Towards a methodology of research of the economic life of refugees in urban areas: Development of theoretical framework on case of Cairo.

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**Problem statement:** The research into the economic life of refugees represents a methodological challenge. Jacobsen and Landau (2003) criticised the paucity of good social science in the area of refugee and humanitarian research, which, they believe, is rooted in weak methodological preparation. Whether their assessment of existing research is correct or not, there certainly are numerous layers of methodological issues to be resolved, should one seriously attempt at studying economic condition of refugees. The methodological questions can be perhaps divided into three broad categories: problems of conceptualisation, problem of data collection, and ethical problems. This master thesis analyses the issue of conceptual underpinnings of economic life of refugees in some detail and, using the case of Cairo as a study material, attempts to develop a theoretical frame for data collection.
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1. Introduction

The admission and recognition of a person as a refugee does not equal provision of, or contribution to, her livelihoods. As numerous examples in recent research show, a state can be generous enough to open its borders to refugees but at the same time refuse to accept any responsibility for their livelihood.\(^1\) By the end of 2006, developing regions 72 per cent of the global refugee population (UNHCR, 2007). Thus, people who escaped persecution and violence in their homelands spend considerable part of their life in exile, mostly in developing countries, often in situations termed by researchers and policy makers as ‘limbo’ or ‘legal anomaly’. What the lack of formal social protection arrangements means for the refugee livelihoods in countries with high poverty rates, severely challenged education, labour and healthcare systems is subject to increasing academic interest.

In policy discussions, refugees are mostly portrayed as the consumers – of foodstuffs, healthcare, shelter, transport or education – and as a ‘burden’ on the host country economy. Hoodfar (1997) pointed out that statistically invisible groups of the economically active population are routinely categorized as consumers as opposed to producers. Her observation can perhaps partially explain the lack of data about refugee economic activities – until relatively recently they have not been recognised as economic agents. This thesis draws on existing qualitative research about refugees in urban areas, which clearly points out that the refugees often have no other option left than to cover their own subsistence since the ‘international refugee support system’ simply does not seem to be able to provide any systematic, sufficient and sustained material assistance to them and the host country social protection system is often inaccessible to non-citizens.

The central question of this paper is how can a future research understand and measure the economic situation of refugees. The thesis is based on the case study of Cairo, hence Chapter one pays attention to the specific situation of refugees in the city and should serve as a backdrop against which possibilities of further research are discussed in subsequent chapters. Chapter two discusses theoretical framework of a ‘refugee’ and her

economic life. It is subdivided into three subchapters, each of which is focusing on one particular component of the concept and how it links to the actual possibilities of research. Subsequent Chapter three focuses on the process and challenges of translation of the conceptual issues into an actual research design.

2. **Topic selection justification: the economic life of refugees in Egypt**

   Egypt is a refugee receiving country, a host to refugees of more than thirty different nationalities. Grabska (2006) cited El Abed’s estimate that overall, there are between 120,000 and 150,000 asylum seekers, recognized refugees and those whose applications for refugee status have been rejected residing in Egypt. This estimate corresponds with the figure of population of ‘concern’ to the UNHCR, which the 2006 UNHCR report put at roughly 104,000 and this figure, obviously, did not include those with rejected asylum application. The numbers of refugees, most of whom are settled in Cairo, have recently increased with people fleeing after the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. It is estimated that around 150,000 Iraqi refugees are in Egypt, although only 9,932 of them were registered with the UNHCR in Cairo by the end of 2007 (Iraqi Voices 2008 and IRIN 2008). These are broad estimates; but they give an idea of the human scale of the refugee problem in Cairo: somewhere around a quarter of a million of people are believed to be trying to find refuge and protection in the city.

   Egypt did not establish spatially segregated sites where refugees would be obliged to live and the costs of their subsistence would be (arguably) met by international refugee support systems. Instead, refugees are expected to self-settle and cover the costs of their life in the city. The early ‘self-reliance’ of refugees has been generally considered desirable as can be illustrated by the UNHCR’s policy document on refugees in urban areas, released in 1997, which explicitly recommended that care and maintenance be strictly limited to those cases of refugee households where early self-reliance is not possible and should be given only once. As Grabska (2006) points out, such policy strategy assumes that the country where the refugees are settled will enable them to access guaranteed convention rights,

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2 By mid 2007, the UN refugee agency estimated, over 4.2 million Iraqi have been displaced: around 2 million people remaining within Iraq, and 2.2 million seeking a refuge in neighboring countries (UNHCR on CNN)
including access to work and government guaranteed social protection on the same terms as
nationals. This is not the case of Egypt, though. Although the country has allowed refugees
to seek protection on its territory, it also made reservations concerning their rights in terms
of wage employment when accessing to the Refugee Convention. The reservations to the
Refugee Convention concern particularly Article 24 ‘Labour legislation and social
security’. That is not a reservation on the right to work as often assumed (wage earning
employment is a subject of Article 17, to which Egypt did not make a reservation), but it
concerns rights at work and social protection.

In practice it means that recognised refugees do have a right to seek wage-earning
employment, but they are treated as any foreigners attempting to work in the country (in
line with the Refugee Convention Article 17 (I)), including the requirement to obtain work
permit. In effect, due to both the demographic pressures on the Egyptian labour market and
administrative and financial burden on the employer of ‘foreigner’ by the above provisions,
no one from the sample of existing research into livelihoods of refugees in Cairo has been
formally employed. Subsequent problem arises with social protection, which is mostly
related to formal employment (i.e. is available to formal workers and their families). The
Egyptian Human Development Report (2005) revealed that social security is still
predominantly a feature of government employment (69% of all distributed social security).

Further reservation made by Egypt when accessing the Refugee Convention concern
Articles 20 (rationing), 22 para.1 (primary education) and 23 (public relief), affecting
various parts of lives of refugees, including achieving education for their children, or
inclusion into poverty relief and alleviation activities. The social services provided by the
UN, NGOs and faith-based groups were reported to be important for refugees, but any

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provides that every such person is required to obtain a permit from the Ministry of Labour. The conditions and
situations governing the granting of work permits are covered in article 4 of the Labour Code, while the
conditions under which an alien’s work permit may be cancelled are covered in article 12. The application for
the work permit has to be done by the employer and is subject to several criteria, including the number of
Egyptian nationals working for a given employer and activities of the employer. Once the application is
approved, the prospective employee has to submit an HIV test result, travel documents, a letter of reference.
Subsequently, the employer has to pay a work permit fee amounting to LE 1,000. Although same foreigners,
such as Palestinians, Sudanese, Italians and Greeks are exempted from paying the high fees based on bilateral
agreements and/or special relations; Resolution 136/2003 regarding the procedures and conditions of work
permits for foreigners, Clause 15, issued by Minister of labour of the Arab Republic of Egypt, 2003
financial assistance is extremely limited\(^4\) and even if provided, it does not cover real expenses of the survival in the city.

Thus, the refugees in Cairo are in a position when they must generate or mobilise resources for their livelihoods, mostly outside formal labour market and public social protection mechanisms. As a result, many of the refugee households experience extreme hardship and poverty, as evidenced in the collected narratives of participants at the refugee sit-in protest in Cairo Mohandeseen park in late 2005, where some describe their living conditions as ‘unbearable’ (Mahmoud 2006, Azzam 2006). But also, at the same time refugees through resourcefulness and resilience manage to establish some livelihoods even in such adverse conditions, and contribute to the local economy.

This thesis builds on the assumption that learning more about the economic situation of urban refugees in developing countries is a necessity for both humanitarian and development policy-making. The refugee livelihood policy, Spearl (2001) argued in his evaluation of the situation in Cairo, should stress that the promotion of self-reliance is by nature a developmental activity. He suggested strategies such as including refugees into ongoing training, micro-credit or poverty alleviation programmes implemented by development agencies and relevant government departments. To this effect, the UNHCR in Cairo tries to develop a system promoting self-reliance of recognised refugees through vocational training, access to income generating activities, some micro-credit, job placement grants and similar measures.

