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MASTERARBEIT / MASTERS' S THESIS

Titel der Masterarbeit / Title of the Master's Thesis

“Wednesday is Petra-day”

Patenschaften between (former) unaccompanied minor
refugees and adults living in Austria as a possible site for
participation in the host society -

A qualitative empirical study among refugee youths in
Vienna

verfasst von / submitted by

Magdalena Labacher, BA

angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts (MA)

Wien, 2016 / Vienna 2016

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt/
degree programme code as it appears on
the student record sheet:

A 066 810

Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt/
degree programme as it appears on
the student record sheet:

Masterstudium Kultur- und Sozialanthropologie

Betreut von / Supervisor:

Mag. Dr. Hermann Mückler ao. Univ.-Prof.

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1. Introduction

Sie liebt mich und unterstützt mich. Und dann weiß ich, dass ich alles schaffen kann. Ich kann ein gutes Leben haben in Österreich, Deutsch sprechen, Freunde finden, eine Arbeit finden und so. Und ich weiß, ich werde das schaffen.¹ (Interview Mostafa)

She loves me and supports me. And then I know that I can manage everything. I can have a good life in Austria, speak German, find friends, find a job and so on. And I know, I will manage.² (Interview Mostafa)

Mostafa is a former unaccompanied minor refugee who left his home country and now lives in Austria. According to the UNHCR, an unaccompanied minor is defined as follows:

An unaccompanied child is a person who is under the age of eighteen, unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is, attained earlier and who is separated from both parents and is not being cared for by an adult who by law or custom has responsibility to do so. (UNHCR 1997:1)

In addition to this definition, this master thesis refers to the Council Directive of the Council of the European Union, which describes unaccompanied minors as:

[...] third-country nationals or stateless persons below the age of eighteen, who arrive on the territory of the Member States unaccompanied by an adult responsible for them whether by law or custom, and for as long as they are not effectively taken into the care of such a person, or minors who are left unaccompanied after they have entered the territory of the Member States; [...]. (COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 2001/55/EC, article 2 (f))

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in the last few years the number of unaccompanied minor refugees seeking asylum in the European Union has increased (cf. Hancilova/Knauder 2011:8). From January to November 2015³ 8,489 unaccompanied minor refugees requested asylum in Austria (cf. BM.I 2015:9).

Although their reasons for leaving their home country are different,

¹ The interviews were conducted in German. To maintain the individuality of the contact persons their comments are not only given in their English translation, but also in the original German. For ease of understanding and readability, some of the quotes have received minor grammatical correction, but the content is unchanged.

² All English translations of the contact persons' comments are my own.

³ A complete statistic for the year 2015 is not yet available.

[...] the goal is the same: to seek a better life and gain access to appropriate education, health and other services. (Hancilova/Knauder 2011:8)

Unaccompanied minor refugees find themselves in a particularly demanding situation in the host country. On top of any traumatic events they experienced in their home country or during their flight, not to mention their fears about an uncertain future, they also suffer from a lack of family support.

The idea of *Patenschaften*,⁴ an idea developed by the *asylkoordination österreich*⁵ as part of the project *Connecting People*,⁶ aims to offer such minors emotional support and an attachment figure. A *Patenschaft* in this context is a voluntary relationship between two people that does not include any financial or other official responsibilities or duties. In the course of such *Patenschaften*, young refugees are assisted by the *asylkoordination österreich* to make contact with suitable adults living in Austria, who they can meet regularly in order to establish a relationship. The way each *Patenschaft* develops is individual, as are the activities that *Patenschaft* couples engage in.

This master thesis is about (former) unaccompanied minor refugees in Vienna and their experiences with a *Patenschaft*. The potential of such *Patenschaften* to strengthen the individual competences of the young refugees and to facilitate their participation in the host society is analysed both theoretically and empirically. The experiences with a *Patenschaft* are considered from the young refugees' point of view, with the aim of giving them a voice.

The research question is the following:

In which way can Patenschaften between (former) unaccompanied minor refugees and adults living in Austria function as a site for participation in Austrian society by enabling to envision future prospects in the host country?

⁴ To maintain the individuality of the concept *Patenschaften* in the spirit of the project *Connecting People*, the term is not translated, but put in cursive letters. The adults who are part of these *Patenschaften*, called "Paten and Patinnen" in German, are referred to as buddies.

⁵ The *asylkoordination österreich* is an association which unites various organizations and supports activities that assist migrants and refugees (cf. online source: *asylkoordination 1*).

⁶ *Connecting People* is the proper name of this project and is therefore put in cursive letters.

The theoretical underpinnings of this master thesis are drawn from refugee studies, the concept of participation, and the anthropology of the state. The research employs a qualitative empirical methodology, based mainly on semi-structured interviews with young refugees who have a volunteer adult buddy, which are further complemented by an interview with an expert on the topic, the leader of the *Connecting People* project. In order to supplement the interview material with a different perspective, a participant observation in the course of a *Connecting People* party was done, during which short informal conversations with the young refugees were undertaken.

The topic of this master thesis was strongly inspired by my own personal involvement with young refugees in Austria. In the course of my work in a refugee house, I have gained deep insights into the everyday lives of young refugees, including the challenges they face on various levels as well as the wonderful moments they experience. The young people concerned find themselves in demanding situations, however they do not only develop coping strategies to deal with these immediate difficulties, but also plan and start to work towards their future goals. One of those strategies is participation in a *Patenschaft*.

In addition, I have developed a close friendship with a young refugee girl, which exhibits some parallels to a *Patenschaft*. The different roles I have fulfilled for her in the last two years—being her friend, her elder “sister”, her tutor and her helping hand for various appointments—were adapted to the different situations she is exposed to in Austria. My experiences with her paint a picture of a young girl who, on the one hand, seems to be a bit lost in her host country, who is confronted with strangeness in every part of day-to-day life, but, on the other, is actively trying to influence and shape her everyday life, as well as her future prospects in Austria.

The contrast between the struggle with the strangeness of the host country and its sometimes inhospitable socio-political atmosphere and the continual efforts to achieve participation in Austria, which I observed among all the young refugees, caught my attention and motivated the research question of this master thesis.

At the moment, Europe is confronted with the largest refugee and migratory movement in decades. Without political changes in the refugees' home countries, these movements will continue or even increase. The refugees' future is uncertain and their chances for socio-political participation are limited. Various legal and structural frameworks, as well as the less-than welcoming societal atmosphere, constrain their freedom of action. Those who wish to stay in Austria have to meet conditions of participation that ensure that members of the host society and the migrants can live successfully together.

This master thesis aims to show that a changed perception of refugees is necessary. Instead of common perception of refugees as being helpless, I hope to show that they are rather the architects of their own lives, capable of planning for the future and developing strategies to achieve their various goals. Against this background, it seems worthwhile to observe and analyse the potential of being part of a *Patenschaft* from an anthropological perspective.

Finally in this section, a short overview of the structure of the master thesis and its chapters is given. In the first part, the topic of this work is situated within existing theoretical approaches and studies. In the second part, the empirical part, *Patenschaften* with an adult Austrian buddy are examined as a possible chance for young refugees to participate in the host society and to strengthen their everyday competences. The research done for this master thesis, as well as the methods, difficulties encountered, and results, are discussed in relation to theoretical approaches, as well as to existing research. The conclusion gives a summary of the findings and the main arguments in relation to the research question.

2. Reflections on participation in relation to young refugees

The topic of this master thesis is located at the intersection between refugee studies, approaches to the concept of participation, and the anthropology of the state. To analyse the specific situation of the contact persons – (former) unaccompanied minor refugees - theories about youth are used.

In the following sections, young refugees' opportunities for participation are discussed along with various factors that have an impact on their chances to act freely. These factors are borrowed from existing theoretical approaches to and research dealing with refugees, as well as from the empirical data gathered as part of the research undertaken for this master thesis.

After discussing the concept participation, an overview of the legal situation of (young) refugees in Austria is presented. This is followed by a discussion about the emotional and psychological well-being of refugee youths, whose demands and challenges are closely connected to their age group. Therefore, the concept of youth, including its cultural aspects, is discussed in relation to young refugees. After that, the socio-political frameworks that confront refugees are exemplified and discussed in relation to the ways refugees are perceived, largely as a result of the contrasting ways they are presented in the popular media and humanitarian discourse. The impact that such constructions have on refugees' chances to partake in society and exercise agency are investigated.

The chapter ends with a discussion of the possible changes in young refugees' lives resulting from their participation in various projects that offer freedom of action and the opportunity to contribute. Finally, the relationship between participation and empowerment is analysed in order to provide the necessary theoretical support for a discussion of the results of the research undertaken for this master thesis.

2.1. Participation as a concept

In order to talk about the concept of participation, it first requires some reflection. Participation is a controversial term, used in many disciplines, and does not have a consistent definition (cf. Croft/Bevesford 1993:439).

Participation originates from the Latin word *participare*, which comprises the terms *pars* (=part) and *capere* (=to take). Participation can therefore be translated as “the act or process of participating,” “the state of being related to a larger whole,” or “the act of taking part or sharing in something” (online source: The Free Dictionary). According to Rahnema, who refers to a similar definition given in the Oxford Dictionary, participation can take different forms, it can be active or passive, forced or based on free will, unplanned or manipulated, morally good, bad or neutral (cf. Rahnema 1993:248).

Participation is often understood in a political sense, meaning, for example, the level of voter turnout, or the involvement and integration of citizens in the processes of decision-making (cf. Geisen/Riegel 2009:9 footnote). Various models—such as the Ladder of Citizen Participation developed by Arnstein (1969)—are used to evaluate the level of participation. In this master thesis, however, the term participation is not used in a political context, but in the sense of socio-cultural participation. In other words, it means the opportunity to codetermine and contribute towards the planning and creation of future life realities for the individuals. It is discussed as a concept to describe the chances to participate in societal everyday life of the host country. In this context, participation can be understood as “[...] Beteiligung an der nachhaltigen Gestaltung der eigenen Lebenswelt und der gesellschaftlichen Verhältnisse insgesamt.” (Rieckmann/Stoltenberg 2011:124), thus the involvement in the planning of the own living environment as well as the societal relations in a broader context (cf. Rieckmann/Stoltenberg 2011:124).

Participation is further understood here based on the conception given by Geisen and Riegel in relation to youths and young migrants. In their definition, they also reject the widespread political understanding of participation. Instead they see it in a socio-cultural context, focussing on forms of social and societal participation, including disposal of

resources and the opportunities available to participate in the organization and configuration of societal life.

Vielmehr geht es bei Partizipation auch um Formen der sozialen und gesellschaftlichen Teilhabe, als Verfügung über soziale Ressourcen und Möglichkeiten der Mitgestaltung des gesellschaftlichen Lebens. (Geisen/Riegel 2009:9 footnote)

Geisen and Riegel highlight the specific situation of young migrants and their restricted chances to participate in the host society. Due to the difficulty they have accessing social resources and educational opportunities, as well as various experiences of exclusion, they find themselves in a marginalised position. Immigrant youths, therefore, do not possess the same chances for societal participation.

Becoming part of a society is a complex process characterized by various social and institutional interactions; chances for participation need to be analysed with respect to those various dynamics (cf. Geisen/Riegel 2009:9, 10). Urban talks about an interplay between the structural conditions and the individual. On the one hand, she points out, participation requires structures that allow, enable and encourage participation, and are optimally enshrined in a legal framework. On the other, she goes on, the individual is active in their creation of new situations. Participation, therefore, is shaped by structural and institutional conditions as well as by the agency of individuals in specific situations (cf. Urban 2005:3).

The structural conditions concern areas such as education, politics, work, health and leisure time (cf. Geisen/Riegel 2009:9). The area of education is especially crucial to young refugees, since they are, due to their legal status, often excluded from educational opportunities. Pfützenreuter points to the connection between participation and education, stating that participation goes definitely hand in hand with education and formation. "Partizipation hat natürlich auch etwas mit Bildung und Ausbildung zu tun." (Pfützenreuter 2001:60)

Apart from the structural conditions and individual agency, the societal atmosphere has a bearing on the extent to which participation is encouraged. Rahnema describes

participation as a complex phenomenon, which enters into human relationships in very different forms, and has to be seen in relation to socio-cultural realities (cf. Rahnema 1993:266). In this context Müller highlights that “[nur] einer Gemeinschaft, die Teilhabemöglichkeiten einräumt, kann man sich zugehörig fühlen.“ (Müller 2001:279) “[... Die] Menschen, die hier leben, müssen in unserem Land eine aussichtsreiche Lebensperspektive sehen. Ohne Partizipation ist diese Perspektive halbiert und damit verstümmelt.“ (Müller 2001:273)

Feelings of belonging can only develop in a person if the society they live within offers and allows them to partake in it. People need a perspective from which to form a sense of self; without participation their identity can only ever be fragmented and incomplete (cf. Müller 2001:273, 279).

2.2. Legal framework

Talking about refugees' chances for participation is not possible without paying attention to the Austrian asylum laws. Nevertheless, this master thesis does not propose to analyse Austrian asylum politics or to participate in the socio-political debate concerning the handling of asylum requests.

The Austrian asylum laws are a very complex set of regulations that are constantly being revised. Therefore, this chapter only gives the most basic information, omitting the details about the various changes and reforms that have been carried out.

From January to November 2015 81,127 people applied for asylum in Austria, a significantly higher number than in 2014, which saw 23,861 applicants during the same time period, January to November 2014. Among the applicants, 73.05% were male and 26.95% were female. Most of the refugees came from Syria, followed by Afghanistan and Iraq; many also came from Pakistan, Iran, Kosovo, Somalia and other countries (cf. BM.I 2015: 3, 4, 6). Among the 81,127 applicants, 8,489 were unaccompanied minors, 575 of whom were younger than 14. Most of the minors came from Afghanistan, followed by Syria and Iraq (cf. BM.I 2015: 9pp).

The Geneva Convention on Refugees is the main source for deciding who can be granted refugee status and what their rights are. It also details the obligations of states towards refugees. Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees the right of persons to seek asylum from persecution in other countries. Article 14 of the Convention entered into force on 22 April 1954. It was developed in 1951 as a post-Second World War instrument in order to protect people who had fled within Europe before 1 January 1951. In 1967, the geographic and temporal limits of the Convention were removed and it gained universal scope (cf. Geneva Convention on Refugees, Introductory note, p.2).

According to the Geneva Convention on Refugees a refugee can be defined as following:

A refugee, according to the Convention, is someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion. (Geneva Convention on Refugees, Introductory note, p.3)

The purpose of this definition is to protect people worldwide from political or other forms of persecution. The Geneva Convention on Refugees is a status- and rights-based instrument, detailing the fundamental rights of refugees as well as important principles, such as non-discrimination, non-penalization and non-refoulement. The regulations must be applied without discrimination according to race, religion, country of origin, sex, age, disability, sexuality or for any other reason. Furthermore, refugees cannot be penalized for illegally crossing borders or illegally remaining in the host country (cf. Geneva Convention on Refugees, Introductory note, p.3). "This recognizes that the seeking of asylum can require refugees to break immigration rules." (Geneva Convention on Refugees, Introductory note, p.3) The Convention also includes standards for the treatment of refugees, including "[...] access to the courts, to primary education, to work, and the provision for documentation, including a refugee travel document in passport form." (Geneva Convention on Refugees, Introductory note, p.3)

The asylum procedure in Austria is regulated by the asylum laws of 2005. Application for asylum can be made at police stations. It includes the registration of the refugee, the taking of fingerprints and a first interview. In the next step, the Federal Office for

Immigration and Asylum (Bundesamt für Fremdenwesen und Asyl, BFA) starts the admission procedure and checks whether the applicant has been registered in another European country before. If yes, following the Dublin Convention, the first country is responsible for the asylum procedure. If Austria is the first country where the person has been registered, it is responsible for the asylum procedure (cf. online source BFA). For the duration of the asylum procedure, the applicants have the right to state basic services (Grundversorgung), including accommodation, food, medical care, measures for people who are in need of care, information and counselling, clothes and school materials for children (cf. online source BM.I. Asylwesen).

In the months following registration, the applicant is interviewed by the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, which is responsible for the asylum requests at the first level of jurisdiction. If the request is denied at the first level, the applicant can appeal. If they choose to appeal, the Federal Administrative Court (Bundesverwaltungsgericht, BVwG) has to review the case again. If the request is denied a second time, the decision can only be appealed in very special cases and will then be handled by the Administrative Court (Verwaltungsgerichtshof VwGH).

There are three possible outcomes of an asylum application, whether it is treated by the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum or, at the second level of jurisdiction, by the Federal Administrative Court (cf. UNHCR 2013:6). These are as follows:

a.) Asylum (§3)

A person who has convincing reasons for believing that they are in danger of prosecution in their home country has the right to asylum (§3). Incidents that happen in the home country after the person has left, or actions the person takes in the host country which express their conviction that they are in danger, are taken into account. The existence of an interstate alternative of settlement or reasons for excluding the individual from the asylum procedure may lead to rejection of the asylum status (cf. AsylG2005, § 3. (1), (2), (3)).

b.) Subsidiary protection (§8)

Subsidiary protection status (§8) is awarded to persons who have applied for asylum in Austria, do not fulfil the conditions for an asylum title, but still cannot be deported back to their home country due to threats caused by international or interstate conflicts. The existence of an interstate alternative of settlement or reasons for excluding the individual from the asylum procedure may lead to rejection of the subsidiary protection status. Once the claim is adjusted to subsidiary protection, §8 grants the applicant a residence permit limited to one year. If the person makes an application for extension of their residence permit, the title can be extended for two more years if the conditions are still the same (cf. AsylG2005, § 8. (1), (2), (3), (4)).

c.) The decision is negative (§10)

§10 pertains to persons who are denied asylum status and subsidiary protection status (cf. AsylG2005, § 10. (1)).

