfare and combating the lack of federal welfare provisions in major US cities. Interestingly, Peter Scholten (2016) also identified a case of policy-making in the Netherlands. When he addressed the diverging policies of Rotterdam and how it affects national policy. This also highlights some significant bottom-up vertical interaction.

Within the policy sphere both countries have developed similar issues. Firstly, although on paper the local LoG has official responsibility for integration support, the qualitative research highlighted the unreliability of this assumption. It has been shown that often the NSAs fill in the gap left by the shortcomings of the local LoG. This is most obvious in the US and the evidence given by Isabel, about the lack of contact between refugees and the State Government. In the Netherlands it is not as obvious, however the role of NSAs is more prominent that originally conceptualised which will be shown in the next section. The second issue is an inherent problem with increased local tier agency in refugee integration. As the local level agency increases, within a policy field, the standards across the country begin to become highly divergent. This can be seen in both the case studies. In the US it has been shown that there is a large difference in refugee naturalisation rates across different states; equally in the Netherlands a common

complaint from NGOs is that municipalities are offering different levels of integration support. As Eline mentioned in her interview, as a refugee “you can't choose where you are going to live,......, but it's very important for your integration”. This issue suggests that if an increased level of local tier agency is to be efficient it needs to be accompanied by a certain degree of national oversight.

The second area of similarities identifies multiple integration domains that are impacted by local LoG agency. In the US it has been shown that State Governments impact in employment, housing, health (medicare), language and cultural knowledge, and safety and stability. This is similar to the Netherlands where Richard, explained that the municipalities provide support in housing, employment, education and safety and stability. However, the two countries share a problem. In Nadwa Mossad’s (2018) study he identifies an over emphasis of promoting ESS, from local governance, over all other forms of integration. This is in tune with the opinions of NGO workers in the Netherlands that criticise municipalities that identify ESS as an indicator of successful integration.

4.3.3.2 Differences

The main area of divergence observed between the two countries on the local level is the form of horizontal interactions. In the Netherlands it is clear that there are significant interactions between the NSAs and municipalities in the integration domains, which will be further analysed in the next section. The Dutch municipalities also show signs of wider horizontal interactions between cities across Europe as illustrated by membership to projects such as CLIP and Eurocities. This is in stark contrast to the attitude in the US, which Maria explained, as “isolationist” and “anti-organisation”. However, in the US the local tier has developed a new role as a facilitator for increased federal funding, displaying horizontal interaction between the NSAs and the local LoG. The NSAs are often unable to develop interactions with the national LoG, thus use the local tier to advocate for or access to funding.

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255 Eline, min 12.06.
257 Maria, min 21.30.
4.3.3.3 Comparison with National LoG

A comparison of the local LoG agency with that of the national LoG offers interesting findings. One critique of the national tier was that it often failed to develop agency or impact any integration domains in the social connections grouping. However, in the local level there are some signs of increased agency within this group. In the US, Isabel identified agency from the mayor’s department and police force that operated in the integration domains of social bridges and social connections. In the Netherlands the CLIP and Eurocities projects often develop initiatives that look at building bridges between cultures and foster community cohesion. The community cohesion emphasis is also cited as a factor in the policies of Dutch municipalities.

The national and local LoG in the two case studies do share another overarching factor when it comes to the effectiveness of their agency. They are all affected by politics. This results in convoluted policies in controversial fields such as refugee integration. This has been seen in the US with Trump (national tier) and in the variety of approaches by the states (local tier). In the Netherlands there has been a shift away from multiculturalism from the national government, in response to pressure from the rise of right-wing populism. Additionally, as stated by Eline, a municipality’s approach depends on the political complexion of the local government. This issue would suggest that the role of more neutral actors, such as NSAs, would increase the effectiveness of refugee integration policy.

4.4 Non-state Actors Level of Governance

In this section I will outline the findings related to the agency of Non-state Actors (NSAs) within the policy field of refugee integration. NSAs have been defined as follows: any organisation or actor (including civil society groups)\textsuperscript{258}, that is not controlled or directed by national or local government and offers a form of support to refugees during the integration process. This distinction can be difficult to decipher in certain cases, as the relationship between some organisations and the government is hard to definitively establish. A good example is the comparison between the RAs in the US and COA in the Netherlands. COA, for this thesis, is

\textsuperscript{258} Civil society groups are only a small aspect of the research in this thesis however they are included and provide important services in this field.
defined as a national LoG actor as it has well-established political responsibility and influence from the Dutch national government.\textsuperscript{259} This is in contrast to the RAs who are defined as a NSA actor. This is because despite receiving federal grants, they retain a significant degree of independence and autonomous decision making.\textsuperscript{260}

This section will be divided into a subsection for each of my case studies and then a concluding aspect that compares and contrasts the evidence. The evidence will show that in the US the role of NSAs is vitally important in supporting refugee integration. In some cases it can be argued that NSAs contribute as the sole actor in supporting refugees through the integration process. In the Netherlands a surprising amount of NSA agency was recorded. The evidence shows that NSAs play a role from Dutch policy-making to policy-implementation, but also in almost every integration domain and with horizontal interactions between all three LoGs. The evidence will highlight a need for increased agency in the future for the NSAs within the refugee integration system.

4.4.1 The United States of America

The US has for a long time retained a reputation of relatively efficient and successful refugee integration.\textsuperscript{261} Much of this success is accredited to the use of NSAs within the process. This was in part the justification of using the US in this thesis, as explained in Chapter 3. The NSAs agency within this political domain can be split into two predominant components: the role of the nine large RAs in resettling refugees in the US; and the subsequent support by the smaller affiliated NGOs, who are in a so-called ‘unique position’. These two aspects consist of my first two subsections with an additional section to briefly address the horizontal interactions discovered on this level, centred around the \textit{Refugee Council USA}.

\textsuperscript{259} Evidence for this can be found in the National LoG section 4.2. Additionally COA employees are actually Civil Servants and are employed by the government.

\textsuperscript{260} Evidence for this can be found in partly in section 4.2, but will be expanded on in this section, 4.4.

4.4.1.1 Resettlement Agencies

Maria, when asked to compare the funding in the US refugee system to the EU stated that the financial support from the Federal Government was fed down to the organisations, predominantly RAs, who were then left to implement their own initiatives. Whereas, she claimed; in the EU she had noticed the majority of refugee projects were funded and led by the member states government. Maria makes an important distinction about the control accompanied by funding.

A study by Jessica Eby et al (2011) supports the assertion that NSAs have remained independent and perform a vital role in supporting refugees. The study assessed the role played by faith based organisations in refugee resettlement in the States. Eby used the RA, Church World Service (CWS), and analysed the history of its support for refugees and assessed its importance in the current system. The study argued that the US had become the leading refugee resettlement country in the world due to the “long-standing active engagement” in refugee support by faith organisations. They argue the usefulness of these organisations, which include many RAs, is due to a variety of factors that include: the long-term community presence and established local networks that these organisations can utilise; and their capacity for advocacy on all levels of governance. The article continues by arguing that work done by faith based actors and the RAs increases the chances of refugees successful integration.