A further research can be useful on two grounds: first, it can improve our understanding of the economic conditions which refugees in given socio-economic context face and, second, contribute to better targeting of activities and resources designated to improve the well-being of the urban refugees. Such research, should it offer data and findings for evidence-based policy, needs to be based on sound and coherent conceptual and methodological foundations. Cairo, with the above sketched complexities of refugee

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\(^4\) See for example Al-Sharmani, (2003) : ‘Of the seventy-two recognized refugees who were interviewed for this project, only 46 people receive financial assistance from the UNHCR. The financial assistance received by these interviewees ranges between L.E 200 and L.E. 450. Of these 46 interviewees, only 16 people receive this assistance regularly (that is, every month), 11 people receive it irregularly (sometimes every two or four months) and 19 people stopped receiving financial assistance altogether because of recent UNHCR decisions to suspend financial assistance in the cases of single refugees and female refugees who were reunited with their husbands’
situation represents a challenge for both concept-development and data collection. Hence it is perfectly suited to serve as a case study, testing the possibilities and limitations of the idea of researching economic life of refugees.

3. Few perspectives on refugee policy development in the context of Egypt

To understand the nature of complexities of refugee situation in Cairo, some local and regional characteristics need to be briefly mentioned first. The position of refugees is affected by both external factors (conflicts outside the territory of Egypt) and internal factors, which are a nexus of political and security concerns, resulting in different groups of people seeking refuge in Egypt being over various periods of time treated differently in respect to their status, labour, and more generally livelihoods. For details and brief overview of the most represented refugee groups, the Sudanese, Palestinian, Somali, Ethiopian, Eritrean and Iraqi refugees please see Appendix 1.

Apart from above mentioned factors, socio-economic concerns to a large extent dictate the refugee policies in Egypt, as is after all evidenced by the nature of reservations made to the Refugee Convention. Recently, the analysis of the 2005 Egypt Human Development Report (EHDR) reveals, Egypt’s social protection system struggles with difficulties ranging from insufficient targeting, lack of outreach, social exclusion of the poorest, to the inefficiencies of the implementation of social protection schemes and misspending. The EHDR(2005) estimated that 20% of the country’s population is living under the Egypt’s poverty line (measured as income poverty), 31,8% experience subjective poverty (measured as relative deprivation), and this figure jumps to 42.5% in the metropolitan area. The situation in the labour marked is increasingly challenging as well: the 2006 census shows that 50% of the Egyptian population is aged between 15 and 45 years, that is in employment age. Almost 10% of the total workforce is unemployed, out of which 92% never had any job (CAMPAS). In these circumstances, the Egyptian government does not foresee Egypt as a country where refugees should settle and locally integrate. Instead, it was assumed that Egypt would play a role of transit, that is that refugees would be protected from the immediate danger and through the assistance of the UNHCR either repatriate back to the country of origin once the conflict ends or be resettled into another (third) country (Shafie, 2004).
Thus, the country did not create a formal policy relating to livelihoods of refugees, let alone strategy for their economic integration. In fact, the state did not in so far accept even the responsibility to determine the refugee status. UNHCR has assumed the refugee status determination responsibility under an agreement signed between UNHCR and Egyptian Government on 10 February 1954 and been unsuccessfully trying to hand over this responsibility to the Egyptian Government for the past few years (Kagan, 2002).

4. Available data and existing research

Egypt has sophisticated system of collection of population related data. The primary source of population estimates is the population census. The last census, conducted in 2006, gathered wealth of information on demographic composition of the Egyptian society. The census collected also social, economic and housing data. Second major set of statistics are the annually published data of birth, death and marriage/divorce events. The Central Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics (CAMPAS) is responsible for publishing the data as well as the census findings. There are also regularly conducted surveys, one focusing on demographic and health and one on labour force. The Demographic and Health Survey is conducted nearly every five years on a sample of about 15 000 households. It provides estimates of the whole nation, as well as of the five major geographic divisions of Egypt (urban governorates, urban lower Egypt, rural lower Egypt, urban upper Egypt, rural upper Egypt). The Labour Force Survey is conducted annually in four rounds on a sample of 20 000 and focuses on the labour force structures and distributions unemployment level. (CAMPAS, El Deeb, 2003)

These statistics however did not reveal any particular data relating to refugees. This is most likely for at least two reasons: First, the refugees are not statistically large enough group. The recent census estimated that Cairo proper alone has 7,8 million permanent inhabitants, Cairo metropolitan area has estimated 17.3 million people, with the population density in central Cairo being estimated by various sources somewhere upwards 31,000 persons per square kilometre. The UNHCR estimated 1,2 refugee per 1000 inhabitants of Egypt in 2005. Second, because of their often precarious legal status, refugees are unlikely to be readily willing to reveal information.
The refugees-related data are collected by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which serves as the status determination authority in Egypt and thus keeps an evidence of all applications and claims for international support lodged by asylum seekers and refugees in Egypt. The statistics are collected by the UNHCR office in Cairo and published in the annual *Statistical Yearbook* released by the UNHCR headquarters in Geneva. The latest 2007 *Statistical Yearbook* reveals that in Cairo by the end of 2006 was 104,467 persons of concern to the UNHCR, which means those who are asylum seekers, individuals recognized under the Refugee Convention, the OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa; or those enjoying “temporary protection”. Out of this ‘population of concern’ to the UNHCR, 50% were under the age of 18, and 48% were in the age bracket of 18-59. Women represented 45% of the population of concern, 47% in the age group below 18% and 42% in the age group 18-59. These data are valuable, however they do not yield any information about the socio-economic situation of the population of concern in Cairo.

The most comprehensive information about the socio-economic conditions of refugees in Egypt originates from academic research and evaluation of Al Sharmani (2003), Spearl(2001), Grabska (2005,2006), El-Abed (2003) and Azzam et al (2005). The research conducted in the city between 2001 and 2006 mostly focused on specific groups (ie. the Sudanese refugees, the Somali, the Palestinians, etc.) but pointed out the structural issues which are believed to be underpinning the refugee livelihoods situation in the city in general, in particular that the refugees have to fend for themselves and many experience severe material hardship.\(^5\) The research found that the primary sources of income of households are low skilled informal jobs, remittances, mutual aid within social network and financial support awarded in some cases by the UNHCR, and also by faith-based charitable organisations and NGOs. The focus and analysis provided by those researchers are however primarily qualitative. As such, the existing research offers extremely useful information about the life of refugees in Cairo, and rich context, but it provides only very limited quantitative data and analysis.

\(^5\)The research of Grabska (2005), Al Sharmani (2003) and Spearl (2001) predates the refugee influx of those escaping the conflict in Iraq and thus some of its information is outdated. But the structural problems they identified did not change in any considerable manner since the publishing of the research report.
5. Towards the development of research concept of economic life of refugees

The following chapter and sub-chapters will explore possibilities of developing a conceptual framework for future economic research, based on the above discussed context of Cairo, and the information, research findings and statistical resources available. It will first briefly discuss the concepts most pertaining to the topic selected, and subsequently analyse their key individual components from the perspective of further research in some detail.

5.1. Situating the discourse

As a starting point, the conceptual framework needs to clarify who is meant by the term ‘refugee’ and what is meant by the term ‘economic life’. There has been a considerable debate in the academic literature about the actual and precise meaning of the word ‘refugee’ and the impact of bureaucratic labelling, as well as about the non-participatory nature and powerlessness of refugees in the very process of being ‘labelled’. As Zetter (1991) argues: “the label conveys...an extremely complex set of values, and judgements which are more than just definitional” (Zetter 1988 in Zetter 1991, p40). Labelling refugees to him is a process of forming, transforming a politicizing their identity (Zetter,1991). This paper will nevertheless use as a basis for conceptualisation the definition which many authors appear to regard as simplifying: the legal definition provided by the Refugee Convention and the 1969 Organisation of African Unity Convention Governing Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. The reason for the choice is twofold: First, the ‘Refugee Convention’ is a legal instrument which Egypt acceded to and hence is bound by its definition and provisions. The legal meaning of ‘who is a refugee’ thus can serve for evaluative purposes of country’s policies. Second, from within the perspective of refugee livelihoods, the existence or lack of legal claim does play important role, and the foundations of a legal claim (for protection, assistance etc) vis a vis a host country are embedded in the Refugee Convention.