In certain cases, applicants who have no right for asylum or subsidiary protection status, but are well integrated, or have family members in Austria, are granted the right to remain (Bleiberecht) (cf. UNHCR 2013:6).

2.2.1. Specific regulations for unaccompanied minor refugees

To make sure that the young person concerned is really under age 18 and belongs to the target group of minors who need special housing facilities and treatment, almost all young refugees have to go through an age assessment procedure as part of the admission procedure. It includes an X-ray of the pastern joints, an examination of the teeth and a full body examination (cf. asylkoordination 2010:5, Fronek 2010:69).

As soon as the young person is admitted to the asylum process, the court assigns the guardianship of the minor to the youth welfare agency. The youth welfare agency is fully responsible for the minor refugee, but is allowed to share the task with third parties. The

guardian is compelled to fulfil all the tasks usually carried out by the parents. “The guardian is responsible for preventing any harm to the development of the minor and supporting his talents in the best way possible.” (asylkoordination 2010:7) The district court monitors the youth welfare agency and its progress in taking care of the minor (cf. asylkoordination 2010:7).

In contrast to adult asylum seekers, unaccompanied minor refugees must have a legal representative for asylum procedures and other juridical proceedings (cf. Hancilova/Knauder 2011:73). Minor refugees who have been granted asylum status or subsidiary protection (with a first extension of this status) are permitted to bring their family members to Austria in order to attain family reunification. This includes spouses, parents and other minors. Nevertheless, this is a complicated process and demands a lot of money to finance DNA-testing and age assessments of family members (cf. asylkoordination 2010:8).

2.3. Refugee⁷ness and Youth

(Former) unaccompanied minor refugees are assumed to be extremely vulnerable due to two factors: being a refugee and being an unaccompanied juvenile. Their life situation must be analysed by taking account of both factors, the challenges resulting from being a refugee, as well as the challenges going along with being a juvenile. The literature review shows that together they create an especially demanding situation.

2.3.1. Refugee⁷ness

A refugee’s emotional well-being is likely to be described using metaphors that refer to an unstable present and uncertain prospects. The term “Leben im Transit” (life in transit),

⁷ The term *refugeeness* is used in this master thesis to describe the life realities of refugees, but without any wish to homogenize the diversity of people belonging to the group of refugees.

just such a metaphor, is used by the Austrian traumata psychologist Lueger-Schuster to describe the situation refugees find themselves in:

Transit bedeutet Durchfahrt oder Übergangsort. Flucht ist ebenfalls eine Durchfahrt, man weiß nicht wohin der Weg führt, man befindet sich im Übergang zu etwas Unbekanntem. Man weiß auch nicht wie lange diese Überfahrt dauern wird, die Perspektiven sind räumlich und zeitlich ungewiss. (Lueger-Schuster 1996:10)

The term “transit” describes the process of leaving a home country and can be understood as a passage route or a transitory space, something temporary, lasting an uncertain length of time, and with an uncertain destination (cf. Lueger-Schuster 1996:10).

Other authors use similar metaphors, such as “Leben im Zwischenraum” (life in the interstices) (Hemmerling/Schwarz 2003), to describe the situation refugees are confronted with after their arrival in a potential host country. The socio-political atmosphere is not always welcoming and structural and political conditions shape the chances refugees have concerning their future in the host country. Various laws and regulations construct a new social group, which is perceived as homogenous from the outside and labelled with the catch-all term “refugees”.

Das dieser Gruppe zugewiesene Leben im sozialen Zwischenraum, im Raum des “nicht mehr” und des “noch nicht”, hat spezielle Auswirkungen auf die psychosoziale Situation der Betroffenen. (Hemmerling/Schwarz 2003:17)

Refugees find themselves in a liminal space, they are no longer in their home country, but also—apart from having crossed the border—have not yet properly arrived in the host country (cf. Hemmerling/Schwarz 2003:17).

In the theoretical literature dealing with refugees’ emotional states, this demanding situation is named “Entwurzelung” (uprooting), the psychological, social and cultural state of a human being who has lost their affiliation with their home country, and has not yet found their place in the host country.

Entwurzelung meint den psychischen, sozialen und kulturellen Zustand eines Menschen, der Heimat, Bezugswerte und Gruppenzugehörigkeit verloren hat und (noch) keine Möglichkeit gefunden hat, sich mit der neuen Kultur und der gesellschaftlichen Ordnung im Asylland zu identifizieren. (Lueger-Schuster 1996:18)

In contrast to migrant workers, refugees do not know how long their stay in the host country will be, which hinders them from making future plans (cf. Lueger-Schuster 1996:16). Many refugees constantly fear for the well-being of their family members and worry about never seeing them again (cf. Lueger-Schuster 1996:28).

Almost everyone I interviewed as part of my research mentioned feeling both that they lacked a home, and that they had not yet arrived. In combination, this evoked fear and feelings of emptiness and isolation. Their descriptions showed clear parallels to the concept of "Entwurzelung" (uprooting).

The term "Non-Lieux" (Non-Places), developed by the French anthropologist, Marc Augé, is a critical reflection about space in relation to communication and loneliness. In this concept the term "Non-Lieux" is ascribed to urban places, such as shopping malls and airports, which are characterized by a lack of identity and communication. On the one hand those places are full of people and life, but on the other go along with anonymity and a lack of communication. Although the concept focuses on urban places and not on people, it evokes similar emotions as the metaphors "Leben im Transit" and "Leben im Zwischenraum". By focusing on this anonymity and lack of communications inherent to places which are full of people, one may see parallels to refugees' life situations. On the one hand refugees are part of the host society, but on the other hand they find themselves at the very margins of this society, widely excluded from social, political and cultural life. Figuratively, refugees' life situations may also be seen through the lens of the "Non-Lieux": "Der Raum des Nicht-Ortes schafft keine besondere Identität und keine besondere Relation, sondern Einsamkeit und Ähnlichkeit." (Augé 1994:121)

2.3.2. Youth

As this master thesis focuses exclusively on young refugees, it is essential to reflect upon the category of youth. Hurrelmann and Quenzel point out that the life realities of youths are not equal today. Most of them are in a position to manage their life, but some of them are stuck in marginal positions in society, which may have a negative impact on

their well-being. For the latter group, the complex challenges of everyday life may be extremely demanding and make it hard for them to achieve success in education and later in finding a job (cf. Hurrelmann/Quenzel 2012:55, 56).

The ongoing individualization of society and the loss of traditional role models and rules of conduct has led to a higher degree of freedom when making life decisions. Youths need to make decisions concerning education, job, domicile, friends and a lot more. This freedom to make decisions may offer advantages for many young people. But those who are not able to manage their future on their own or to make the necessary decisions are confronted with a lack of orientation, excessive demands and have trouble forming their identity (cf. Hurrelmann/Quenzel 2012:65, 66).

The American linguist Bucholtz, who worked on youth and cultural practice, points to the cultural dimension inherent in the concept of youth. In her view, youth cannot be seen as an absolute category, it is rather a socio-cultural phenomenon which differs according to time and place. The understanding of what youth means, the age group defined to constitute youth, its content and how that period of life manifests itself are dynamic and bound to time, location and culture. In general youth describes a transitional phase and is applied to those who are no longer children but are not yet adults. The passage between these periods is socially constructed and influenced by cultural rules. Youth therefore must always be seen in its social and cultural contexts (cf. Bucholtz 2002:525, 526).

Rapid cultural change within a society may lead to identity crises concerning adult roles, resulting from a balancing act between different traditions and values. Cultural changes disrupt traditional social and generation-related roles, and therefore affect the processes of socialization and identification of young people (cf. Bucholtz 2002:529, 530). Bucholtz discusses the topic of cultural change within societies and its effects on young people's lives in relation to suicide rates. When talking about the impact of cultural change on the process of growing up, one may come to the conclusion that leaving one's home country and requesting asylum in another country—with its different culture and different values—may create a similar situation to the one Bucholtz observed.

Unaccompanied minor refugees are still going through adolescence when they leave their home country. Their socialization is disrupted, accompanied by a loss of the norms, values and traditions that they were absorbing in their home country. They are confronted with different norms and expectations in the potential host country. Thus, the young people have lost their ability to act in culturally appropriate ways in various situations, and lack the resources to meet the requirements of adolescence in the host country. Furthermore, they have lost the social status they would have enjoyed in the home country, and find themselves in the role of a child under the care of authorities and social workers. Having to cope with all these factors, developing a stable adult identity and approaching the potential host society actively and positively is a huge enterprise (cf. Meißner 2003:145pp).

Authors who highlight the well-being of young refugees distinguish between accompanied and unaccompanied minor refugees. Derluyn and Broekaert point out that, on top of the difficulties experienced by any refugee and any adolescent, the separation from parents and other family members may be even more detrimental to the well-being of unaccompanied minor refugees (cf. Derluyn/Broekaert 2008:321). They refer to a Belgian study, showing that the probability of developing symptoms such as anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress syndrome is five times higher among unaccompanied minor refugees than among accompanied minor refugees. Emotional, developmental and behavioural problems, which may occur among unaccompanied minor refugees, include:

[...] sleeping problems, concentration disorders, nightmares, depression, withdrawal, anxiety, post-traumatic stress symptoms, somatic symptoms, severe grief reactions and sadness, aggression, diminished interest, hyper-arousal, low self-esteem, severe guilt feelings, fatalistic view of the future, substance abuse, violent behavior, suicidal acts, psychosis and delinquent behavior. (Derluyn/Broekaert 2008:321)

Furthermore, the development of an adult identity, which is a very complex and demanding process anyway, is made harder due to the process of flight and the loss of role models, such as parents and other family members (cf. Derluyn/Broekaert 2008:322). Challenges related to puberty, such as identity crises, might be intensified (cf. Derluyn/Broekaert 2008:323).

The uprooting, disruption and insecurity inherent to migration may thus affect the psychological and social development, making the progress of identity forming a more difficult balancing act between two or more sets of cultural notions and values. (Derluyn/Broekaert 2008:323)

2.4. Media representation and humanitarian discourse

The way refugees are perceived and portrayed shapes their chances for agency and participation. Before analysing those dynamics, it is worthwhile to reflect on the term “refugee”.

The literature review, which includes various scientific articles as well as reports from national and international organizations, leads to the conclusion that the displacement and movement of people has increased all over the world.

The displacement of people is an extremely complex phenomenon, which must be seen in a broader context, with an eye on socio-political processes. A broad range of practices play a crucial role in consideration of movements of people (cf. Malkki 1995:495). These include:

Nationalism and racism, xenophobia and immigration policies, state practices of violence and war, censorship and silencing, human rights and challenges to state sovereignty, “development” discourse and humanitarian interventions, citizenship and cultural or religious identities, travel and diaspora, and memory and historicity [...]. (Malkki 1995:496)

Contemplating those various factors, it becomes clear that it is not possible, nor useful, to summarize all these people within the category “refugees”. Following Malkki’s argument, the term “refugee” must be seen in a broader context:

[...] the term refugee has analytical usefulness not as a label for a special, generalizable “kind” or “type” of person or situation, but only as a broad or descriptive rubric that includes within it a world of different socioeconomic statuses, personal histories, and psychological or spiritual situations. (Malkki 1995:496)

When reflecting upon the term “refugee,” the question of the term’s emergence arises. Malkki offers a critical analysis of the history and the development of the term and of the

ways in which displacement of people has been managed. Her work gives a way of understanding the images and associations that go along with the term “refugee”, and the way it is used nowadays - both in scientific literature as well as in everyday reports about refugees.

Malkki highlights the relevance of locating historical moments at which new objects, such as the “refugee”, can emerge. Her analysis shows that the refugee, as “a specific social category and legal problem of global dimension” (Malkki 1995:497, 498), started to exist after World War Two, when very specific methods of dealing with mass displacements of people were necessary and were gradually standardized. One of the strategies employed to manage mass displacement was the refugee camp, which was related to various institutionalized processes that display power and allow control over the movement of people.

During World War Two and in the years that followed, refugees were seen as a military issue, often considered with the aim of using their capacities for various services. Later on, especially after the foundation of the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), what to do about refugees turned into a social and humanitarian question. In her work, Malkki talks of a “[...] transformation of ‘the problem’ from the military to the social and humanitarian.” (Malkki 1995:500) The use of the refugee camps allowed the management of mass displacement and made the people concerned available for various interventions. This contributed to the emergence of the “refugee” we know today (cf. Malkki 1995:497pp). “[...] the modern, postwar refugee emerged as a knowable, nameable figure and as an object of social-scientific knowledge.” (Malkki 1995:498)

A look at the literature shows that over time refugees and refugee issues became linked to specific features. On the one hand, it can be observed that refugees are portrayed and seen as an existential threat, and on the other, characteristics such as helplessness, speechlessness and emptiness are attributed to refugees and their lives. Both practices need to be considered and discussed, as those attributions and representations have an impact on the scope of action afforded to refugees.

Williams, Huysmans, Bigo and Nyers offer great arguments about the perception and the handling of refugee issues in relation to various security strategies for controlling the movement of people. Attention needs to be paid to the security mechanisms that European Union member states use and their effect on refugees' lives.

Williams approaches the issue via international relations theory, focussing on the dynamics that lead to the securitization of situations through a specific way of communication. He labels security as a "speech act" (Williams 2003:512) and describes how specific issues are represented in a way that turns them into threats and security issues. Thus, he argues that security is not "[...] an objective condition but [...] the outcome of a specific social process [...]." (Williams 2003:513) These "securitizing speech-acts" lead to the emergence of a situation which is seen as a threat (cf. Williams 2003:512, 513). Williams refers to Buzan, Wæver and De Wilde, who observe similar dynamics at play, using speech to turn a potentially non-threatening situation into a security risk.

In security discourse, an issue is dramatized and presented as an issue of supreme priority; thus by labeling it as *security* and agent claims a need for and a right to treat it by extraordinary means. (Buzan/Weaver/De Wilde 1998:26 quoted by Williams 2003:514)

Although they are not focussing specifically on refugees here, the same dynamics can be used to understand how refugees are linked to specific features and how certain measures deployed in the handling of refugee issues are often justified in the name of security.

Bigo, a French international relations professor, points out the contradictions between an ideology of openness and free movement of people, on the one hand, and various practices against foreigners justified in the name of security, on the other (cf. Bigo 2009:579).

The term "Eurosurveillance," amongst others discussed by Bigo, deals with the principle of free movement of people (as a core value of the European Union), which has developed more and more in the direction of " 'European only' free movement" (Bigo 2009:581). Immigration policies focus more and more on state security, including various

strategies such as strict border controls and expulsion of the people concerned (cf. Bigo 2009:581). In the scientific literature those policies are named “Eurosurveillance,” meaning the

[...] systematic control of foreigners entering the territory of the Union and even control of EU citizens within the Union’s borders, in the name of the fight against terrorism and illegal immigration. (Bigo 2009:582)

“Government xenophobia” (Bigo 2009:584) develops on the basis of various threats and dangers linked to foreigners. Crimes committed by foreigners, illegal entry and border-crossing and the representation of foreigners as beneficiaries of European welfare programmes have been highlighted and portrayed in a way that creates an atmosphere of insecurity, which is threatening on a world scale.

In these representations, the migrant is usually portrayed as coming from the south, or even from so called “Third World countries,” not equipped with enough resources to contribute, and considered responsible for various problems such as crime and drug dealing (cf. Bigo 2009:584, 585). As Appadurai puts it:

The focus may be on the State’s national security interests, on economic growth supposedly threatened by foreigners’ cheating the system, or on the threatened identities of majorities under the impression that they are becoming minorities in their own countries and alarmed by the eclipse of their own values as central and quasi-monopolist values in the society in question. (Appadurai 1998 quoted by Bigo 2009:585)

The result of such policies is a “[...] rejection of the Other in the name of protection of the Self.” (Bigo 2009:584, 585) Many of the practices that are undertaken in order to combat these assumed threats are justified in the name of security.

Similar to Williams and Bigo, Huysmans also focuses on the dynamics that allow a link to be made between migration issues and the idea of societal dangers. After issues of internal security and the crisis of the welfare state, Huysmans points to the imagined threat to cultural security supposedly presented by foreigners (cf. Huysmans 2000:758). He observes a differentiation between residents of the European Union member states and foreigners from the so called “Third World” (cf. Huysmans 2000:763). The latter “[...] are easily pictured as culturally (and sometimes also as racially) different.” (Huysmans

2000:763) He labels those security politics as “[...] a specific policy of mediating belonging [...]” (Huysmans 2000:757), a belonging mediated by cultural identity. Foreigners and asylum seekers are presented as a threat to the idea of homogeneity. “Immigrants, asylum-seekers and refugees are present and are challenging the myth of national cultural homogeneity.” (Huysmans 2000:762)

Apart from an analysis that makes explicit the connection between refugee issues and various security mechanisms, theoretical concepts that expose how refugees are presented as passive victims of various power constellations are crucial to this master thesis.

