Learning in precarious circumstances: Social change, agency and everyday resistance in organisations supporting refugees in England and Scotland

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Abstract

Refugees and asylum seekers in the UK are often eager to access adult education and learn what they need to settle and build their futures. Many charitable organisations around the UK provide non-formal educational opportunities for sanctuary seekers. However, funding is limited for adult education, and austerity cuts mean that organisations are stretched, while a hostile policy environment towards migrants exacerbates challenges. This PhD study set out to explore the learning that was happening in these organisations under precarious circumstances and how learning may relate to social transformation in two communities, located in Norwich and Glasgow.

Utilising an ethnographic methodology, including participant observations, interviews and workshops, this study was based in a lifelong learning centre in Glasgow and an organisation supporting refugees and asylum seekers in Norwich. I observed ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes, conversation cafés, allotment sessions and other community activities organised by the NGOs.

This study found that everyone, including sanctuary seekers, staff and volunteers experienced precarity in a multiplicity of ways, which affected how they could access or facilitate learning, in addition to influencing what people learned. However, people regularly exercised agency to navigate this precarity, through learning (often informally) to cope with change, sharing knowledge and building solidarities. Learning was regularly a response to change, with people acquiring the knowledge and skills to navigate uncertainty. Learning also facilitated change in 'a minor key', which was meaningful for their lives. Organisations acted as important, adaptable spaces for this learning to occur, with educators' judgement and knowledge about their students playing an important role. The findings suggest that sanctuary seekers have agency to undertake varied learning that both resists and contributes to social change on an everyday level, and this agency is supported by shared connections, solidarities and informal spaces for learning amidst structural precarity. (300 words)

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Abbreviations

CEFR – Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

CELTA – Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults

CLD – Community Learning and Development

DLUHC – Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities

DfE – Department for Education

EFL – English as a Foreign Language

ESOL – English for Speakers of Other Languages

FE – Further Education

HCL – House of Commons Library

LGBTQI+ - Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and associated identities

LLE – Lifelong Learning Entitlement

NATECLA – National Association for Teaching English and other Community Languages to Adults

NGO – Non-governmental Organisation

NRS – National Records Scotland

ONS – Office for National Statistics

PAR – Participatory Action Research

SNP – Scottish National Party

SQA – Scottish Qualifications Authority

UH – Unity Hub

UN – United Nations

UNESCO- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

WEA – Worker's Educational Association

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Researching learning and change with refugee organisations in England and Scotland

The origins of this PhD project stretch back to 2017, when I returned to the UK to start my Master's degree after several years of teaching English in Vietnam and Singapore. Alongside my MA I started volunteering as an ESOL teacher in a local charity in Glasgow. I remember becoming frustrated by politicians who said that people who move to the UK should learn English[1], but wondering why ESOL provision for people who are refugees and asylum seekers seemed to be difficult to access for many and was so regularly provided by volunteer teachers. For my Master's dissertation project I interviewed volunteer ESOL teachers about their motivations, and found that most were very qualified and experienced. I discovered that teachers who were retired were able to sustain their roles as volunteers, but that younger volunteers felt that they would have to leave their roles if their jobs demanded it. Volunteers told me about the lack of resources in organisations and how younger volunteers wanted to volunteer more but that this was not sustainable as they needed to get jobs to earn money (Bouttell, 2023a). As I interviewed teachers around the country teaching with a variety of organisations, I heard that funding and resources were stretched everywhere, particularly in England and Northern Ireland, whose governments had not published ESOL strategies.

Through the process of completing my MA research, and through my own continued volunteer roles, I realised that there was so much that could be researched within the topic of adult education for people who are refugees and asylum seekers in the UK, and that this was a very crucial topic with the potential to impact change in people's lives in the UK. All of the people seeking sanctuary that I worked with wanted to access more opportunities to learn, which contradicted the political rhetoric that claimed that not enough people were learning either because they did not want to, or through their own failure to take up

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[1] For example, in 2019 Boris Johnson said "I want everybody who comes here and makes their lives here to be, and to feel, British – that's the most important thing – and to learn English. And too often there are parts of our country, parts of London and other cities as well, where English is not spoken by some people as their first language and that needs to be changed." (Halliday and Brooks, 2019). I discuss this quote and others like it in more detail in chapter 2.

opportunities. More recently, politicians, especially in England, seemed to ignore the topic of education for refugees and asylum seekers altogether.

I designed this PhD project to explore the question of what people were learning in organisations supporting refugees and asylum seekers, and how learning related to social change in these contexts. Over the period of four years that I have undertaken this research, which I started in October 2020, there has been an enormous amount of large-scale social change and turmoil. This includes the Covid-19 pandemic and the continuation and outbreaks of numerous armed conflicts, and political upheavals, which have led to forced displacement on a global level and exacerbated challenges for those who were already displaced. Within the UK, there have been several political changes over the course of the project, including four different Prime Ministers[2], five Home Secretaries[3], and three Scottish First Ministers[4]. There has been the introduction of policy aimed at deterring those seeking asylum in the UK, including the Illegal Migration Act 2023, which aimed to criminalise methods of arrival in the UK, and remove the majority of those arriving in the UK and seeking asylum to Rwanda. And then subsequently, with the election of a Labour government in July 2024, the immediate repeal of such a policy. There have been alterations to how refugees have been dispersed around the country, with moves to house people in additional local authorities and large increases in the use of hotels to house people, and the introduction of the use of barges as accommodation. As I finalise this thesis in November 2024, the Bibby Stockholm barge has been closed (Elgot & Walker, 2024), although more hotels housing asylum seekers have been opened since the general election in 2024 (Geiger, 2024).

All these factors have meant that there is not only continual change, but the continual *threat* of change for those who are sanctuary seekers in the UK. There are also numerous day-to-day changes and challenges for the staff and participants of charitable organisations supporting refugees and asylum seekers. Despite the challenges that those within organisations faced, they have continued to offer learning opportunities for the people that they work with. My experiences as an ESOL teacher, and Master's dissertation research

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[2] Boris Johnson, Liz Truss, Rishi Sunak (Conservative) and Keir Starmer (Labour).
[3] Priti Patel, Suella Braverman (who was Home Secretary twice), Grant Shapps, James Cleverly (Conservative) and Yvette Cooper (Labour).
[4] Nicola Sturgeon, Humza Yousaf and John Swinney (SNP).

made me interested in the learning that people were engaging with in organisational spaces. Because change was ever-present in organisations supporting refugees and asylum seekers, I wanted to explore the relationship between learning and change, and worked to develop a project that looked at how such change impacted on learning, but also how participants and staff may facilitate change. In other words, this thesis aimed to explore the relationship between learning and change in organisations supporting refugees, exploring how wider social transformation affected those in the organisations, and how people may respond to this change, and how they may influence change of their own in the organisations, communities or their own lives.

I decided to conduct research in both England and Scotland partly because of my own experiences of volunteering in these contexts, as well as interest in how the diverging policy approaches of these nations towards refugees and asylum seekers may impact on learning. The Scottish Government's approach to sanctuary seekers has been traditionally more welcoming, and has included specific policy for adult education, whereas England has tended to exclude asylum seekers from policy, and has neglected adult learning in its policy approach (Bouttell, 2023b). I wanted to consider whether these diverging approaches in policy would influence what learning was going on in organisations. Learning has been framed in different ways, and in the following section I will discuss how the concept of informal learning has been influential in this thesis.

1.2. Informal learning in refugee contexts

As I will explore in more detail in chapter three, I have adopted a conceptualisation of learning which is informed by theories around informal learning. People who move to the UK and other English-speaking countries in the Global North, particularly those who move from countries in the Global South, frequently experience de-skilling and under-employment, with much prior education going unrecognised (e.g. Baker et al., 2021; Morrice, 2007; Phillimore & Goodson, 2006, Krahn et al., 2000). This applies to formal learning, such as non-recognition of qualifications. But it also applies to informal learning. Hager and Halliday (2006, p.163) have stressed the centrality of context to learning and that this social context means that knowledge is derived from 'the human practices of inference and judgement set in a space of reasons that is independent of individual learners'. Moll et

al., (1992) have conceptualised that learners bring 'funds of knowledge' with them to classroom settings, which are examples of tacit knowledge and skills which may have been acquired unconsciously through informal learning. Blommeart (2004) has explored how literacy practices from the Global South may go misrecognised when people locate to another country in the north. For example, Roberts (2019) has considered how in British job interviews, gatekeeping of roles assumes cultural knowledge, and that migrant candidates are frequently disadvantaged by an underlying assessment of cultural and linguistic knowledge. Ismail (2023) has suggested that particularly women from the Global South have engaged in informal learning, rather than formal learning, with much of their prior experiences of learning neglected in research. Despite a lack of acknowledgement, there is still a great deal of informal learning that goes on for people who are refugees and asylum seekers. For example, Kaukko and Wilkinson, (2020) have highlighted how refugee students adopt informal learning practices related to surviving during exceptional circumstances, such as how to care for family members. This suggests that people who are refugees may use informal learning in different ways depending on circumstances, and I will develop this argument in light of the findings of my research project later in the thesis.

The neglect of consideration of prior informal learning has contributed to deficit discourses, which have focussed on what groups are lacking. This approach has been challenged for not acknowledging skills and knowledge, that people, particularly those from socially marginalised groups already have (Yosso, 2006; Aikman et al., 2016). For example, Yosso (2006, p.78) has emphasised the 'community cultural wealth' of 'Students of Color', asserting that their cultural knowledge, skills and abilities frequently go unrecognised. In their discussions of multilingualism, Blommeart et al., (2005, p.198) have discussed how someone who may be framed as not being able to communicate in a particular language is dependent on the location that they are in, and that rather that problems with communicating could be reframed from an individual deficit but rather, as a problem 'for the speaker' and not 'of the speaker'. Prior experiences of informal learning, likewise to formal learning, are often not recognised as valuable by institutions in the UK, and are misrecognised in differing ways. Informal learning once people have arrived in the UK is also not explicitly included in policy which considers adult education for new migrants to England and Scotland (Bouttell, 2023b). Learning when moving to a new country should also not be

necessarily viewed as positive, and Morrice (2013) uses the framework of transformative learning to suggest that sanctuary seekers who move to the UK also experience negative experiences of informal learning, relating to the UK asylum system, life in the UK and their identities.

When refugee learning is included in government policy, the focus is usually on formal education. Morrice (2021) has suggested that in international discussion of education for refugees, focus has been on traditional schooling, and is underlined by assumptions about linear, uninterrupted progression through education. Atkinson (2018) has criticised the dominance of functional curricula in adult education for migrants, rooted in assessment and progression, which results in a deficit framing of refugees and asylum seekers' education. This has contributed to a political paradigm of adult education for refugees which is rooted in neoliberal considerations of economic benefit, linear progress and a deficit approach, which not only discounts the heterogenous nature of people seeking sanctuary, but also underestimates and undervalues the majority of adult learning which occurs.

As I will discuss in more detail in chapter three, I have built a conceptual framing of learning that is situated in the everyday, mainly encompasses the informal and non-formal, and is connected with processes of social transformation.

1.3. Adult Education for sanctuary seekers in non-formal organisations

This study has been situated in organisations supporting refugees and asylum seekers in the UK. Although there has been research in the field of adult and continuing education for refugees, there is less research of learning based in these particular organisations which are in non-formal, community contexts. Garkisch et al., (2017) in their literature review of third-sector support for refugees and asylum seekers globally, remark that there has been a focus on children in research of education, and any research into the education of adults has looked at those likely to take work, and has neglected other groups of migrants, such as elderly people.

In addition, I became aware through my research, and by the experience of living and volunteering in different locations, that there is a variation in regional and national policies that affected refugee populations differently. Policy that applies to England touches on the

role of community organisations supporting refugees and asylum seekers, but does not elaborate their role in providing adult education in detail in policy (HM Government, 2018; Bouttell, 2023b). The Scottish government highlights the role of organisations in providing adult education much more deeply. For example, a report forming a part of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy has explored the role that third-sector organisations play in the integration of newcomers (Phipps et al., 2022). Scotland has a published refugee integration strategy which was renewed in March 2024 (Scottish Government, 2024a), and England does not have a published refugee strategy at the time of writing. I will return to discuss these policy differences in more detail in chapter two.