But because labels not only serve the as a tool to describe the world but also to “construct it in convenient images” (Zetter, 2007, p. 173), and as Malkki (1995) argued, being a refugee is a complex and dynamic process of ‘becoming’, a complex and gradual transformation which occurs also by experiencing the processes, relationships, networks etc
in countries of asylum (also in Al Sharmani 2003, Grabska 2006), the use of definition of Refugee Convention shall not mean a divorce from the notion of complexity and dynamics of life of refugees. The crude categorisation of people into broad groups of ‘asylum seekers’, ‘temporarily protected’, ‘recognised’, ‘rejected’ and those who fulfil all the criteria but have never applied for the status, shall not hide the complexity of existing in a social world and effect of local environment.

The concept of livelihoods seem to be particularly well suited to accommodate the notion of inter-relations between matters such as legal status and rights, income and stores and social relationships. Such understanding of ‘economic life’ is a broader concept than measuring income and selections between alternative uses of means. Karl Polanyi in his Great Transformation (1944) argued that the substantive meaning of ‘economy’ indeed includes the social, cultural and historical embeddedness of how people make a living and meet their needs and wants. Sen(1999) further introduced into economic thinking the concept of ‘capabilities’ - “the freedom to achieve actual livings that one can have reason to value” (p. 73). The focus, argues Sen, is “on the freedoms generated by commodities, rather than on the commodities seen on their own” (p. 74).

Chambers in his Poverty and livelihoods, whose reality counts? (1995) employs non-monetary aspects as concepts equally relevant as the income and consumption to develop ‘livelihood’ concept; at the core of which is ‘living, with people, tangible assets and intangible assets contributing to it’ (Chambers 1995,p. 194). Such definition is multifaceted. The tangible assets here are income, ‘stores’ including food stocks and valuables. The intangible assets are ‘claims’ and access to material, moral or other support (Chambers, 1995). The existence and accessibility of tangible and intangible assets interacts and together with social capital jointly determines the livelihood capabilities of people.

These components of the livelihood model, with a particular focus on the economic aspects of life or refugees, will be used for constructing analytical framework and subsequent research methodology. The next parts of this paper will attempt to discuss the three elements of the framework, the intangible assets, social networks, and tangible assets, as possible building blocks of developing a research.
5.2. **The intangible assets of refugee livelihoods**

The first set of ‘assets’ of refugee livelihoods to be explored are the intangible assets. The importance of legal rights or legal claims can hardly be overestimated. If it has been argued above that the Refugee Convention could serve as a basis for evaluative purposes, next step is to explore in which areas is the existence of claims established.

The Refugee Convention is a complex legal tool, which essentially provides a definition of who is a refugee (Art 1) and a subsequent set of norms for their treatment in regard to their juridical status, gainful employment, welfare and administrative measures. With a view to the concept of capabilities in livelihoods, the provisions could be broadly categorised followingly:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entitlement</th>
<th>Capability: What the person can do or can be</th>
<th>Functioning—well-being as:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full application of Status and Rights to all refugees as accorded by the 51 Refugee Convention:</td>
<td>Refugees able to escape vulnerable and powerless status and social exclusion:</td>
<td>Integration and participation in the normal life of the new society:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JURIDICAL STATUS (Personal status, Movable and immovable property, Artistic rights and industrial property, Right of association, Access to courts)</td>
<td>Refugees able to associate, form groups, own property and claim their legal rights through court actions</td>
<td>Freedom to access justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT (Wage-earning employment, Self-employment, Liberal professions)</td>
<td>Refugees able to engage in formal labour market, generate income as entrepreneurs, etc.</td>
<td>Freedom of choices and action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WELFARE (Rationing, Housing, Public education, Public relief, Labour legislation and social security)</td>
<td>Refugees able to escape poverty</td>
<td>Freedom and possibility of exchange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURES (Administrative assistance, Freedom of movement, Identity papers, Travel documents, Fiscal charges, Transfer of assets, Expulsion etc.)</td>
<td>Refugees able to have and prove their legal identity and engage in legal acts as well as able to leave and return to a country of asylum</td>
<td>Human security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Freedom to participate in society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Freedom to access courts and justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Freedom to move</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The existence of intangible assets, if applied as indicated above, would seem pleasantly straightforward. Yet, the categories of refugees and their entitlements under the Refugee Convention are not as uniform as it may appear at the first sight.

First, not all refugees are in the same legal position and with the same entitlements. The critical issue is that a refugee must be ‘recognised’. Criteria which must be satisfied for recognition of a refugee under the Refugee Convention include the requirement that the applicant for the refugee status is outside the country of his nationality. But the act of crossing international boundaries also does not make one a recognised refugee. The refugee status is a declaratory one. It means that a person is a refugee within the meaning of the Refugee Convention as soon as she fulfils the criteria laid by the Convention. This necessarily occurs prior to the time at which her refugee status is formally determined by a relevant authority of a host country and she is formally recognised as a refugee (UNHCR, 1992). Through the formal recognition, a person does not become a refugee, but is formally declared to be one. Only through this act of recognition can be established a claim to some of the entitlements provided for by the Refugee Convention. This has a particular bearing on selection of ‘who to interview’. As noted in previous chapter, there are significant numbers of refugees who did not apply for a refugee status and hence are not formally labelled as asylum seekers within the meaning of Refugee Convention. Next, there are also those whose application had been rejected and their files have been ‘closed’ by the status determining authority. Yet, they may well be in a situation when they had to flee due to persecution, or generalised violence.

Second, correspondingly with the first problem, the Convention entitlements, the ‘claim to support’, are not uniformly awarded. It is possible to identify three different stages of ‘being a refugee’ to which different provisions of the Refugee Convention apply: simple presence, lawful presence, lawful residence (Goodwin-Gill, 1996). Some provisions of the Refugee Convention are limited only to refugees ‘lawfully staying’ in contracting states. Such lawful residence needs to be proved by the evidence of permanent, indefinite,

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unrestricted or other residence status such as the issue and possession of travel documents or re-entry visa. The corresponding Convention provisions citing lawful residence include wage-earning employment (Art 17), recognition of professional diplomas (Art 19) and labour legislation and social security (Art 24). Other provisions and benefits extend to refugees whose presence is lawful; which implies admission in accordance with the applicable immigration law, for a temporary purpose. Finally, some (but no socio-economic) provisions extend even further and benefit all refugees, without in any way being dependent upon their legal situation (residence status), such as the prohibition of expulsion or return to a country they escaped ('non-refoulement', Art 33). The status of the person and corresponding entitlements thus can be seen as a dynamic set, moving on a continuum from simple presence to lawful residence. From a research point of view, that means that attention must be paid to the actual legal status and documentation of the person because that reveals the basis for her legal entitlements in the country.

Third, countries are allowed to make reservations to certain articles in the Refugee Convention, which in practice means that they are not bound by the provisions. In case of Egypt, as already mentioned above, these reservations concern all welfare provisions. Thus, for instance, even the fulfilment of the condition of ‘lawful stay’ in Egypt does not seem to establish an entitlement to claim social security. A research issue here is, whether anyone from the sample actually enjoys any formalised social protection measures concerning the major life contingencies as is sickness, injury, unemployment, maternity or old age.

Fourth, even if the element of recognition and ‘claim’ is available, the real ‘access’, that is the opportunity in practice to cope with loss and rebuild a livelihood, may be limited due to the social and economic realities of host countries like Egypt. Thus, the legal entitlement to seek wage earning employment in a country with high chronic unemployment might be of a little meaning in itself, without real access. The observation made by Zohry and Harrell-Bond (2003, p.63) that many refugees are among the ‘poorest of the poor’ in Egypt is visible to the naked eye of any researcher visiting Cairo. (The Appendix 2 of the paper presents rather crude overview of dynamics and interplay of legal status and available entitlements.) From a research point of view, the important question is whether anyone has been awarded the work permit and formal employment status or whether anyone obtained requisite licenses for opening business and gained income through it.
In summary, even in such seemingly homogenous group of like-situated individuals as are ‘refugees’, their vulnerabilities and formally awarded access to means of coping vary considerably. The rather dry legal exploration aimed to illustrate why the refugee situation is often termed by researchers and policy makers as ‘vulnerable’. Refugees, especially those who did not reach the stage of recognition combined with ‘residence’ are living in a liminal situation: they do no longer have the rights and protection stemming from citizenship status of one State but they are not citizens with corresponding rights and entitlements in another State either.