The studies carried out by Nyers and Malkki focus on establishing a link between the category refugee and a specific form of communication about refugees, mostly linked to helplessness and emptiness on the one hand, and emergency situations on the other. Nyers, professor of the politics of citizenship and intercultural relations, is one of the leading academics dealing with humanitarianism and the handling of refugee issues. He states that “humanitarian emergency” became a powerful label when talking about refugee issues, among scholars as well as aid workers. Refugee topics became linked to a “crisis vocabulary” (Nyers 1998:16), frequently including words such as “crisis, complex emergency, challenge, and control” (Nyers 1998:16). With good cause, Nyers raises the question about the effects this humanitarian discourse has on the identity of the people concerned, the refugees themselves. He answers this question pointing to the way the UNHCR Homepage represents refugees. It shows a picture of an empty T-shirt in front of a shelter, without showing any individuals, in order to highlight the emptiness that refugees might feel after leaving their home country. “Like the empty shirt, the life of the refugee is typically seen as suffering from emptiness.” (Nyers 1998:18)

Refugees’ lives are described in a way that creates the impression of “a profound sense of lack” on various levels. Nyers refers to Malkki, who is one of the leading scientists working on the representation of refugees and *refugeeness*, and mentions “a certain kind of helplessness as a refugee characteristic” (Malkki 1996:388, also quoted by Nyers 1998:18). The metaphor “speechless emissaries” (Malkki 1996:377) also exemplifies how

refugees are portrayed and linked to silence, emptiness, invisibility and passivity. Malkki, who developed the concept, points out that the mass media and the publications from international and humanitarian organizations create dynamics of representation, which place refugees in the situation of “speechless emissaries” (Malkki 1996:377), allowing them to end up as “Objects of Humanitarian Intervention” (Malkki 1996:385).

One of the most far-reaching, important consequences of these established representational practices is the systematic, even if unintended, silencing of persons who find themselves in the classificatory space of „refugee“. That is, refugees suffer from a peculiar kind of speechlessness in the face of national and international organizations whose object of care and control they are. (Malkki 1996:386)

To render the same thoughts in Nyers words: “[...] refugees are silent – or rather silenced – because they do not possess the proper political subjectivity (i.e. citizenship) through which they can be heard.” (Nyers 1998:18)

These ways of representing refugees and of dealing with topics related to refugees contribute substantially to the restricted chances for refugees to exert agency and participate meaningfully in potential host societies. Furthermore, it hinders the positive perception of refugees’ competences and capacities. Their potential to be active creators of their own future goals and participants in society remains in the background. But, as Gingrich states,

[...] refugees are not only victims of shifting constellations of power and persecution. Out of their marginalized, impoverished, and desperate conditions, they nevertheless may become active and creative producers of their own lives and destinies, if given a chance. (Gingrich 2002:16)

2.5. Young refugees’ participation in projects

Concerning young refugees and their chances to take part in projects that offer room for agency, there is little theoretical and empirical material to be found. Couch is one of the few who has researched and described the impact on young refugees of being part of projects that allow them to become active and to step out of their attributed victim role.

With a clear focus on the factors of age and *refugeeness*, she is able to encapsulate the difficulties young people face when trying to be heard in a wider context:

It is a development well deserved, for age can be as much of an impediment to full enfranchisement in public life as race, ethnicity, class, sexuality and gender. Indeed, age is often coupled with one or more of these factors to create significant barriers to young people's ability to shape the institutions and community contexts that affect their lives. (Couch 2007:37)

Couch points out that young refugees are confronted with various barriers, preventing them from participation. On the one hand, she names the challenging situation resulting from the lack of family and other social support; on the other, she observed that many projects are not culturally sensitive or flexible enough to allow refugee youths to participate. Therefore, Couch calls for a more critical understanding of participation, especially in relation to young refugees (cf. Couch 2007:37, 38).

During her research and work with refugee youths, she observed three main effects on young refugees' lives, resulting from the participation in projects that gave them the opportunity to become active members and to be heard:

- "Young people's commitment is enhanced by their participation" (Couch 2007:39);
- "Participation contributes to young people's self-image" (Couch 2007:39);
- "Participation may enhance young people's resilience" (Couch 2007:40).

These results show parallels to the findings of the research done in the course of this master thesis. As Couch also observed, participation in a project changes the view young refugees have of themselves. Instead of feeling powerless and stuck in a marginalised victim-role, they become more active, aware of their own competences, and therefore able to contribute to their own life and to society in a broader context. This raising of self-esteem enables them to take the next step in tackling various problems (cf. Couch 2007:40, field diary).

Any program that claims to concern itself with the whole young person, and a whole range of needs, must take into account the vital issue of refugee young people's settlement experience, alienation and society's denial of their status and worth. It is through active participation – being treated as social subjects capable of taking actions for themselves to transform their lives – that refugee young people are most likely to develop as confident human beings with a strong sense of identity and self-worth. (Couch 2007:43)

The concept of collective agency, as discussed by Khan and Akhter, focuses on similar effects. The authors conducted research among refugee women in the United Kingdom, who collectively organized their own groups to meet their specific needs. Feelings of belonging to a collective movement arose and a space for resistance and empowerment was opened to the women (cf. Khan/Akhter 2008:41). Khan and Akhter found that their contact persons,

[...] are “fighting” and “pushing” [...] against the social injustices they have suffered both in their home country and in Britain. They are challenging the stereotypical image of women, particularly refugee women, as passive victims, by speaking out in public about their experiences and seeking to change the public’s perception of refugees and asylum seekers. [...] The women are actively resisting the negative labels and stereotypes associated with asylum seekers, particularly those promoted by the media. (Khan/Akhter 2008:45)

This concept of collective agency is crucial to my research among refugee youth participating in a *Patenschaft*. The *Patenschaft* is, on the one hand, a very small-scale project between two people, but, on the other, it allows participation in the whole social group of *Connecting People*, which is made visible through various events organized by *Connecting People*.

2.6. Participation and empowerment

The concept of participation is closely related to that of empowerment. Empowerment is an important concept, used in many disciplines with various different definitions. This master thesis avoids the notion of empowerment used in psychology and social work, and instead refers to the notion of empowerment as used in social science. The purpose is to establish a link to the concept of participation, and to use it as a tool to analyse the effects of *Patenschaften* on young refugees’ everyday lives and their view of their future.

The sociologist Herringer points out that the indefiniteness of the term makes it hard to use the concept in practice (cf. Herringer 2006:14). He aims at a clearer definition of the concept and distinguishes four ways to talk about empowerment.

- *Empowerment politisch fokussiert* (empowerment politically focused) means the unequal distribution of political and structural power in a society, which needs to be distributed in new ways.
- *Empowerment lebensweltlich fokussiert* (empowerment focused on everyday life) means the strengthening of everyday competences in order to handle everyday life challenges.
- *Empowerment reflexiv fokussiert* (empowerment reflexively focused) aims towards an active process of achieving power and agency in order to eschew passivity and to become active on an individual as well as a political level.
- *Empowerment transitiv fokussiert* (empowerment transitively focused) means the support of others in order to help them to achieve competences and to plan and shape their future goals (cf. Herringer 2006:14pp).

Herringer's conceptions of *Empowerment lebensweltlich fokussiert* (empowerment focused on everyday life), *reflexiv fokussiert* (reflexively focused) and *transitiv fokussiert* (transitively focused), fit the *Patenschaften* and their effects on the everyday life of the young refugees. Herringer's following definition of empowerment is therefore adopted in this thesis.

Empowerment beschreibt mutmachende Prozesse der Selbstbemächtigung, in denen Menschen in Situationen des Mangels, der Benachteiligung oder der gesellschaftlichen Ausgrenzung beginnen, ihre Angelegenheiten selbst in die Hand zu nehmen, in denen sie sich ihrer Fähigkeiten bewußt [sic!] werden, eigene Kräfte entwickeln und ihre individuellen und kollektiven Ressourcen zu einer selbstbestimmten Lebensführung nutzen lernen. (Herringer 2006:20)

Thus, empowerment here means encouraging processes of self-authorization, which allow individuals in demanding situations of disadvantage and societal exclusion, to become active and aware of their capacities, to develop motivations and learn to use their individual as well as collective resources in order to strive for a self-determined lifestyle (cf. Herringer 2006:20).⁸

Cooper also offers an idea of empowerment in relation to refugee youth.

The goal of empowerment through participation with refugee youth need not to be conceptualized as enabling outright resistance to a negative power of

⁸ The English translation is my own.

prohibition and/or punishment, but rather to realize positive, creative capacities that may advance the capacities of individuals to achieve various goals. (Cooper 2007:115)

Using a methodology of Participatory Action Research (PAR), Cooper conducted her research at a long-term refugee camp in Kenya, analysing the impact of participatory projects on the empowerment of young refugee participants, who were living in disempowering circumstances. She describes how young refugees participating in her research developed new skills, such as asking questions, collecting data and sharing ideas, which they valued as useful for their future (cf. Cooper 2007:105pp). Cooper's conception of empowerment is closely related to the effects of participation in a *Patenschaft*.

3. Research

This chapter presents the research carried out for this master thesis. It describes the contact persons and the process of contact building, and goes on to discuss the methodology used and the challenges encountered during the fieldwork process. It begins with a short introduction to the *Connecting People* project.

3.1. *Patenschaften* – a short introduction

The idea of creating *Patenschaften* between unaccompanied minor refugees and adults living in Austria was developed by the Austrian organization *asylkoordination österreich*, which founded the project *Connecting People*, financed by Unicef Österreich. The purpose of this project is to encourage Austrians or migrants who have lived in Austria for a long time to become part of a voluntary honorary *Patenschaft* with an unaccompanied minor refugee. A *Patenschaft* in this context does not include any legal or financial obligations.

The main objectives of the project are to establish a stable long-term relationship and to provide support in everyday life challenges.

Im Zentrum steht dabei der Aufbau einer längerfristigen stabilen Beziehung zu einem Jugendlichen und die Unterstützung in ihrem schwierigen Alltag. Zeit schenken, emotionale Zuwendung, zuhören, einfach 'da sein' stehen dabei an oberster Stelle. (Online source: *asylkoordination 2*)

In the best case, the young refugees experience an atmosphere of acceptance and participation (cf. online source: *Connecting People 1*).

Before the couples are matched together, *Connecting People* organizes appointments with interested adults in order to give them information about the project and to talk about expectations, preferences, resources (e.g. time) and potentially challenging situations. In the next step, they are invited for training to obtain basic information about asylum laws, hosting possibilities for asylum seekers in Austria, the specific situation of unaccompanied minor refugees, possibilities for education, access to the labour market

and a lot more. Furthermore, they meet adults who are already part of a *Patenschaft* and ready to share their experiences.

The young refugees obtain the basic information from their social worker and if they are interested they are also invited for a meeting to share their wishes and expectations.

In order to match *Patenschaft* couples together, interests, hobbies, knowledge of language, cultural knowledge etc. are taken into account, in order to offer a good starting basis for the relationship. If necessary, the buddies as well as the young refugees can get support and advice from the *Connecting People* team any time they need.

Apart from the preparation and the matching of *Patenschaft* couples together, *Connecting People* organizes regular activities and meetings in a larger framework in order to offer room for contact and exchange between the *Patenschaft* couples (cf. online source: *Connecting People* 2, field diary). These events go beyond the established two-person relationship and can be assumed to create feelings of belonging to a collective project.

3.2. Contact persons

The *Patenschaft* can be seen as an exchange between both sides, including getting to know each other's culture, and reducing the formation of stereotypes. The young refugee as well as the buddy can profit from this kind of relationship. Although a study of the buddies' side, or a comparison of both sides of the story would also be very interesting, the purpose of this master thesis is to focus only on the young refugees' point of view, and to analyse whether the *Patenschaft* is an assistance and a site for participation in the host society. Thus, the interview partners are young refugees who have a volunteer adult Austrian buddy they meet regularly.

The interviewees, all between 17 and 23 years old, comprise two girls and eight boys. Their countries of origin are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Somalia and Nigeria. They attend

either language classes, compulsory school courses, or are doing an apprenticeship. The contact persons had different legal statuses: six had a positive asylum status, one had a subsidiary protection status, two were still engaged in the asylum procedure, and one person had received a negative asylum status (in first instance). The legal status of the young people was no criteria for being part of the research, it even seemed interesting to compare the experiences made by people with a different legal status.

To maintain the anonymity of the informants, their names have been replaced with pseudonyms. Concrete socio-demographic data as well as specific private information, which might allow conclusions to be drawn about any contact persons, have been modified or omitted.

3.3. Establishing contacts

In order to establish contact with young refugees who belong to a *Patenschaft*, I first contacted the project coordinator of *Connecting People (asylkoordination österreich)*, Klaus Hofstätter, who originally formulated the idea for *Patenschaften* and who is responsible for matching the *Patenschaft* couples together. He gave me permission to take part in the events held by the project, assisted me in making contact with the young refugees, and therefore played a crucial role in enabling me to carry out my research.

Contact was initially attempted via an e-mail sent to the buddies of prospective contacts, explaining the purpose of the research and asking them to explain it to their fosterlings. The mail was sent to the buddies because not all of the potential contact persons had an e-mail address and/or regular access to the internet. Furthermore, I wanted to make sure that the young people did not misunderstand the request, a risk that was minimised by having the buddy explain it to them first.

Although the mail was sent to a large group of people, only one person who was willing to give an interview replied. I decided, therefore, to try to make contact with the young people in person. I was invited to a *Connecting People* party, and I used that occasion to

build contacts. I observed my contact persons and started spontaneous conversations with them. With its broad range of foods from various countries, the buffet proved to be a good ice-breaker and provided the opportunity for starting to speak with the young people. While standing in the queue, waiting for the chance to select our food, it was easy to start talking. Having then filled our plates, I was invited to stand with a small group of boys and eat with them. After some small talk—about the taste of the food and the young people's carefully selected outfits—I was asked about my role in the event. One boy astutely observed,

Du bist zu jung für eine Patin und du bist zu alt für ein Mädchen, das eine Patin hat. Du bist eine Österreicherin und du sprichst perfekt Deutsch. Also was machst du hier? (field diary)

You are too young to be a buddy and you are too old to be a girl who has a buddy. You are Austrian and you speak perfect German. So what are you doing here? (field diary)

Following this direct question, I had to admit my plans and intentions immediately. The reactions were throughout positive. The most common reaction was to offer to assist me with my project. One boy even told me that he was aware that it would mean a lot of work for me and that he would assist me.

Ich werde dir helfen! Ich weiß viel über Patenschaften, ich habe meine Patin schon fast zwei Jahre. (field diary)

I will help you! I know a lot about Patenschaften, I have had my buddy for almost two years. (field diary)

However, some of the potential contact persons reacted sceptically at the beginning and asked many questions about how the information they might give would be used. After explaining very carefully that this work has nothing to do with any authorities or organizations responsible for asylum procedures, and assuring them that everything would be anonymized, they felt more comfortable and ready to talk. The following conversations happened spontaneously and mainly took place among small groups of boys. The girls were present in much smaller numbers and stayed closer to their buddies during the party, often just sitting at the table for the whole evening. The boys formed groups and chatted without their buddies. Some of them already knew each other from previous parties, language classes or schools they were attending together.

Since it was an event for *Patenschaften*, it was easy to steer the conversation to that topic. During those short conversations, which mostly took place in small groups, I was able to observe that the young people were very proud of their buddies. They pointed to them and told me about their family members and the jobs that they do. Some even asked their buddies to come over and join our conversation. In all cases I disclosed my position and my research intentions.

Apart from two informants, Armin and Mohammad, who I got in touch with via personal contacts, and one person, Mostafa, who responded to my mail request, all my interviewees were found during this event. I asked most of them directly to give an interview. Only Aden came up on his own and offered to help me out, whilst Daria was encouraged by her buddy to participate. I observed the young people talking to each other about my research and asking each other if they also plan to participate. One girl, Nadja, turned out to play a crucial role in my access to the field. After I explained to her the purpose of my research, she told me that she did not want to give an interview, but that she would help me to establish some contacts. She then walked around with me, introducing me to other young people she knew from school, telling them about my project. Having her confidence as a key insider in this community made it much easier to obtain access to the field and to recruit my contact persons.

In most cases, the young people gave me their phone number and we decided to fix an appointment in the following few days. I realized that it was better to send them a message instead of calling: most contact persons did not pick up the phone, but responded immediately to my messages.

3.4. Methodology

For this master thesis a qualitative empirical research, based on a combination of methods, was done. The aim was to gain insight into the research topic from different angles and to compensate for the weaknesses of one method by supplementing the research with other methods (cf. Friebertshäuser 1997:505, 515).

I conducted ten half-structured, problem-centred interviews with (former) unaccompanied minor refugees. Furthermore, an expert interview with the project coordinator of *Connecting People* was carried out in order to obtain background information from an expert perspective.