Existing academic research frequently emphasises the impact of community learning for people who are refugees and asylum seekers. In the context of Northern Ireland, Steele-Hawthorne et al. (2018), have outlined projects which are partnerships between faith-based organisations and local communities. In the Scottish context, Slade and Dickson (2021) have proposed that community adult education for refugees and asylum seekers forms an important part of fostering inclusion and social justice for these groups, highlighting the flexibility adult educators have in these settings to respond to differing needs of learners.

Innanen (2019) explores how non-formal spaces for asylum seekers in Finland can offer important informal learning opportunities for both staff and participants. In the Australian context, Miralles-Lombardo et al. (2008), highlighted the role of multi-cultural organisations working with refugees in creating spaces for learning and informal networks with the wider community. Puttick (2018; 2023) has explored the topic of family literacy in community adult education spaces in the UK. Commenting on research with refugee organisations and learning, she expresses that 'refugee community organizations should be considered as multivoiced, living, learning ecologies and that future practice-research in the third sector should strive to illuminate these voices in diverse ways and mobilize the hopeful nature of this ecology for social change' (Puttick, 2023, p.89). As this quote highlights, those in the field of adult education for refugees are calling for more ways to include the variety of different approaches and how they may lead to social change. Aside from these studies, there has been a general focus on competencies and skills in the field, and more formal learning environments, and the informal and life-wide perspectives of learning have regularly been overlooked, with community organisations particularly neglected in research.

This leaves a need for research which explores learning in non-formal organisations working with sanctuary seekers, to explore the nature of this learning, and how it relates to processes of change.

1.4. Research Questions

I have introduced some of the limitations and opportunities in the conceptualisations of learning in refugee contexts, and the space that organisations may offer in exploring more informal kinds of learning. I also raised the fact that large-scale social change means that people who are seeking sanctuary in the UK, and the organisations who work with them, are often encountering continual change. I also highlighted that policy approaches to refugees and education frequently diverges between UK nations. Considering the entangled nature of learning and social change in the context of organisations who support refugees in the UK, I developed the following research questions:

In organisations supporting refugees and asylum seekers in England and Scotland, how do processes of learning relate to social change?
    a. How does social change impact on learning in organisations?
    b. In what ways does learning in organisations facilitate social change?

As I have discussed, within policy for adult education there has been a focus on skills, and a narrative which has favoured formal education and I wanted to adopt a framing which was oriented to acknowledge informal learning, and the importance of the everyday. This means that I have used a conceptual framing based partly on informal learning to analyse the activities in organisations. In terms of social change, I have explored large-scale social transformation, including the types of global changes discussed in the opening paragraphs. However, in addition, I have also developed a conceptualisation of social change which acknowledges the everyday, micro-level social change, in order to observe the types of change that were enacted by people in the ordinary, day-to-day circumstances of the organisations. Furthermore, as I developed this project, the notion of precarity became very important, as this represented an impactful iteration of the wide variety of social change that people were experiencing in organisations. These concepts have guided the project and the analysis of the data and will be elaborated in much more detail in chapter three.

This project has aimed to explore the above research questions, casting light on the kind of learning that is going on in organisations on the everyday level, integrating how people navigate change in their lives. It shows the centrality of informal and non-formal learning for those who are refugees and asylum seekers living in the UK, and how organisations work to facilitate this learning. This study provides arguments against a deficit framing of refugee education, showing the multiple ways in which people who are seeking sanctuary in the UK are learning in spite of, and in resistance to structural challenges. Additionally, this thesis also contributes to theoretical explorations of education and social change, building a framework of how the two are related in refugee contexts. After the completion of this thesis, I will work with organisations to disseminate the findings of this project, producing a written report for use in funding applications, and plan to undertake workshops with staff, volunteers and participants of organisations.

1.5. Outline of the thesis

This thesis begins with an examination of the context of the UK policy environment. In chapter two I explore how a 'hostile environment' towards migration has worked to make life precarious for those who are forced to move to the UK. I will then also discuss how austerity cuts and neglect of adult education have combined to create challenges for organisations offering learning opportunities for sanctuary seekers, as well as outlining adult education provision more broadly. I also provide some context about the cities that the studies took place in. In chapter three I will introduce the conceptual framework of this thesis, which draws on constructions of social transformation, precarity and learning theories. These lay out a theoretical lens through which the findings have been analysed and discussed. Chapter four provides an outline of the methodological approach of this PhD research project; ethnography, alongside reflections on researcher positionality and ethics, as well as giving some background about the sites of the research. The following three sections; chapters five, six and seven, are focussed on presenting and analysing the empirical findings of the research. Chapter five outlines the varied experiences of precarity that people faced and lays out the ways in which precarity was impacting on people in the organisations and how they were learning within these challenges. Chapter six looks at the adaptabilities of the organisations, considering who had agency to change spaces and the limitations on flexibility. It also explores the opportunities offered by informal time periods

like break times and the sharing of food, as well as how people used digital tools in adaptable ways to learn. Chapter seven focusses on the varied learning that was occurring within the organisations to navigate precarity, to both cope with it, and resist it, from the perspectives of everyone there. People wanted to learn for different reasons and were often motivated by urgent demands such as negotiating visas for themselves and their families to stay in the UK, as well as having long-term ambitions for their learning in the future. Chapter eight draws these findings together with the theoretical framing to outline implications for learning in organisations in the future, and develops theoretical implications based on learning and change. I discuss the ways in which educators and participants facilitated learning within precarious conditions and what agency they had to do so. I examine how the relationship between learning and change was often complex, and how people coped with and resisted structural change on an everyday level. I also explore how traditional paradigms framing education as a linear pathway were problematised by the findings of the research and how conceptualisations of learning in refugee contexts could consider a more nuanced understanding of how people who are refugees often learn. In chapter nine I discuss the implications of this thesis for policy and practice, with particular focus on the takeaways for organisations, who offer a crucial, flexible space for informal learning opportunities. Although undertaking this PhD project has not always been easy, seeing how important education is to people who are refugees and asylum seekers has kept me motivated, and the project's subject area of adult education for sanctuary seekers has remained incredibly relevant throughout the process. I hope that the findings will help to contribute to positive change in this field and highlight the value of learning for people in building lives in the UK.

Chapter Two: Policy, organisations and adult education for refugees and asylum seekers

2.1. Introduction

The subject of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK is heavily politicised. With the continued use of political slogans such as 'hostile environment' and 'stop the boats' by British politicians, it has been remarked that much policy in the field of asylum is based on ideology rather than research (Morgan and Willmington, 2023). For example, in early 2024, a government announcement of the closure of asylum hotels was targeted at marginal Conservative seats in order to try to win over voters because of the approaching general election (Walker, 2023). Within this politicised context, focus is typically on populist strategies of appearing to reduce migration, rather than on policy around integration and education for those new arrivals who are already in the UK.

In this chapter I discuss the key literature in the field, thinking first about the wider political environment, moving on to organisations supporting refugees and providing adult education, which are situated within the political context, and considering where these fields overlap. First, I explore some of the UK policy around asylum and migration in recent years, as these policies have an impact on many aspects of this study. I will also explore how austerity politics, within a broader neoliberal political agenda has impacted on third sector organisations working with refugees and asylum seekers as well as on funding for adult education. I will explore where and how adult education policy for people who are refugees and asylum seekers has been neglected and how this has contributed to precarity and uncertainty for sanctuary seekers, as well as the organisations that support them. I also examine adult education in the UK, and how this relates to ESOL and asylum seekers and refugees, subsequently looking at adult educators of sanctuary seekers and their roles. Additionally, I review the particular locations of this study, England and Scotland, and their divergences, in their policies of adult education, ESOL and integration for refugees and asylum seekers. I also provide context on the cities of Glasgow and Norwich themselves, and provide some local context in order to locate this study. This exploration of the political and social context provides a backdrop to this study that places it within a broader picture of

precarious funding of adult education for people who are refugees and asylum seekers in the UK.

2.2. Migration policy: change, hostility and liminality

2.2.1. Defining Migration Categories

A person who is a refugee is defined by the 1951 Refugee Convention as: "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." (UNHCR UK, n.d.). In the UK, someone who has claimed asylum and is waiting for a decision regarding their refugee status is referred to as an 'asylum seeker'. There are also people who are refugees in the UK who have arrived through resettlement programmes, known as humanitarian routes to the UK, such as some Ukrainians, Syrians, people from Hong Kong, or Afghans[5], which means that they have not needed to claim asylum and go through the UK's asylum system. There is limited official data available of the numbers of people living in the UK who have been refused asylum (Mayblin, 2019a), and this number is likely to be changing regularly. Refused asylum seekers are not entitled to state support or to work, but may be permitted to appeal their asylum claim. People across these different migration categories have different rights, entitlements and legal responsibilities.

Someone who is seeking asylum in the UK is not allowed to work, and receives £49.18 (at the time of writing) to live on each week, or £8.86 per week if they are housed in a hotel with meals provided, and this money is dispensed on a pre-payment card (Home Office, n.d.). People who have been granted refugee status are permitted to receive Universal Credit (state benefits available to British citizens) and are allowed to work. But even for those who receive refugee status, there can be complications. For example, very little time is given for newly approved refugees to apply for a national insurance number[6] (needed to receive benefits) and find new accommodation. The amount of notice given to new refugees to leave their accommodation was recently reduced from a period of 28 days (an already very

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[5] E.g. Ukraine schemes, Hong Kong British Nationals (Overseas) scheme, Syrian Vulnerable persons resettlement scheme, Afghan citizens resettlement scheme.

[6] According to the Government Services website at the time of writing, this can take up to 16 working days. https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/national-insurance-numbers#:~:text=to%20an%20appointment-,Apply%20online,get%20your%20National%20Insurance%20number.

limited time to navigate the bureaucracy and challenges involved), to seven days in 2023, with many charities asserting that this would lead to destitution and homelessness of many refugees forced to leave asylum accommodation (Gecsoyler and Taylor, 2023).

It is also important to keep in mind that the categories of refugee and asylum seeker are complicated, changeable and temporary. People can move between different statuses, from asylum seeker, to refugee, or between other migration statuses. For example, someone may move to the UK on a student visa, but if war breaks out in their home country, they may claim asylum when their student visa expires. Mayblin, (2019a, p.7) points out that migration '"categories" are not as neat or simple as they appear' and that the terms, such as 'asylum seeker' or 'refugee' are ascribed by the state. These terms are also proliferated through their use by international organisations and in research. People who these terms refer to are from a hyper-diverse range of social and cultural backgrounds beyond these legal categories, with a multiplicity of socio-economic statuses, identities and life experiences. In this thesis I regularly use the term 'sanctuary seekers' to apply generally to people who are both refugees and asylum seekers, and use the individual legal terms when it might be relevant to them. However, I acknowledge that these terms can be problematic as they can overly homogenise an incredibly diverse range of people.