From a future research perspective, it must be noted that the existing research into refugee livelihoods in Cairo gives very good description of the perceptions of refugees in regard to the attainment of their rights (see Grabska 2005, Sharmani 2003, Azzam 2005). The intangible assets are extremely complicated to measure and interpret quantitatively and finding ways to do so in regard to functionings (capability sets) of refugees would be a matter of methodological complexity which is beyond the abilities of the author since the methods to measure intangible assets are still a subject to considerable academic debate and very few agreements. It is thus not the ambition here to develop comprehensive methodology, which would assess and measure intangible assets as such.

For the purposes of this paper, and the methodology of researching the economic life, the aim is to enable an exploration of the relationship between intangible assets and tangible aspects of the refugee livelihoods. Information about the current legal status is important to collect because a subsequent data analysis should be able to establish whether there is an actual relationship between one’s status and economic situation. The intention here is not to exclude from the research sample those who did not apply for refugee status or those whose application was not successful. One can for example use “all who have fled country or origin as a result of one of the civil wars, due to personal persecution, insecurity, or general violence” as a definition of who should be included in the sample (see Grabska, 2005).

Indeed, if also data of non-applicants and those with denied refugee status are included, a later analysis could reveal whether the residence status, length of stay in the country, having a work permit, being issued identity papers and travel documents, membership in a social security scheme matters (whether there is any correlation) and how much is matters (what is the quantitative difference) in relationship to the tangible aspect of
livelhood such type and height of income, material gain from poverty-alleviation activities, inclusion in saving associations (Gameyas).

5.3. Social networks and livelihoods of refugees

The inclusion of social networks into analytical framework of the livelihoods and the economic life of refugees is founded in the assumption that "people invest in each other to gain future access to different resources" Van Duijn et al. (1999, p.191). Those living in urban areas, Hannerz (1980) explains, "typically do not draw their sustenance directly out of the earth, but to a great extent from their dealings with one another" (also in Willems, 2003). Personal relationships in the absence of any institutional structures providing for support and assistance may be critical for building one’s livelihood. Participating in the communities allows refugees to access their culture, practice their traditions, and support each other psychologically but also find and share accommodation, establish and participate in educational activities, find employment, distribute information or participate in saving and insurance associations (Spearl 2001, Grabska 2005,2006, Sharmani 2003, Zohry and Harrell Bond 2003, etc). One’s participation in social network, or lack of it, thus has bearing on his/her chances to generate tangible assets, pool resources and share expenditure. Hence, it is not only the existence of legal claim but also the interaction with others, which should be considered during research design and data collection. It would be inaccurate, however, to assume that refugees by virtue of their non-citizenship status form one social-network/community which can be easily characterised and which lends itself readily to classification and economic research. Number of issues should be noted in relation to both the conceptual understanding and practical research design, particularly sampling process.

First, the residence in a host country does not erase experiences, structures, dynamics and politics, which formed one’s life before the flight. The research conducted in Cairo points out that refugee communities establish themselves largely around shared ethnic backgrounds (identities) and kinship. Somali refugees in Cairo, for example, are reported to co-operate along the five main clan families lines (Al-Sharmani, 2003). A study of Sudanese visiting strategies in Cairo discussed the importance of Sudanese social networks as a means of seeking mutual aid and support (Fabos, 2002). „Maintaining social ties is a paramount priority to a refugee community“, argued Schafer (2006) after she found out that participants in major refugee sit-in protests during interviews time and again expressed how important the chance to communicate, share and find support and solace with other refugees was to them. Importantly though, shared nationality does not necessarily equal shared
identity. As other researchers pointed out on the example of Sudanese community, deep divides originating from the conflict in Sudan, fragmentation and tribalisation of Sudanese society and distinct ethnic identities all play role in the lack of trust that has been reported by some. (Moro 2004, Grabska 2006). Similarly, Yoshikawa (2008) reports on divides within the Iraqi community in Cairo, concluding that “mistrust between segments of the Iraqi population is hampering the development of self-support networks that are lifelines for the many other refugee communities in Egypt.” Such findings imply that there are different social networks even within those from the same country of origin. Sampling and analysis in future research thus needs to take into consideration the diversity of communities, even if they are of the same nationality. The smaller the sample, and the more limited number of discrete chains of referrals, should a snowball sampling method be used to collect the interviews, the less likely the results will be possible to generalise beyond the particular research (sub)group.

Second, geographical/residential proximity and network ‘density’ plays a role. The Cairo urban refugees are scattered within a city of 214 km² (82.6 sq mi) in a number of neighborhoods which include but are not limited to Ard El-Liwa, Nasr City, el-Maadi, Ain Shams, outskirts of Mohandessin, Arba wa Nos and others (Al Sharmani 2004, Grabska 2005, Zohry ndt, Schaffer 2006). Coker (2004, p.17) in her research speaks of “the extreme cultural, social and geographical fragmentation experienced by southern Sudanese refugees in Cairo“. Similarly, others noted the increasing loosening of the social networks of refugees in the sprawling city, when refugee households and communities are „typically separated by an hour or more commute at different ends of the bustling city“ (Schaffer, 2006). That refugees, even of the same nationality may be quite isolated in the city points to a broader issue-- that mutual support may not be readily available and that it is not expense-free. Visiting friends or family is likely to bring along significant time investment, transportation costs and further expenses on occasional small gifts, sweets and similar items, which are part of social conduct.  

Again, this has practical implications. On the level of concept, attention must be paid not only to the gains associated with participating in social networks (from our

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7 The problem of distance is further complicated by a web of non-material issues such as the security of refugees on the streets of Cairo, as stories of harassment or police round-ups abound.
perspective in particular: pooling of resources, material aid, employment) but also the associated costs, which include travel costs, and also other material contributions. From the perspective of methods of data collection, due to the ‘scatteredness’ of the population over vast area, the random sampling based on ‘neighborhoods’ may not be the most feasible data collection method, even if it would in theory yield the most representative results. Other types of sampling methods, such as the snowball sampling based on referrals, may not easily reach those who live far from the initial contact(s) and have least opportunities and means for social exchange. Possible solution here is to actively ask for and include referrals also to those who ‘do not have many friends’, for households who live ‘far’ and households who are known to ‘cannot afford to travel by microbus or metro’.

Third, age and gender are likely to be important for participation in social networks. The UNHCR statistics reveal that 45% of all population of concern are females. It should not be automatically assumed that their access to social networks is the same as are the networking opportunities of men. As Schaffer (2006) in her report from the refugee protest explains: “For women in particular, the demonstration provided an opportunity...to develop friendships with other refugees and allowed their children a safe environment in which to play. For many, this was also the first time they learned about the services and resources available to them.” Especially for those who care for young children, the chances to leave their household may be slim. The author of this paper encountered refugee women who were household-heads (all three of them widows), who had young daughters and claimed that they are very isolated because due to the security reasons they cannot leave the daughters at home alone. One of them further explained that she does not send her children to school because the streets of Cairo are very unsafe environment, in particular for young girls, and another explained that after her older daughter has been severely attacked by a violent employer, she prefers her to stay at home and they together care for the younger children (by which decision the family lost the only source of regular, if very low, income).

Similar question arises in relation to the chances of participating in social networks for those of old age. The UNHCR(2007) statistics put their figure at total 2% of the population of concern, that is some 2080 people who are in non-employment age and who in most likelihood do not enjoy any form of social security/pension. The existing Cairo literature does not say anything about old age refugees in general and about their inclusion into social networks (or it was not found during literature review for this paper). It is safe to
assume, though, that for this age groups the availability of social support from their environment is absolutely critical.

From the data collection perspective, it means that even if women constitute nearly half of all the people of concern in Cairo, they may have less social contacts due to their domestic and child-rearing duties or security concerns. Thus, methods such as the snowball sampling based on referrals may not easily reach them and/or they may be underrepresented. Perhaps for the same reasons, the ‘old’ people appear to not be included in existing research. The sampling method should seek to ensure that data on these populations is included. As the unit of analysis is expected to be a household, possible solution is initiating a numbers of different referrals chains, ensuring that single males households (including shared households of single men) are complemented by other types of households, including those with female heads and households where lives an ‘old person’.