To supplement the data gained from the interviews, I conducted a participant observation during a *Connecting People* event, including 15 short conversations with young refugees, who are part of a *Patenschaft*. During the whole research and evaluation process I kept a field diary in order to record any critical reflection on the data being collected and the research settings.

3.4.1. Problem-centred interviews

Problem-centred interviews are semi-structured interviews, meaning that questions concerning the topic of interest are prepared in advance and are used throughout the whole conversation as a guideline (cf. Kruse/Schmitt 1998:162). The informants are given the chance to talk as freely as possible (cf. Mayring 2002:67). This interview form was developed by Witzel and is characterized by the problem-centring - thus the dealing with a certain societal problem, the subject orientation - thus the development of the methods in relation to the subject, and the process orientation (cf. Witzel 1982:74, Flick 2002:135).

The problem-centred interview makes use of four instruments: a short questionnaire, an audio-recording, a conversation guide, and postscripts (cf. Witzel 2000:3, 4).

The short questionnaire aims to collect social data about the contact person. As Witzel points out, these questions can be used to start the conversation off (cf. Witzel 2000:3).

In the course of this research, the informants were asked about their age, their country of origin, their duration of stay in Austria and their current education. The question concerning their legal status was not asked directly, since it is such a sensitive issue, but it was mostly mentioned by the contact persons when talking about their education and job prospects, since their legal status shapes their chances to access educational opportunities and the labour market.

By audio-recording the interview, the interviewer is free to concentrate completely on the conversation and to observe the interview setting. Furthermore, it offers a detailed picture of the whole communication process (cf. Witzel 2000:4).

All contact persons interviewed as part of this research gave permission to make an audio recording of the conversation. One informant, Armin, was very curious about how the audio recording would be used. He explained that he had been interviewed before and that, although his anonymity had been promised in advance, his full name was mentioned afterwards. After assuring him again that all names would be anonymized, and that all private information would be left out, he agreed to the audio recording. In five cases it became clear during the first minutes of the interview that the informants felt uncomfortable and kept correcting themselves while talking. After I asked them how they were feeling, they explained that they did not feel comfortable being recorded while speaking German. In order to create a more relaxed atmosphere, to encourage the contact persons to speak in a less inhibited manner and to pay less attention to their language skills, I switched off the Dictaphone during the conversations with Amir, Mohammad, Rahmad, Aden and Elisa. Instead, I made detailed notes.

The third instrument of the problem-centred interview is the interview guide, which functions to orient and control the relevant elements of the conversation. Furthermore it allows the interviews to be compared afterwards (cf. Witzel 2000:4).

During the conversations, the guideline turned out to be an indispensable tool. It must be taken into account that the contact persons were often very shy. They were asked to give an interview in a language which was not their native tongue, and to share some very personal information with me. Most of them had difficulties structuring the information they wanted to give, some asked openly for leading questions.

Sag mir wie ich weitermachen soll, ich habe so viel in meinen Gedanken. Was willst du zuerst hören? (Interview Mohammad)

Tell me how to continue, I have so much in my mind. What do you want to hear first? (Interview Mohammad)

In addition to the audio recording Witzel recommends writing postscripts, containing remarks on the setting and non-verbal information. Also ideas concerning the evaluation of the collected material are included (cf. Witzel 2000:4).

In the course of this research, I wrote very detailed postscripts. This was especially true for those interviews for which I had to make notes instead of an audio recording.

Most of the conversations took place in public spaces, mainly in cafés, because these are neutral places, and I assumed it would make it easier for the informants to talk openly. Indeed, most contact persons mentioned that they really enjoyed both the conversation and spending time in a café. Two interviews took place in the refugee house where the contact persons live. They wished to show me their housing facilities and to make me a cup of tea in exchange for being allowed to participate in the research (cf. Interview Elisa, Interview Samir).

The problem-centred interview was chosen to offer the interview partners an idea of the research interest and to supply some leading questions, which assisted them in structuring their answers, as well as allowing structured evaluation of the data.

3.4.2. Expert Interview

Meuser and Nagel define the expert interview as an open interview which follows an interview guide. The expert interview differs from other interviews since it does not focus on the informant himself and his or her individual orientations, but rather on the organizational and institutional context (cf. Meuser/Nagel 2002:71, 72). The particular research interest determines who can be defined as an expert. Thus it is usually the researcher who decides who functions as an expert in the context of the research (cf. Meuser/Nagel 2002:73).

Meuser and Nagel recommend conducting the expert interview using an open interview guide, because doing so meets the thematically limited interest of the interviewer as well as the expert status of the informant. During the construction of the guidelines, the

interviewer gains familiarity with the topics, which enables a casual and non-bureaucratic interview situation (cf. Meuser/Nagel 2002:77, 78).

The expert interview for this master thesis was undertaken with Klaus Hofstätter. He is one of the originators of the concept of *Patenschaften*, leader of the project *Connecting People* and responsible for the matching the *Patenschaft* couples together. This interview provided deep insight into the concept *Patenschaft*, its aims and challenges, as well as the possible effects on both people involved – the buddy and the young refugee. Furthermore it offered lots of valuable background information and the personal opinions of the project coordinator.

3.4.3. Participant observation and informal short conversations

To complete the data gained by the interviews and to contribute to a fuller picture of the field of interest, a participant observation, containing informal short conversations, was carried out. Participant observation, founded by Malinowski, is an essential part of qualitative empirical research. The chief characteristic of this method is that the researcher collects data while participating in and being part of the social situation they are studying. Due to the direct contact with the persons involved and the closeness to the field of research, the chances of capturing the perspective of the members of the social situation under investigation are higher. In the ideal case, the observations are half-structured, which means that a guide concerning the dimensions of the observation is prepared in advance and kept in mind during the participant observation. These guidelines help the researcher to focus on the dimensions that are essential to the specific research, and to make observational protocols afterwards. Doing so allows comparisons and enables generalizations (cf. Mayring 2002:80pp).

For this master thesis a participant observation was carried out in the course of a huge party of the project *Connecting People*, which offered an opportunity for exchange for the *Patenschaft* couples. This event took place in the Casino Baumgarten in Vienna and was very well attended. It offered insights into the interactions between the young refugees

and their buddies. Furthermore, it allowed me to carry out informal short conversations with young refugees, who shared information about their *Patenschaften*. These short conversations in the field turned out to be especially useful and offered valuable empirical material. As Atkinson also states, such short conversations are less formal and more spontaneous so the contact persons are less shy and less inhibited about speaking. "The ethnographic interview and the more casual fieldwork conversation are more or less deliberately contrived occasions when story-telling is facilitated." (Atkinson 1990:104)

3.4.4. Field diary

During the whole research process, I kept a field diary, which turned out to be an indispensable tool. The field diary allowed me to record the information in a structured way. It includes the interview protocols, changes of to the interview guidelines, notes on the settings of the interviews and various observations concerning the interview process.

Atkinson and Hammersley, as well as Malinowski highlight the importance of writing a field diary during the research process (cf. Atkinson/Hammersley 1983:146, Malinowski 2001:45). "Fieldnotes are the traditional means in ethnography for recording observational data." (Atkinson/Hammersley 1983:145) Especially during the participant observation, at the *Connecting People* party, the field diary was indispensable for recording information. During the conversations with the young people, I needed some breaks to make notes. I mainly took the chance to grab my field diary and pencil whenever my contact person left for a while to get some food from the buffet. But those occasions were rare, because most of the time I was standing with a small group of people and they almost never left me completely alone. To find the time to make at least a few short notes, I had to go to the wash room or go outside of the building.

I also used the field diary during the interviews with the young people. As mentioned above, half of the contact persons felt uncomfortable having the conversations recorded. Their concentration switched away from the topic at hand and towards speaking proper German without making mistakes. Five informants preferred me not to make an audio

recording of the conversation, but to take notes while listening to them. The interview situation seemed to be less stressful for them, and even funny in some cases when they watched me hectically writing down what I considered important.

3.4.5. Evaluation

DeWalt and DeWalt describe the analysis of field notes as an iterative process characterized by “[...] reading, thinking, and writing; and rereading, rethinking, and rewriting.” (DeWalt/DeWalt 2011:179) Reviewing, categorizing, organizing and summarizing the material leads to new insights and conclusions.

Once an insight surfaces, it should be treated like a hypothesis with a return to the data in order to build the clear and logical argument to support it, often with recategorization, organization, and review. (DeWalt/DeWalt 2011:180)

DeWalt and DeWalt name three activities which are part of the process of analysis: data reduction, data display, and interpretation and verification (cf. DeWalt/DeWalt 2011:180). In the course of this work, the first data reduction took place during the research process by focusing on the specific questions that seemed to most quickly lead to information relevant to the research question. The material was then transcribed and, according to the recommendations of DeWalt and DeWalt, read and organized very carefully again and again.

The main evaluation of the empirical data was done in compliance with the rules of theoretical coding, a method that aims to coax theories out of data by breaking up the material, marking it with codes and abstracting it step by step.

According to Flick, there are different procedures that can be used to deal with empirical data: open coding, axial coding and selective coding. These should not be seen as completely separate processes, but applied instead in combination. Open coding should be used at the beginning, and selective coding is recommended at the end of the evaluation process (cf. Flick 2002:258, 259).

During the open coding phase, the data is divided into different areas of meaning and coded with appropriate terms. Those codes are divided into groups according to the research question and then categorized. These categories are labelled with further codes that are more abstract than those used in the first step and point to the content of the categories. In order to name the codes, terms from the scientific literature (constructed codes) or quotes used by the interviewees (in-vivo codes) are used. The latter are preferable due to their close relationship to the empirical material and were used in this work. The aim of open coding is to break up the text and to develop a deeper understanding of the material. The result of open coding is a list of codes and categories, along with their definitions and memos from the empirical material (cf. Flick 2002:259pp). Axial coding then aims to refine the categories from the open coding process by selecting the most relevant. To these axial codes are then added more passages from the empirical material, which are set in relation to each other (cf. Flick 2002:265). Selective coding continues this process in a more abstract way, aiming to define the main category and rank the others around it. The purpose of these procedures is to discover patterns and their conditions in the material. As soon as new passages no longer offer new insights, theoretical saturation is deemed to have been reached, and the interpretation of the data can be stopped (cf. Flick 2002:267, 268).

The goal of all data analysis is the summarization of large quantities of data into understandable information from which well-supported and well-argued conclusions are drawn. (DeWalt/DeWalt 2011:179)

3.5. Reflection of the research conditions

Reflecting upon the research process seems crucial in the light of the specific research conditions. As mentioned above, the research took place among a very vulnerable group of people, who were inhibited about talking for a number of reasons. Firstly, the refugees had already been interviewed by various authorities in the course of their asylum procedures; secondly, they had to give the interview in a foreign language; and, finally, they shared very personal information.

The main challenge was to handle the topic in an as sensitive way as possible. On the one hand, having a buddy is something they are happy about and even proud of, but on the other, it somehow labels them as being alone and in need of help. The latter was not always experienced as comfortable. Just the fact that they have a buddy gives away the information that they are here without their family. One interview partner, Mohammad, told me explicitly that he did not feel comfortable about being seen as a poor refugee who needs assistance (cf. Interview Mohammad). Therefore, the line was very thin between asking the interviewees to share very personal information about their experiences with the *Patenschaft*, and at the same time not giving them the feeling of being in a vulnerable position. Most young people I was in contact with during the course of this research wished to have a normal life, without emphasising their *refugeeness*. This dilemma was solved by clearly highlighting my interest in the *Patenschaft* itself, and by conveying to them the impression that they are experts on the topic.

Another important factor that needs to be mentioned is the informants' understanding of the purpose of the research. As refugees are used to being interviewed by various authorities in the course of the asylum procedure, it was important to explain the purpose of this research in a very detailed manner. I clarified that this research was being undertaken for my studies at the University of Vienna, and that I had no relation to the authorities or to other institutions responsible for the asylum procedure. I explained that the focus of the research was their experience with the *Patenschaft* and that no personal questions about leaving their home country or their asylum procedures would be asked. I promised that the information they would give would be anonymous and that their names and other private information would be changed or left out.

Although it appeared that the informants had understood my explanations, in some cases it turned out at the beginning of the interview, that they did not know exactly what our meeting was about. Aden thought he was participating in a whole project, and Rahmad thought that I wanted to be his buddy because I had started talking to him during a *Patenschaft* project event (cf. Interview Aden, Interview Rahmad).

The informants' individual assessment of their own German skills presented another problem. Most of the contact persons spoke German pretty well, but frequently underestimated their language competency and felt inhibited about talking in German.

Du musst sehr intelligent sein um mich zu verstehen. Mein Deutsch ist ja schlimm. (Interview Daria)

You have to be very intelligent to understand me. My German is terrible. (Interview Daria)

Considering the often short time they had been attending language classes, their language competences were actually very impressive. Noticing that some of them felt inhibited because they worried about making mistakes, I started telling them that I was impressed by their language competency. I observed that my contact persons seemed to feel more comfortable after I had complimented their language skills and they started to talk more fluently without worrying about making mistakes thereafter.

Nevertheless, I noticed that some interview partners still felt really uncomfortable and kept looking at the Dictaphone and correcting themselves very carefully while talking. During five interviews I decided to stop the recording, make notes and write a detailed protocol afterwards, in order to relax the interviewees and create an atmosphere that allowed them to speak without worrying about mistakes.

My own role during the research and its possible impacts on the young people's behaviour and on the information they shared with me, must be reflected upon too. Concerning the direct contact with the informants, my role as a young local person definitely shaped the interview situations, the way the contact persons presented themselves, and therefore also the data gathered. It can be assumed that for all the young people who took part in this research, I was not only perceived as the person asking them for an interview, but also as a potential contact or even a friend in the host society. Many informants wished to stay in contact after the interview and tried to arrange another meeting or just wanted to text a little bit. These expectations and hopes they had, definitely shaped the way they presented themselves and the information they shared with me.

Gender-related differences in the ways the contact persons presented themselves were visible during the interviews and had an impact on the interview situation. The girls, after the ice was broken, quickly started talking and seemed less inhibited about sharing personal stories, memories and hopes. They seemed to talk to me in a very collegial and trustful way. Daria said directly,

Ich spreche so mit dir, weil du verstehst es, du bist auch eine Frau. (Interview Daria)

I talk to you like this, because you understand, you are a woman too. (Interview Daria)

In contrast, the boys seemed to be more concerned about what to say and appeared to be trying harder to present themselves in a good way.

While the girls admitted freely that they wished for assistance and a helping hand in everyday life situations as well as for information about norms and values, the boys seemed to be caught in a dilemma, wishing for similar things but hesitating to articulate the fact directly. Some boys told me that they definitely needed help and wished for a buddy, but they also confessed to feeling ashamed about being so helpless and depending on other people's assistance. In their country of origin they would have already been working and responsible for a family. Finding themselves in a completely new societal environment, without knowing the language or culture, and with limited options to influence their legal status and to make future plans, left them in a very vulnerable position and made them feel uneasy.

Another point that needs to be mentioned is the young people's perception of the *Patenschaft* in relation to its duration. The longer they were part of the *Patenschaft* the more natural it seemed to have been for them. During the interviews it became clear that those informants who had had their buddy just for a few months were very enthusiastic about the support and the experiences they had had in the relationship with the buddy. They spoke about many little details and told memories of single meetings and conversations they had shared with the buddy (for example cf. Interview Rahmad, Interview Samir).

Those contact persons who had been part of a *Patenschaft* for a longer time reported in a more general way, as if they were talking about something that is already part of their life

and routine, but still clearly something they appreciate a lot and do not want to miss. Abdi, who has his buddy for more than two years, answered the question about the common activities he shared with the buddy by saying,

Was meinst du? Naja, wir machen was jede Familie so macht, reden und essen und Spiele spielen und manchmal machen wir Urlaub. (Interview Abdi)

What do you mean? Well, we do what every family does, we talk and eat and play games and sometimes we go on holiday. (Interview Abdi)

4. Findings of the research

In this chapter the findings of the research are presented. The headings of the sections conform to the main categories that evolved whilst evaluating the empirical material. Contrary to expectations, the status of the asylum procedure seems to have had no influence on the experiences in the *Patenschaft*.

4.1. Digression: Meaning of participating in the research – “*Today I am here with you.*”

Concerning the readiness to participate in the research, in general I observed a keen interest from the side of my contact persons. A crucial factor was the personal contact with the informants. As mentioned above, the e-mail asking for an interview was met with little response, but the direct contact I made during the project party led to many young people developing an interest in my project, which encouraged them to give an interview.

The motives for participating in the research were as varied as the young people's personal life stories and backgrounds. They include: curiosity and a simple interest in the research, the hope of getting to know an Austrian person better (even if it was just through doing an interview), the intention of giving something back after having received so much help from Austrian people, and in some cases also the wish to get in contact with a young local woman.

As for what participating in my research meant to the young people, I observed that almost all the interviewees considered it to be an important appointment. Apart from three people, two of whom had waited at the wrong place, they all intentionally arrived at the meeting point too early and were there already waiting for me. Mostafa explained to me that he came earlier out of respect to my culture and its appreciation of punctuality and to show me that he took the interview seriously.