2.2.2. A Hostile Environment

In the following section I outline some perspectives on the ways in which people who are refugees and asylum seekers in the UK have been constructed in policy and political discourse, with a view to providing a backdrop for the study. The UK's history of migration policy has been said to be linked with its legacy of empire and colonialism (Goodfellow, 2019). Additionally, Mayblin (2017) has noted that there are correlations between the geographical histories of the British Empire, and places which many of those seeking asylum come from. In 2012 Theresa May, then the Home Secretary, stated that she wanted to make a 'really hostile environment for illegal migration' (Kirkup and Winnett, 2012). This led to the immigration acts of 2014 and 2016, which in turn resulted in what became known as the Windrush scandal, in which Caribbean-born people who had travelled to the UK who were told that they were British citizens were removed and/or deprived of their rights in the UK

(Craggs, 2018).[7] Maya Goodfellow (2019), in her exploration of policy as well as public, media and political perspectives of migration in the UK has posed that the 'hostile environment' Immigration Acts of 2014 and 2016 were part of a broader political direction to blame migrants for particular social problems, which had been intensifying even during the previous Labour government. In fact, the term 'hostile environment' was initially used by a Labour minister in 2007 (Goodfellow, 2019). Within the Home Office, which makes decisions about people's asylum claims, there has been cultivated a 'culture of disbelief', meaning that decision and policy makers presume that asylum claimant's stories are false until they can prove otherwise (Mayblin, 2019b). In September 2024, the Home Office released a report[8] examining the historical roots of the Windrush scandal, which suggested that the UK's history of 'immigration or citizenship legislation was designed at least in part to reduce the number of people with black or brown skin who were permitted to live and work in the UK' (Home Office, 2024b, p.4). In response to this publication, twenty-five MPs from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds signed a letter[9] calling for 'action to acknowledge the links between racism and hostile migration policies' (Gentleman, 2024).

Mayblin (2019a) argues that there has been a political, rhetorical shift towards constructing asylum as economically motivated, rather than as humanitarian or political. She posits that a focus on eliminating economic 'pull factors' has resulted in policies leading to the impoverishment of asylum seekers (Mayblin, 2019a). Yuval-Davis et al., (2017) have explored the idea of 'everyday bordering' to conceptualise the development of bordering practices within the state, beyond the physical border of the country. Since the 2014 and 2016 Immigration Acts in the UK, everyday bordering has been stepped up, with healthcare, landlords, employers and more having to carry out checks on migration categories. This was additionally a contributing factor to the Windrush scandal mentioned above. It could be argued that during the last few years that there has been an additional emphasis added to the 'everyday border' to give even more attention to strengthening the physical border of the nation state with a shift in political rhetorical focus beyond the 'hostile environment'

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[7] In her memoir released in 2023, Theresa May reportedly stated that she regretted using the term 'hostile environment' and the impact of the 2014 and 2016 immigration acts on the Windrush scandal. https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2023/aug/31/theresa-may-says-she-regrets-using-term-hostile-environment

[8] The report was completed in 2022, but went unreleased by the Home Office until 2024.

[9] The letter was written by the Labour MP for Norwich South, Clive Lewis.

towards the continued use of the slogan: 'stop the boats' by the Conservative government. This arguably worsened a sense of limbo experienced by people seeking asylum who are in the UK.

In April 2022, the then Prime Minister Boris Johnson and then Home Secretary Priti Patel announced that the UK government had struck a deal with the government of Rwanda to remove irregular migrants seeking asylum in the UK to Rwanda to seek asylum there instead of the UK (Johnson, 2022). This policy was subject to several legal challenges and in November 2023 the UK Supreme Court ruled that the plan was unlawful, stating that there was a risk of asylum claims being wrongly assessed, or of applicants being returned to their own countries where they would face persecution (Syal and Taylor, 2023). The governments of the UK and Rwanda amended the plan, and in late 2023 a revised agreement was issued, becoming law in April 2024. During the month of June 2024, in the run-up to the General Election, some asylum seekers were detained and issued notices that they would be removed to Rwanda, with reports that one person was paid £3000 to be removed there (Seddon, 2024). The Rwanda plan was proposed to 'deter illegal entry, and make it easier to remove those with no right to be in the UK' (Home Office, 2022). However, the idea that this policy would act as a deterrent to those coming to the UK to seek asylum was contested, and modelling suggested that only a few hundred people per year would be removed (Migration Observatory, 2024). There was also a possibility it could contribute to people being more open to exploitation by gangs, as their legal status in the UK became less certain.

Prior to the general election in July 2024, the Labour Party had promised that they would discard the Rwanda plan if they were to form a government (Hymas, 2024). On the first day of the new Labour government led by Keir Starmer, he announced that the Rwanda was 'dead and buried', ending the scheme (Francis, 2024). Despite the challenges and changes that the policy has been through, the threat of removal to a country thousands of miles away also contributed to a sense of uncertainty and fear for those people seeking asylum in the UK. The newly appointed Home Secretary Yvette Cooper subsequently announced in July 2024 that a new Border Security Command would focus on trying to 'smash the criminal smuggling gangs' (Home Office, 2024c). With the cancellation of the Rwanda policy, and a move to try to curb smugglers who bring people to the UK, there is still uncertainty about what the Labour Government's next strategies will be towards those refugees and asylum

seekers who are already living in the country, or if there will be a marked change in approach to the Conservative government. In September 2024, Keir Starmer reportedly showed 'great interest' in how Italy's hard-right government had reduced irregular migration, partially through a deal to process some asylum claims in Albania (Adu, 2024). Although the end of the Rwanda scheme can be seen as a positive step for asylum seekers in the UK, the politicised nature of asylum and persistent changes to policies in this field continue to contribute to an atmosphere of liminality for refugees and particularly asylum seekers in the UK.

Hicks and Mallet (2019, p.48) discuss the proliferation of impermanence at the border in their discussion of refugee camps and remark that 'The border is temporal as well as spatial'. In the UK, those seeking asylum are placed in liminal spaces like hotels and detention centres, face uncertainty over whether they will be removed, and frequently have to wait for long periods of time to hear decisions about their claims. This liminality can contribute to a sense of in-betweenness for those going through the asylum system. Further to this, Mayblin (2019a) has documented how the asylum system has impoverished people going through it, as a form of 'slow violence'. The very small allowance given to people seeking asylum and the fact that they are not allowed to work in most circumstances contributes to the draining of energies as people focus on surviving in their everyday lives. A report released by the Royal College of Psychiatrists in 2024 called for the reform of Britain's immigration system stating that it risked 'retraumatising' people seeking asylum (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2024).

In the UK, the use of hotels as asylum housing started as a 'contingency', but has grown massively since 2019 with close to half of the over 100,000 people living in 'asylum accommodation' in the UK, housed in hotels in 2023 (Refugee Action, 2023).[10] According to research by the NGO Refugee Action, the uptick in the use of asylum hotels is linked with the awarding of housing contracts to private providers (Refugee Action, 2023). The government has suggested that hotels are a necessary measure because of a lack of social housing, but this reasoning has been questioned, and attention drawn to the slow rate of asylum

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[10] The Conservatives had been making assertions that it wished to end the use of asylum hotels while still in government but they are still in use at the time of writing, with more hotels opened by the Labour government in November 2024.

decision-making (Gross, 2023). Issues with asylum accommodation are reflected all over the UK, including in both England and Scotland (Piacentini et al., 2023). Even when people seeking asylum are granted dispersal accommodation that is not a hotel, people are regularly moved hundreds of miles away from the places that they have been living for months, as was the case during my research in Norwich. This only adds to the sense of in-betweenness, with people in hotels not being able to begin to feel settled in the UK. Dispersal accommodation (i.e.. Asylum accommodation that is not a hotel) is also impermanent, because when a decision is made on an asylum claim, claimants are asked to leave this accommodation, either if they gain refugee status, to find their own housing, or if the claim is refused, they are instructed to leave the UK. The Conservative government had pledged to cut back on the use of asylum hotels, but aimed to house people in other forms of temporary accommodation, such as the Bibby Stockholm barge (Morris and Taylor, 2023), and was planning to expand the use of detention centres (Refugee Action, 2023). The Home Office (under the Labour government) has since announced that the contract for the Bibby Stockholm barge will not be renewed when it expires in early 2025 (Andrews, 2024), and the last asylum seekers reportedly left the barge in November 2024 (Elgot & Walker, 2024). One report from the National Audit Office has suggested that housing people in detention centres could be even more expensive for the government than the use of hotels (National Audit Office, 2024). These forms of accommodation have been contested as problematic, in terms of the health and social interactions for those who live in them, especially former military sites which are large distances from any other infrastructure or communities.

It has been commented that policies, such as accommodation, around asylum in the UK and across Europe are contributing to a sense of limbo, liminality and impermanence for those who are seeking asylum. In the context of Direct Provision, asylum seeker accommodation in Ireland, O'Reilly (2019, p.139), has remarked on 'the liminality of uncertain or in-between political and legal status embodied in liminal spaces, spaces of permanent temporariness where people wait for extended periods of time to move into the next stage of their lives: between inclusion and exclusion, between hospitality and hostility, between citizenship and non-citizenship.' This can also be applied to the UK, particularly the use of hotels or barges moored off the coastline, as housing heightens this sense of liminality for many people

seeking asylum who live in them, as O'Reilly (2019, p.143) emphasises 'a hotel is a place where you stay temporarily, not where you live'.

In addition to temporary hotels and accommodation contributing to a sense of uncertainty for sanctuary seekers, visa status also plays a role. The status of asylum seeker is temporary, which could lead to refugee status in the future. As mentioned previously, those with this status are not allowed to work, and the asylum process is marked by long periods of waiting, with no guarantee that they will be allowed to stay in the UK, contributing to a sense of limbo (Cortvriend, 2020). In July 2024, it emerged that some asylum seekers had been told by the Home Office that they had been granted refugee status, only to later be informed that this was a mistake weeks later, and to cut up residency permits they had been sent (Taylor, 2024). This means that although people may feel that gaining refugee status would lead to more security and less uncertainty, even this could be taken away.

There are also challenges arising from intersecting identities for those who are refugees and asylum seekers in the UK. For example, it has been noted that problems such as those with housing for people seeking asylum also tend to disproportionately impact on those with disabilities, with hotels regularly not meeting accessibility requirements for them (Refugee Action, 2023). Furthermore, in general, LGBTQI+ sanctuary seekers (Tschalaer, 2022) and women (Finlay et al., 2021; Cheung & Phillamore, 2014) are also more likely to experience additional obstacles in settling in the UK including discrimination and isolation. Although historically, the Home Office has considered the claims of those who are fleeing countries that persecute LGBTQ+ people and women, the then Home Secretary Suella Braverman in a speech in September 2023 questioned the right to seek asylum on the basis of gender or sexual orientation. She said that: 'we will not be able to sustain an asylum system if in effect, simply being gay, or a woman, and fearful of discrimination in your country of origin is sufficient to qualify for protection' (Zeffman and Francis, 2023, p.1). This means that people who already face structural challenges because of their identity, are also potentially facing additional discrimination within the UK asylum system. As I discuss later, I found that some of these intersecting issues of identity, namely gender, also had an impact on access to adult education.

Immigration is not a devolved policy area, which means that policy in this field applies across the UK, and is not controlled by Scotland. The Scottish government does tend to use

different rhetoric with regard to migration, and has published strategies, such as the 'New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy' (Scottish Government, 2018; Scottish Government 2024) which suggests it would take an alternative approach to migration to Westminster, choosing to recognise refugees as 'new Scots'.

2.3. Organisations: Austerity, neoliberalism and precarity

In the following sections I will consider how withdrawal of funding from public services and the third sector by the central government in the UK has impacted on organisations working with those who are refugees and asylum seekers. Since the election of the Conservative-led coalition government in 2010, there have been continual funding cuts known as 'austerity' measures, largely blamed on the financial crash of 2008, but it has been argued that these have been a part of a broader neoliberal agenda of state withdrawal from funding public services (Brown, 2015). Neoliberalism is a nebulous concept and has been associated with the championing of free markets and the rolling back of state intervention in favour of corporate interests (Peck, 2010). Davies et al., (2017, p.1281) have conceptualised violence produced by austerity measures taken as part of a neoliberal approach, as what 'states choose not to do'. In the UK context, discourses of citizenship and volunteerism have proliferated in policy agendas as means of justifying cuts or as a substitute for essential services (Dominelli, 2016). I am going to consider how this withdrawal of state support has impacted on organisations who work with people who are seeking sanctuary in the UK.