In summary, the social networks are intricate relational systems, contingent upon a plethora of factors and fulfilling numerous functions, of which material gain is just a small part. Similarly to the intangible assets, to quantitatively measure and interpret the role of social networks in all their complexity in regard to refugees would be a major multidisciplinary academic endeavour on its own. Given that the chief interest here is the ‘economic life’, the practical interest is predominantly to see whether the participation in social networks relates to the economic situation of households, particularly where material sustenance is concerned. Into the notion of one’s social network would be included all those who are not immediate family defined as “two or more persons related by blood, marriage or adoption who also satisfy the conditions of sharing the same housing unit and making common provisions for food and other essentials of living,” (ILO, 1973). Thus, even one ‘household’ can contain more than one ‘family’.

The issues to be covered in relationship to material aid are whether households interviewed received or provided any financial assistance (loan or gift) to someone else who is not family memeber (another refugee or Egyptian), whether they received or provided any material assistance (including foodstuffs, medicines, clothing, textbooks and other school necessities, household stuffs –blanket, carpet, pottery-, household appliances) to someone who is not immediate family (refugee/Egyptian). Issues in relation to gainful
employment include whether any member of the household received or provided an employment (defined as any remunerated activity) from/to any refugee (who –relative, someone else-), whether they have been referred by or referred another person to employment possibility (refugee/Egyptian). The issues of resource pooling should include participation in saving associations Gameyas (refugee only Gameya, mixed, mostly Egyptian participants), insurance associations (run by refugees, mixed, mostly Egyptian participants), joint purchases with other households refugee/Egyptian (business venue, land, property, durable goods including telephone, foodstuffs, else). The expenditure-sharing should at minimum include flatsharing of more than one immediate family, including flatsharing of more than one single persons, and immediate family with other person(s) (what is shared –rent costs, utility costs, telephone costs, toiletries, cooking appliances, furniture and durable goods, foodstuffs, else).

The data on economic aspects of social networking could reveal what is the relationship between mutual material aid, financial assistance, job referrals, participation in saving and insurance associations, forms of cost sharing and the household income and expenditure (whether there is any correlation) and how much it matters (what is the quantitative difference).

5.4. The tangible assets of refugee households

The last set of assets to discuss are the tangible assets available to and generated by refugees. The tangible assets of refugee livelihoods are here understood as income, stores and savings. The income represents both monetary and in kind receipts. The ILO (1973, 2003) defines household income as derived from the following main sources: „employees’ salaries, wages and other related receipts from employers, net income from self-employment, business profits, income from personal investments (rent, interest, dividends), royalties and commissions… or trust fund, alimony, pensions, annuities, scholarships, remittances and other cash assistance regularly received, and various other periodic receipts, together with social security and assimilated benefits in cash and in kind“ (ILO, 1973 Art 14 Para ii). As discussed throughout this paper, the sources of monetary income of refugees are mostly from informal labour (Grabska 2005), self-employment (Yoshikawa,
2008), remittances (Al Sharmani, 2003) and the UNHCR. Non-monetary contributions to household economy include goods and services transferred free of charge, but also the value of home produce consumed within the same household (e.g. agricultural products, livestock products), services, or “the estimated gross rental value to the occupier of rent-free housing, whether obtained as wages in kind or otherwise“ (ILO 1973, Art 14, para iii, ILO 2003).

The stores include assets such as durable goods, jewellery, land, property, or livestock. Savings refer to both difference between disposable income and the consumption plus non-consumption expenditure, as well as to existing monetary resources, which the household obtained by other means (for instance money generated before the flight and brought to Cairo) and did not deplete prior to or during the measured period.

Although there was not any detailed quantitative measuring of the household economic status of refugees conducted, all research points out that many refugees live in dire material circumstance and that most of the households are ‘poor’. Measuring the tangible assets available to households is important from two perspectives: First, if data are collected, researchers would be able to assess the income poverty incidence, depth and severity of refugee households. Second, the information about how much different sources contribute to the total household income can also reveal what ‘works’ for generating household income, and which factors affect positively or negatively income generating (please revisit suggestions of previous chapters).

With a view to the proposal that collected data could be used for subsequent poverty measurement, and for the broader purpose of comparison, it would appear sensible to try to harmonise the categories of data with those collected by the population census and/or the two major surveys (Labour Force Survey and Demographic Survey). The intuitive and research appeal here is in the possibility to compare the refugee-related data with those of general population of Cairo (where not applicable, with the aggregates of the four urban governorates) and being able to confirm, counter or qualify the generally held assumption that refugees are in the same situation as the poor Cairene. The policy development orientated appeal is in the possibility of better targeting of inclusion into poverty alleviation or employment strategies, should such be developed to benefit both the local population and the refugees. The population census collected economic data in number of broad categories: participation in economic activity, employment status,
occupation, industry and economic sector. To measure income per se is generally reported to be difficult and very sensitive endeavour. The problems to be briefly discussed here concern both the conceptual level and in practical applicability of the concept of income of households.

First, the conceptual issue concerns the very notion of ‘income’. *The Resolution of the Twelfth International Conference of Labour Statisticians* (1973) and later *Resolution concerning household income and expenditure statistics of the Seventeenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians* (2003) demand that ‘(a)ll irregular, non-recurring receipts are excluded from the definition of income.’ (Art 21). In all likelihood, a significant part of the income of refugee households can hardly be described as ‘regular’. For example, the body of research quoted elsewhere in this paper described the pattern of transfers from the UNHCR as rather erratic and the employment of many refugees as occasional. The proposal here is to resign on the requirement of regular recurrence of the income and for analytical purposes collect data on all income in a given reference period, even if such is not periodical. Such solution could be consistent with the Resolutions as Art 23 allows for ‘operational definition of income’ (ILO, 2003).

Second, ideally, both disposable income (income from production plus transfers minus taxes, compulsory fees and fines, social security contributions and compulsory and quasi-compulsory inter-household transfers paid) and household expenditure (consumption plus non-consumption expenditure) should be recorded. The reason is the extreme difficulty of measuring income correctly as respondents often do not recall a receipts when asked, may have a reason not to reveal certain type of income, or may simply miscalculate/misjudge the height of income. Those are not problems unique to refugee population and in fact seem to be inherent pains of income surveys/studies. Edin and Lein (1997) identified these problems in their ‘Making Ends Meet’ study and modified data collection accordingly. First, they asked about the household expenditures (“budget”) and only at a second stage about household income. Asking about budget first was crucial for getting accurate figures. If income related questions were asked first, respondents tended to adjust their reporting of expenditures downwards to fit their description of income and

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8 Note. This is generalisation. Since the detailed census data were available from CAMPAS only for considerable fee, and there was not a guarantee that they include the actual questionnaires, the measurement of income, the composition of categories etc, in the census must be further discussed, preferably with those experts who constructed the survey at CAMPAS.
rarely talked about informal income. Their strategy of data collection, even if reportedly lengthy, seems to yield more accurate result.

Third, the problem of in kind contribution in services as a part of income should be given brief attention because especially the female economic contribution in labour and services in the household has been often overlooked in the quantitative research. In *Indicators on income and economic activity*, the Statistics Division of the UN Secretariat (ndt) explains that in principle, any work such as production of foodstuffs for own consumption, for as little as one hour a week is taken to define person as economically active. Hoodfar (1997), in her excellent anthropological research of communities of the poor in Cairo noted that ‘work’ to those she interviewed and observed meant a paid job for which a woman has to leave her home. Thus, women working from home, or those in family run business, did not perceive themselves, nor were they regarded by their social groups, as working. As a consequence, their contribution in kind to household economy was underreported (p.110-112). In cases of other forms of contribution, such as housework and child care, all married women in her sample considered it their responsibility, regardless of whether or not they were engaged in cash-earning activities(p.166-172). From a data collection point of view, the selection of topics and formulation of questions in regard to these types of household contributions should probably be consulted with anthropologists, and the authors of existing refugee research. Technically, the inclusion of in kind contributions, unpaid and also ‘informal’ work into the composition of data collection tools can be aided by the *Guidelines concerning a statistical definition of informal employment* (ILO, 2003). But the particular questions development requires intimate knowledge of the refugee communities in Cairo, and rigorous testing (see chapter 3.2.3). It is not clear at this stage whether a computation of the transfers in kind would be possible, which is not an argument against collecting the data as they can serve analytical purpose even if not computed/included as a part of adjusted disposable income.