In Afghanistan ist es nicht so streng mit der Zeit. Man kann auch später kommen und es ist kein Problem. Aber ich weiß ja, in Österreich ist das anders, also bin ich jetzt früher gekommen, damit du siehst, dass ich ein ernster Mensch bin. (Interview Mostafa)

In Afghanistan it is not so strict concerning time. You can also come later and it's no problem. But I know it's different in Austria, so I even came a bit earlier so that you can see what a serious person I am. (Interview Mostafa)

Furthermore, Rahmad, Samir and Daria dressed up very beautifully and even told me that they did so because they were participating in research done for the university and they wanted to look good for that occasion.

Most contact persons were proud to be part of this study, some mentioned that directly. When informed about the anonymization of their names, Samir even protested and wanted to be mentioned with his real name.

Oh nein, du musst das nicht machen. Du kannst meinen richtigen Namen schreiben, also meinen ganzen Namen und alles. Vielleicht wird jemand der mich kennt deine Arbeit lesen. (Interview Samir)

Oh no, you don't have to do that. You can write my real name, my whole name and everything. Maybe somebody who knows me will read your work. (Interview Samir)

Rahmad let me know that he had changed his daily routine in order to participate in the research.

Ich mache jeden Tag Sport, jeden Tag! Nur nicht heute, heute bin ich hier mit dir. (Interview Rahmad)

I do sports every day, every day! But not today, today I am here with you. (Interview Rahmad)

Apart from Mostafa and Abdi, who are very well integrated into their buddies' families, all of the contact persons made the effort to start a friendship and to stay in contact, almost all of them texted me after the interview. Amir invited me to go to the theatre three weeks after the interview, and he asked me directly if we could be friends. He made this offer because he had shared so much private information with me and felt so close after doing so. Samir asked me for permission to refer to me as a friend, because his lawyer

had told him that Austrian friends are good and helpful for the asylum procedure. Aden asked me after the interview when we would meet the next time.

Wann sehen wir uns das nächste Mal? Ich werde dich anrufen und einladen!
(Interview Aden)

When do we meet next time? I will call you and invite you out! (Interview Aden)

Rahmad and Mohammad both mentioned that one of the reasons for them wanting to get to know me better was because of the fact that I am a young Austrian woman.

Du bist ein liebes Mädchen von diesem Land. Ich habe nicht genau verstanden wie ich dir helfen kann, weil ich Deutsch nicht gut spreche. Aber ich möchte helfen und auch dich kennen lernen. Du bist ein gutes Mädchen, ein guter Mensch. (Interview Rahmad)

You are a nice girl from this country. I didn't understand exactly how I could help you, because I don't speak German well. But I want to help and get to know you. You are a good girl, a good person. (Interview Rahmad)

Ich muss ehrlich sagen, ich möchte schon versuchen dich kennenzulernen und wiederzusehen. Wir haben uns jetzt so gut unterhalten. Du bist ein gutes Mädchen, du gefälltst mir. (Interview Mohammad)

I have to tell you honestly, I really want to try to get to know you and see you again. We had such a good conversation. You are a good girl, I like you.
(Interview Mohammad)

But the girls also let me know that they would have liked to stay in contact. Daria informed me that I should not hesitate to contact her if I needed any more information or any other assistance. She even sent me a message a few days after the interview to ask about how the research was progressing (cf. Interview Daria, field diary).

Discussion:

This digression is presented in the findings of the research because - contrary to the picture of refugees as passive and helpless that one often finds in the media and in humanitarian discourse - the informants appeared highly motivated and interested. As Urban states, participation is partially shaped by structural and institutional conditions, but it is also shaped by the agency of individuals in specific situations (cf. Urban 2005:3). The interview can be seen as an example of something that gives the young refugees a

chance to be part of something, to articulate their opinion, and to become active creators of a certain situation. Their huge interest and their readiness to participate show that the young people relished the chance to become active. Although in some cases it turned out in the first minutes of the meeting that they had no clear idea what the meeting was about, they were still ready to give an interview. Their main motives turned out to be curiosity, the wish to help, and the desire to get in touch with a local person. The various comments show clearly that the young people actively tried to benefit from spending time with an Austrian person. The participation in the research was seen as a potential opportunity to establish contacts.

4.2. Emotional support – “*She likes me and I like her.*”

Most contact persons told me that in the beginning they did not clearly understand what a *Patenschaft* was and how it was supposed to function. But when they heard about it - from their social workers or friends who already had a buddy - they all knew immediately that they wanted to have a buddy themselves. Every single person I interviewed had very clear wishes and hopes concerning the *Patenschaft*. Most expectations concerned some kind of emotional support in various parts of their life. They wished for somebody who would look at their German class certificate, somebody they could spend the weekends with, doing various leisure time activities, somebody who would taste the food they prepared, listen to their memories of childhood and their home country, and a lot more. Basically, they just wished for somebody to spend time with them.

Klaus Hofstätter, the project leader of *Connecting People*, also points to the relationship component of the *Patenschaften*.

*Das wirklich Wesentliche an den Patenschaften ist, dass jemand **dich** sieht, dass du es **wert** bist, dass man hinschaut und dass du dich nicht verbiegen musst. Es gibt jemanden der dich jenseits von Erwartungen und Anforderungen anerkennt. Diese Beziehungskomponente steht im Vordergrund. (Interview Klaus Hofstätter)*

*The essential thing about Patenschaften is, that somebody sees **you**, that you are **worth** being seen and that you don't have to try to be somebody you're not. There is somebody who acknowledges you, beyond expectations and demands. This relationship component is of primary importance. (Interview Klaus Hofstätter)*

Leaving one's home country, for whatever reason, is accompanied by a sense of loss: loss of family members, friends, social networks and a familiar daily routine. All contact persons mentioned feelings of loss and emptiness. They were able to remember the day they left home as if it were yesterday. Without asking them, all of them told me in great detail about the feelings they had about leaving home and being alone in the host country.

Weißt du, ich bin immer sehr alleine, sehr sehr alleine, seit fünf Jahren bin ich alleine. Vor fünf Jahren habe ich meine Familie in Bangladesch gelassen und bin zwei Jahre zu Fuß nach Österreich gekommen. Ich war immer alleine, auch jetzt ein und ein halbes Jahr in Österreich war ich alleine. Wenn man immer alleine ist, dann wird das Herz so, wie sagt man [macht Handbewegung], so klein, wie wenn du kein Wasser trinkst, weil du keines hast. (Interview Rahmad)

You know, I am very alone all the time, very very alone - for five years I've been alone. Five years ago I left my family in Bangladesh and walked to Austria by foot for two years. I was alone all the time. Even now, after one and a half years in Austria, I am still alone. If you are alone all the time, your heart gets so, how do you say [makes a movement with the hand] so small, similar to not drinking water, if you don't have water. (Interview Rahmad)

All my interview partners had a very strong wish for emotional assistance that went beyond the support they received from their social workers in the housing facilities. Statements, such as the following, express the urgent wish to belong somewhere, to be accepted and loved.

Ich brauche jemanden, der da ist für mich, wenn ich Unterstützung brauche. Jemanden wo ich hingehen kann, wenn ich Zeit habe. (Interview Abdi)

I need somebody who is there for me whenever I need support. Somebody I can go to when I have time. (Interview Abdi)

Being asked about their emotions and experiences with the buddy, the young people described various feelings which are categorised here under the term "emotional safety". These feelings were articulated and illustrated in different ways by the informants, but they all went in the same direction.

Sie ist sehr nett und lieb und spricht immer gut mit mir. Sie mag mich und ich mag sie und jetzt sie ist meine Familie. Ich war immer alleine und habe mir so sehr eine Familie gewünscht. Dann ist diese Frau [die Patin] gekommen und hat gesagt, dass sie meine Patin sein will, das ist Wahnsinn. Ich will mein ganzes Leben in Österreich leben und mit ihr zusammen. (Interview Rahmad)

She is very nice and kind and always talks to me in a good way. She likes me and I like her and she is my family now. I was always alone and I wished for a family so much. Then this woman [the buddy] came and said that she wanted to be my buddy, this is amazing. I want to spend the rest of my life in Austria and be with her. (Interview Rahmad)

Vorher war ich alleine und jetzt bin ich mit jemandem. Früher habe ich nichts machen können und jetzt sage ich, ich mache das mit Petra [der Patin] oder schauen wir mal ich frage Petra. [...] Und immer am Mittwoch am Abend, da haben wir Tanz-Kurs, da gehen wir zusammen hin und danach essen wir. Also Mittwoch ist Petra-Tag [lacht]. I feel I am not alone. Auch wenn ich ein Problem habe, dann rede ich mit ihr und sage: „Petra ich habe ein Problem“, so mit Vertrauen und so. (Interview Daria)

Before I was alone and now I am with somebody. Before I couldn't do anything and now I tell myself, I'll do this with Petra [the buddy] or why don't I ask Petra. [...] And on Wednesday in the evening, we always have dancing class. We go there together and after that we eat. So Wednesday is Petra-day [laughs]. I feel I am not alone. Also when I have a problem I talk to her and say, "Petra I have a problem," and I do so with trust. (Interview Daria)

Some contact persons even experience integration into the buddy's family. For example, Mostafa, who had lost his whole family on the way to Europe and had not been able to re-establish contact, experiences the *Patenschaft* very intensely and cannot imagine living without the buddy and her family anymore. He reported feeling trust for and even the complete integration into the new family, which sees and treats him like their own child. Most time he refers to the buddy and her husband as *Mutter* (mother) and *Vater* (father), and their daughter is like a sister to him. He reported that he has recently moved into the buddy's apartment, where he has his own room and takes part in family life. Asked about the *Patenschaft*, he gave the following description.

Die nehmen mich wie ein echtes Kind, schützen mich bei allem und wollen, dass alles gut geht mit mir und mir nichts fehlt. Früher war ich immer unglücklich und ich konnte nichts machen. [...] Im Heim konnte ich nichts mitmachen, ich war immer im Zimmer und die Türe war zu und ich habe immer geweint und gedacht: „Was soll ich machen?“ [...] Und mit denen [den Paten] ist es anders. Seit ich meine neue Familie habe ist mein Leben verändert, alles kann ich jetzt machen, alles! Ich bin auch nicht mehr müde und ich brauche keine Therapie mehr. [...] Und da ist Vertrauen, Vertrauen ist so wichtig, weil ohne Vertrauen geht keine Familie. [...] Die sagen ich soll mir nicht so viele Sorgen machen, weil wenn ein Problem kommt, dann kann ich mit denen reden und die werden mit mir eine Lösung finden. Und genauso machen die es dann auch. (Interview Mostafa)

They accept me as a real child, they protect me from everything and they want me to be fine and not to lack anything. Before, I was always unhappy and I could

not do anything. [...] In the housing facility I could not join in anything, I was in my room all the time and I kept the door closed and cried and asked myself, "What shall I do?" [...] And with them [the buddy and her family] it's different. Since I've been with my new family, my life has changed, I can do everything, everything! I'm not tired anymore and I don't need therapy anymore. [...] And there is trust, trust is important, because a family doesn't work without trust. [...] They tell me not to worry so much because, if there is a problem, I can talk to them and they will find a solution together with me. And that's exactly what they do. (Interview Mostafa)

Abdi and Samir also consider themselves to be part of their respective families and illustrated these feelings of belonging as follows.

Die sind Mutter und Vater für mich, wir sind eine Familie, jeder kennt den anderen gut. Ich schenke denen auch was zum Muttertag und zum Vatertag und zu Geburtstage und so. (Interview Abdi)

They are mother and father to me, we are a family, everybody knows the other one well. I also give them presents for mother's day and father's day and birthdays and other occasions. (Interview Abdi)

Sie ist sehr nett. Sie nimmt mich wie einen Sohn. (Interview Samir)

She is very nice. She treats me like a son. (Interview Samir)

Two contact persons, Mohammad and Aden, sometimes even experienced their integration in their buddies' families as pressure. On the one hand, they seemed to enjoy being part of the family, but they also mentioned being a bit tired of all the social duties, such as celebrating birthdays and other family-related events. Mohammad, who regularly received gifts from the buddy's family members, even decided to avoid some of the bigger family get-togethers, since he felt under pressure to give presents to them in return. As a trainee, he had a low income and could not afford to buy gifts for the family members. Showing up empty-handed made him feel uncomfortable so he decided not to join in (cf. Interview Mohammad).

Und die feiern eben so viele Feste, dauernd einen Geburtstag, eine Konfirmationsfeier oder sonst was, so mit Geschenken und [lacht] alle freuen sich. Sie haben mich immer eingeladen und es war schön. Aber es war so viel. Weißt du, ich bin ein einfacher Mensch und ich brauche nicht so viele Partys, und das war auch irgendwie deprimierend. Bis heute laden die mich immer zu allem ein, aber ich gehe nicht immer hin. (Interview Mohammad)

And they celebrate so many occasions, there's always a birthday, a confirmation ceremony, or something, with presents and [laughs] they are all so happy. They have always invited me and that was nice. But it was too much. You know, I am a simple person and I don't need so many parties and it was also somehow

*depressing. So far they have invited me to everything, but I don't always go.
(Interview Mohammad)*

Aden also experiences the social pressure of the belonging to a family that naturally includes him in its structure. He reported that the buddy's family is disappointed if he does not take the time to drop in for a visit on a regular basis (cf. Interview Aden).

The meaning of emotional support mentioned above became clearly visible when reflecting on the answers to the intentionally vague question: "What do you get from your buddy?" In almost all cases the young people referred immediately to emotional matters, such as love, time, support, assistance, good feelings, a family, a new home.

*Sie gibt mir so viel Liebe. Nicht alle Patinnen sind gleich, meine ist die beste.
(Interview Rahmad)*

*She gives me so much love. Not all buddies are the same, mine is the best.
(Interview Rahmad)*

Ich hab familiäre Gefühle bekommen, etwas das ich sehr lange nicht hatte und schon fast vergessen hatte, also nicht nur fast, ich hatte es vergessen. (Interview Mohammad)

I have family feelings, something I didn't have for a long time and had almost forgotten, not almost, I had forgotten. (Interview Mohammad)

Material things, such as presents for various occasions and small gifts in everyday life, were mentioned second most often. Financial assistance was mentioned in third place or even later, although all of them sometimes received it from their buddies. They appreciated the financial assistance, but accentuated much more pointedly the emotional side of their relationships.

Emotional support can be seen as the basis for the bonds between the young people and their buddies and what, in some cases, enabled a relationship to reach far beyond learning sessions and assistance in everyday life. This became clear to me when I listened to the young people's descriptions of their relationships with their buddies. Armin's and Mohammad's narrations show in a particularly touching way the intensity of these relationships, on the one hand, but also how flexible their shape can be, on the other. Both of them told that the contact with their buddies started taking new forms at a certain point.

Armin explained how, once he had achieved a certain amount of self-sufficiency and independence, he realized he needed less assistance from his buddy. He considers the *Patenschaft* to be at a turning point now. Armin feels good that he doesn't need it anymore and he wishes to turn the relationship, which was - from his point of view - characterized by one-way assistance for a long time, into a friendship or something similar. He explained that they recently started spending their time together doing different things than they did a year ago. While their relationship was characterized by various appointments and learning-sessions before, today they go for a walk together, drink coffee or watch movies. Armin concluded that these changes were due to the progress he had made in the last few years. Apart from receiving positive asylum status, which gave him safety at various levels, he finished school and found a job and a flat. This stability in his life allowed their relationship to change. He emphasised that the buddy had played, and still played, a major role and had always been on his side, helping him to tackle challenges and develop future prospects. Because of the tight emotional bond between them, it is clear to Armin that their relationship will continue, even if he no longer needs assistance in his everyday life.

Jetzt treffen wir uns halt so. Ich brauche ihre Hilfe nur manchmal. Wir sind dann meistens bei ihr zuhause. Wir trinken Kaffee zusammen oder schauen fern, das macht sie gerne. Manchmal gehen wir auch spazieren. Sie hat auch einen großen Hund, mit dem gehen wir dann in den Wald. (Interview Armin)

Now we just meet like this. I only need her help occasionally. Most of the time we meet at her place. We drink coffee together or watch TV, she likes doing that. Sometimes we also go for a walk. She's got a big dog and we go to the forest with him. (Interview Armin)

Mohammad, who also experienced changes in the relationship with his buddy, told me, smiling, that he had grown up, and after three years with the buddy, their relationship had turned into a friendship. He reported that nowadays the buddy even sometimes calls him to ask him for advice.

Irgendwann ist es bei uns dann nicht mehr um Patin und Patenkind gegangen, sondern es ist einfach eine normale freundschaftliche Beziehung zwischen uns entstanden. Sie hat mir dann einmal auch gebeichtet, dass sie eigentlich gar keine Ahnung von Jugendlichen hat, weil sie selbst keine Kinder hat. Und wir haben dann eben festgestellt, dass wir eine super freundschaftliche Beziehung zueinander haben. [...] Und wir haben da auch immer so viel geredet. (Interview Mohammad)

At some point it was no longer a question of buddy and godchild, but a normal amicable relationship developed between us. Once she also confessed to me, that she had no idea about youngsters because she had no children herself. And we noticed that we have a great friendly relationship with each other. [...] And we have always talked so much. (Interview Mohammad)

The descriptions of the changes in their relationship prove that the relationship between the young people and their buddies is stable and continuous in a broader context and reaches further than support in everyday life challenges. After reaching the point when the buddy is not “necessary” anymore for the young person, the relationship still continues, but starts taking new forms without losing its importance and intensity.