2.3.1. Austerity's impact on refugees and the third sector

Alongside, and often entangled with the hostile migration policy environment, there has been a wider reduction in public sector funding available. Austerity cuts have fitted into a broader neoliberal agenda of withdrawal of central government support and a greater reliance on free-market economics (Brown, 2015). This has impacted directly on organisations supporting refugees through lessening their sources of funding, as well as indirectly impacting other public services accessed by refugees and asylum seekers. Benwell et al., (2023) have highlighted how the decline in support for people seeking sanctuary from both central and local governments has impacted on organisations who are supporting asylum seekers and refugees. As Clayton et al., (2015, p.27) have noted, since the implementation of austerity cuts, staff in public and third sector organisations are having to

do 'more with less'. It has also been suggested that with greater competition for funding for organisations, there have been fewer partnerships in some areas, as well as less sharing of best practice, and lack of trust between service providers with a shift to being more inward-looking (Clayton et al., 2016).

Wider cuts to public services also have a big impact directly on those who are refugees and asylum seekers. There are significant barriers for people who are refugees and asylum seekers to access healthcare in the UK, including language, and difficulty with registering with a GP (Asif & Kienzler, 2022). 'Charging regulations' have also been introduced, which means that people from overseas without the necessary documents can be refused treatment unless they pay a large upfront fee (Asif & Kienzler, 2022). Cuts to the funding of mental health provision have additionally had a large knock-on impact to asylum seekers. In studies of the mental health of people seeking asylum living in 'contingency accommodation', a majority of people reported a deterioration in their mental health while living in hotels, which is often not resolved even when they are moved out of hotels (Refugee Action, 2023). Charities have often needed to supplement or replace support that has been cut and it has been suggested that charities are needing to explain how the healthcare system works and are sometimes filling the gaps in mental healthcare, but that this may not be sustainable in the long-term (Brookes et al., 2023).

In the following section I look more closely at the literature about these organisations and how they are responding to and coping with the challenges posed by austerity, and the precarity that it has produced.

2.3.2. Spaces supporting refugees and asylum seekers in precarity

In the UK there are different types of organisations providing services for refugees and asylum seekers around the country. These vary from large international NGOs such as the Red Cross, to smaller, more local charities supporting refugees and asylum seekers which have emerged throughout the UK depending on dispersal policies in specific areas. Mayblin (2019b) has remarked that grass-roots humanitarian civil society organisations have formed locally around the UK as a response for increasing need for essential items such as food, health products and clothing. In the context of austerity cuts and the hostile environment to migration, organisations supporting sanctuary seekers which originally aimed to facilitate

cultural and artistic activities frequently need to support with essentials such as food, clothing and bureaucratic support (Benwell et al., 2023). Organisations often also provide services such as advice, signposting to other services and education, often in the form of ESOL classes. Darling (2022, p.122) has called attention to how austerity and privatisation have resulted in significant funding cuts to organisations working with refugees and asylum seekers resulting in reductions in staffing and paid working hours, and therefore the scaling back of provision offered by organisations in cities around the UK.

The repeated cuts to funding of organisations working in the third sector has additionally had an emotional cost on staff working in those organisations. Austerity cuts have resulted in staff shortages, overwork and lower pay, with one of the results being impacts on mental health for those working in such organisations (Clayton et al., 2015). Cuts to the amount of paid hours and staff in organisations leads to a reliance on resourcefulness and 'goodwill' from staff towards those who use services to get work done (Clayton et al., 2015). Many of the challenges faced by organisations supporting refugees were also exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, which stretched their services and made it more difficult to access and support people (Finlay et al., 2021). It could be argued that the need for organisations specifically aimed at supporting basic needs of refugees and asylum seekers demonstrates deficiencies in the state support of these groups. Mayblin (2019a, p.76) asserts that 'such a response is only necessary when there has been a failure of state provision, in this case a failure in adequate subsistence support for people seeking asylum'.

Although organisations providing services for sanctuary seekers could be seen as *disrupting* a hostile policy environment, Mayblin (2019a, p.78) has also suggested that 'civil society actors and organizations often function via their own logics and practices to (re)produce hierarchies of human worth and vulnerability, rather than simply ameliorating, confronting, challenging, and contending with those colonial logics that manifest in state policy.' She suggests that organisations can be 'in some ways part of the asylum system' (Mayblin, 2019a, p.). The asylum system and the support provided is (deliberately) not meeting the needs of those who go through it, which makes organisations vital to fill in these gaps but these organisations may not transform the system which they support. A continued focus on addressing the symptoms of hostile policy, rather than on facilitating meaningful change, as well as a focus on simply the everyday needs of asylum seekers may mean that organisations

are not placed to impact consequential and lasting change, or to critically contest the structural challenges that they address. Mayblin (2019a) still argues that organisations are necessary, and as Mayblin and James (2017) posit, organisations are filling the gaps left by the inadequacies of support in policy.

Additionally, Darling (2011, p.409) has challenged an uncritical focus on care and generosity as a response to asylum in the context of drop-in charities, and argues that there should also be a consideration of the 'political potential' of these environments to consider mutuality and asylum seekers as actors within the spaces. Darling's (2011) analysis of the subject of care in an organisation supporting asylum seekers in Sheffield offers insights into the power relations present in how volunteers and staff in organisations interact with asylum seekers. Assumptions about who can give and who can receive care in such spaces are political, and tied with assumptions about people seeking sanctuary. As I explored earlier in this chapter, those who are seeking sanctuary in the UK regularly face large challenges, and organisations while working to aid in negotiating these challenges may frame these groups as vulnerable and in need of support as an outcome of the particular power relations within organisations. As Aikman and Robinson-Pant (2019) have pointed out in the field of indigenous women in the Global South, a focus on vulnerability may neglect the agency and power that particular groups framed as vulnerable hold.

Organisations working with sanctuary seekers in the UK are located within a wider system of migration policies and restrictions which produces and maintains their need to exist. Organisations, including staff and volunteers within them are a part of this system and can play a part in reproducing the violence of the asylum system. Furthermore, austerity policies also exacerbate challenges for sanctuary seekers as well as posing issues directly for organisations and staff within them. This builds a picture of a challenging landscape to navigate for organisations and those that they work with. In the following section, I will move to the field of adult education, which has also been shaped by neoliberal policies in recent years, and I then look at how this field has served people who are refugees and asylum seekers in the UK, moving on to specifically explore the field of ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages).

2.4. Adult education: Lifelong Learning, ESOL and adult educators

2.4.1. Adult Education and Lifelong Learning in the UK

In the following section, I will provide a very brief overview of some of the backdrop of adult education in the UK, and then move on to consider the topic of adult learning for those who are refugees and asylum seekers. There is a long history of adult education in the United Kingdom, with organisations such as the WEA (Worker's Educational Association) growing after the First World War, the introduction of the Open University in 1969, and local provisions of adult education centres and colleges (Tuckett, 2017). The move away from the concept of 'continuing education', a more formal and competitive approach, and towards 'lifelong learning' as a concept sought to 'refocus agency onto the learner rather than the providing institution', and to emphasise the importance of context to learning (Rogers and Horricks, 2010, p. 6). However, the discourse around 'lifelong learning' as a concept has been criticised as increasingly associated with work-related settings, and as having primarily economic benefit (Field, 2000; Rogers and Horrocks, 2010; English and Mayo, 2012).

Adult learning and education is a policy area in the UK that has seen loss of funding and has been neglected over the last two decades. Adult education policy has become increasingly focused on labour market outcomes and away from a broad range of curriculum across the life of the learner, sometimes referred to as 'life wide learning' (Tuckett, 2017). It has been argued that there has been a shift to a neoliberal policy agenda with regards to adult education which focusses on competencies and skills for work (Field & Malcolm, 2006; Barros, 2012). A neoliberal 'managerial culture' approach in adult literacy has also been criticised as being overly concerned with tracking learners' progress and attainment, and ignoring 'the richness of personal and social learning that occurs' (Grummell, 2023, p.10).

In terms of recent policy developments, in 2023 the government announced the creation of the 'lifelong learning entitlement' (LLE), which aims to streamline the post-18 student finance system to help people up to age 60 to pay for college or university courses (Department for Education, 2023). This would mean that from 2025 people would be able to apply for a loan for various levels of adult education (beyond the narrower focus of student finance which currently reserved for financing Higher Education). However, the LLE is a loan, meaning that learners will need to repay it, it still has a labour market focus, and it would

not be accessible for people seeking asylum. It is also unclear whether those with refugee status would qualify for the LLE.

The LLE applies only to England, and Scotland has its own student financing system which at present remains for Higher Education (Scottish Government, 2024b). In Scotland, adult education now falls within its Community Learning and Development (CLD) sector (Education Scotland, n.d.). Scotland shares in some of the history of adult education in the UK, although it had seen fewer funding cuts than England. Scotland has also had a particular tradition of Freirian adult education through its Adult Learning Project (ALP) (Kirkwood & Kirkwood, 2011). I will touch more on the distinctions between English and Scottish approaches later in this chapter in the particular context of ESOL education. In the following section, I will consider the area of adult education specifically for those who are refugees and asylum seekers, and then move to consider further nuances between policy approaches in England and Scotland.

2.4.2. Adult education for refugees and asylum seekers

I have collected examples of quotes from politicians in England over a period of five years which show some of the political rhetoric surrounding learning English, regularly tied with integration of migrants in the United Kingdom.

Quote	Politician
"too often there are parts of our country, parts of London and other cities as well, where English is not spoken by some people as their first language and that needs to be changed" (Halliday and Brooks, 2019).	Boris Johnson, 2019, shortly before he became the Prime Minister.
"We estimate that there [are] 770,000 people that live in [England] that speak hardly any or no English… And most of those people – we estimate 60 to 70% – are women. And most of those women, in turn, are of Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin…if you don't speak English then there is no way you can take full advantage of the opportunities that modern Britain has to offer you" (Asthana, 2018).	Sajid Javid, 2018, then the Communities Secretary.

'Refugees who make their home here will be given support – more support to integrate into the community, learn English, and become self-sufficient' [later in the same speech] 'Our plan will reduce the incentives for people to come here illegally, thereby removing the opportunity for criminal gangs to profit.' (Home Office, 2021).	Priti Patel, 2021, then the Home Secretary.
'Uncontrolled immigration, inadequate integration, and a misguided dogma of multiculturalism have proven a toxic combination for Europe over the last few decades…Multiculturalism makes no demands of the incomer to integrate. It has failed, because it allowed people to come to our society, and live parallel lives in it. They could be in the society, but not of the society.' (American Enterprise Institute, 2023).	Suella Braverman, 2023, then the Home Secretary.

Table 1: Political rhetoric about learning for migrants

Much of the political rhetoric in the table above demonstrates a deficit approach towards education for migrants or people from certain ethnic groups (e.g. Pakistani and Bangladeshi women, in the case of Sajid Javid). The focus is on what they are not able to do and, in many cases, an individualised perspective is demonstrated, which seems to focus the responsibility for learning on the individual adult. Sajid Javid, in his forward to the Integrated Communities Green Paper, relates the story of translating for his mother, who could not speak English when he was a child. He states that years later: 'Eventually, my mother decided she'd be better off if she learned English. Today she's fluent, and gets so much from it' (HM Government, 2018, p.9). He does not focus on the other actors and institutions involved, there is an implication that if someone decides they want to learn English, then they will be able to. This draws the focus away from the role of the central and local government, colleges, non-governmental organisations, members of the community and others, who may play a role in someone being able to learn English. Furthermore, it also ignores the role that languages other than English play in people's lives, and elevates English as the only language that one needs to know to live a fulfilling life in the UK.

The provocative quote above from Suella Braverman, shows that there is still a political focus on integration as something that should be demanded from who she refers to as the 'incomer', and although she does not mention learning English in this speech, her attack on

'multiculturalism' as allowing people to live 'parallel lives', implies that these other cultures do not speak English. This quote also seems to suggest that 'integration' is being used as a synonym of 'assimilation', a one-way process of a newcomer adopting the culture of their new home. Xanthaki (2016) has suggested that integration is regularly used as a synonym of assimilation in practice in European political rhetoric.