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) has developed a two-pronged strategy that combines an international campaign with their domestic efforts in the US. The domestic efforts consist of two main aspects, which can shed light on the extent of their agency in the States. The first aspect is their resettlement program which provides crucial support and facilitates refugees access into the US. Overall they have managed to resettle 5,374 refugees across 25 US cities in

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262 Maria, min 3.30.
264 Ibid., p.587.
265 Ibid., p.587.
266 Ibid., p.587.
2018.\textsuperscript{268} The second aspect of their refugee program in the States is IRC empowerment programs, which consist of: financial coaching, vocational training and asset building. In 2018, they delivered 9,127 empowerment programs to refugees and asylum seekers in the US.\textsuperscript{269} This shows that IRC has established itself as an actor within refugee integration not only in the form of refugee resettlement, but also having gained a certain degree of agency within the integration domains of employment, education and even housing. This agency is separate from the role their affiliates play, which will be addressed in the next section.

The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) has displayed signs of significant agency within multiple domains of refugee integration. HIAS define three domains that act as the framework for their refugee support in the US. These domains are; basic needs, social integration and economic integration.\textsuperscript{270} HIAS acknowledges that their local affiliates play a role in all three domains, especially basic needs, but that the organisation itself creates its own initiatives within the other two. Within social integration, HIAS works to enable refugees to develop connections in the local community, which is an attempt to “support long-term integration”.\textsuperscript{271} They accomplish this through intensive case-management, cultural orientation and extra volunteer support.\textsuperscript{272} HIAS also argues that economic integration is essential to refugees successfully adapting to life in their new home.\textsuperscript{273} They run multiple projects that help increase refugee’s assets and knowledge in starting up businesses and gaining employment as soon as possible. This evidence shows clear HIAS agency within different domains of refugee integration.

HIAS developed another role within refugee integration in the US; which centred around advocacy. HIAS outlines the lobbying effort that the organisation makes towards United States Congress and other forms of local governance.\textsuperscript{274} This includes their political campaign to highlight that 2018 had seen the lowest refugee resettlement cap in history, at a time HIAS claim “it is most needed.”\textsuperscript{275} Jessica Eby’s (2011) study also acknowledged that “advocacy with the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[268] Ibid.
\item[269] Ibid.
\item[270] HIAS, ‘About the Hebrew…’.
\item[271] Ibid.
\item[272] Ibid.
\item[273] Ibid.
\item[274] HIAS, ‘Advocacy…..’.
\item[275] Ibid.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
US government on issues relating to immigration and refugee rights has been a hallmark of faith communities (including the RAs)”. 276 Although the impact of these campaigns are hard to quantify and measure, Eby’s study asserts that these organisations have significant advocacy influence when it comes to raising and allocation of integration funding. 277

This evidence viewed through the agency lens shows that HIAS clearly hold agency in a wide range of integration domains. Interestingly HIAS manage to cover the economic domains of employment and education; which the national LoG also acts within. However, what is unique about the agency of HIAS and other NSAs is that they manage to effectively act within the social connections and cultural knowledge domains. NSAs seem to acknowledge the benefits of including social and cultural aspects and even define them as a crucial element of long-term integration. This theme is even more prominent when the role of the smaller affiliate organisations are assessed.

4.4.1.2 ‘Unique Position’

During an informal interview with Isabel, conducted prior to the official interview used in this thesis, she claimed that the NGOs working with refugee integration in America held a “unique position”. 278 In her experience NGOs offered a unique opportunity to mediate between the refugees in need and the government who provide the funds for support. She explained that, on the one hand, these smaller organisations, referring to the affiliates of RAs, were able to utilise their already established community networks to help support refugees integration, especially when it came to employment. 279 On the other hand, they are well positioned to advocate and lobby government officials as a representative of the refugees and their needs. This ‘unique position’ was a concept that needed to be addressed in more detail, therefore it became a prominent topic to be discussed during my research.

The official process on arrival into the US, for resettled refugees, highlights how integral the role of the local NGOs has become. The IRC article investigating the resettlement process explains

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277 Ibid., p.601.
278 Isabel, min 7.35. I do not have the recording for original quote but reaffirmed her meaning in official interview.
279 Isabel, min 10.00.
that on arrival, a refugee is greeted at the airport by a caseworker from the RAs affiliate organisation. These organisations are then required to find a suitable home and deal with any other immediate needs the refugee may have, this can include: medical assistance to financial or legal advice. This process was addressed in the interview with Tim, the CRRA employee. He explained that when a family arrives they will be greeted by one of his staff, and then “from (the) next day the resettlement process really begins”.

“We then take them to places where they can apply for the limited benefits they are entitled to” and any member of the family that is of working age will be assisted in beginning their employment process by the CRRA’s designated employment office. This process is a Federal Government requirement for any refugees entering the US. Tim’s evidence highlights that from the first day NGOs are providing important support for refugees. Additionally it is an example of an NGO working within the ‘unique position’ between refugees and the government.

For the first 90 days after arrival the resettlement agencies and their affiliates work with both the national and local governments and the surrounding community to help new arrivals settle. Within that time-frame a refugee is expected, by the national government, to become economically self-sufficient. Tim claimed that the CRRA’s success rate for ESS within 90 days was approximately “ninety-eight percent”. He also explained that after this period refugees are still entitled to employment advice and services at CRRA, for up to five years, and unofficially still receive a wide variety of other support.

The topic of NGO’s ‘unique position’ was a question that was brought to attention in multiple qualitative interviews. Tim asserted, when asked directly what he thought of the unique position assessment, “I would completely agree with that”. He explained that the CRRA rely on many donations from the local community both physical donations of money but also the invaluable

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281 Tim, min 0.38.
282 Ibid., min 0.53.
283 Ibid., min 0.20.
285 Tim, min 17.16.
286 Ibid., min 17.53.
287 Ibid., min 9.03.
donations of advice and volunteering.\textsuperscript{288} In relation to refugee employment support he claimed “it’s extremely important that we have a connection with the public or the private companies”.\textsuperscript{289} For a refugee to have access to this type of well-established community network is crucial for the success of their integration and has failed to be provided by the national or even local LoG. However, it is important to address the locational dimension to this argument. Olivia, the American refugee academic, rightly acknowledged that, although she agreed with the ‘unique position’ idea that “it’s different in every place”.\textsuperscript{290} She continued: “in some cities were they are a go between” but that depends on “what kind of city we’re talking about here in the US”.\textsuperscript{291} Despite this both interviewees acknowledged the good work that NGOs manage to achieve by utilising their networks and connections in both the local community and the government.

This analysis of the ‘unique position’ has also helped enlighten the extent of NSAs agency within refugee integration support. There are instances, from the first day, of support in the domains of employment, housing, health, safety and stability and language and cultural knowledge. Additionally it has been shown that these local NGOs offer a social network that facilitates refugees building of all domains of social connections.