Discussion:

Lueger-Schuster points to the lack of a home when talking about refugees’ emotional states. Apart from material belongings, human beings need a place that they belong to in order to develop emotional needs and competences. Leaving their home country means that those material and emotional roots get lost for many refugees (cf. Lueger-Schuster 1996:10, 11). Lueger-Schuster uses the term “uprooting” to describe the psychological, social and cultural state of a human being that has lost their affiliation with their home country, and has not yet found a place in the host country (cf. Lueger-Schuster 1996:18).

As (former) unaccompanied minor refugees, the informants were separated from their parents, a factor which may have severely influenced their well-being (cf. Derluyn/Broekaert 2008:321). Unaccompanied minor refugees are often confused or depressed in exile. Most of them wish for emotional support and assistance in the potential host country, in some cases they even wish for a surrogate family (cf. Meißner 2003:145). All the contact persons interviewed for this master thesis expressed similar wishes for emotional support and an attachment figure, some very desperately.

Ich wollte auch eine Patin. Die haben nicht gleich eine finden können und ich habe so sehr gewartet. Dann habe ich meine Patin bekommen. Ich war so glücklich. (Interview Aden)

I also wanted a buddy. They couldn’t find one immediately and I was waiting so long. Then I got my buddy. I was so happy. (Interview Aden)

The *Patenschaft* turned out to provide tremendous emotional support for the young refugees and allowed them to put down new emotional roots. The buddies, as new attachment figures, seem to be a safe haven from which they are able to live their lives and always return to whenever necessary. In some cases, the relationship is very intense and the young person is even completely included in the buddy's family life.

The continuous personal attention they experience in the *Patenschaft* creates emotional stability in their life, which gives them foundation to tackle everyday life challenges and to advance their individual capacities in order to plan for and realize future goals in the host country.

4.3. Encouragement – “*I can do it!*”

The informants reported the hard times they had been through after their arrival in the host country. They felt to be without prospects, were sometimes depressed, and in most cases were unable to realize any of the future plans they had previously had in mind. Some of them saw their own competences as useless in the host country and had no confidence in themselves.

The young people explained that the buddies had encouraged and motivated them to believe in themselves and their own capacities. They told me how the buddies had praised their abilities, and helped them to figure out how they might create and shape their life. The buddies opened up new possibilities for the young people - mainly concerning educational and job-related chances - based on their individual resources, talents and wishes.

Daria, for example, wished to study business and economics, just like her buddy - a young woman - did. She hesitated to talk about this dream and feared that she might not manage to study at an Austrian university, especially because of the number of mathematics classes necessary and the fact that she would have to study in German. When talking to her buddy about it, she received encouragement to strive for this goal. The buddy explained to her that she still had enough time to improve her language skills

and become familiar with the content of the studies. She encouraged her and let her know that she believed she could do it. Daria has not given up her plan and borrowed some books from her buddy to gather information about the studies she wants to start (cf. Interview Daria).

Despite having concrete goals and the will to realize them, the young people still have to deal with various setbacks, such as not receiving an answer about their asylum status in time, receiving a negative asylum status, being rejected for apprenticeships or schools, or failing an exam. The informants reported how the buddies motivated and encouraged them to persevere in such situations.

Elisa, for example, wanted to achieve her childhood dream of becoming a nurse. The admission test was difficult for her because it was in German and her language competence was not yet sufficient. She failed the test, but was invited to try again a year later. Being very discouraged and disappointed, her buddy encouraged her to stick to her dream and try to realize it step by step. He assisted her with a further language class and helped her to secure a volunteer internship in a hospital, as this was good preparation for the nursing school. Finally, she applied again for the admission test and passed (cf. Interview Elisa).

Mein Pate sagt immer: „Elisa das kannst du schaffen.“ (Interview Elisa)

My buddy always tells me, “Elisa you can do it.” (Interview Elisa)

The buddies believe that the young people are capable of taking responsibility. Being confronted with such trust seems to have an impact on the young people's self-image: they talked proudly about their efforts and successes.

Mostafa's case demonstrates this very clearly. He reported proudly that his buddy's family asked him from time to time to look after their little daughter. He experienced that as a sign of confidence and was fully aware of the responsibility that it represents. In the beginning he was afraid that something might go wrong while he was alone with the little girl, that she might cry, feel uneasy in his company, get hurt or wish for the parents to come back home. After looking after her a few times, he realized that he was able to do it

well and that the buddy and her husband were proud of him and trusted him to take care of their little daughter. He also experienced attention from the little girl, who enjoyed playing with him (cf. Interview Mostafa).

The three examples given are very diverse and address different realms of the young people's lives, but they all show that being encouraged and being believed to be capable of taking responsibility motivates them to take on new challenges.

Discussion:

Due to the various experiences that all refugees go through, compounded by the period of adolescence and their separation from their parents and other family members, unaccompanied refugees are in a particularly vulnerable position. Derluyn and Broekaert mention various emotional, developmental and behavioural problems young refugees often suffer from, low self-esteem not being the least of the symptoms (cf. Derluyn/Broekaert 2008:321).

Couch, who did research among refugee youth, found that young refugees' participation in projects changes their view about themselves. Participation in a project contributes to the young people's positive self-image and enhances their resilience. Consequently, they feel less powerless, more aware of their own capacities, and experience autonomy and social competence (cf. Couch 2007:39, 40).

Participation in the *Patenschaft* has just the effects that Couch observed. Due to the buddies' encouragement of the young people, the trust they place in them and their competences, they experience an increase in their self-confidence and self-worth. The readiness to take responsibility and the hope of being able to shape the circumstances of their own life are thereby enhanced.

4.4. Language acquisition - “Now I understand.”

One of the main expectations the young people had of the *Patenschaft* was that they would receive individual support to help them improve their language skills, going beyond the regular German classes they attended.

This became obvious during a workshop organized by *Connecting People* when young refugees who wanted a buddy were asked about their needs and wishes (cf. Interview Klaus Hofstätter). During the expert interview, Klaus Hofstätter explained:

Im Wesentlichen wollen sie Deutsch lernen und Deutsch reden. (Interview Klaus Hofstätter)

Basically they want to learn German and to speak German. (Interview Klaus Hofstätter)

All informants were fully aware of the importance of language competency as a requirement for getting into contact with locals, as well as gaining access to the labour market and educational opportunities.

Ich muss noch besser Deutsch lernen. Ich mache jetzt eine Lehre und später will ich studieren. Ich will Wirtschaft studieren, dafür muss man gut deutsch sprechen. (Interview Daria)

I have to learn better German. I am doing an apprenticeship now and later I want to study. I want to study economics and being able to speak German well is necessary for that. (Interview Daria)

In order to highlight their need to learn German, they described the troubles they had in their first months in Austria due to their insufficient language skills.

Amir missed an appointment with his lawyer because he could not find the address and was not able to ask people in the street where it was. Aden told me about a time he was out with friends in a bar. He saw a very beautiful girl his age who came over and showed an interest in getting to know him. He felt frustrated because he was not able to understand what she was saying, and could not find a way to communicate with her. Elisa failed a school admission test because her language skills were insufficient. Abdi recalled difficulties finding an apprenticeship. Armin, who was doing an apprenticeship, felt uncomfortable when he was not able to understand his work colleagues at the beginning:

they spoke too fast and would not always explain the difficult words to him (cf. Interview Amir, Interview Aden, Interview Elisa, Interview Abdi, Interview Armin).

The contact persons stressed the importance of language skills in everyday life in the host country. They were highly motivated to learn German and wished for somebody who would offer continuous assistance in that process. Amir summed it up most clearly.

Ich wollte dringend eine Patin, weil ich brauche auch Hilfe beim Deutsch lernen. Ohne Deutsch man kann nicht leben. (Interview Amir)

I urgently wanted a buddy because I needed help with learning German. Without German you cannot live. (Interview Amir)

However, the informants recalled having doubts about how to get into contact and communicate with their buddies at the beginning. Especially those informants who spoke little or even no German when they first met their buddy considered it to be an inhibiting factor at the start of the *Patenschaft*.

Und ich hab mich gefragt was wir jetzt reden sollen, ich kann ja kein Deutsch und sie weiß sicher nicht viel über Jugendliche. (Interview Mohammad)

And I asked myself, what shall we talk about now. I don't speak German and she certainly doesn't know much about young people. (Interview Mohammad)

After the early attempts of the young people and the buddies to make contact - mostly assisted by the young people's social workers - learning German turned out to be a starting point and an ice breaker in their quest to get to know each other. The young people reported that, during the first few meetings with their buddies, they were continuously pointing to things around them and learning single words. The following comment made by Amir exemplifies how his buddy started making up little language games to assist him with language acquisition.

Am Anfang waren wir spazieren. Mein Deutsch war schlecht und ich konnte nicht sprechen. Meine Patin hat geredet und ich habe immer „Ja, ja“, gesagt, aber eigentlich habe ich nichts verstanden. Dann hat sie mir Wörter gesagt und dorthin gezeigt. Sie hat gesagt: „Baum“, und mit dem Finger den Baum gezeigt. Und dann habe ich gelernt. (Interview Amir)

In the beginning we went for a walk. My German was bad and I couldn't talk. My buddy talked and I always said, "Yes, yes", but to be honest, I didn't understand anything. Then she told me words and pointed at the thing. She said, "tree" and pointed with her finger at the tree. And then I learned. (Interview Amir)

All contact persons mentioned German lessons as being one of the main activities they engaged in with the buddies. These took a variety of forms. Some told me how they had read children's books together. Others learned German while exploring the city with the buddy, reading and translating all the signs and placards on the street. Some reported cooking typical food from both countries together and naming the ingredients in both languages. Others looked at pictures of the young people's home countries and discussed cultural and societal norms and values. They watched movies together and read comics, went to the cinema and the theatre, and visited cultural events. Some even had regular learning sessions at home with the buddy.

Wir lesen zusammen. Sie hat mir gezeigt, dass man besser lernen kann, wenn man laut vorliest und sich selbst hört. Am Anfang hat sie vorgelesen und dann habe ich gelesen und sie hat mich ausgebessert. Sie hat mir auch ein Buch geschenkt von einem syrischen Flüchtling, das ist in Deutsch. (Interview Armin)

We read together. She showed me that reading out loud and hearing yourself is better for the learning process. In the beginning she read to me and later I read and she corrected me. She also gave me a book about a Syrian refugee, it is in German. (Interview Armin)

Searching the young people's explanations about their language learning revealed some commonalities. The activities reached far beyond the simple process of language acquisition. Learning German together allowed space for cultural exchange and enabled each to plunge into the other's culture.

In some cases, language learning even became an explicit exchange process. Daria, who speaks English fluently, mentioned that her buddy also speaks pretty good English, but still need some corrections sometimes. Abdi told me that his buddy had lived in Egypt before and had learned to speak Arabic there. Nowadays she practices her Arabic skills with him and Abdi functions as her teacher, correcting her. Mohammed and Amir reported that their buddies had learned some words and phrases in Farsi, their native tongue.

Moreover, language was seen as a tool for expressing and sharing experiences and emotions. Some contact persons told me that they shared their personal history with their buddy.

Wir sprechen miteinander. Sie hat mich gefragt über meine Eltern und ob die noch leben und wie ich nach Österreich gekommen bin. Und ich habe ihr alles erzählt. Das war gut. (Interview Samir)

We talk to each other. She asked me about my parents and if they were alive and how I came to Austria. And I told her everything. That was good. (Interview Samir)

Those contact persons who had not received an asylum decision yet (Samir and Rahmad) drew particular attention to the importance of being able to express their feelings to the buddy.

With their improving German skills, it became possible to have more personal conversations and to share emotions, allowing closeness and trust to develop. Consequently, the *Patenschaft* as a whole was described by the interviewees as becoming more intense.

The informants reported that, with increasing language competence, they were able to become more self-reliant in everyday life. They proudly told me about various situations that they could now finally handle without being dependent on anybody's assistance. These included going to appointments alone, communicating with doctors and lawyers when necessary, asking about the departure and arrival of public transport, and talking to locals (cf. Interview Amir, Interview Armin, Interview Mohammad, Interview Elisa).

All informants, without exception, rated the buddies' assistance with their language acquisition as outstanding.

Ja also die Sprache habe ich von denen [der Patin und ihrer Familie] gelernt, natürlich. (Interview Abdi)

I learned the language from them [the buddy and her family], of course. (Interview Abdi)

Das ist schon ein Glück wenn man eine Patin hat. Man lernt die Sprache viel schneller. (Interview Mohammad)

Having a buddy is really fortunate. You learn the language a lot faster. (Interview Mohammad)

Discussion:

Interactions between the host society and migrants rely on language competence. Next to cultural and social capital, language skills and the ability to communicate influence refugees' chances of coming into contact with the local society (cf. Balluseck 2003:29). Bielefeld also highlights the relevance of language skills, which he defines not only as a tool for integration, but also as a tool for building one's own identity as well as for expressing one's own opinion (cf. Bielefeld 2013:155).

Knowledge of the local language is the key to being able to participate in the host society. All contact persons in this master thesis were in the process of language acquisition and were fully aware of the significance of understanding and speaking the local language. When asked what they wished and expected from the *Patenschaft*, German learning took an important place. The various activities that the pairs combined with German learning - such as walks through the city, cooking sessions, theatre and cinema visits - assisted the young people in the process of language acquisition. With increasing language skills, the young people are able to participate in conversations, express their opinions and share their emotions. They feel more self-confident in everyday situations, less scared in public, and are therefore able to act more self-reliant and escape the passivity they felt caught in before they learned the language. Language skills literally open up the local society to them and gradually allow them to participate more in the various areas of cultural, societal and political life. The buddies are felt to provide major support during this process.

4.5. Acculturation – “I learned to be punctual.”

The empirical data shows, in many different ways, that the buddy is perceived as a “cultural bridge” (Interview Mohammad), to quote one of the interview partners, that is a person who can be asked everything the young refugee does not understand about life in Austria.

All the contact persons come from countries with cultural norms and values that differ from those of European societies. In their everyday life in Austria they were confronted with new norms and values that led to confusion and created unanswered questions. They reported feeling irritated and unsure about how to behave and react appropriately in various situations. The way people greet one another, the way couples behave in public, the importance of punctuality, and the separation of waste were mentioned by the informants.

Und für mich war damals alles so fremd, ich kannte ja die Kultur und die Leute nicht. Ich wusste auch nicht wie man sich da benehmen soll und was man reden soll. Und das war so lustig [macht eine Pause, weil er so lachen muss], weil, weisst du, sie [die Patin] hat dann ein Eis gekauft für sich und für mich, und wir haben dann so dieses Eis gegessen. Und da war eben so ein Papier dran und ich hab nicht gewusst was ich damit machen soll. Und irgendwann war so ein kleiner Haufen mit ein bissl Mist und da hab ich das Papier ganz vorsichtig oben drauf gelegt. Und meine Patin hat dann sofort ganz streng gesagt: „Halt, mit mir machst du das nie wieder!“ Und ich hab gar nicht verstanden was ich jetzt falsch gemacht hatte. [lacht] Und naja, es war eben kein Mistkübel, sondern den Müll hat schon jemand anders dorthin geworfen gehabt und ich habe was dazu geworfen. [wir lachen beide] (Interview Mohammad)

And everything was so strange for me, I didn't know the culture or the people. I also didn't know how to behave or what to talk about. And it was so funny [takes a break, because he laughs so much], because, you know, she [the buddy] bought an ice cream for her and for me, and we ate the ice cream. And there was a piece of paper wrapped around the ice cream and I didn't know what to do with it. And then I saw a little bunch of waste and I put the paper carefully on top of it. And my buddy said very strictly, "Stop! Never do that again while you're with me!" And I didn't understand what I had done wrong. [laughs] And yeah, it wasn't a rubbish bin, somebody else had put their waste on the ground, and I put my paper on top of it. [We both laugh.] (Interview Mohammad)

The perception of time and punctuality was mentioned very often during the interviews. The contact persons reported several difficult situations and misunderstandings resulting from different perceptions of time and the importance of appearing punctually at various appointments. Such situations were experienced in the relationship with their buddies as well as with official appointments and school-related schedules.

Aden told me about a German class he attended. For various reasons - that he did not want to mention in detail during the interview - he arrived late again and again. Consequently he had lost his place in that class (cf. Interview Aden).

Armin explained how he had missed the first *Connecting People* meeting because he had left for his journey there far too late, even though he really wanted a buddy. Later on, when he got a buddy, he regularly showed up late for meetings with her. One day, the buddy let him know that it was impolite to let somebody wait (cf. Interview Armin).

Sie ist immer pünktlich, und jetzt bin ich auch pünktlich. Irgendwann sieht man, dass man pünktlich sein muss. Am Anfang war ich immer zu spät und sie hat sich dann aufgeregt und irgendwann hab ich gecheckt, dass ich pünktlich kommen muss. (Interview Armin)

She is always on time, and now I am punctual as well. At a certain point you see that you have to be on time. In the beginning I was always too late and she complained and then one day I realised that I had to arrive on time. (Interview Armin)

Asked about the reasons for being late, the informants pointed to the cultural differences between Austria and their respective home country.