There is a great deal of research which points out that the majority of migrants who move to new countries want to access educational opportunities and learn the language of the country that they arrive in (E.g. Rosenberg, 2007; Cheung & Phillimore, 2014; Refugee Rights Europe, 2016; Bennet, 2018; Refugee Action, 2019; Kisiara, 2021; Morrice et al., 2021; Mann & Turner, 2023). Simpson (2016) points out that learning the language of a new country for those migrants who settle there is a *human right* enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but that in contrast, politicians have regularly presented learning English as an *obligation* on the part of newcomers. It has been suggested that the barriers to learning English are not those of individual motivation (as the political rhetoric may imply), but structural factors such as long waiting lists for classes (Refugee Action, 2019) or the unavailability of other forms of support such as childcare (Sharifian et al., 2019; Slade & Dickson, 2020). As I will explore in more detail later, the perspective that people who are refugees and asylum seekers want to learn English also fits with the findings of this research project. At both organisations, English classes were extremely popular, one operating a long waiting list, and the other with very crowded classrooms every week.

As I have elaborated above, immigration policy has increasingly been concerned with deterring people from seeking asylum for economic reasons (Mayblin, 2019a). This means that the focus in adult education policy on the labour market, understandably poses issues for people who are asylum seekers in the UK, as they are deliberately excluded from taking up work. Puttick (2018, p.3), in her research of family literacies with mothers who are sanctuary seekers posits that the political positioning of language learning as something that happens in the community may leave certain groups neglected. Additionally, the liminal status ascribed to asylum seekers facilitates particular challenges for people seeking asylum to access adult education. In England, people who have sought asylum need to wait for six months until they can join a college ESOL class for free. As they are barred from working,

they do not fit neatly within a neoliberal model of lifelong learning which has largely economic goals.

Although any policy which considers adult education for people who are refugees and asylum seekers in the UK almost always refers to a benefit as 'integration', many of the policies which I have considered in the above sections often act in counter to integration. For example, as Piacentini et al., (2023, p.12) remark, the use of hotels as asylum accommodation are 'highly effective at removing people from contributing to and receiving support from their communities, strengthening the disintegrative norm and segregatory power of dispersal.' Morrice et al., (2021) through documenting the experiences of resettled refugees in the UK suggest that restrictive policies around English language education, serve to increase the likelihood of social exclusion for those learners, for example the preclusion of funding for those refugees who are in employment, or at retirement age prevents them from accessing free English classes. The limited provision and focus on adult education for those who are seeking sanctuary is also exacerbated by the other structural challenges in place. In other words, with opportunities to access adult education already limited, wider difficulties in sanctuary seekers' lives caused by migration policy amplify challenges to routes to formal learning opportunities.

As I considered earlier in this chapter, Westminster's approach to migration has been concerned with deterring entry to the UK, and this seems to implicitly include generating barriers to accessing adult education. In the earlier quote from Priti Patel, she stated that there would be more support for people to learn English, but then that: 'Our plan will reduce the incentives for people to come here illegally' (Home Office, 2021). This is a complicated statement, because in research of those living in refugee camps in France, the most popular response to the question 'what do you want to do in the UK?' was to 'look for education opportunities' (Refugee Rights Europe, 2016, p.28) which in turn suggests a desire to improve their English. There is no explicit policy statement that education for asylum seekers should be neglected, but the *absence* of policy which considers adult education particularly for those seeking asylum in England is significant, and does seem to be part of a deliberate strategy of further marginalising this group of people by withdrawing an 'incentive' of education. Scotland stands in contrast to England on this front, with

educational policy which includes people seeking asylum explicitly (Scottish Government, 2018).

Morrice (2021) through analysis of international policies around lifelong learning for refugees, has suggested that when in more recent years, lifelong learning has been considered, this has looked at tertiary education and has characterised education as an uninterrupted learning pathway. She points out that this is problematic particularly for those who are refugees who may not have progressed through education uninterrupted, and that this paradigm has contributed to the deficit narrative that refugees lack something, rather than a consideration of how educational systems can adapt to refugees. A perspective of education for refugees as a linear progression through educational structures may have contributed to a system which means that learning opportunities are not accessible or suitable for sanctuary seekers.

English language education is the most commonly cited area of learning for new refugees and asylum seekers, and in the following section I will explore this specific area, and the differences between Scotland and England in this field.

2.4.3. ESOL

As demonstrated by the above quotes from British politicians, if adult education for newcomers is discussed in political discourse, it is usually in terms of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision. ESOL is distinct from EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learning, and refers specifically to learning English inside a predominantly English-speaking country, as opposed to a non-English speaking country (British Council, n.d.). In this section, I have separated ESOL in England and Scotland, because unlike immigration policy, which I explored above, education is a devolved policy area, which means that the two nations have different approaches. England and Scotland have different ESOL curricula and qualifications, and different ways of funding and considering ESOL in policy. Scotland and Wales generally have more funding and a specific policy focus for ESOL than England and Northern Ireland (Bouttell, 2023b) although as will be explored, ESOL is a complicated landscape in both Scotland and England.

The formal ESOL curriculum in England is referred to as ESOL Skills for Life, and overseen by the Department for Education (DfE). Funding for adult ESOL in England primarily comes from the Education and Skills Funding Agency and the Adult Education Budget (Foster & Bolton, 2018). Local Further Education (FE) colleges are expected to be a core provider of ESOL classes. In England, people seeking asylum are allowed to study but are not permitted to access free college ESOL classes until they have been in the UK for six months waiting for a decision on their claim (Refugee Education UK, n.d.). Around the UK (including both England and Scotland), depending on the area, there are often very long waiting lists for college ESOL classes, and a very high demand for courses (Higton et al., 2019). Availability of ESOL classes has been referred to as a 'postcode lottery' (Sutton & Feeney, 2024, p.2). Funding for ESOL in England has also come from the Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities.[11] In 2013-15, funding was provided for community-based ESOL provision, and in 2016 funding was promised by David Cameron for ESOL for 'isolated women' (Foster & Bolton, 2018). The government sometimes introduces ring-fenced funding for ESOL for particular groups, usually those on resettlement schemes, for example for Ukrainian refugees (Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2023). In England, it has been observed that funding for ESOL provision has been repeatedly cut (Refugee Action, 2019, Sutton & Feeney, 2024). Colleges report that they are struggling to meet the demand from ESOL learners. A survey of colleges and adult education centres found that over 80% had waiting lists of up to 1000 students for ESOL courses, most citing loss of funding as the main reason for this (NATECLA, 2016). Local authorities in England have also reported that there is insufficient provision to meet demand from local learners, with suggestions that a lack of funding has led to the use of low paid, zero hours teaching contracts making it difficult to recruit qualified teachers (Higton et al., 2019, p.74). Even when potential learners can join classes, there are sometimes reports that classes are not as frequent as students would like them to be. This means that many of those who are asylum seekers and refugees are accessing very little or often no formal ESOL classes taught by colleges.

Unlike Scotland, England has never had a dedicated strategy in place in policy for ESOL.

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[11] Previously named the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government

Instead, ESOL has been integrated into policy for Lifelong Learning, and it was included in the category of Adult Community Learning in the 'plan for an adult skills and lifelong learning revolution' (House of Commons Education Committee, 2020). ESOL has also been included as an area in the government's Integrated Communities Strategy (HM Government, 2018; HM Government, 2019). A lack of direct focus on ESOL in policy means that there has not been a streamlined source of funding in the field, and a lack of support from policymakers. The National Association for Teaching English and other Community Languages to Adults (NATECLA) has said that an ESOL strategy was promised to be published in 2019 within the Integrated Communities Strategy, and continues to push for a strategy (NATECLA, n.d.). In addition, a policy briefing published by the Bell Foundation in 2024 has called for a national strategy for ESOL, stating that 'A strategy is crucial to ensuring a coherent, effective, and data-driven approach to the delivery of ESOL across the UK', due to the varied funding streams and regional disparities in England (Sutton & Feeney, 2024, p. 2).

2.4.3.2. ESOL in Scotland

In Scotland, the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) oversee ESOL, and colleges accredit ESOL within the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework. Scotland has also published an ESOL strategy, originally published in 2007 and updated to cover the period 2015-2020, which also considers Community Learning and Development provision of ESOL (Scottish Government, 2015). Unlike England, the Scottish Government immediately allows all refugees and asylum seekers to join ESOL classes for free, rather than requiring them to be in the UK for a certain period, or to receive certain benefits (Meer et al., 2019). The Scottish government has also taken an alternative approach to the integration of sanctuary seekers to England, publishing the 'New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy', originally in 2013 and recently renewed in 2024 (Scottish Government, 2018; Scottish Government, 2024a). This approach in policy has marked the Scottish government as more invested in adult education for refugees and asylum seekers than England (Bouttell, 2023b). The Scottish Government funds college ESOL, which is the main formal route for those who are refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland to take accredited classes and Community ESOL is funded by multiple stakeholders, including the Scottish Government, Adult Learning and Empowering Communities Fund, local councils, Lottery funding, and other charitable sources (Scottish Government, n.d.; Glasgow ESOL Forum, n.d.). College courses are very popular and tend to

have long waiting lists, and community ESOL can be seen by some as a route to studying in a college, especially in cities with very large populations of ESOL learners like Glasgow (ESOL Network Project, n.d.). Like England, there is also funding allocated to Scottish authorities for ESOL through particular resettlement schemes for people arriving as refugees from certain countries as part of these programmes. However, the funding for ESOL within resettlement schemes is overseen by the Home Office, so this funding is not in the remit of the Scottish Government (Meer et al., 2019). Dissimilarly to England, ESOL in Scotland has faced fewer funding cuts than its English equivalent, although the funding landscape has still undergone changes and is a very complicated picture with many different funders which can regularly shift (Meer et al., 2019). One recent survey of ESOL professionals in Scotland found that the majority said that they did not have access to the necessary funding to work effectively (Brown & Sheridan, 2024). It has been remarked that Scotland's ESOL environment is 'characterised by complexity' (Meer et al., 2019, p. 2).

The publication of an ESOL strategy marked Scotland apart from England which has never published such a strategy. However, although the New Scots Integration Strategy was updated in 2024, the Scottish government has not renewed its ESOL strategy. Instead it incorporated this into its Adult Learning Strategy for 2022-2027. This means that there is no longer a dedicated strategy for ESOL in Scotland, and instead ESOL is now located within areas of adult learning and integration, which brings Scotland more in line with England's more segmented approach in policy. Brown and Sheridan's (2024) analysis of the perspectives of ESOL practitioners in Scotland showed that many of those working in the ESOL sector in Scotland felt that the move to absorb the strategy into other policy meant that progress had been lost, and that the Scottish government's commitment to ESOL has waned over time.

Scotland's approach to the delivery of ESOL could be said to be different to England as there have also been some calls within the New Scots approach for the support of multi-lingual learning, as Scotland has multiple official languages[12] (Phipps et al., 2023). There are also some similarities between the English and Scottish ESOL landscapes, and the formal

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[12] English, Gaelic, Scots, British Sign Language

curriculum itself is marked by levels which are generally in line with CEFR[13] European language qualifications standards. However, UK government policy has in the past not accepted Scottish (SQA) ESOL credentials as indicators of English proficiency for those applying for UK citizenship (Knox, 2015). This means that there could be difficulties within the devolved nations for those who might need to move between them, and find themselves without valid qualifications in ESOL. Additionally this puts in place another barrier for those who resettle in the UK to gain permanent citizenship and access to the rights of permanent citizens.