4.4.1.3 Refugee Council USA

During the analysis into HIAS’s ‘local advocacy’ another interesting finding was uncovered. They addressed their working relationship with other RAs, which within the framework of this thesis is defined as horizontal interactions. They explain that they work in collaboration with the other eight RAs to support the successful integration of refugees. This includes HIAS’s participatory membership of Refugee Council USA (RC), which is a coalition of 25 US based NGOs dedicated to supporting refugees.\textsuperscript{292} The RC defines its aim as both “enhancing and building” the capacity of member organisations through a mutually agreed agenda of refugee protection and collaboration between organisations.\textsuperscript{293} They advocate in the US and around the world for durable and fair solutions to refugee allocation and integration. Their membership

\textsuperscript{288} Ibid., min 9.30.
\textsuperscript{289} Ibid., min 9.50.
\textsuperscript{290} Olivia, min 9.29.
\textsuperscript{291} Ibid., min 9.45-10.09.
\textsuperscript{292} HIAS, ‘Advocacy…..’.
includes the majority of the US RAs and other large international organisations. The RC is a concerted effort to develop horizontal interactions between NSAs to increase the effectiveness of their agency within the field of refugee integration. This sort of initiative may lead to some substantial benefits in improving the current refugee integration system in the Netherlands.

4.4.2 The Netherlands

Prior to the research for this thesis I assumed that there were limited levels of agency from NSAs in the Netherlands. This is partly due to the majority of the literature around the Dutch refugee integration system concentrating on the relationship between the national and local LoGs. However, during the research it became apparent that in reality NSAs were providing extensive support at all stages and in multiple domains of refugee integration. This is both sanctioned by the government and in response to the lack of support provided by the Dutch authorities. During the research process three organisations rose to prominence as significant actors within the refugee integration process in the Netherlands. They are: Stichting Lemat (SL), Nidos and the Dutch Council for Refugees (DCR).

4.4.2.1 Stichting Lemat

Stichting Lemat (SL) is a small organization in the Netherlands that defines their mission as building bridges between Eritrean status holders and the wider Dutch society. Olivia is the co-founder of SL and she explained, that the organisation was founded due to a perception that Eritreans were dealing with significant issues within the Dutch integration process. She claimed that there was a “large gap in (cultural) knowledge” on both sides, Eritreans and Dutch alike. SL works together with municipalities, social organisations and language schools in a culturally sensitive approach that attempts to “narrow the culture gap and connect cultures”. Their approach deals with both sides and helps run training workshops for Dutch employees,

294 Ibid.
295 As discussed in the literature review in Chapter 1.
296 It is important to acknowledge that the DCR is the largest out of the three and wields the most agency in this field and had difficulty interviewing employees of Nidos due to sensitive are of work.
298 Olivia, min 9.30.
299 Ibid., min 9.30.
300 Stichting, ‘About Stichting….’.
including both NGOs and civil servants, who come into regular contact with Eritrean refugees. At the same time they also support and teach Eritreans the cultural differences through empowerment courses. This two-way approach is very important to SL and Olivia, who explained that “we (SL) believe there should be investment in both (sides)” because it is “so important you don't have these cultural miscommunications and conflicts,.....because both don't understand the culture”. This is clearly agency within the integration domains of language and cultural knowledge but also the important building of social connections. A SL project in Rotterdam explains that they are introducing newcomers with local residents by organising cultural activities, thereby offering a social bridge, between the two cultures.

SL refuses to limit its agency to the social connections domain and there are significant, though small, examples of increased efforts at the policy-making. Olivia, explained that SL have attempted to lobby a more effective policy and legislation at the national level, “because in the policy-making there should be room for also special attention for special groups”. She elaborates that SL felt the need to invest time and effort into this strategy because “they (government) were not prepared enough”. Olivia claims that she has seen improvement over the last few years and the national government does on occasion ask for their advice on issues related to Eritreans. She also explains that in general it is far more effective to interact with municipalities than the Dutch national government. It is important to note that this is also in part due to the fact the SL deal with municipality employees on a regular basis. However, when asked what the best reform solution and who should lead this reform Olivia answered: “I think that we should cooperate and we need national policies to give us the room that we can do the work on the local level”. This evidence highlights limited examples of SL acquiring agency on the policy-making stage but a desire to build the relationship between the two LoG. It also

301 Ibid.
302 Olivia, min 5.10.
303 Ibid., min 6.06.
304 Stichting, ‘About Stichting....’.
305 Olivia, min 6.45.
306 Ibid., min 10.18.
307 Ibid., min 19.18.
308 Ibid., min 21.30.
309 Ibid., min 16.52.
reinforces the argument for increased lower level agency within the refugee integration domains, but with a clear oversight role for national LoG.

4.4.2.2 Nidos

The research on the Nidos organisation was hindered by the restrictions enforced due to the sensitive field they work in, this has resulted in my analysis of Nidos coming from official information or indirect explanation from other professionals within the system. The Dutch organisation has custody over unaccompanied minor refugees and aims to manage asylum seeker development to independence.\(^{310}\) Once the guardianship is granted Nidos obtains a high level of agency within the integration support. Their core concepts are identified as follows: (1) to represent the interests and legal representation, (2) to facilitate their independence by the age of 18 and (3) to support refugees while offering prospects for the future.\(^{311}\)

During the research into Nidos an interesting element became apparent. On the official website it stated that “in recent years, Nidos has made contacts with organisations from various European countries that are occupied with unaccompanied minor asylum seekers and refugees”.\(^{312}\) These efforts resulted in the creation of ‘the CONNECT’ which aims to exchange “good practices” and to “improve collaboration between actors involved in care, protection and integration of unaccompanied minors in Europe”.\(^{313}\) This European network is subsidised by the European Commission and includes countries such as Sweden, Italy and the UK, as well as the Netherlands. This sort of project has similar horizontal interaction traits as the CLIP and Eurocities on the local LoG and the Refugee Council USA. During the research it became apparent that the sharing of knowledge by the organisations on the frontline of refugee integration support is a phenomena that is on the rise and supported by the NSAs.\(^{314}\) It is also important to acknowledge that this type of project is not limited to Nidos and other examples

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\(^{311}\) Ibid.

\(^{312}\) Ibid.

\(^{313}\) Ibid.

\(^{314}\) This topic had been covered in majority of the interviews but most prominently in the interviews with Olivia, min 21.30 and Eline, min 38.20.
were discovered in the Netherlands. This is a trend that should be encouraged because of the difficulty in fostering horizontal interactions on the national LoG and to a lesser extent local tier. Additionally, this project identifies significant agency by Nidos in the refugee integration field.