Fourth, the ‘stores’ of the households are broadening the concept beyond income (and expenditure). With a view to discussed comparisons with data gathered by population census and/or national surveys, collection of information relating to housing would perhaps be most appropriate way to gather data about household stores. These are banded in broad categories of housing type and tenure, number of rooms, utilities, sanitary conditions, availability of appliances and equipment. It’s important point to note, however, that certain topics could be covered on the level of household (for example housing type and tenure
questions), while other types of information could be better gathered on the family level (including number of rooms the family has available, ownership of appliances, and similar). As the existing research shows, several families may share accommodation in order to reduce their expenditures (Al Sharmani, 2003) but the concern here is that although more than one family can reside in a dwelling, what is a property of one family (for example an appliance, mobile telephone, chicken, etc) may not be shared by the whole household.

In summary, the tangible assets are the backbone of the proposed concept. The collected information should be able to reveal the actual income of the refugee households, whether and how it changes in relation to different characteristics of the household types how the income composition compares with the Egyptian population, the data would also enable poverty measurement, analysis of participation at the labour market, and similar. From the perspective of methodology, while it seems that tangible assets are in their large part readily quantifiable, the success or failure of data collection would rely on the actual design and administering of the questionnaire. (see further chapter 6.6)

6. Towards a development of methodology of data collection

This chapter will explore the last element which the thesis, the process of translating the above discussed concept into actual research design.

6.1. Substantive frame for research of tangible assets of refugees

The framing of a research into the economic life of refugees, resulting from the conceptual discussion concerns four areas: intangible assets, social networks, tangible assets and characteristics of the households. (see Table 2). The approach proposed in this paper represents a compromise between narrow approach, which would mean focus solely on tangible assets in refugee livelihoods (such as the income and expenditure) and the broad approach which would attempt to collect information of equal precision and depth on all aspects of livelihoods. This proposal centres the research and data collection around household’s economic data, complement with information about intangible assets and social networks where they relate to economic status of the households.
### Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intangible assets</th>
<th>Social networks</th>
<th>Tangible assets</th>
<th>Household type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>residence status, duration of stay in the country,</td>
<td>financial assistance (loan or gift) / assistance in kind</td>
<td>disposable income of household (income from production plus transfers minus taxes, compulsory fees and fines, social security contributions and compulsory and quasi-compulsory inter-household transfers paid)</td>
<td>nr of members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>being issued identity papers and travel documents,</td>
<td>received or provided employment</td>
<td>household expenditure (consumption plus non-consumption expenditure)</td>
<td>nr of family units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>having a work permit,</td>
<td>have been referred by or referred another person to employment, participation in saving associations insurance associations</td>
<td>savings (disposable income minus household expenditure plus any financial assets accrued before the measurement period)</td>
<td>sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>having a work contract,</td>
<td>joint purchases with other households</td>
<td>stores (housing type and tenure, number of rooms, utilities, sanitary conditions, availability of appliances and equipment)</td>
<td>age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>membership in a social security scheme</td>
<td>flat sharing of more than one immediate family</td>
<td></td>
<td>place of usual residence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>duration of stay in current residence,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>marital status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>number of children</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>educational attainment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>school enrolment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>disability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6.2. Main research questions

The tentative proposed substantive frame consists of three central questions to be answered by the research:

A) How much refugee households can spend (on what)

B) How much money/other tangibles they are able to secure and from what sources
C) How do the intangible assets, social networks and household type affect household income

6.3. Data collection – choice of method

Both quantitative and qualitative approaches have their advantages when dealing with such a complex issues as is the situation of refugees. The intuitive appeal of qualitative methods has been eloquently described by Myers (2000): „Central to the qualitative paradigm is the belief that people assign meaning to the objective world, that their valued experiences are situated within a historical and social context, and that there can be multiple realities“.

Yet, based on the given key questions, a quantitative approach may well be better suited for data collection. Its attractivity lies in the standardisation of quantitative approach, where the same question is asked every respondent. This would allow for subsequent quantitative analysis and comparison among subgroups. Next, if data are collected in comparable categories, they would enable comparison with the findings of the recent census of population of Egypt.

The difficulty of the approach however arises on the issue of sampling, access to respondents and timeframe. The following section of the paper will be a brief exploration of these issues, particularly with a view to some of the points discussed in previous chapter (see especially chapter 2.3. Social networks.)

6.4. Data collection – sampling

If it has been argued that refugees, even in one city, are a diverse group, and that refugee even in one (sub)group can have vastly diverse experiences, what sampling methods can be used, and how a sample should be constructed so that it can be representative of the population discussed? Here, the methodological challenge is to develop a sampling method and frame, which would take into consideration the difficulties associated with diversity of refugee population but also the problems of access to refugees, establishing communication and building relationship and trust.
As with other hard-to-reach populations, choosing sampling method is to a large extent dictated by certain research limitations, which are embedded in the choice of population of interest. The ideal method to employ for quantitative data collection would be a survey, based on probability sampling. But because refugees are unusual in the population, geographically scattered, and are not listed anywhere, it is not possible to satisfy the condition of random selection. Similar problem arises with sampling to maximise the range. I do not know what exactly is the norm and what constitutes variation.

One option would be to use as a basis the data collected by the UNHCR to define the ‘norm’ and variation. But the percentages of population quoted by the agency are those of people who registered with the UNHCR and are population of their ‘concern’. That leaves out those who never registered and those who are failed asylum seekers. As explained in the first chapter, their numbers are expected to be at least equal to those formally of concern. And as discussed, they should be included in the sample. Thus, the risk in using the UNHCR statistics as a basis for range sampling is that possible different composition of the non-included population will not be adequately reflected.

A possibility, perhaps, would be to use the database of the UNHCR as a source for range sampling, and complement the data set with equal number of households data obtained through convenience sampling.

The primary technique of convenience sampling is the snowball sampling: One interviewee gives the researcher the name of another possible respondent, who in turn provides the name of a third, and so on (Vogt, 1999). The snowball technique is used predominantly in qualitative type of research but Atkinson and Flint (date) argue that snowball sampling may be applied as a more formal methodology for making inferences about a population of individuals who have been difficult to enumerate through the use of descending methods such as household surveys (Snijders, 1992; Faugier and Sergeant, 1997 in Atkinson and Flint ). One of the problems which are embedded in the non-randomised sampling such as the snowball method is that those with fewer social contacts may be underrepresented. Sample are then likely to be biased towards the inclusion of individuals with inter-relationships, and therefore will over-emphasise cohesiveness in social networks (Griffiths et al, 1993) and also will miss ‘isolates’ who are not connected to any network that the researcher has tapped into (Van Meter, 1990).
At least three different groups should be selected on the basis of country of origin, each including 60 households. Next, (sub)clusters should be established, taking into consideration gender, ethnic, or other specificities. If all respondents were drawn from one referral chain (even in sub-clusters), the members of such a large single chain sample are likely to share similar characteristics. Thus, it will probably be needed to initiate several discrete chains with fewer links, particularly where any inference about a wider hidden population is considered important.

The snowball sampling can be further complemented by use of existing ‘social hubs’ as a source of contact with potential respondents. There are numerous formal and informal associations and community projects that serve as social hubs. On the formal level, the UNHCR is a place, which all asylum seekers have to visit in order to submit their application for refugee status, present relevant facts and be interviewed. Another type of ‘hub’ include the nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) such as the Africa and Middle East Refugee Assistance (AMERA), Caritas, Refuge Egypt, and other nearly 20 NGOs, community development groups and charity institutions. Notably, some of them are available to all who consider themselves refugees, some only to recognized refugees and individuals who have sought or are presently seeking asylum, some to all who have entered Egypt within a certain time frame, some according to nationality (see also Edinier’s ,2006, review of the health-care services providers in Cairo), which needs to be accounted for should one draw respondents from these hubs.