It does seem to be true that there is more consideration of ESOL, from a more community-based perspective in policy in Scotland than in England. It has been remarked that with regards to adult education for refugees and asylum seekers, 'Scotland is a leader in Europe with respect to policy but underfunding and jurisdictional issues could undermine its promise' (Slade & Dickson, 2020, p. 117). Mulvey (2015) has pointed out that Scotland's hands are often tied by Westminster in terms of the amount of funding it is given. Although the discourse that considers multilingualism and community adult learning within Scottish policy has been praised, it has also been suggested that any success of the ESOL strategy was down to practitioners rather than policy makers (Brown & Sheriden, 2024). Scottish policy has also been criticised for its focus on embedding employability, rather than incorporating life-wide learning (Brown, 2017). Since the pandemic, the funding landscape in Scotland seems to have gone through numerous changes. Stella & Kay (2023) in their report on language learning in Scotland observed that demand for ESOL was frequently not met across Scotland, and that broader cuts to adult and community education in Scotland had detrimentally impacted ESOL provision. Therefore although Scotland has more policy focus on ESOL and refugee integration as well as having a better history of funding adult and community education than England, there are still many challenges, with many uncertainties.

The previous sections have shown how ESOL is a varied landscape in both England and Scotland. There are numerous barriers which emerge from this, for example, long waiting lists and inconsistent funding mean that people who are refugees and asylum seekers may

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[13] Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

not have access to ESOL classes at all. Even when people are able to access classes, there are still many challenges, for example, Morrice et al. (2021), have pointed out that within ESOL delivery there is an assumption that learners will be able to learn language at the same rate, and the formal schooling background of refugees is not considered. This means that people with limited schooling may be in the same classes as those with university degrees. In the following section, I will explore more explicitly educators who work with refugees and asylum seekers, who would usually be teachers of ESOL, but may also work in other roles.

The impact of ESOL (under)funding

As I have discussed in the previous two sections, the funding of ESOL in England and Scotland is complex and variable. This impacts upon how people can access opportunities to learn. The 'six month rule' in England means that people seeking asylum have to wait for at least six months before they are even allowed to register for college classes, and this usually ends up being longer because of term dates and waiting lists. Although Scotland does not have this rule, in many locations there are long waiting lists for formal ESOL classes. Different resettlement programmes also create a hierarchy over who can access ESOL provision. For example, people on the Ukrainian resettlement routes have access to different ESOL provision than the majority of refugees and asylum seekers. The Government website for the Homes for Ukraine scheme states that Ukrainians on resettlement schemes have been eligible to register for formal programmes of ESOL overseen by local authorities, as well as online courses from the British Council, and access to free resources through the Open University (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2023). However the majority of people seeking asylum in the UK do not have access to such opportunities and resources. As I have mentioned, due to the lack of formal provision for ESOL, many people who would otherwise have wished to access such opportunities are attending classes offered by charities, and many community organisations have short-term and variable funding. Ringfenced funding for provision for particular nationalities on resettlement routes means that there is a two-tier system with regards to access to education. The funding that organisations in this study had access to was varied, and they regularly wove together funding from a variety of sources, such as National Lottery funding, funding from Local Authorities and short-term funding for small community projects. As I will discuss later in the thesis, funding for projects would sometimes finish and staff needed to find alternative

funding or projects would come to an end. The underfunding of formal ESOL in England and Scotland and the difficulty of many people on non-favoured visa routes to access education had a great impact on the organisations, as many of their learners were unable to access classes elsewhere.

2.4.4. Roles of educators of refugees and asylum seekers

I have already touched on how funding cuts to organisations supporting people who are refugees and asylum seekers have impacted on staff members, and outlined some key areas about adult education in the UK. Next, I will explore educators working with refugees specifically, and their role as potentially shaping learning in organisations in ways which might go beyond the traditional planning of lessons and learning materials.

It has been suggested that for some teachers of refugees, they may feel pressure to undertake work that could be perceived as beyond the scope of their jobs (i.e.. teaching a language), such as undertaking pastoral care or helping with wider issues such as finding jobs or accommodation (Häggström et al., 2020). Ira et al. (2021), also suggest that teachers of refugees worked on building relationships with families of their students. Falk et al., (2022) suggest that in conflict settings teachers may feel stress, frustration and sadness if they are left feeling unable to support their students with the challenges that they faced. It has also been suggested that teachers may feel guilt if they do not have the time to help students who are refugees and asylum seekers with wider tasks beyond the classroom (Häggström et al., 2020). The structural challenges around lack of resources and funding, as well as the challenges which their students negotiate, many of which I explored earlier, create issues for teachers.

Cooke & Peutrell (2019) have observed that ESOL teachers have been set up as 'cultural brokers', in the sense that they may act as intermediaries between their students from diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds and the government and policies surrounding routes to citizenship in the UK. This could be through courses specifically aimed at ESOL for citizenship (Cooke, 2019), but may also be more deeply embedded in the curriculum, such as the inclusion of Fundamental British Values within policy for ESOL (Bouttell, 2023b). Teachers may feel they need to avoid topics which seem difficult, such as those hidden within 'Fundamental British Values', or the citizenship curriculum such as colonialism and racism

(Cooke, 2019). As these elements are 'hidden' within the curriculum there is little training on how to negotiate topics in ESOL classrooms which may provoke critical perspectives/ dissent.

Many ESOL teachers in organisations supporting refugees and asylum seekers are volunteers, especially in England, as was the case in this study. In my previous research I have explored how volunteers have a variety of motivations to volunteer, including what some express as an act of resistance to what they perceive as hostile policy towards migrants in the UK (Bouttell, 2023a). Some expressed their frustrations at ring-fenced funding which meant that some learners (particularly asylum seekers) might be excluded from certain classes. In my previous research with UK-based volunteers, I found that volunteers were often qualified and experienced, but that many expressed that they wanted to know more about their learners and pedagogies which might support refugees with challenges that they faced in the UK (Bouttell, 2023a). This is also reflected in international research, one study with adult educators of refugees in Greece suggests that teachers wanted to learn more about working with the groups they taught (Kafritsa et al., 2021). I have also suggested that ESOL teachers in organisations are also learning from students they teach informally, and that classrooms can act as sites of intercultural learning (Bouttell, 2023a).

It has also been noted that different types of social transformation can impact upon teachers of English as a second language and shape the ways in which they see their roles and identities (Colliander, 2019). Teachers also often navigate changing roles and identities, for example, Rojas (2012) has explored the ways in which female EFL teachers have embodied multiple and shifting identities as they performed their roles. It has also been suggested that language teachers develop and reconstruct multiple 'professional role identities' throughout their careers, which they bring to the classroom and develop while they are working (Farrell, 2011). As I found in this study, and will discuss in more detail later, teachers often shifted between multiple roles while they were speaking with learners in the organisations.

All of this means that within refugee organisations, teachers negotiated a particular role or roles which might regularly transform, and may have some overlaps and some divergences from that of an ESOL teacher in a college, or also even from other staff members in the organisation. As I mentioned earlier in the sections about ESOL in England and Scotland, it is a very varied picture around the UK, and different organisations and localities may do things

very differently making for a complex picture, and not a singular role of an educator in organisations.

2.5. Situating the study: Norwich and Glasgow

In addition to having different national policy environments, this study took place in two different localities, with diverging local issues and demographics, Glasgow and Norwich. In the following sections, I will explore some of the contexts of each city in order to give some background for the experiences of refugees and asylum seekers who live there.

2.5.1. Sanctuary seekers in Glasgow

Glasgow is the largest city in Scotland, with a population of 635,130 in 2021 for the city area, and a population density of 3,555 people per square kilometre in 2022 (Scotland's Census 2023; Glasgow City Council, n.d.). According to Scotland's most recent census data (which was collected in 2022 while I conducted fieldwork), 12.9% of people in living in Glasgow stated that they only felt they had a non-UK or Scottish national identity, and 19.1% stated that they were born in a country outside of the UK (Scotland's Census, 2024).

The Home Office has a policy of dispersing asylum seekers in need of housing around the UK. Glasgow houses large numbers of dispersed asylum seekers, the majority of those in Scotland, and the largest number of any UK local authority. In 2014, this was around 3,300 people, 11% of the UK population of asylum seekers (Scottish Government, 2018). According to the Home Office's asylum and resettlement datasets, in late 2022 this had risen to 4,635 asylum seekers and 521 resettled refugees (Home Office, 2023). This number has fallen somewhat in subsequent years (see Table 2). It should be noted that the number reported in government statistics will be larger in reality, because there is only reported data about the location of those asylum seekers who are receiving government support.

Table 2: Asylum seekers receiving support and resettled refugees in Glasgow

Year[14]	Number of Asylum Seekers receiving support	Resettled refugees	Total	Per 10,000 of population[15]
2022	4,635	521	5,156	81

[14] Date of publication. Usually to June of that year, and reporting on the previous year, but asylum statistics have been published at different points in the years shown. Numbers of resettled refugees were not updated in 2024 statistics.
[15] Rounded to the nearest whole number.

| 2023 | 3,900 | 209 | 4,109 | 65 |
| 2024 | 3,868 | 209 | 4,077 | 64 |

(Home Office, 2023; Scottish Government, 2024; HCL, 2024).

To give these figures some context, in 2022 (the year the fieldwork took place) Glasgow housed more than double the number of asylum seekers housed in Birmingham, which was the city with the next highest number of dispersed asylum seekers in the UK. Because of these large numbers, there are a lot of different organisations providing support for refugees and asylum seekers in Glasgow. From my research, I counted at least 20 different organisations providing support in various forms, including housing advice, clothing, food banks, destitution grants and more. Some of these are international (e. The Red Cross), some are national (Scottish e.g. The Scottish Refugee Council), and some are local, working specifically in particular post-codes of the city with local communities who live there. In Glasgow, there are local 'integration networks', originally set up in the early 2000s to support sanctuary seekers, which serve different areas of the city. Many of these charities also host English classes, offer help for people to enrol on college ESOL courses, or signpost to other services. There are also many additional organisations which are not solely targeted towards refugees and asylum seekers, but who extend their services for these groups (e.g. Food banks, housing charities etc).

ESOL classes are the main kind of formal adult education which the majority of sanctuary seekers seek out initially. In Glasgow there are a number of organisations offering ESOL classes. This is necessary because of the large numbers of people who need them., However, this can also cause confusion for those trying to access them, as there are many different kinds of offers just for ESOL around the city. There are some networks which try to signpost people to classes in their area, although despite this, many people often must travel long distances across the city to reach classes. The Glasgow ESOL Register assessed and signposted people to three different community organisations in Glasgow overseeing free ESOL classes: Glasgow life, the WEA and Glasgow ESOL forum. There are also local colleges and private language schools in the city who provide English classes.

2.5.2. Sanctuary seekers in Norwich

Compared with Glasgow, Norwich is a much smaller city, with a population of around 143,900 in the 2021 census (Office for National Statistics, 2021), although Norwich is one of

the fastest growing cities in the UK, according to the local council (Norwich City Council, 2022). Ethnic diversity in Norwich is below the national average, but is significantly higher than the surrounding rural areas (Norwich City Council, 2023). In the 2021 census, 12.8% of the population of Norwich stated that they had a 'Non-UK identity', and 17.6% of those surveyed in Norwich listed their country of birth as outside of England (Office for National Statistics, 2021). The surrounding rural areas around Norwich average around 5% of people who list their country of birth as outside the UK. This makes Norwich a relatively diverse city which is in the middle of a much less diverse rural area, and Norwich is not very well connected to other cities which are relatively diverse.

Table 3: Asylum seekers receiving support and resettled refugees in Norwich

Year	Number of Asylum Seekers receiving support	Resettled refugees	Total	Per 10,000 of population
2022	160	192	352	24
2023	328	293	621	43
2024	257	293	550	38

(Home Office, 2023; HCL, 2024)

According to the Home Office's asylum and resettlement datasets, Norwich was home to 160 dispersed asylum seekers, and 192 resettled refugees, a total of 352 in 2022. This increased during the course of this study as hotels housing asylum seekers were opened, and in the asylum statistics published in 2023, there were reported to be 328 people seeking asylum and 293 resettled refugees, totalling 621 people (HCL, 2024). This means that the number of sanctuary seekers who were receiving asylum support in Norwich increased by more than 75% over the course of less than two years. Although the number of sanctuary seekers in Norwich is considerably lower than in Glasgow, this represented a large increase in the numbers of people that the organisations in Norwich were supporting while I was undertaking fieldwork. This change reflects the complexities of the policy environment around temporary accommodation which I outlined earlier in the chapter. Although the ratio of people seeking asylum in Norwich per capita is lower than Glasgow, it is higher than the national average, and is equal to or higher than many London Boroughs for example (HCL, 2024).