4.4.2.3 The Dutch Council for Refugees

The Dutch Council for Refugees (DCR) is the largest organisation that deals with refugee support in the Netherlands. The DCR website identifies their overall mission as “helping refugees build a life in the Netherlands”. The organisation covers four main departments of support: (1) social support, (2) legal guidance, (3) participation declaration process and Labour participation. This suggests a high level of agency within all of the integration domains. This wide degree of agency is supported by the data collected from Richard’s interview. As Richard is a refugee now living in the Netherlands he was able to explain the whole refugee experience from the asylum process to setting up his restaurant. He explains that even during the asylum application interviews he was assisted by the DCR who were “always there to help you”. Richard acknowledged that throughout the interview process there were four people present: the refugee, the interpreter, the IND officer, and a DCR representative. He continued “during that time you panic” and the support offered by an outside actor like the DCR was invaluable, he even asserted that “the Dutch Council for Refugees are always on the side of the refugees”. Richard also noted that once the interview process was completed the DCR helped provide a lawyer for the complex legal work that follows. This supports the extent of agency stated on the DCR website.

315 Another well-established project was from the DCR, can be seen on https://www.vluchtelingenwerk.nl/wat-wij-doen/onze-projecten/internationale-projecten
Also used as an example: the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) which DCR is a member, can be seen on https://www.ecre.org/
317 Refuges and other newcomers are required to sign a participation declaration, that states that the newcomer understands the values, rights and duties in Dutch society and will respect them.
318 DCR, ‘About Dutch….’
319 Richard, min 4.45.
320 Ibid., min 8.05.
321 Ibid., min 5.55.
322 Ibid., min 10.39.
323 Ibid., min 15.00
This level of DCR agency continues after asylum is granted. Eline, the DCR employee, explained that once COA and the municipalities have arranged housing for newly recognised refugees there is a need for local support. The DCR will offer assistance in settling refugees and start the civic integration process, which includes: registering with local language courses, arranging bills and registering for healthcare. Eline elaborates that this support is implemented by the DCR but often paid for by the municipalities and the Ministry of Security and Justice. This is due to the Integration Act in the Netherlands, which requires municipalities to take care of social support for refugees, however many outsource that to the DCR. Eline claims that currently approximately 70% of the municipalities allow the DCR to operate within their region. When asked about this DCR support, Richard said “yes,..they will take responsible for filling forms out” and applying for loans which can help to stabilize a refugee in the first few months and years. He even claimed that the DCR had helped pressure COA into finding him a house quicker after his asylum claim was accepted. Richard did acknowledge that once he learnt the language, to a workable level, there was no real need for DCR support, it then came from the municipality.

It is important to acknowledge that Richard’s experience cannot be generalised to all refugees. In my interview with Kevin, the IND employee, he was critical of the work done by DCR. He claimed that during the interviews DCR employees can often be hesitant to ask enough questions and can make the process more difficult, sometimes to the detriment of the refugee they are trying to support. He also had a wider issue with the DCR’s strategy, which he argued focused too heavily on providing benefits to refugees and not on finding employment. This, he argued, results in refugees being passive actors in the job market. It is important to note that just as

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324 Eline, min 9.35.
325 Ibid., min 10.24.
326 Ibid., 13.00.
327 Ibid., min 13.35.
328 Richard, min 29.30.
329 Ibid., 25.03.
330 Ibid., 30.50.
331 Kevin, min 53.00.
332 Ibid., min 27.30.
Richard’s account cannot be generalised, Kevin’s has similar issues because he comes from a national LoG perspective.

The question of funding was an area that Eline felt the need to explain in detail. She was keen to establish that the DCR receive government subsidies only for the work that has been outsourced, which is what differentiates them from organisations like COA.\textsuperscript{333} This would include the running of language courses and the day-to-day social welfare support provided, including employment services. However, no government funds were directed to her department which was the political advocacy directive, this was in fact funded by the national lottery.\textsuperscript{334} This third department highlights a degree of agency similar to that addressed with SL, namely policy-making. However, it would seem that the DCR has significantly larger degrees of agency within this realm. When Eline discussed the letter outlining proposed reforms, that she had sent prior to the interview, she explained that this was created with DCR consultation.\textsuperscript{335} Which is the first time an official role in policy-making has been permitted to an NGO. She claimed that the national government in the past had mainly be interested in the experience of the NGOs rather than their input into policy-making.\textsuperscript{336} Eline used the example of the 2013 reforms to integration when the policy was changed on the back of advice provided by NGOs. This is significant agency within policy-making as well as policy-implementations from NSAs and could be highly beneficial for future reforms to the Dutch integration system.

4.4.3 Comparing and Contrasting

4.4.3.1 Similarities

A comparison of NSAs agency, within the refugee integration system, between the US and the Netherlands offers some interesting findings. An obvious similarity is the extent of the integration domains that are covered by the NSA support. Both in the US and the Netherlands NSAs are providing assistance to refugees in the domains of employment, health, housing and safety and stability. Interestingly, they also cover language and cultural knowledge. This can be

\textsuperscript{333} Eline, min 23.51.
\textsuperscript{334} Ibid., min 25.30.
\textsuperscript{335} Ibid., min 41.00.
\textsuperscript{336} Ibid., min 40.04.
seen in the US by HIAS who specifically deal with cultural orientation as a part of their social integration campaign. In the Netherlands the cultural aspect is most clearly evident by the work of Stichting Lemat who run workshop for Eritrean refugees to educate on the Dutch culture, but significantly also do the same for Dutch on the Eritrean culture.

Another similarity observed is the increased attempts by NGOs in both countries to foster horizontal interactions beyond their regional boundaries. In the US this can be seen with the efforts made by the Refugee Council USA (RC). The RC has been fostering connections with organisations around the US and even globally. This is similar to the efforts made by Nidos in their ‘CONNECT’ initiative that aimed to share knowledge between similar organisations around Europe. This use of horizontal interactions holds a great amount of potential and the increasing number of these projects highlight their growing importance. They manage to bypass the political stagnation of the national LoG and take a more pragmatic approach to dealing with integration policies.

A further similarity, I have alluded to in earlier sections, is that large proportions of refugee integration support has been outsourced from the national and local governments to NSAs. This in part is a result of financing and expertise, nevertheless the policy implementation of integration politics is dominated by NSAs agency. This is more obviously observed in the US than in the Netherlands. In the States it is clear that once a refugee passes the security clearance and immigration requirements the physical support is implemented almost completely by NSAs. Tim explained that CRRA workers greet refugees at the airport and that this was just the beginning of their integration support.337 Although not as all inclusive as the US approach the NSAs role in the Netherlands is significant. Eline explained that the national and municipal governments outsource and fund the work done by DCR for the basic support and integration progression.338 This outsourcing is significant for this thesis because it highlights the higher LoG utilising the skills and resources of NSAs, and could be a strategy that would be useful to expand in future reforms.