With such a ‘hybrid’ sampling method, the question to what extent the findings would be generalisable arises. Because respondents are not randomly drawn, but are dependent on the subjective choices of the respondents first accessed, snowball samples are likely to be biased, which limits the validity of collected data (Van Meter, 1990; Kaplan et al, 1987, Griffiths et al, 1993). At present, a statistical formalisation of snowball sample biases is not available (Van Meter, 1990). It has been argued however (Atkinson and Flint) that the problem of selection bias may be partially addressed, firstly through the generation of a large sample and secondly by the replication of results to strengthen any generalisations (that is, at least 60 respondents, in at least 3 groups). Importantly, even of the most characteristics of the sample would match with what we know about refugees, if the sample is not chosen randomly, the results will not be representative of the whole refugee population or community researched.
6.5. Data collection -access

The actual access to respondents plays a central role in success/failure of the data collection. With a view to the previously discussed sampling methods, three issues should be mentioned.

First, where contacts with potential respondents through organisations/institutions are concerned, those will be governed by identity and personal data protection of organisations, which are strict and for understandable reasons. Thus either use of the existing data or access to clients of organisations and institution must be negotiated between the researcher, the institution, and the potential respondents. At the time of writing the thesis, I had not available internal policy guidelines on data protection of organisations servicing refugees, hence any specific suggestions cannot be made here. In general terms, in the preliminary phases of the research, before any final decisions in regard to sampling procedure are made, the organisations need to be consulted first, the research objectives and key questions need to be made available to them and ethical treatment of gathered information (i.e. confidentiality, anonymity of respondents, methods of recordings, who will have access to the questionnaires and to the records, etc) need to be guaranteed to them.

Next, the access to respondents through snowballing methods is contingent upon the ability of the researcher to first establish contacts and, second, gain their trust. Unless the interviewees believe the researcher can be trusted, any snowballing on such a sensitive issue as the material situation of their households can hardly occur. Here, lessons can be learned from researchers who conducted qualitative research with larger samples in Cairo, such as Al Sharmani (2003) or Grabska (2005), who described her method as the ‘culturalist’ approach, which meant that research assistants of the same ethnicity as the researched group carried out the majority of the interviews with respondents (p. 20). Whether this would be a sensible idea for economic research is not clear, because Grabska herself explained that having research assistant of the same ethnicity caused occasional tensions, as well as possible bias as the research assistants found it sometimes difficult to remain neutral. It is not possible to make any conclusive statement about the best way to gain trust on such a sensitive topic as ‘money’ yet. The opinions of the experts residing in Cairo, such as Al Sharmani or Harrell Bond and other experienced social researchers should ideally be elicited before any decision is made.
Finally, there is also a question of accessibility of the research to the respondents. All efforts should be made to ensure that they feel confident and comfortable with the idea of answering the questions. That probably eliminates administering the questionnaires in written form (and for instance asking organisations to distribute and collect the questionnaires among their clients). Thus, even if trying to get standardised results, the technique to employ in data gathering would most likely need to be interview. The benefits of administering the questionnaires by a researcher were mentioned by Al Sharmani (2003), who explains that although her questionnaires were anonymous, the refugees asked did not feel comfortable writing down information about themselves, and as some were illiterate the researcher’s reading out the questions and writing down the answers was both necessity and means how to conduct the data collection in relaxed atmosphere. It would also mean that questions could be explained, if necessary.

6.6. Between concept and data collection- brief overview of the process of developing methodology

As evidenced by the above discussions, the closer one moves to the actual practice of collecting the data, the more uncertainties arise. The phase between deciding upon conceptual approach and actual data collection includes a number of research design steps, each of which should reduce the amount of uncertainty and contribute to effectiveness and efficiency of the actual research.

The first step in research preparatory phase is the development of substantive frame. Ideally, one would want to develop substantive frame with members of the primary audience, which in my case includes the refugees. They should have a say in what really matters about their economic life, as they are the experts on their own material situation. The information gathered from the primary groups would then serve as a basis for modification of the concept and development of substantive frame and methodology for a research (on the process, see Hoppe et al 1995; in Lankshear 1993). Their opinions can be elicited in a number of ways, most feasibly through focus groups, which, Gibbs(2007) argues, are particularly useful when there are power differences between the participants and decision-makers or professionals.
Once a solid substantive frame and key research questions are finalised, the next step is development and testing of the questionnaires and sampling methods. Once a draft questionnaire is developed and sampling method is tentatively decided upon by the researcher, next step should involve inviting the opinions of those who are actively engaged in social research concerning refugees (such as the academics at the AUC, the officers of UNHCR, officers at AMERA and others) as well as those who are engaged in statistical population related data collection in Egypt (CAMPAS, Population Council) and of other experts on the proposed questionnaires and sampling strategy. Based on their feedback, the questionnaires (and if necessary the sampling frame) would be modified and tentative coding system should be elaborated.

Subsequently the pilot phase of the data collection should be conducted. The pilot phase should basically test the adequacy of chosen research instruments, establishing whether the questionnaire is easy to understand, the sampling frame and technique are effective and the coding protocol is realistic and workable, and gauging the appropriate length and number of interviews (Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001).

Should the pilot phase be successful in that the possible problems it revealed are reparable, and remedied, the research ‘proper’ can start.
7. Conclusions

The focus of this paper has been the issue of conceptual underpinnings of research of economic life of refugees. Jacobsen and Landau (2003) criticised the paucity of good social science in the area of refugee and humanitarian research, which, they believe, is rooted in weak methodological preparation. This seems to be quite possible, but it must be also acknowledged that the very subject of researching refugees is rather complicated.

To start with, there are few agreement as to what actually the term ‘refugee’ means, and how to account for the multiple forces that have bearing on their life, or more specifically well-being, in countries where they enjoy protection. The concept of livelihoods developed by Chambers (1995) seems to be well suited to accommodate the notion of inter-relations between matters such as legal status and rights, income and stores and social relationships.

The treatment of the concept in this paper has been rather conservative, placing the tangible household assets (income, stores, savings) at the core of interest, and attempting to identify how the intangible assets and social networks relate to it. Admittedly, this is narrowing down the holistic view of human well-being into predominantly material and readily measurable aspects, which can rightfully be criticised. But it can also be argued that a body of qualitative research has already been produced on the issue of intangible assets and networks in refugee life in Cairo, which produced rich, broad and relevant results as evidenced by the wealth of references in this paper. The aim of subsequent research should not be to duplicate the previous ones but to fill the gaps in knowledge and explore questions which were not sufficiently answered yet.

The choice to focus the conceptual and method-related discussion on tangible assets was born out of a pragmatic assumption that income and expenditure of refugee households matter great deal. It matters to refugees because as any human being they need shelter, food, water, clothing, shoes, medicines and many other things which money can buy. It should matter to advocates because although refugees are spoken of as a ‘burden’, they generate resources which are spent on rents, public transport, telephone connection, electricity, locally produced foodstuffs, and numerous other items, which directly benefit local economy. And it should matter to policy makers because it would enable them to better target their poverty alleviation activities and schemes.
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Appendix 1

1.3.1. Egypt and Sudan are neighbours with a centuries long both-way migration history. Recently, the number of Sudanese nationals who arrived in Egypt over several decades was estimated to vary anywhere up to 4 million (Azzam et al, 2005). Between 1976 and 1995 the Wadi ElNil (Nile Valley) Treaty (1976) awarded to Sudanese in Egypt rights nearing the citizenship rights (Azzam2006, El Abed ndt). In 1995, after the attempted assassination of Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, which was allegedly supported by the Sudanese government (El Abed ndt, NY Times), the preferential treatment of Sudanese in Egypt ended. All newly arriving Sudanese we treated as any other foreign national in Egypt, including in labour or social protection matters. The policy turn spelled problem especially for those Sudanese who were refugees. The first refugee wave came to Egypt in 1955 when the civil war in Sudan started. New arrival peaked throughout mid eighties during the civil war in Southern Sudan. Many of the Sudanese who arrived in the 1980s to Egypt as students became refugees ‘sur place’ in Egypt (Azzam 2005, World news). A subsequent refugee arrival wave was created by the long- ongoing conflict in Darfur, when tens of thousands escapees kept arriving in Egypt from mid-nineties onwards. Of those who applied for refugee status, thousands were rejected and eventually became ‘closed files’ while others were given temporary protection status. In January 2004, the Egyptian and Sudanese governments signed so-called "four freedoms agreement" (freedom of movement, residence, work, and property ownership) between the two countries (Zohry, ndt). The actual consequences of the agreement for the Sudanese refugees, especially the failed asylum-seekers who live in Egypt without any valid documents, is at the time of writing this paper unknown.