In meiner Kultur, in Afghanistan, sind die Leute nicht so genau mit der Zeit und der Pünktlichkeit. (Interview Mohammad)

In my culture, in Afghanistan, people are not so precise with time and punctuality. (Interview Mohammad)

Apart from becoming familiar with various local values and patterns of behaviour, the contact persons were introduced to typical Austrian food by their buddies. They reported visiting different restaurants. The informants got to know famous Austrian dishes. Abdi told me with enthusiasm about how much he enjoys *Kaiserschmarrn*.⁹

Almost every interview partner told me about how they had cooked together with their buddy in order to learn about the typical food and eating habits of each other's country of origin. The young people were proud to let their buddies taste the typical food of their home country.

Thus, cooking together turned out to be an activity that easily allows for cultural exchange.

Wir kochen zusammen, Samosa, kennst du das? So somalisches Essen ist das! Und Petra ist jetzt auch schon ganz gut mit Samosa. Und sie macht immer so gute Torten - wow! Wir haben auch zusammen so gute Kekse gebacken letzte Woche. (Interview Daria)

⁹ *Kaiserschmarrn* is a typical Austrian dish from sweet dough.

We cook together, Samosa, do you know that? It's Somali food! And Petra also cooks Samosa quite well. And she always makes such good cakes - wow! We also baked such good cookies together last week. (Interview Daria)

The young people also learned about traditions and feasts, half of the contact persons joined their buddies' families for Christmas and Easter celebrations.

Ich war zum ersten Mal bei einer österreichischen Familie und ich war bei allen Festen dabei, bei Weihnachten, und wie heißt dieses Hasenfest das bei euch immer im Frühling kommt? (Interview Mohammad)

I was with an Austrian family for the first time and I was part of all the feasts, Christmas, and what is this rabbit-feast called that always comes in spring? (Interview Mohammad)

Furthermore, the contact persons reported getting to know classical music by visiting the opera together with their buddies. Half of the informants went to the opera or to the theatre with their buddy. Not all of them liked the music, some of them told me that they did not really understand what the opera or the play was about, but all of them were impressed by the locations and the atmosphere.

Amir wondered why all the people just sat there and listened instead of standing up and dancing. He concluded that it was due to the differences between his own culture and Austrian culture, and told me about how he received confirmation from his buddy about this conclusion. In return, he invited his buddy to an Afghan concert in order to show her the music from his country of origin (cf. Interview Amir).

Elisa picked up the habit of making visits to the theatre as part of her routine, together with the buddy she goes to see plays on a regular basis. She enjoys dressing up in an elegant manner and talking with her buddy about what they have seen (cf. Interview Elisa).

The young people also told me about excursions and daytrips they went on together with their buddies. They visited famous places, such as Schloss Schönbrunn, Prater, Salzburg and a lot more. They were glad to get to know Austria and to learn about the places that are culturally and historically important.

Wir waren zweimal in den Bergen, ich habe vergessen wie die heißen. Und einmal in der Lobau, dort waren wir mit dem Fahrrad. Einmal Schönbrunn. Und noch viele andere, aber ich habe sie vergessen. Sie hat gesagt: „Du kannst auch alles aufschreiben, wohin wir einen Ausflug gemacht haben und was wir gemacht haben.“ Und sie hat mir eine...wie heißt das? [zeigt ein kleines rosa Notizbuch] gegeben zum Aufschreiben. (Interview Samir)

We were in the mountains twice, I forgot the names. And once in the Lobau, where we went by bike. Once in Schönbrunn. And so many other places, but I forgot. She said, "You can write down the places we made an excursion to and what we did." And she gave me a...what is this called? [shows a small pink notebook] to write everything down in. (Interview Samir)

Daria and Mohammed summed up how they became familiar with the local culture, assisted by their buddies.

Petra ist von Österreich und ich nicht, ich bin von Somalia, das sind andere Kulturen. Und Petra erzählt immer von Österreich und ich von Somalia, wie wir alles machen und über die Kultur und alles. (Interview Daria)

Petra is from Austria and I'm not, I'm from Somalia, they have different cultures. And Petra always tells me about Austria and I tell her about Somalia, like we do everything and about the culture and everything. (Interview Daria)

Kulturell und sprachlich hat sich viel verändert für mich. Weißt du, die Ideologie der Menschen hier ist anders und ich habe von ihr [der Patin] gelernt das zu verstehen. Wie denken die Leute hier, wieso lachen die Österreicher über etwas, das ich nicht lustig finde, wieso sind die sauer wenn man ein bisschen später kommt, warum hassen sie Ausländer, und vieles mehr. Ihr seid anders, ihr denkt anders, ihr habt keinen Krieg gehabt. All das hab ich zu verstehen gelernt von meiner Patin. Sonst hätte ich das vielleicht nie gelernt. (Interview Mohammad)

Culturally and linguistically a lot has changed for me. You know, the people's ideology here is different and I learned how to understand it from her [the buddy]. How do the people here think, why do the Austrians laugh about something I do not find funny, why they are shirty if somebody comes a bit later, why they hate foreigners, and a lot more. You are different, you think in a different way, you have not had a war. I learned to understand all that from my buddy. Otherwise I might never have learned that. (Interview Mohammad)

Discussion:

The interviews with the informants show the range of cultural topics young people are confronted with in Austria, which sometimes leave them puzzled or unsure about how to behave.

All the contact persons left their home countries at a very young age, most of them were between 14 and 16 years old, so still during puberty. Meißner points to the incredible challenges confronting unaccompanied minor refugees concerning cultural matters. When leaving their home country, their socialization is disrupted and they are removed from the cultural environment they are familiar with. In the potential host country different norms and values and different demands concerning the period of adolescence await them. The young people often lack the cultural resources to manage the new situations, they have no strategies in their own cultural repertoire that fit the new demands. As examples, Meißner mentions how sexuality is handled in public, perceptions about time, norms and rules in everyday life. These were precisely the topics that were also mentioned by the informants in this master thesis. The resulting insecurity hinders the young people from developing their identity and making decisions concerning their future (cf. Meißner 2003:145pp).

In the course of a *Patenschaft*, the young people are gradually introduced to the local culture from different angles, with an expert - the buddy - on their side. The usually very close relationship between the buddy and the young person creates an atmosphere that allows the young people to ask culture-related (and other) questions. The informants become familiar with the norms and values of the host society. The buddies, as members of the local society and as an attachment figure for the young people, function as a “cultural bridge” (Interview Mohammad) between the young people and the host society.

Richter states that, the ability to participate may be hindered by cultural differences (cf. Richter 2013:65). The *Patenschaft*, in many cases, turns out to help in making many of the differences comprehensible by supplying information about the local culture. This is important because interactions between the host society and migrants require, apart from language skills, knowledge about the society concerned (cf. Balluseck 2003:29).

4.6. Local orientation– “Now I can find the way!”

All the contact persons, apart from Samir who lives outside Vienna, told me about the many walks through the city they had taken with their buddies. They discovered the city together, its historical spots, important monuments, parks and a lot more. The young people experienced those walks as a plunge into an unknown city.

Most contact persons told me about various daytrips they had taken with their buddies. They visited cities such as Salzburg, Linz, and Graz, mountains, lakes and castles. During the trips they learned a lot about Austrian geography. Most of them attended or still attend a school in Vienna and know about the federal states, their capitals and sites, and about the mountains in Austria, but had never left Vienna before, at least not with somebody who lives in Austria and is able to guide them around the country. During the trips with their buddies, they supplemented their theoretical knowledge about Austria with pictures and personal experience.

Apart from geographical information, the young people steadily became more familiar with public transport in Vienna. The buddies encouraged them to use buses and trams, helped them to plan the route, printed maps out for them and explained where they should alight. The contact persons reported that they used public transport more regularly and now went to appointments alone.

Ich kenne ja das Haus vom Anwalt, aber ich konnte die Straße nicht finden. Einmal bin ich hingegangen und später zwei Stunden zurück. Ich war verloren. Aber dann habe ich gelernt wo das ist und wie man dorthin fahren muss, mit der U6 bis Währingerstraße. (Interview Amir)

I know the lawyer's house, but I couldn't find the street. I went there once and it took me two hours to go back home. I was lost. But then, I learned how to get there, you have to take the U6 to Währingerstraße. (Interview Amir)

Discussion:

Gaining a working knowledge of the city and the public transport system reduced the young people's fears and increased their mobility. They are able to go to various appointments without depending on anybody's assistance. The mobility they gained

opens the city up for them. In the best case, this allows the young people to feel like they belong to the city they live in. Armin described this as follows:

Früher bin ich immer hier gegangen und alles war fremd und komisch für mich. Ich bin auch hier hergekommen mit meiner Patin. Jetzt gehe ich immer hier am Weg in meine Arbeit. Es ist jetzt normal. Ich gehöre jetzt hier her. Ich bin jetzt a echta Wiener. (Interview Armin)

In the beginning I was walking around here and it all looked so strange to me. I also came here with my buddy. Now I pass by this place every day when I go to work. It is normal now. I belong here. Now I am a real Viennese guy. (Interview Armin)

4.7. Support in everyday tasks – “Life here is hard, but she helps me.”

The contact persons reported receiving support from their buddies with various challenging everyday life tasks. In many cases the buddy was described as a person who knows a lot and is an expert concerning various burdens and challenges found in everyday life. They were characterized by adjectives such as strong, intelligent, stress-resistant, caring, helpful and patient. Many contact persons admire their buddies for those features.

Sie ist eine kluge Frau, eine sehr kluge Frau! Sie weiß alles und deswegen kann sie mir immer helfen. Sie hat mir auch geholfen mit der Wohnungssuche und der Lehrstelle. Und sie kennt sich aus mit Dokumenten und mit allem. Ich kann sie immer anrufen und sie alles fragen. Und sie weiß immer was ich machen kann. (Interview Daria)

She is a smart woman, a very smart woman! She knows everything, and that's why she can always help me. She also helped me look for an apartment and an apprenticeship. She knows about documents and everything. I can always call and ask her anything. And she always knows what I should do. (Interview Daria)

Meine Patin ist eine intelligente Person, die kennt sich aus mit der Welt und mit dem Leben. Sie hat viele Reisen gemacht und so viele Bücher gelesen, und Kinder hat sie auch. Sie weiß ganz viel und sie erzählt mir auch immer viel. (Interview Armin)

My buddy is an intelligent person, she knows a lot about the world and life. She has travelled a lot and read so many books, and she has children as well. She knows a lot and she always tells me a lot. (Interview Armin)

The buddy, as an expert - or something akin to a survival artist who can offer advice in most situations - therefore fulfils a broad range of functions for the young people. In what follows, I give examples of the various forms of assistance that the buddies offer in the everyday life situations encountered by the young people.

The young people experience the buddies as an indispensable backup concerning school-related demands, such as homework, examinations and presentations. Almost all the interviewees mentioned that common learning sessions were a regular activity. Some contact persons even receive some extra teaching, which goes beyond the homework or tasks set by their schools. Examinations and big homework were often described as a common challenge, a task that is managed by the young person and the buddy together. The young people gave many examples of this “team-feeling” that arose when tackling school challenges. Those include, of course, a huge amount of common learning sessions, personal motivation letters, and small gifts supposed to function as talismans. Successes, such as good marks, are celebrated. This acknowledgement of the young people’s achievements makes it worthwhile for them to continue learning.

Samir told me that he was very much looking forward to having dinner with his buddy in a special restaurant after finishing the school year. Being invited for dinner and being allowed to choose the restaurant motivated him to learn and to prove to the buddy, as well as to himself, that he was able to finish school (cf. Interview Samir).

Amir’s buddy promised to take him on a short holiday if he passed all his examinations, which motivated him to study hard (cf. Interview Amir).

Not all contact persons were so enthusiastic about being assisted with school-related tasks. Aden, for example, told me that he was tired of studying and complained that his buddy always was asking him about homework and trying to convince him of the importance of study (cf. Interview Aden).

Furthermore, the buddies are felt to provide essential backup during various appointments with authorities. The young people described how the company of their buddies during such appointments provided both mental and structural support. They

feel that the presence of their buddies guarantees that they are taken seriously by those in authority.

This is especially true for appointments concerning their asylum procedures - particularly the asylum interviews - where the buddies are felt to provide extremely important assistance. Some contact persons were accompanied by their buddies and thereby felt safer, stronger, and less helpless in front of these authorities.

Samir told me about visiting his lawyer with his buddy - he has to give his school certificate to prove his educational progress.

Sie wird auch nächste Woche mit mir zum Anwalt gehen, wenn ich meine Zeugnisse von der Schule bekomme, und die dem Anwalt geben. (Interview Samir)

Next week, when I get my certificate at school, she will come to the lawyer's with me, to give him the certificate. (Interview Samir)

Amir reported having trouble at the financial authority when asked to fill out the forms in order to receive money. He told that the lady working there was unfriendly, especially when she asked why his German was not better. The following day he came back accompanied by his buddy: the same lady was extremely friendly and assisted him with the paperwork (cf. Interview Amir).

Ich bin immer dort hingegangen für das Geld [Finanzamt]. Weisst du? Und ich habe das Papier [den Antrag] ausgefüllt. Die Frau hat gesagt: „Das ist nicht richtig.“ Sie hat auch nicht helfen wollen. Ich habe gefragt und sie hat nur gesagt: „Das ist nicht richtig.“ Später ist meine Patin gekommen und dann hat die Frau alles gemacht. Und sie hat auch gut gesprochen. Dann ist das Geld gekommen. (Interview Amir)

I always went there [financial authority] for money. You know? And I filled in the paper [the application form]. The lady said, "This is not correct." She did not want to help. I asked and she just said, "This is not correct." Later my buddy came and the lady did everything. And she also talked in a friendly way. Then the money came. (Interview Amir)

My contact persons described feelings of frustration and sadness when talking about such situations. They put such troubles down to their *refugeeness*. To borrow a metaphor from Mohammad, the buddy is thought of as a "bridge" between their self-experienced foreignness and the demands of their new structural environment (cf. Interview Mohammad).

The buddies were felt to offer indispensable support to the young people as they took the steps necessary to become self-reliant in managing their everyday life. When turning 18, unaccompanied minor refugees have to move out of the special housing facilities for minors. If their asylum procedures are not yet complete, they move to a housing facility for adult refugees and continue to receive state basic services (Grundversorgung) for refugees. If their asylum procedures are complete and they have been granted asylum, they have to look for private accommodation, such as an apartment, a student house or something similar. Their situations vary according to the age they were when they arrived in Austria, as well as the extent to which they availed themselves of the various opportunities offered to them during their stay in the special housing facilities for minors - language classes and other educational opportunities, therapy, integration in local (sports) clubs and other projects and offers. Some cannot wait to move out and take full responsibility for their life, while most are distressed by the thought of having to move out and being without the protection and assistance of the institution and their social worker. Those in the latter group especially depend on having the support of somebody in order to make steps towards independent living.

The contact persons reported how their buddies had helped them to find appropriate accommodation, establish contact with a landlord/landlady, transport furniture and personal things to the new accommodation, pay the deposit, look for further educational opportunities, as well as organise administrative tasks, such as the registration of the new residence, paying the rent and insurance and applying to the financial authority for minimum income.

Abdi experienced support concerning his further education.

Es ist alles leichter geworden. Wenn man alleine ist, dann ist alles schwer und mit denen [der Patin und ihrer Familie] ist alles leicht. Sie hat zum Beispiel die Idee gehabt, dass ich diese Lehre mache und dann auch die Matura. Die ist einfach hingegangen und hat mit der Lehrerin geredet. Ich wusste das ja nicht, dass man das machen kann. Und dann hat sie mir das gesagt und so habe ich eben die Lehre dann bekommen. Und dann werde ich auch die Matura machen. (Interview Abdi)

It all got easier. If you are alone, everything is difficult, and together with them [the buddy and her family] everything is easy. For example, she had the idea that I could do this apprenticeship and the Matura exam. She just went there and talked to the teacher. I did not even know that it was possible to do this. And then she told me and I got this apprenticeship. And then I will also do the Matura exam. (Interview Abdi)

Moreover, they described how the buddies provided assistance concerning the structuring of everyday life and the keeping of important appointments.

Die sagt mir immer, dass ich das Leben geordnet leben soll. Ich soll nicht immer so lang schlafen. Früher hat sie mich immer angerufen am Morgen, und sie hat gesagt: „Hey, guten Morgen, Deutschkurs nicht vergessen, du musst dann losgehen.“ [...] Sie weiß meine Sachen besser als ich. Ich muss das auch lernen, das ist wichtig. (Interview Mostafa)

She tells me to live my life in an ordered way. I should not sleep so long every day. In the beginning she always called me in the morning and she said, “Hey, good morning, don’t forget your German class, please leave in time.” [...] She knows my schedule better than I do. I have to learn that as well, this is important. (Interview Mostafa)

The buddies also function as a mediator for various conflicts in the young people’s lives, such as trouble at school and in their housing facilities. On the one hand, they have a very strong emotional relationship with the young people, but on the other hand, they do not have the legal custody. Therefore, the buddies have a special form of authority that allows them to mediate between the young people and those who are in charge of taking care of them.