337 Reference in section 4.4.1.2 ‘Unique position’, Tim, min 0.38.
338 Reference in section 4.4.2.3 ‘DCR’ Eline, min 10.24.
4.4.3.2 Differences

The main overarching difference between the two integration systems and the NSAs agency within them revolves around the reasoning behind their role. In the US it is obvious that the NSA system has been purposely built to utilise the skills of these organisations to conduct the support that would ordinarily be associated with the government. They not only permit the NSAs to provide support but they will offer grants and investment for the organisations work. However, in the Netherlands, although the funding does exist, albeit on a smaller scale, the NSAs original aims seems to be to fill the gaps that are left by both official LoG. This is made apparent by the fact that the DCR, the biggest Dutch refugee NGO, does not operate in all the regions in the Netherlands.  

4.4.3.3 Comparison with National and Local LoG

The main advantage that the NSA LoG holds over the national and local LoGs is the ability to facilitate a two-way integration process through building community relations. This comes under the social connections tier of integration domains. This domain is vital to successful integration and an area that the national LoG struggles to develop. The local LoG although better placed than the national tier to develop social connections, shows limited capacity to effectively facilitate this two-way process. However, the NSA level has shown clear examples of this as previously identified in the Netherlands by Olivia and Stichting Lemat efforts. This organisation actively helps both Eritreans and Dutch groups to foster better understanding and integration efforts. In the US this was identified as part of the ‘unique position’ of NGOs. Jessica Eby (2013) identified the importance of the “long-term community presence” of NGOs. This ability to establish a network in the community was observed in NSAs in both countries and not only allowed them to develop social bridges and social bonds but also help provide effective support in the domains of employment and language and cultural knowledge.

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339 Reference in section 4.4.2.3 ‘DCR’ Eline, min 13.35.
340 Explained in section 4.2 ‘National LoG’
341 Explained in section 4.3 ‘local LoG’
Another aspect that was apparent in both case studies was the NSAs horizontal interactions with the other two LoGs. NSAs were observed to have consistent and substantial interactions with both tiers of governance that not only consisted of top-down initiative but examples of bottom-up. This would suggest a significant, albeit small, degree of agency within the policy-making realm. In the Netherlands we have examples of NGOs working with both national and local tiers to provide refugee support whilst also influencing policy, as outlined by Eline’s account of DCR role in the new reform bill.\textsuperscript{343} In the US this phenomena was far more limited with the advocacy of HIAS and other RAs restricted to funding applications and allocation.\textsuperscript{344}

This evidence suggests that the role of NSAs is significant in refugee integration. Both countries have shown examples of crucial agency originating from non-governmental organisations. This agency has largely been beneficial to the efforts to integrate refugees more effectively, by using local networks and strong advocacy to improve the system. This would suggest an increase in NSA agency would be highly beneficial for the integration of refugees in the Netherlands. However, it is important to acknowledge that any increase in NSA agency would have to be accompanied and guided by agency from the other two levels. Both Eline and Olivia, who work for NSA organisations, admit that any reform needs to be controlled and enforced by the national LoG.\textsuperscript{345} Eline explains that reforms “shouldn't just be NGOs, the government is responsible too”.

\textsuperscript{343} Reference in section 4.4.2.3 ‘DCR’ Eline, min 41.00.
\textsuperscript{344} Reference in section 4.4.1.1 Eby, ‘The Faith Community’s role...’, p.601.
\textsuperscript{345} Eline, min 22.25. And Olivia, min 16.52.
\textsuperscript{346} Eline, min 22.58.
4.5 Conclusion and Discussion

Prior research on refugee integration in the Netherlands had concluded that there was a lack of convergence within the policies of the national and local levels of governance. This phenomenon has been most aptly described by Peter Scholten (2016), who coined the term ‘decoupling’. However, the existing research completed by Scholten and others, focused on two LoG, incorporating the role of non-state actors within the local tier. Additionally, the existing work predominantly researched policy, neglecting the impact that these actors had on the different integration domains. This research has shown that when viewed through an agency lens the role of NSAs takes on a wider and more important role than previously assumed. These insights led to an intriguing questions such as: ‘Which actors hold agency in the domains of refugee integration?’ and ‘How effective is this agency in facilitating successful refugee integration?’. These questions establish the general aim of this thesis, which is to establish agency within the refugee integration systems of the Netherlands and the United States of America. It also assisted in the creation of a hypothesis for future reforms of the integration system. By utilising Ager and Strang’s (2008) integration domains in collaboration with the existing concepts of multi-level governance and political agency it has been possible to establish a certain degree of agency from the three LoG identified.

4.5.1 Significant Findings and Further Research

During this research a plethora of interesting factors and data have been observed and collected that assist in answering the research question. The significant findings can be categorised into two groupings: agency findings, that address the original research question posed; and more general overarching integration findings, that allude to topics for further research.

4.5.1.1 Agency Findings

In regards to agency within the integration domains this contribution has illustrated a multitude of similarities and differences between the two case studies. (1) In terms of the national LoG, it has been shown that both countries have developed an integration system that facilitates an

‘indirect’ form of national government agency. This agency results in the government outsourcing responsibility for refugee support in key integration domains, that cover the markers and means and the facilitator tiers.\(^{348}\) It must also be acknowledged that both retain agency over the final integration domain of rights and citizenship. The Dutch system has experienced vertical ‘decoupling’ which is not present in the US system, to the same extent. There was little evidence of substantial horizontal interactions in the US, in contrast with the Netherlands which had significant interaction between the national government and certain NGOs. The national LoG in both countries had developed a fundamental problem as shown by: limited evidence to suggest that the national tier had significant agency within the social connections domains. This results in an over emphasis on ESS and a neglect of key social areas of integration.

(2) The local LoG of both case studies shared similar traits as well. The local tier has seen an increase in independence from the national LoG in the realm of refugee integration.\(^{349}\) This resulted in the local tier increasing its agency within the policy-making sphere.\(^{350}\) Both countries local tier’s exhibited agency within the domains groups of markers and means and facilitators, similar to the national LoG. The significant difference between the two case studies were in regards to horizontal interactions. The Netherlands saw the development of initiatives such as: CLIP and Eurocities. Whereas, there is active protest against this type of project in the US. However, there are examples of horizontal interactions in the form of local LoG distributing the federal grants to the NSAs. The local LoG does pose some issues. Firstly, the assumption that official local support is reliable is not always reliable.\(^{351}\) Secondly, when the local LoG agency had increased, within refugee integration there had been evidence of highly divergent standards of support across the country.\(^{352}\) This suggests a need for oversight from a higher authority. However, the local LoG did show signs of increased agency within the social connections tier

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\(^{348}\) In the US this is conducted through the use of federal grants to the RAs; in the Netherlands, COA is utilised by the government in combination with DCR, to provide refugee integration support.

\(^{349}\) This was more evident in the Netherlands and the policy ‘decoupling’ between the two levels, but there is limited examples in the US.

\(^{350}\) The US had local state-led initiative develop and the Dutch had instances of bottom-up vertical interactions, in Rotterdam.

\(^{351}\) In both cases there were references to the local government falling short on required refugee support.