Even with these relative increases in numbers of people seeking sanctuary being housed in Norwich, the city has a much smaller population of people who are seeking asylum

dispersed there than Glasgow, and numbers per capita are also smaller. This is also reflected in a smaller number of organisations supporting refugees and asylum seekers in Norwich. There are around five organisations in Norwich who work to support sanctuary seekers, including an international NGO, an organisation aimed at supporting youth, and two organisations providing free ESOL classes, and one organisation which provides individual support. Like Glasgow there are also other charities providing wider services who also support refugees and asylum seekers as a part of their support services. The sites of this study in particular will be outlined in more detail in the methodology chapter (chapter three).

2.6. Conclusion

Migration policy, which is in the hands of the UK government in Westminster has constructed enormous challenges for people who are refugees and asylum seekers living in the UK. Not only has a hostile approach to policy created many direct problems for sanctuary seekers, it has fostered uncertainty and precarity, bringing the continual *threat* of change. Austerity cuts to public spending have impacted heavily on organisations working with refugees and asylum seekers, meaning that organisations' resources and staff are stretched. I have explored the ways in which adult education and ESOL in the UK are a complicated field. Political ideology frequently frames learning for migrants from an individualised deficit standpoint, while the policy provision for ESOL in both England and Scotland is piecemeal and has faced funding reductions. The sites of this study are located within this landscape, but also have unique local nuances. In England there has been considerably less policy focus on adult education generally, as well as around integration for refugees and asylum seekers. Scotland has had a longer history of supporting adult and community education, and ESOL (despite recent cuts). Glasgow hosts a large population of sanctuary seekers, reflected in its large number of NGOs, while Norwich has a much smaller number of people who are refugees and asylum seekers, and a smaller number of organisations. This chapter has provided an overview in order to situate this study within the organisations which operate within a complex policy picture. They are impacted by immigration and education policies, which are consistently causing change and precarity. In the next chapter I discuss theories around social change, precarity and learning to build a conceptual framework through which the findings of this thesis were analysed.

Chapter Three- Conceptual framework: Social transformation, precarity and learning

3.1. Introduction

As I mentioned in chapter one, throughout the period of writing this thesis (2020 to 2024) there has been a significant macro-level change, including a global pandemic, the outbreak of international conflicts, and many notable shifts in UK politics including numerous Home Secretaries, Prime Ministers and Scottish First Ministers. Amid these transformations, this research has been concerned with change, and I have considered how learning in organisations supporting refugees has been influenced by social change and how it may impact change. In order to do this, I have built a theoretical framework that combines social change, including the precarious circumstances that people who are refugees experience, and learning that is going on for the wide range of people who access activities at organisations. This chapter will explore social transformation and how it has been theorised, discussing how distinctions between major and minor social change have been conceptualised. I will also explore conceptualisations of precarity, and as I will discuss, experiences of precarity could relate to aspirations for learning, (which may often not be fulfilled) as well as learning to cope with continual change. The final section of this chapter will discuss how theories of learning, literacy and pedagogy can frame education in the contexts of social transformation and precarity. Here, I explore how formal, non-formal and informal education have been constructed across differing perspectives, discussions of literacy as a social practice, and critical, engaged and public pedagogies, in order to build a framing of learning that is suited to considering the diverse learning that happens in organisations working with sanctuary seekers. Therefore, this chapter forms a theoretical framework for this thesis which is grounded in an understanding of the complex relationship between precarity, social change/transformation and learning.

3.2. Conceptualising social transformation

In this study, I was interested in exploring how learning in organisations related to social transformation and in this section I will explore more some of the broader literature about social change and transformation. I discuss how and why social transformation has been

conceptualised by some thinkers, as well as considering social change from major and minor perspectives, and how they relate to one another. This is a very large field and at times the terms social change and transformation are used interchangeably, while some theorists have stressed that they are distinct conceptualisations. For example, Stephen Castles (2001) has expanded on the concept of social transformation as an alternative to modern conceptions of development, especially in the sense of using western, linear models of progress such as GDP and free markets as measures of a successfully transforming society. As de Haas et al. (2020, p.13) summarise, 'In their idealised and 'smooth' portrayal of modernisation, dominant development theories ignore the centrality of political conflict, violence [and] war' in their vision of change. The context of globalisation and rise of neoliberal approaches to economics coming to dominate models of progress means that the concept of social transformation has been explored as an alternative to traditional paradigms of development. 'Social transformation studies can... be understood as the analysis of transnational connectedness and the way this affects national societies, local communities and individuals' (Castles, 2001, p.14). Castles (2001, p.15) sees social transformation as 'not [implying] any predetermined outcome, nor that the process is essentially a positive one'. Therefore, it can represent either positive or negative change that is not necessarily planned. In addition, he suggests that 'social transformation studies... should lead to positive recipes for social and political action to help communities improve their livelihoods and cope with the consequences of global change' through a holistic, participatory approach in research (Castles, 2001, p. 19).

Large and small transformations relate to one another in complex ways and it has been put forward that they should not be viewed as opposites or indeed distinctly separate concepts. Erin Manning (2016, p.1) suggests that 'The major is a structural tendency that organises itself according to predetermined definitions of value. The minor is a force that courses through it, unmooring its structural integrity, problematizing its normative standards.' As reflected in this study, and considered in more detail in chapter eight, major and minor transformation might feel distinct, but small, everyday actions may resist and disrupt large change, and relate to major transformation by moving 'through it'. In the following paragraphs, I start by discussing theorisations of predominantly large-scale social transformation, then moving to focus on what has been framed as the 'minor', while also

considering the connections between these. In later chapters I will explore how in this study as Manning suggests, the minor was moving through the major, within and around the learning that was going on in the organisations.

It has been suggested that the study of sociology has been concerned with the impact major modes of organisation and institutions such as capitalism, the state and industrialisation, and social structures such as class and patriarchy, have on individuals and communities, and how they instigate change (Browne, 2015). As touched on above, Castles (2001) has critiqued traditional development paradigms in the social sciences which focus on linear progress driven by 'major' political agendas and instead proposes examining social transformation as an alternative way of considering global perspectives and transnational processes of change. He proposes the study of social transformation as framing how change impacts 'national societies, local communities and individuals' (Castles, 2001, p.14), while also maintaining that social transformation is not necessarily positive change. Castles (2018, p.246) sees 'refugee and asylum seeker movements as one aspect of the dislocation of existing social and political structures through neoliberal globalisation'. Migrants are then blamed for recent rises in inequality by some populist movements (Castles 2018) rather than being understood as symptomatic of global and individual transformation. The consideration of the impact of complex, transnational processes on local communities can be particularly useful in the study of refugee community education, because refugees have physically travelled across the world and been located in new communities in the UK and still evidence minor, non-linear transformational events.

Somewhat in contrast to Castles' perspective, De Haas et al. (2020) have argued for a need to consider 'social transformation' as a particular conceptual framework for exploring large-scale change. This framework considers the political, the economic, the technological, the demographic and the cultural as interconnected spheres to frame fundamental transformation of how societies are organised. The conceptual framework of social transformation has therefore been influential in the context of the interconnected global processes at play in the field of seeking sanctuary. Their conceptualising of social transformation of 'long-term societal shifts on a deep structural level' p.14. provides a wider lens than traditional development discourses focussed heavily on economic progress.

However, Yadav (2018, p.4) in keeping with Castles' critique, has pointed out that although the concept of social transformation has itself changed to become more comprehensive than that of 'development', 'it still reflects a structuralist tradition within a modernist paradigm'. Within modern, westernised notions of progress, what counts as social transformation tends to be dictated by governments and NGOs and often focuses heavily on structural transformation which necessarily neglects the minor and non-normative forces of transformation.

Linear notions of change as a positive force of development tend to emphasise the upwards progression of change over time. Bates and Smith (2008) have explored that there has been a large focus on temporal transformation in political and institutional studies of social and political change, but argue for a need to consider space in addition, emphasising the role of space in change. Doreen Massey (2005, p.35) has proposed that space can be imagined as 'always in process, as never a closed system' as a way to counter development discourses or 'grand narratives related by modernity'. In this view, space could be one particular way in which the minor and the major relate to one another, with space constructed in differing ways, including the everyday. Considering the relationship between spatial relations and change is significant to my study which is grounded in organisations, both in terms of physical space as well as practices, values and identities within. Massey's conception of space as in process, emphasises the relationship between space and change, as space not only being impacted by wider transformation but also as transforming itself. As I will explore in chapter 6, the physical spaces of the organisation, which themselves were always changing, held important relations to learning and change. Taken alone, the larger-scale perspectives of social transformation are useful, but not enough for this study, which is also deeply concerned with the everyday, acknowledging change from a smaller perspective, and considering human agency in these wider processes of social transformation. The concepts of social transformation that include such everyday perspectives contribute to a relevant theoretical framing of social transformation/change for my study, in contrast to and critical of linear, development discourses.

As I mentioned in chapter 1, there has been a great deal of large-scale social transformation throughout the course of my study, including but not limited to; the Covid-19 pandemic,

changes in UK migration policy and global conflicts which have contributed to forced displacement of people. But in order to consider these large-scale changes and their relationship with learning, I want to conceptualise the minor in relation to change, as despite these large changes, the minor was what felt the most present and relevant in my study of learning. Therefore the concept of large-scale social transformation is important, but it is only one part of the picture. Moving forward, I will mainly use the term social transformation for the macro-level and social change for the micro, but it is important to emphasise that they relate to one another in varied ways, sometimes reinforcing one another, and sometimes moving against each other, and I do not view them as inseparable concepts.

3.2.1. Social change and the everyday

Carolyn Pedwell (2021), has conceptualised the role of the everyday in social change from a speculative pragmatist approach, considering the work of John Dewey to explore the concept of habit as a crucial part of social change. As Pedwell (2021, p.108) stresses, 'progressive and enduring forms of change inevitably exceed the aims and technologies of political and corporate governance – they emerge from, and are embedded within, the ongoing routines, habits, experiments and solidarities of everyday life'. She discusses how studying habit can help us to 'appreciate how affective and political breaks or surges are (sometimes fleeting and sometimes much more significant) moments in ongoing and uneven processes of collaboration, struggle, and experimentation' (Pedwell, 2021, p.54). Therefore, the everyday becomes crucial when considering social transformation. In a study of learning in organisations, this framework suggests that the everyday activities and learning which are occurring are a crucial part of wider processes of social transformation.

Pedwell's understanding of change challenges notions that there is a binary choice between major and minor social transformation/change, as well as posing criticisms of how change can and should be made. By considering that the major and minor are intertwined, and considering the importance of the everyday, there is more room given for agency of those navigating and responding to change. Further, the conceptualisations of the minor which I have discussed also challenge the binary sometimes posed between reform vs revolution when discussing change. Pedwell (2021) highlights the importance of the present moment

and pre-figurative politics, which does not necessarily have an end point in sight. In this understanding, an action does not need to either represent a very radical transformation on the one hand, nor to be maintaining or reproducing an overarching system on the other. Rather, change could emerge from everyday actions, or in planning and negotiating structural challenges while forming ideas about the future.

Manning (2016) also characterises minor acts as not being pre-planned, and that this makes them pragmatic. From this framing, peoples' everyday acts do not aim for conscious goals, and thus the change that results from these actions is unpredictable. This also relates to much informal learning, which I will consider later in this chapter, and is particularly relevant in some of the cases of informal learning that I describe in the subsequent chapters by people who are coping with migration policies in the UK.