1.3.2. Another large group of refugees in Egypt are the Palestinian refugees. By the end of 2002, there were estimated to be 50,000 Palestinians in Egypt (USRC, 2002). That figure refers to people who had arrived in Egypt over several decades. Their history of arrival, recognition and position in Egypt is long and complex, as is the history of Palestinian dispossession. The first large group, estimated 12,000 refugees, arrived in Egypt during 1948, after the attacks on Jaffa and several Palestinian villages (Yassin 1996, Sarraj 1986). After Egypt assumed military and administrative rule of Gaza in 1949, many Palestinian’s were transferred there and only minority was allowed to remain in Egypt ‘proper’ (Yassin 1996, El Abed, ndt ). The number of Palestinian refugees arriving to Egypt in 1956 (the year
of ‘Suez Crisis’ \(^9\) was reportedly small. But in reaction to the worsening economic situation in Gaza, then President Abdul Nasser invited more than 5,000 Palestinians with relevant qualifications to work in the Egyptian public sector (El Abed, ndt). After the so called ‘Six day war’ (1967), these Palestinians and their families became ‘stateless’ and were never able to return \(^10\). Egypt further became a host to several thousand military and civilian Palestinians, arriving after the Six days war. The relatively favourable Egyptian Palestinian refugee policy, by which the refugees were enjoying rights as national, was overturned in 1978 when the Egyptian Minister of Culture, was killed by a Palestinian faction group (Seale 1992, El Adeb ndt). As a direct consequence, an administrative regulation annulled all provisions awarding special treatment to Palestinians. From the early 1980s Palestinians were treated as foreigners and, despite the fact that Palestinians in Egypt come under the mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), until fairly recently no protection or assistance was provided to them.

1.3.3. Cairo has been also home to large group of Somali refugees since approximately the end of nineties, after the Somali state collapsed in 1991. \(^11\) The current situation in Somalia is routinely referred to as a catastrophic humanitarian crisis. By the end of 2004, the Somali refugees were the second largest recognised refugee population in Cairo (UNHCR, 2003). These refugees often came from the first host country, such as the neighbouring Libya, Saudi Arabia, or from Yemen or Kenya. The reasons for leaving the first host country and seeking asylum in Egypt cited by Al Sharmani (2003) were lack of legal residence status, fears of deportation to Somalia, and experiences of harassment and racism in the first host countries, as well as hope for the resettlement into a third country through the Cairo regional office of the UNHCR. The Somali population never enjoyed any preferential

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\(^9\) The Suez Crisis (1956) was a military attack on Egypt by Britain, France, and Israel after Egypt's decision to nationalize the Suez Canal

\(^10\) At the war's end, the state of Israel had gained control of the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, eastern Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights, which among other effects resulted in massive population displacement

\(^11\) After Mohamed Siad Barre was overthrown in 1991, conflicts between clan warlords resulted in killing and wounding thousands of civilians. The latest attempt to restore central government in Somalia seems to have failed in 2006, when Ethiopia- backed warlord elected as president by Somali lawmakers in Kenya was challenged by The Somalia Islamic Courts Council (SICC), which seized the capital Mogadishu and took control of parts of southern Somalia. Subsequently, SICC declared holy war against Ethiopia, which they accused of invading Somalia to help the government, and Ethiopia responded by military invasion the same year. The temporary government returned to Mogadishu in 2007, yet it does not exercise control over large parts of Somalia. (Reuters, 2008)
treatment by the Egyptian government. Their position and rights in Egypt are governed by the Refugee Convention, including in the employment and social protection issues.

1.3.4. Ethiopian refugees came to Egypt in three waves: between 1977-1979 arrived those escaping the Mengistu regime (Cooper, 1992)\(^\text{12}\). Second larger group arrived between 1991-1992 when the Mengistu regime collapsed. Third wave of refugees arrived in 1998-2000 as a result of the border conflict with Eritrea, as well as the suppression of civil liberties and economic hardship (Zohry and Harrell-Bond, 2003)\(^\text{13}\). In 2002, the cessation clause concerning Eritrean refugees in Sudan had been invoked (UNHCR, 2008). A wave of Eritrean refugees subsequently flew from Sudan to Egypt because of their fear of forcible repatriation back to Eritrea.\(^\text{14}\) Not all those arriving to Egypt registered as official asylum seekers. By the end of 2004, the Ethiopian refugees made up to 2% of the total refugee population registered by the UNHCR, the Eritreans represented even lower figure (UNHCR RO Cairo, 2004). It is estimated, though, that the Ethiopians and Eritreans in Egypt number around 5000, the majority of whom have had their asylum claims rejected by the UNHCR (Zohry and Harrell-Bond, 2003). More recent data on the make-up of the Ethiopian and Eritrean refugee population in Egypt are not available. Similarly to the Somali population, the Ethiopians and Eritreans were not awarded any special treatment and their status is governed by the Refugee Convention, including in the residence, employment and social protection issues and immigration law, where those who never registered are concerned.

1.3.5. Last group, which should be at least briefly discussed are the Iraqi refugees currently residing in Cairo. As previously stated, their numbers are estimated to be somewhere between 100 000 and 150 000, many of them not registered with the UNHCR. Historically, there is not much evidence of Iraqi refugees in Egypt available as Egypt became as a recipient of Iraqi refugees after the 2003 US led invasion of Iraq. While countries such as Jordan and Syria experienced massive influxes early after the conflict started, in Egypt the

\(^{12}\) Mengistu Haile Mariam was the leader of the military junta that governed Ethiopia from 1974 to 1987, and the President of the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia from 1987 to 1991. During the years commonly referred to as 'red terror' (1977-1978) alone, estimated half a million people have been killed, including thousands of university students, intellectuals and politicians. Mengistu fled to Zimbabwe in 1991 and enjoys asylum there ever since.

\(^{13}\) Eritrean-Ethiopian War was two years long border-dispute-triggered war (1998 to 2000), initiated by Eritrea. The war, which did cost at minimum tens of thousands of human lives ended in June 2000 but border tensions remain persistent.

\(^{14}\) Since 2002, the UNHCR decided to reconfirm (restate) the refugee status in Sudan of those Eritreans who lost in under the cessation status and recognise the new arrivals from Eritrea, who number some 9000 only in 2008. (Kaba, 2008)
early arriving refugees following the Saddam Hussein’s fall were few and rose following the bombing of Askariya shrine in Samarra in 2006 (Yoshikawa, 2008). Some refugees presently in Cairo transited via Jordan and Syria, reportedly arriving on one-month tourist visas that they extended once in the country. During 2006, Egyptian authorities introduced de-facto barrier to the arrivals of Iraqis from Iraq as they introduced a requirement of personal interviews for granting visa permits, which are conducted only in Amman or Damascus (Younes and Rosen, 2007). If successful, after arrival to Egypt, Iraqis can register with the UNHCR, which on prima facie basis recognises the refugees and provides them with documentation necessary for legal residence in Egypt (Younes and Rosen 2007). From the scarce material available, the Iraqi refugees appear to settle mainly in Cairo and its satellites, and in smaller numbers in Alexandria and smaller Egyptian cities.
Appendix 2: The following table presents rather crude overview of dynamics and interplay of legal, humanitarian and developmental discourse.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dominant Domain</th>
<th>Humanitarian relief + Some refugee entitlements (simple presence)</th>
<th>Refugee entitlements (lawful presence graduating into lawful residence) + Relief + Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Humanitarian relief</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>Local Integration</td>
<td>Return</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Prima Facia**

- Asylum seeker
- Refugee Status determination Process (*RSD*), Person still asylum seeker
- Rejected
- Appeal
  - Person still asylum seeker
  - Rejected
- Success full
- Legal:
  - Refugee
  - E
  - F
  - U
  - G
  - E
  - E
  - Local integration
  - Voluntary repatriation
  - Resettlement
- Closed file = No entitlement as refugee