\(^{352}\) In the US it can be seen when analysing the naturalisation rates across the states; in the Netherlands during the interviews the issue of differing standards was addressed by multiple sources.
that was not evident in the national tier. This has been associated with a pragmatic cohesion focused approach.

(3) The NSAs LoG has also provided interesting findings across the two cases. The NSAs agency across the integration domains of the *markers and means, facilitators* and significantly, *social connections*. The ability of the NSAs to hold agency on the *social connections* domain is crucial as both other levels have struggled with this.\(^{353}\) Due to this social and cultural focus, the NSAs have also been shown to facilitate a two-way process of integration, which involves both refugees and the local community working towards better integration. The NSAs have consistent and substantial horizontal interactions with not only the other two LoG, but have shown initiative to expand to NSAs internationally. This has been accompanied with instances of NSAs holding more agency in the policy-making sphere, although more evident in the Netherlands than in the US. The NSAs have another advantage over the other LoG which they are less vulnerable to political change. The latter point may be an advantage but also highlights a weakness in NSAs. They are far less accountable than the other levels and thus wield less authority within the policy field.

4.5.1.2 Overarching Findings

The research has contributed evidence that assists the wider academic study of refugee integration. It has highlighted two main factors, that could form a basis for further research. (1) The first finding that needs to be addressed is the idea of a two-way process in refugee integration. A constant theme throughout the research was the need for both refugees and local communities to work together to facilitate successful integration. Too often the emphasis has been forced on the refugee to make the effort. This leads to the possible research question: ‘How would a two-way process approach improve the success of the Dutch integration system?’ (2) The second recurring theme is the over emphasis on economic self-sufficiency as an indicator of, and driving force for, successful integration. This was very evident in the US where all LoG displayed this focus but was observed to a lesser extent in the Netherlands. This leads to the question: ‘Is the economic self-sufficiency focus used in the US more effective than the

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\(^{353}\) The national level has limited to no agency in this area and the local has some instances but not as substantial as the NSAs.
social/cultural focus in Europe?’. Both these questions have a huge impact on refugee integration and would lead to very interesting and fruitful further research.

Two additional reoccurring themes have been identified, in this contribution, as important to refugee integration were as follows: the origin nationality of refugees; and the location of residence within the destination country. However, both these themes have extensive existing scholarly research.

4.5.2 Recommendations and Limitations

The evidence in this contribution would suggest that the hypothesis originally outlined is to some extent supported. The original hypothesis is as follows:

‘Increased political agency of non-state actors in the domains of refugee integration, would improve the effectiveness of the Dutch system and utilise some of the successful aspects shown in the US’

The research has proven that the increase of NSAs role would be beneficial to the Dutch refugee integration system but this alone will not sufficiently improve the chances of successful integration. With slight alterations the original hypothesis can become an effective recommendation, as follows:

‘Increased political agency of both the local level of government and non-state actors in the domains of refugee integration, with national level oversight would improve the effectiveness of the Dutch system and utilise some of the successful aspects shown in the US’

Overall the research suggests that the most effective system would include increased agency of both the local and NSA LoG, with the local leading the way on policy-making and NSA leading the policy-implementation. It has been shown that in the Netherlands municipalities are the most appropriate actors to lead the reforms as they are positioned well to facilitate the interactions between the other two tiers. Additionally, their role would provide more political authority and accountability than that of the NSAs. This increased agency would be accompanied by national LoG oversight and enforcement as they are the only actor to wield genuine control over the
whole system. This would utilise the knowledge and experience of the lower levels of government and will produce a pragmatic, problem-solving and efficient approach to integration.

In addition, this research suggests an increase in horizontal interactions on all levels would benefit the integration system due to the international dynamics of this challenge. However, it seems in the current political climate that this would be difficult on the national LoG, therefore the focus should shift to the two other levels. If the local and NSA LoG can foster stronger horizontal ties then real progress could be made in reforming the integration of refugees. A by-product of this initiative may see the national level following this example.

The evidence from this thesis adequately develops a meaningful recommendation, however it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the study. Firstly, the scope of the study; a wider breath of research could incorporate the international LoG or develop and nuance the depth of the US system. The latter would be greatly served by a more extensive interview process in the States. Secondly, the incorporation of another European country, with a comparatively different system to the Netherlands, would vastly increase the extent to which the findings can be generalised whilst also offering interesting data. Finally, an important weakness is the difference between the US refugee resettlement and the Dutch asylum process. However, this could develop into a further research project that would help identify how important this factor is to the success of refugee integration.

Overall this thesis has contributed evidence to establish political agency within the refugee integration domains in the US and the Netherlands. This was achieved whilst offering a supported recommendation for future reform of the very system studied, namely the increase of local and NSA levels of governance with national government oversight.

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354 Possibly the United Kingdom or Spain would offer a sufficient and interesting comparison.
## Appendices

### Appendix 1

### Qualitative Interviews

*Table of Interviews:*

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<tr>
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<th>Date:</th>
<th>Format:</th>
<th>Length: (Mins)</th>
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<td>11/04/2019</td>
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<td>Maria (Prof) <strong>US</strong></td>
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<td>Skype</td>
<td>29.53</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tim (CRRA) <strong>US</strong></td>
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<td>Skype</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eline (DCR) <strong>NL</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1.06.31</td>
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<td>Phone Call</td>
<td>44.17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miriam (COA) <strong>NL</strong></td>
<td>17/05/2019 and 24/05/2019</td>
<td>Email</td>
<td>7 Questions (in total)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne (Dutch NGO) <strong>NL</strong></td>
<td>31/05/2019</td>
<td>Email</td>
<td>3 Questions</td>
</tr>
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The names have been changed for ethical confidentiality considerations.

*List of commonly used questions:*

**Universal** -

1. Could you just run through the general process that a refugee goes through during the arrival and subsequent integration process? (In brief)
2. Show them the theoretical framework diagram and conceptual scheme and ask what they thought, improvements or how it relates to their country?

3. Is there a difference between the perception of “successful” integration between that of the government and that of refugees? (Basically does the government focus too much on jobs and money?)

4. Do you think that refugees pose a different integration challenge to a country than other groups of migrants? (If so, why? And how does this affect your role?)

The US -

1. Do you agree that NGOs in the US are in a “unique position” between government and the local communities, that helps them support refugee integration?

2. How has the Trump administration changed or affected your work in refugee integration?

The Netherlands -

1. Is society's role receding when it comes to refugee integration, basically is the emphasis too much on the refugee to integrate? (shouldn't it be a two-way process?)

2. There has been substantial research on the relationship between the national LoG and the local/municipality LoG in the Netherlands, and it has been outlined examples of ‘decoupling’, have you seen examples of this? (Often consists of conflicting policies or conflict between the two levels)
Appendix 2

Additional Concepts:

Although my theoretical framework is embedded within the a MLG system of policy making, whilst also utilising political agency as a tool for assessment, there are additional theories that require attention. These concepts all contribute to certain aspects of my framework and thus need to be addressed.