Abdi told about some serious troubles at school and in the housing facility he lived in. He explained that his buddy’s intervention was the last chance for him to get his troubles fixed. The buddy functioned as a mediator who talked to his teachers and social workers and helped to solve his problems.

Damals habe ich in einem Heim gewohnt, in einem Jugendwohnheim, weil ich ja noch unter 18 Jahre alt war. Danach hab ich ein Problem gehabt, ich hab eine Schlägerei zuhause gehabt, im Jugendwohnheim, und dann musste ich das Heim verlassen für zwei Wochen lang und das war für mich sehr sehr schlecht. Und dann hat sie [die Patin] das gehört und sie hat mir dann geholfen. (Interview Abdi)

At that time I lived in a house, in a home for young people because I was under 18 years old. Then I had a problem, I had a brawl at home, in the home for young people, and then I had to leave the home for two weeks and that was very very bad for me. And then she [the buddy] heard about that and then she helped me. (Interview Abdi)

Discussion:

As foreigners who are insufficiently familiar with the functioning of local organizations, institutions, or with the local language, the young people feel helpless in many situations.

In their discussion about how youths manage everyday life, Hurrelmann and Quenzel point out that the life realities of youths today are not equal: not all youths find themselves in a position that allows them to manage their life. Those who are in a marginal position in society may experience negative impacts on their well-being and have trouble tackling everyday life challenges, finding success in education and, later on, finding a job (cf. Hurrelmann/Quenzel 2012:55, 56).

All contact persons articulated their need for support in everyday life tasks. In their appointments with authorities especially, the informants described how their buddies provided mental and structural support, which allowed them to be taken seriously by these authorities.

Since it requires them to leave the housing facilities for minors, turning 18 is a very demanding time for young refugees, often accompanied by feelings of fear and excessive demand. In a report about unaccompanied minor refugees in Austria, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) quotes a coordinator of the *asylkoordination*, who describes the period of turning 18 for young refugees as “[...] a cut in their lives that has already been filled with cuts.” (Blecha 2012:22) As Freithofer also points out, unaccompanied minor refugees urgently need stable surroundings that allow the development of future goals (cf. Freithofer 2002:123, 124).

The buddies provide a stable attachment figure in the young refugees’ lives and invaluable assistance in the process of taking steps towards independent living.

5. Conclusion

The intention of this master thesis was to analyse the potential of *Patenschaften* to facilitate young refugees' participation in the host society. The main emphasis was on (former) unaccompanied minor refugees' experiences and reports, with the purpose of giving them a voice and the chance to contribute to the discourses which are mostly *about* them, but are not dialogues *with* them. The leading research question was the following:

In which way can Patenschaften between (former) unaccompanied minor refugees and adults living in Austria function as a site for participation in Austrian society by enabling to envision future prospects in the host country?

In the course of this work a theoretical examination was carried out and an empirical study - based on ten interviews with (former) unaccompanied minor refugees, a participant observation including informal short conversations, and an expert interview - was conducted.

The results of the research paint a complex picture of the living conditions of young refugees who have an adult Austrian buddy.

The purpose of a *Patenschaft* is to develop a stable long-term relationship between a young refugee and an adult who lives in Austria. While spending time together, the *Patenschaften* offer individual assistance and space for communication and exchange. Although all *Patenschaften* are shaped in different ways, all informants experience support in various areas of their everyday life.

The buddies, as new attachment figures, give the young refugees the chance to create new emotional roots and feelings of belonging and safety. Respecting and appreciating the young refugees, trusting in their competences and capacities, and encouraging them to strive for their goals, changes their view of themselves. They become more aware of their capacities, which leads to a strengthening of their self-confidence and self-esteem. Next to emotional support and encouragement, the results of the research point to support with language acquisition, enhanced knowledge about the country and its

culture, as well as support with the management of everyday tasks. All these factors contribute to the young people's empowerment (also cf. chapter 2.6.) and create a basis for them to envision their future in the host-country.

The results of the empirical study afford the conclusion that young refugees are open-minded and interested in integrating into society. Their motivation to strive towards participation increases when they are part of a *Patenschaft* and they are ready to invest plenty of effort in doing so.

It is not only the buddies' support that leads to these effects: the young people also reported the assistance they receive from their social workers, their teachers, colleagues at school and other projects that aim to assist refugees in the host country. The outstanding characteristics of the *Patenschaften* are the continuity in the relationship between the buddy and the young refugee, the undivided attention they receive, the individual assistance, as well as the goodwill the young people experience (also cf. Interview Klaus Hofstätter). These factors make the *Patenschaften* unique among the various forms of support young refugees receive in the host country.

Patenschaften are a valuable part of the attempt to alter the public's perception of refugees. The buddies can be seen as multipliers who indirectly help to change the public's view of refugees, away from a focus on characteristics like helplessness and victimhood (also cf. chapter 2.4.) towards a focus on refugees' competences and capacities. This is a basic requirement for opening up new discourses and allowing a more differentiated and respectful handling of refugee issues.

For the sake of both the host society and the migrants, opportunities must be created to allow encounters between refugees and the local society. One such opportunity is the project *Connecting People*, a way of involving the civil population in the integration of refugees (cf. Langthaler/Trauner 2009:81). *Patenschaften* enable encounters and interactions between refugees and local people. They allow an exchange between both partners, reduce prejudices and stereotypes, solve misunderstandings and allow insights into the living conditions of the other. The young people as well as the members of the

host society benefit from these contacts. Klaus Hofstätter wishes that every young refugee in Austria can find a buddy (cf. Interview Klaus Hofstätter), an aspiration that this master thesis endorses in view of the positive effects it found *Patenschaften* to have.

Ich bin jetzt nicht mehr alleine. Und zusammen schaffen wir alles, so sagt immer meine Patin. Weil ich muss alles gut schaffen, weil ich werde in Österreich bleiben. (Interview Daria)

Now I am not alone anymore. And together we can manage everything, that is what my buddy always says. Because I have to manage everything in a good way, because I will stay in Austria. (Interview Daria)

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6.3. Online sources

asylkoordination 1

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asylkoordination 2

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BFA

http://www.bfa.gv.at/bmi_docs/1738.pdf [last access: 03/02/2016]

BM.I Asylwesen

http://www.bmi.gv.at/cms/BMI_Asylwesen/betreuung/start.aspx [last access: 03/02/2016]

Connecting People 1

http://www.connectingpeople.at/htms/kap_2_1.htm [last access: 14/07/2015]

Connecting People 2

http://www.connectingpeople.at/htms/kap_2_2.htm [last access: 14/07/2015]

The Free Dictionary

<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/participation> [last access: 05/08/2015]

6.4. Statistics

BM.I (Bundesministerium für Inneres). 2015. Vorläufige Asylstatistik November 2015.

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6.5. Grey literature

Field diary

Interview protocols and transcripts

7. Annex

7.1. Register of interviews

Interview with Abdi, 14/12/2014

Interview with Aden, 09/12/2014

Interview with Amir, 12/12/2014

Interview with Armin, 08/12/2014

Interview with Daria, 15/12/2014

Interview with Elisa, 26/12/2014

Interview with Mohammad, 12/01/2015

Interview with Mostafa, 25/11/2014

Interview with Rahmad, 17/12/2014

Interview with Samir, 13/12/2014

Expert Interview with Klaus Hofstätter, 20/07/2015

7.2. Participant observation and informal short conversations

Connecting People party, 09/12/2014, Casino Baumgarten

7.3. Interview guidelines

Interview guideline for the problem-centred interviews with young refugees

Wie lange hast du deine Patin/deinen Paten schon?

How long have you been meeting your buddy?

Wie hast du erfahren, dass es *Patenschaften* gibt?

How did you find out about *Patenschaften*?

Hast du sofort gewusst, dass du eine Patin/einen Paten möchtest?

Did you know immediately that you wanted to have a buddy?

Wie hast du dir eine *Patenschaft* vorgestellt? Was hast du dir gewünscht?
How did you imagine a *Patenschaft* would be? What did you wish for?

Wie hast du deine Patin/deinen Paten bekommen?
How did you make contact with your buddy?

Kannst du dich noch an das erste Treffen erinnern? Wie war das für dich? Was habt ihr gemacht?
Do you remember the first meeting with your buddy? How was it? What did you do?

Wie ist es weitergegangen nach dem ersten Treffen?
What happened after the first meeting?

Wie oft seht ihr euch?
How often do you meet?

Wie organisiert ihr eure Treffen? Von wem geht die Initiative aus?
How do you organise your meetings? Who takes the initiative?

Was macht ihr zusammen?
What do you do together?

Gibt es etwas das du von deiner Patin/deinem Paten lernen kannst?
Is there anything you can learn from your buddy?

Gibt es etwas das deine Patin/dein Pate von dir lernen kann?
Is there anything your buddy can learn from you?

Was bekommst du von deiner Patin/deinem Paten?
What do you get from your buddy?

Wie würdest du deine Patin/deinen Paten beschreiben?
How would you describe your buddy?

Wie würdest du die Beziehung zu deiner Patin/deinem Paten beschreiben?
How would you describe your relationship with your buddy?

Kennst du die Familie deiner Patin/deines Paten? Wenn ja, verbringst du viel Zeit mit der Familie?
Do you know your buddy's family? If so, do you spend a lot of time with the family?

Verbringst du Feiertage mit deiner Patin/deinem Paten?
Do you spend feast days with your buddy?

Möchtest du noch etwas hinzufügen?
Do you want to add anything?

Interview guideline for the expert interview

Warum wurde das Projekt *Connecting People* gegründet?
Why was the project *Connecting People* established?

Wie wird das Projekt von den jungen Flüchtlingen angenommen?
What are the young refugees' reactions to the project?

Ist die Anzahl der interessierten jungen Flüchtlinge und der potentiellen Paten/Patinnen ausgewogen?
Is there an equal number of interested young refugees and potential buddies?

Wie viele *Patenschaften* wurden insgesamt schon vermittelt?
How many *Patenschaften* have been established in total?

Wie werden die *Patenschaften* vermittelt?
How are the *Patenschaften* set up?

Welche Wünsche und Erwartungen in Bezug auf die *Patenschaft* haben die Jugendlichen im Vorfeld?
What kind of wishes and expectations concerning the *Patenschaft* do young people have in advance?

Wie sind die Rückmeldungen von Jugendlichen die schon längere Zeit Teil einer *Patenschaft* sind?
What is your assessment of the feedback from young people who have already been part of a *Patenschaft* for a longer period of time?

Was ist in deinen Augen das Ziel einer *Patenschaft*?
In your opinion, what is the goal of a *Patenschaft*?

Wie schätzt du die Effekte der *Patenschaft* auf das Leben der Jugendlichen ein?
How do you value the effects of the *Patenschaft* on young people's lives?

Wie lange dauert eine *Patenschaft* im Durchschnitt?
How long does an average *Patenschaft* last?

Hat sich die Zielgruppe des Projektes *Connecting People* in letzter Zeit verändert?
Did the target group of the project *Connecting People* change recently?

Was wünschst du dir für die Zukunft für das Projekt *Connecting People*?
What are your hopes for the future of the *Connecting People* project?

7.4. Abstract (English)

This master thesis deals with (former) unaccompanied minor refugees in Vienna and their chances for participation in the local society. The idea of *Patenschaften*, inaugurated by the *asylkoordination österreich* as part of the project *Connecting People*, is discussed as a possible site for participation.

The theoretical part examines factors which influence and shape refugees' freedom of action. The concept of participation is described, an overview of the legal framework is given and the emotional and psychological well-being of young refugees is considered. The concept of youth, including its cultural aspects, is discussed in relation to young refugees. Media and humanitarian representations of refugees and their impacts are reflected upon. Possible changes to young refugees' lives resulting from their being part of projects that offer them freedom of action and opportunities for contribution are demonstrated.

The empirical part is based on (1) ten interviews with (former) unaccompanied minor refugees who are part of a *Patenschaft*, (2) a participant observation, including short conversations, and (3) an expert interview with the leader of the project *Connecting People*.

The results of the research offer a complex picture of young refugees' living conditions in Vienna and their experiences with a *Patenschaft*. Next to emotional support and encouragement, the young people receive from the *Patenschaft*: support with language acquisition, enhanced knowledge about the country and its culture, as well as support with the management of everyday tasks. All these factors contribute to the young people's empowerment and provide the basis for them to strive for participation and to envision future prospects in the host society.

7.5. Abstract (German)

Diese Masterarbeit beschäftigt sich mit (ehemaligen) unbegleiteten minderjährigen Flüchtlingen in Wien und deren Chancen für Partizipation in der Aufnahmegesellschaft. Das Konzept der Patenschaften, ins Leben gerufen von der *asylkoordination österreich* im Rahmen des Projektes *Connecting People*, wird als eine Möglichkeit für Partizipation diskutiert.

Im theoretischen Teil werden Faktoren erörtert, die den Handlungsspielraum von Flüchtlingen formen. Das Konzept Partizipation wird beschrieben, ein Überblick über die rechtlichen Rahmenbedingungen gegeben und die emotionale und psychosoziale Situation junger Flüchtlinge reflektiert. Das Konzept Jugend, mit Schwerpunkt auf dessen kulturelle Komponenten, wird in Bezug auf junge Flüchtlinge diskutiert. Repräsentationen von Flüchtlingen durch Medien und humanitäre Organisationen, sowie deren Auswirkungen, werden analysiert. Mögliche Veränderungen im Leben junger Flüchtlinge, die durch die Teilnahme an partizipativen Projekten entstehen können, werden aufgezeigt.

Der empirische Teil basiert auf (1) zehn Interviews mit (ehemaligen) unbegleiteten minderjährigen Flüchtlingen, die Teil einer Patenschaft sind, (2) einer teilnehmenden Beobachtung in Kombination mit Kurzgesprächen und (3) einem Experteninterview mit dem Koordinator des Projektes *Connecting People*.

Die Ergebnisse der Forschung zeigen ein komplexes Bild der Lebensbedingungen junger Flüchtlinge in Wien und ihrer Erfahrungen mit einer Patenschaft. Neben emotionaler Unterstützung und Ermutigung erfahren die Jugendlichen in der Patenschaft Unterstützung beim Spracherwerb, erweitertes Wissen über das Aufnahmeland und dessen Kultur, sowie Unterstützung bei Anforderungen des Alltages. All diese Faktoren tragen zum Empowerment der jungen Flüchtlinge bei und bilden die Basis für deren Streben nach Partizipation und Zukunftsperspektiven im Aufnahmeland.

7.6. Curriculum vitae

Magdalena Labacher, BA

Birth: 06.07.1988, in Linz, Austria

Email: magda4444@gmx.net

EDUCATION

2011-present	Master's in Cultural and Social anthropology, University Vienna
2013	College for Social Pedagogy, Bildungsakademie, Vienna
2007-2010	Bachelor of Arts in Cultural- and Social anthropology, University Vienna
2006/07	Sociology, Johannes Kepler University, Linz
1998 -2006	Landwiedstraße Grammar School, Linz, school leaving examination

WORK EXPERIENCE

Feb. 2016-present	Refugee counsellor at MOZAIK (Diakonie), counselling centre for young adult refugees
April 2015-present	Co-founder and pedagogical supervisor of the project ROB – Rugby Opens Borders , a project which aims to facilitate young refugees' arrival and integration in the host society via sport and various workshops
Aug. 2013 - Jan. 2016	Refugee counsellor in the Haus der Frauen (Verein menschen.leben), residence for refugee women and their children
May-July 2012	Internship, <i>International Organization for Migration Vienna</i> (IOM Vienna), Country Office, Project CulTrain - development and implementation of cultural trainings for unaccompanied minor refugees in Austria
May 2012 - Jan. 2016	Refugee counsellor in the WoGe18 (Verein menschen.leben), residential group for unaccompanied minor refugee girls
April 2012	Internship (4 weeks) in the WoGe18 (Verein menschen.leben), residential group for unaccompanied minor refugee girls
Feb. 2012 - Dec. 2012	Project Welcome to Austria (Don Bosco Flüchtlingswerk), production of a booklet to support unaccompanied minor refugees after their arrival in Austria, joint elaboration with young refugees (volunteer work)
Dec. 2011 - March 2012	Educational coaching in the House Abraham (Don Bosco Flüchtlingswerk), residential group for unaccompanied minor refugees (volunteer work)

March 2011 - Sept. 2011	University of Vienna, organization of an international scientific conference (within the framework of the Master studies)
May 2011 – May 2012	Project Tobias (Don Bosco Flüchtlingswerk), leisure-educational activities for unaccompanied minor refugees in the refugee reception centre Traiskirchen (volunteer work)
2007 - 2011	Annual summer internship in the senior citizens' residence St. Anna (Caritas), Linz
2007	Aupair stay in France

PERSONAL SKILLS

Language skills:	German: native tongue
	English: level C2
	French: level B2
	Persian: level A1

Further training:

15.11.2014	Seminar: <i>"Kollektive Traumatisierung, psychosoziale und psychotherapeutische Interventionen."</i> (asylkoordination österreich)
10.05.2012	UNHCR-Workshop <i>"Stationen einer Flucht"</i> , role play and educational tool to raise awareness about the challenges of refugeness (Rollenspiel und pädagogisches Werkzeug zur Sensibilisierung für die Probleme des Flüchtlingsdaseins)