Policy Agenda and Framing

Policy Agenda and Policy Framing are two additional theories that are interlinked and comprises of important factors in the MLG framework. Policy Agenda as summarised by Sarah Spencer (2018) involves each LoG having their own aims and objectives when it comes to creating policies. This agenda is a reflection of: the particular problems and both political and institutional factors being dealt with by each tier of governance. This agenda will then shape the Policy Framing, which consists of how each tier of governance perceives an issue area. Policy framing shapes the possible future actions of government, including policy, and can differ between levels. In highly contested policy areas, such as migrant integration, agenda setting and policy framing are strongly driven by governance tier specific factors. This makes integration a policy area much more likely to see a conflicting or contradictory policy strategy between levels of government. This contribution also argues that the NSAs have their own particular problems and institutional factors thus a unique policy agenda. The research will show evidence that this agenda then leads them to frame policies around refugee integration differently from other levels of government.

Vertical Venue Shopping

One element that requires attention is highlighted by the work of Virginie Guiraudon (2000), who has formulated a concept labelled “vertical venue shopping”. Guiraudon claims that

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355 Spencer, ‘Multi-level Governance’, p.2037. (However the original explanation originates from Peter Scholten (2013) p.119)
358 Guiraudon, ‘European Integration…’, p. 251.
“political actors seek policy venues where the balance of forces is tipped in their favour”, and that this has led to local levels of governance searching for their most favourable venue.\textsuperscript{359} This often results in the regional government bypassing their national government to push their initiatives through.

\textit{Methodological Nationalism}

Andrew Wimmer and Nina Glick-Schiller (2003), conceptualised methodological nationalism (MN) as a tool to criticize the predominant focus, in the study of migration, on the national level of governance. They define MN as the “naturalisation of the global regime of nation states by the social sciences”.\textsuperscript{360} They assess the negative consequences of scholars and intellectuals assuming nation states are the natural unites for comparative migration studies. They conclude that the unwavering focus on the nation state has two significant consequences. Firstly naturalisation, by taking for granted that the boundaries of a nation “delimits and defines” the analysis. Secondly territorial limitations, that confines the social analysis to both the political and geographical boundaries of the nation state.\textsuperscript{361} The research into agency of different levels of governance coincide with the fundamental assumptions made by MN and promote the importance of focusing on the lower tiers of politics. MN advocates the idea of not fixating solely on the national level to establish the complexities of migration policies which is perfectly in tune with my concept. In addition MN also encourages the analysis of horizontal political interactions as part of the complex process of migration politics.

\textit{Inter-governmental Relations}

I like Adam and Eve Hepburn’s (2018) study of inter-governmental relations (IGR) on immigrant integration in MLG states will be used as the main reference for IGR. They claim that traditionally IGR has been studied in classical areas such as federalism and territorial politics but can be effectively utilised in analysis of immigrant integration.\textsuperscript{362} IGR can be defined as how

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid., p.252.
\item Ibid., p.578.
\item Adam, ‘Intergovernmental Relations’, p.1.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
governments, especially in a multi-level state, coordinate on any political issue. Adam and Hepburn identify four reasons for the importance of IGR in integration policies. First, IGR affects efficiency of policy-making as in many western states few policies are now attributed solely to one political level. Secondly, IGR impacts the legitimacy of policy-making, for example a dominant executive power may be considered undemocratic. Thirdly, IGR relates to accountability, as a coherent structure makes it clear who holds responsibility. Finally, IGR helps define the ontology of substate actions, by highlighting whether the local level has too much influence over policy or not enough. These four reasons make IGR a theory that will need to be assessed and considered in the context of research into the agency of refugee integration.

363 Ibid., p.1.
364 Ibid., p.2.
Appendix 3

Research Design Breakdown

Qualitative Research

To elaborate further on the details of my research design I will use methodological work on qualitative research techniques to guide me through the qualitative aspects of my work. Alan Bryman (2012) in his book *Social Research Methods*, outlines a step-by-step guide to conducting qualitative research. Bryman’s framework will be used as a guideline for conducting the qualitative research aspect of my mixed-method design. This will be in combination with John Cresswell’s (2009) work on qualitative data analysis and interpretation, conceptualised in the form of a diagram. By using Cresswell’s diagram as a handbook for my qualitative analysis I hope to keep the process as efficient and systematic in an attempt to acquire the most accurate results.

Grounded Theory

My research will be embedded in the concept of grounded theory. Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss (1990) described, the need for grounded theory due to the fact that much of the emerging qualitative research was “often judged by quantitatively-oriented readers”. In contrast grounded theory derives its theoretical framework from the data, which is systematically analysed through the research process. This requires the theory to constantly be tweaked and adapted to new data collection, which results in the most accurate interpretation. The research in this contribution had a small range of prior concepts and some limited theoretical predictions before the qualitative research begins. Hence a strong need for adaptability of both the theoretical framework and research design in an attempt to account for all aspects of agency. Grounded theory predominantly uses qualitative interviews for the data collection, as it provides the opportunity for the richest amount of data to adapt theories. Alan Bryman (2012) guidelines

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368 Ibid., p.387.
for semi-structured interviews were utilised for this research with people in the field of refugee integration. It required considerations of Bryman’s recommendations for preparation of interviews, as well as the types of questions to ask during the interview.369

**Quantitative Research**

The difference between qualitative and quantitative research is often simplistically reduced to a difference between words and numbers, respectively. Alan Bryman (2012) identifies three further differences between the two methods of research, that I believe highlights the importance of utilising both simultaneously.370 Firstly, qualitative is very inductive, where theory develops from the research, quantitative allows me to establish general themes and patterns beforehand, deductive. Secondly, the epistemological differences that see quantitative taking a natural scientific approach in contrast to the interpretivist approach of qualitative, this can offer wider validity and accuracy to the research. Finally, the ontological differences that have quantitative research using a rationalist/positivist approach in contrast to the constructivism of qualitative research. Combining these two types of research makes any analysis more accurate and nuanced which only benefits the final conclusions.

**Data Sets**

The quantitative element of the research may not be as extensive as the qualitative, but it provides an equally important angle for evaluation. My research design takes the form of a mixed-method convergent approach, thus will require an assessment of quantitative data to supplement and shape my theory. Refugee integration poses a challenge to quantitative research as finding data sets assessing the effectiveness of integration can be hard to find, partly due to difficulty in establishing a measurable definition of successful integration. Three types of data sets were assessed in the hope from these I will be able to discover new areas of interest with new data sets. The first area of assessment is the Eurostat and CBS (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek) reports, which have collected data on asylum application (both quantity and geographic location) and also foreign migrant inflows (including refugee). The second area is

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policy briefs, which will consist of analysis of the aims of the integration policies that affect refugees the most, from my chosen countries. The third area is the limited amount of EU integration assessment documents, these are commissioned by the European Commission to assess how successful their integration policies have been. Whilst researching these three areas I will be attempting to assess where the agency lies in the process of refugee integration and establish patterns of agency that can be explored during my qualitative interviews. The latter role of this research is important as my analysis of quantitative statistics offers a unique method to shape the direction in my qualitative research. The quantitative data will also supplement and support any evidence collected in the qualitative interviews. This process is more clearly represented in Figure 8, below, by the arrow going back from the quant data analysis to the qual data collection.

Figure 8: My mixed-method convergent research design in detail. (Created on Google Doc Presentation)
Appendix 4

Supplementary Reflections

Internal and External Validity

A key challenge for any research project is maintaining both internal and external validity. Internal validity is the process of ensuring that you are measuring what you have set out to measure in the research. External validity then assesses the extent to which you can generalise your findings to the wider population, both are interconnected and are very important for any scientific research. Robert Adcock and David Collier (2001) outlined the levels and tasks involved with measurement validity, which contributes to the internal validity in a study.371 The strategy of triangulation,372 is evident in the research design which consists of two distinct methods and multiple areas of data. This will help correlate and establish patterns from my data. I will also be collecting ‘thick description’, that captures as many important elements as possible, during my interviews, which John Cresswell (2009) identifies as another key component for increasing validity.373

Austria Case Study

Originally Austria had been considered as an European comparison, however this posed another limitation revolving around language. My research into the Austrian situation has been hindered at times by the relevant documents only being accessible in German. This is understandable but as a non-German speaker it has limited my research into some areas. This combined with the fact that Austria was too similar to the Netherlands meant that I decided to exclude my findings from this country. All these limitations however are manageable and do not deduct from the overall outcome of this research project.

372 The use of several sources of data and collection techniques.
Appendix 5

UNHCR seven groups that fall under resettlement submission categories:

1. Legal and/or physical protection needs
2. Survivors of torture and/or violence
3. Medical needs
4. Women and girls at risk
5. Family reunification
6. Children and adolescents at risk
7. Lack of Foreseeable alternative durable solution

(UNHCR, ‘Information on UNHCR Resettlement’, Accessed: 13/05/2019,
www.unhcr.org/information-on-unhcr-resettlement.html)

The US State Department’s three categories for people eligible to enter USRAP (labelled priorities):

Priority 1 (P1) - Individual referrals by designated entities (including: UNHCR, US Embassy, or designated NGOs) by virtue of their circumstances and need for resettlement.

Priority 2 (P2) - Group referrals by Department of State by virtue of resettlement needs. (Often in consultation with UNHCR and NGOs on which groups are most vulnerable)

Priority 3 (P3) - Family Reunification, individuals from certain nationalities granted access for the purpose of reuniting with family members in the US. (List of eligible countries on their official website)

www.state.gov/refugee-admissions/)
Appendix 6

Further Information

The Dutch Rise of the Right Contextualisation

In relation to this thesis the rise of alt-right and far-right political parties has seen Prime Minister Mark Rutte (VVD)\(^{374}\), on the national level of governance, refuse to work with the PVV after the 2017 election, which resulted in the longest coalition negotiation in history, with the Groenlinks.\(^ {375}\) On the local level the FvD became the largest party in three provinces in March 2019, which resulted in many parties refusing to work with them.\(^ {376}\) The current political situation around migration is clearly having a negative impact on both levels of governance and will have an impact on how integration policies are created and implemented.

Mossad (2018) Study Urban Areas Assessment

The first element of the ‘local context’ addressed by Mossad et al (2018) is the fact that statistically urban areas have better citizenship rates in refugees.\(^ {377}\) It is a reasonable assumption that an urban area would offer more integration facilities and wider employment opportunities thus increasing chances of successful integration. However, urban locations often have an existing surplus of low-paid workers and higher costs of living.\(^ {378}\) Mossad’s study attempts to explain this by elaborating on wider factors that affect refugee integration. This included refugees residing within communities inhabited by conationals (people with same national heritage) resulting in higher rates of naturalisation.\(^ {379}\) When using the agency lens it can be asserted that local LoG has a role to play in regulating all these conditions; from unemployment levels, to residency with conationals, to the costs of living within an urban area. This suggests that the local LoG in the US does hold significant agency within domains established by Mossad’s study as key to refugee integration.

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\(^ {374}\) VVD – People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy.
\(^ {375}\) Van Selm, ‘Migration in the Netherlands’ (2019)
\(^ {376}\) Ibid.
\(^ {377}\) Mossad, ‘Determinants of Refugee…’, p.9175.
\(^ {378}\) Ibid., p.9177.
\(^ {379}\) Ibid., p.9177.
Appendix 7

List of US Resettlement Agencies (RAs):

1. Church World Service
2. Episcopal Migration Ministries
3. Ethiopian Community Development Council
4. Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)
5. International Rescue Committee (IRC)
6. Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
7. US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
8. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
9. World Relief

All RAs have an agreement with the state department to provide reception and placement services for refugees on arrival in the US.

Appendix 8 -

The COA Act (1994)

The COA tasks have been laid down in the COA Act. Article 3 of this Act states:

1. The COA is in charge of:
   - the material and immaterial reception of asylum seekers
   - placement of asylum seekers in a reception centre
   - placement of asylum seekers in municipal reception centres and payment of contributions to the respective municipalities for the costs of this reception centre
   - intermediary activities regarding the outflow of persons entitled to a residence permit to accommodation made available by the mayor and aldermen
   - other tasks as assigned by the Minister to the COA, connected with the reception of asylum seekers

2. Our Minister can assign tasks to the COA, as referred to in the first paragraph regarding other categories of aliens.

3. In regulations, our Minister may set rules regarding the provisions to asylum seekers as referred to in the second paragraph.

Tasks

The COA has the following tasks:

- *Receive asylum seekers.* The COA receives asylum seekers and accommodates them in COA-locations until the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND) has decided on their asylum application.
- *Giving support to asylum seekers.* Asylum seekers are independent and responsible for their own lives. The COA supports them in a future in the Netherlands or elsewhere. Together with the respective partners we prepare asylum seekers for integration and (work) participation in the Netherlands, or we contribute to a repatriation with prospects.
- *Supply goods.* The COA provides the asylum seekers with bedding inter alia, and the first items to furnish their room.
- *Pay a weekly allowance to asylum seekers.* This is laid down in the Regulations for Provisions for Asylum Seekers and other categories of foreign nationals (Rva).
- *Acquire, manage and close reception centres.* The COA is responsible for a sufficient number of reception centres for asylum seekers that have been allowed into the asylum procedures. We realise reception centres all over the Netherlands and negotiate with municipalities for that purpose. We are flexible in our reaction to the nature and size of the inflow and outflow of asylum seekers.
- *Maintain the safety and quality of life in the reception centres.* The COA-staff is trained in conflict control. There is 24/7 security staff in a reception centre.
- *Execute the Regulations for Provisions for Certain Categories of Foreign Nationals.* These regulations provide for an allowance to persons not eligible for the asylum procedure but who do have lawful stay in the Netherlands.

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