While I started this project thinking about macro-level transformation such as global trends in migration and the UK government's ever-evolving policies around asylum, from my ethnographic fieldwork I realised that in the day-to-day life and learning in organisations, change was occurring but that this was on the micro-level, although often within the context of major transformations. As I noted in my fieldnotes on the day that Russia invaded Ukraine 'This morning we woke to the news about Russia invading Ukraine. It wasn't mentioned during the day.' (Glasgow fieldnotes, February 24, 2022). People had day-to-day concerns, and it was not until a couple of months later that Ukrainian refugees started to arrive at the organisation with their own large and small issues. Participants had challenges relating to large events, but they tended to focus on more immediate concerns, which were significant to their lives. Strategies to cope with, and resistance to major transformations in the form of upheavals or war or immigration policy, were often expressed through small, everyday acts and interactions within the space of the organisation and beyond.

Castles' (2001) conceptualisation of social transformation which also acknowledges change that is not necessarily positive is useful for considering a topic such as asylum, as this is directly related to a complicated global web of interconnected processes of change. It is also impacted by national UK policy, and it has direct consequences for communities and individual people. In adopting a framing that chiefly considers only major social transformation, refugees can be seen as caught up in the forces of globalisation, but a lens

that explores minor social transformation also opens up a study of refugees' own strategies for coping with, counteracting and facilitating transformation.

It is exactly the 'routines, habits, experiments and solidarities' described by Pedwell (2021) which I aimed to observe through my fieldwork. This also ties in with Massey's (2005) ideas about the role of space in change, which highlights the importance of the sites in which habits and change can take place. The everyday can be characterised as a contradiction, it can be both 'ordinary and extraordinary, self-evident and opaque, known and unknown, obvious and enigmatic.' (Highmore, 2001, p.16). Therefore I have constructed a theoretical framing of social change that is concerned with the everyday, but that is rooted in the large-scale processes of social transformation, working through one another, considering both how sanctuary seekers are subject to global and national processes, while also considering their everyday agency in navigating and responding to and facilitating change.

Although there may have been the potential to resist major transformation, the forces of change are usually of a scale that make it more difficult for individuals to resist these major changes. The nature of the multiple and ongoing social transformations which occur, has created an environment characterised by precarity for specific groups of people. This precarious environment means that there is a continual and uncertain threat of change and that uncontrolled and unpredictable change may occur in people's lives which may also lead to learning that is not necessarily positive. Learning may be unplanned, unintentional and in response to circumstances that are out of someone's control. In the following sections I will explore theoretical conceptions of precarity, which was a key driver of this kind of learning, and consider its relevance for this study. I will also discuss different conceptions which are key in understanding learning in refugee contexts.

3.3. Framing precarity, liminality and resistance

3.3.1 Precarity: Cruel optimism and precarious pedagogy

In this section, I aim to explore how the concept of precarity has been conceptualised and consider its relationship with change and learning. As I discuss later, the data from my fieldwork revealed that people in the organisations (staff and learners) were experiencing precarity in a variety of ways. Therefore I want to discuss different framings of precarity in order to be able to situate it alongside conceptions of learning and change. By building a

framing of precarity, I want to be able to account for how continual change, and the threat of change was impacting people in the organisations I researched with.

The theoretical concept(s) of precarity and precariousness have been utilised in various ways. McCormack & Salmenniemi (2016) highlight different strands in the discussion of precarity. One of these ties the concept of precarity with that of vulnerability, exploring the body, what counts as human, and of ethics of relationality (Butler, 2004). In discussions of refugees, a move to situate vulnerability as fostered by circumstances, rather than inherent to individuals has been put forward (Welfens & Bekyol, 2021). Another strand of thinking around precarity is concerned with the consequences of neoliberal capitalist structures (some of which I discussed in chapter 2) on 'life, labour and subjectivity' (McCormack and Salmenniemi, 2016, p.6). For example, Guy Standing (2011, 2014) has built on the concept of the 'precariat' to explore how precarity and labour are inter-related. He argues that the precariat is 'an emerging class characterized by chronic insecurity, detached from the old norms of labour and the working class… governments are reducing the rights of many of their own people while further weakening the rights of more traditional denizens, migrants' (Standing, 2014, p.1). Standing emphasises precarity as a condition enabled by limitations on the rights of individuals enforced by neoliberal policies which create insecure environments. I feel that there are many overlaps between these two understandings of precarity, and Zembylas (2018, p.97) stresses that precarity is an 'ambivalent figure', which may shift and change.

Lauren Berlant (2011, p.192) argued that the widespread adoption of neoliberal modes of economics has led to privatisation, the downsizing of social welfare and 'market-driven' practices that have shaped experiences of insecurity globally and even across lines of traditional social class. They developed the theoretical concept of 'cruel optimism' to frame the neoliberal capitalist assertion that if an individual works hard, they will succeed in life, and how this has shaped a fantasy of 'the good life'. This successful life is rooted in factors such as upward social mobility and security, and is contrasted by the overwhelming reality of precarity for the majority of people (Berlant, 2011). However, they assert that this fantasy has also ground people down and Pedwell (2021) points out that Berlant's 'cruel optimism', rather than facilitating social transformation/change, can keep people stuck in a kind of stasis which could hinder change.

The concept of 'cruel optimism' also relates with how people may *learn to cope* with precarity. Berlant explores how 'Cruel Optimism turns toward thinking about the ordinary as an impasse shaped by crisis in which people find themselves developing skills for adjusting to newly proliferating pressures to scramble for modes of living on.' (Berlant, 2011, p.8). Therefore this provides an appropriate link between structurally precarious conditions and how these conditions may stimulate learning and impact change for people experiencing them. Berlant (2011, p.99) conceptualises agency as 'an activity exercised within *spaces of ordinariness* that does not always or even usually follow the literalizing logic of visible effectuality' (emphasis added). In this view, people may have agency to respond to precarious circumstances, but this may not lead to notable change, it is 'an activity of maintenance not making' (Berlant, 2011, p.100).

The concept of 'cruel optimism', and its focus on the cruelty of aspirations in modern capitalist life particularly resonates within studies of forced migration and learning. McWilliams and Bonet (2016) have applied Berlant's theoretical conception of 'cruel optimism' to a study of refugee youth in the USA. They use the concept of precarity in order to 'describe the conditions that have come to texture global migration patterns in the contemporary moment' (McWilliams & Bonet, 2016, p.155). They point out that those who are refugees experience 'a line of precarity' that runs through their journeys stretching back to pre-displacement, and running into when they arrive in their new countries, as they face insecurities because of uncertainties around status and their unpredictable dealings with institutions (McWilliams & Bonet, 2016). They suggest that refugees frequently arrive in new homes as aspirational, and 'expecting that educational attainment…will deliver them from a life of liminality and precarity', but that when they arrive they 'discover that the very institutions purposed to help them realize "the good life", are in an equally precarious position, they find themselves disillusioned and grasping for a hopeful beginning' (McWilliams & Bonet, 2016, p.158). The authors point out that there is a dichotomy between young refugees' expectations of finding opportunities to access education and the reality that they experience. In this sense, the 'cruel optimism' which refugees may experience is tied to their aspirations for access and journeys through education, which may not be as they expect, as those ambitions are hampered by precarity.

Precarity also impacts on pedagogy, and some scholars have explored how the two may be related. Jennifer Fisher (2011) has commented that precarious conditions for young people have impacted on their experiences in education. She explores how pedagogy, rather than being an individualised experience can be viewed as a 'public and pedagogical engagement', stressing that pedagogy can be unpredictable and difficult, rather than a strict 'code of conduct' (Fisher, 2011, p.385). She calls for a 'precarious pedagogy' which demands educators to be responsive to the structural precariousness which may differently impact on young people as an 'ethical and political obligation' (Fisher, 2011, p.418). Zembylas (2018) has also considered the ways in which precarity could influence pedagogy, questioning how educators can re-frame precarity to critically explore its potentials and dangers within pedagogical practice. Building on Fisher's (2011) notion of 'precarious pedagogy', he proposes a '*critical pedagogy of precarity*… a pedagogical framework that critically interrogates the normative ways in which students and teachers engage with precarity' [emphasis original] (Zembylas, 2018, p.103). These conceptions of precarious pedagogy move away from approaches to education that promise mastery in a particular field and more openness to the varied circumstances of those who are learning. Nevertheless, Kimberly Powell (2019, p. 193) has observed that these constructions have still located 'pedagogy' within formal educational institutions and are limited by 'particular constructs and constraints of teaching and learning'. As an alternative view, she has considered walking 'as precarious public pedagogy' observing the 'paradoxical relationship of constraints and possibilities' that come in precarious circumstances (Powell, 2019, p.196).

It has also been pointed out that there has been a gendered dimension to experiences of precarity globally. Natalia Flores Garrido (2020) in her feminist exploration of precarity, has highlighted that precarity impacts men and women differently. The division of labour along gendered lines has meant that there is 'less value associated with the activities performed by women' (Flores Garrido, 2020, p.583). She also points out that 'precarity is deeply connected to processes of colonialism and the different role of racialized bodies in capitalism' (Flores Garrido, 2020, p.588). In this way, she suggests that an intersectional feminist approach to precarity is important in understanding the myriad ways that precarity can impact on different people globally, and how this is tied up in structural inequalities. As I will explore later, this idea also relates to this study as I found there were symptoms of

precarity which tended to impact very differently on men and women in the organisations I researched with.

Although conditions of precarity particularly impact those seeking sanctuary, precarity appears to be something that impacts almost everyone. There has also been discussion more widely about the roles of those who are working with people who are refugees and asylum seekers. In the previous chapter in which I explored the context for this study. I discussed unreliable funding which led to precarious working conditions of educators and those working in the charity sector. Kouritzin et al., (2021) have conceptualised the additional, unpaid but essential tasks which English language educators in Higher Education, such as replying to student emails and preparations, as 'magic time'. They have discussed how the prevalence of neoliberal ideology in institutions has led to steadily increasing workload for staff, but decreases in the amount of time available to do work. In the previous chapter I discussed austerity cuts and how these have contributed to organisations in the third sector having to do more work with fewer resources. This suggests that precarity is not limited to participants in organisations, and can be experienced by educators and other staff who are working in charities supporting refugees.

Before I undertook my fieldwork, precarity was not a part of my initial planned theoretical framework, which was originally guided by perspectives on social change and learning. However, precarity emerged as an important element of everyday life of the participants, and I applied some of the above theories as a way of making sense of the data because precariousness seemed so relevant to the everyday learning, lives and change of those in the organisations. Through reading in the field of precarity I realised that precariousness is often fundamentally tied with change and learning. The uncertain conditions of precarity are frequently facilitated through macro-level social structures, and are inherent in factors such as neoliberal policies, and structural violence. Formal learning is also tied-in with these structural processes, and educational institutions themselves may also experience precarity, impacting on the lifelong learning of those who encounter them (McWilliams & Bonet, 2016). In this way, precarity can be seen as the product of large-scale social change, but also as an ever-changing, 'ambivalent' (Zembylas, 2018, p.97) force that impacts on everyday lives in a multiplicity of ways, creating conditions of unpredictability and uncertainty, manifesting in *continual* and *unpredictable* change. The conditions of precarity could lead to

stasis, or imperceptible change as people strive to maintain themselves (Berlant, 2011). However, Butler et al., (2016) have asserted that living precariously can be reconsidered as a part of resistance, and not only a negative condition, with precarity opening space for alternatives which could take the form of different pedagogical interventions. Rather than undermining agency, activities may form a part of everyday change which can be grounded in affective responses to precarious forces. Additionally, people can learn to cope (typically informally) with precarity through their experiences and encounters, and learning thus forms a part of this micro-level change. Therefore this theoretical conception of precarity which considers how structural insecurity, social change and learning are interwoven forms a key theoretical underpinning for this thesis, and I will use this as a lens to consider the data in later chapters.

3.3.2. Liminality, resilience and resistance

As I explored in chapter 2, many studies have pointed out that people who are refugees and asylum seekers experience liminality, or a sense of in-betweenness or limbo while they are building lives in the United Kingdom. In the UK context, this liminality is caused by various structural challenges relating to factors including migration status, the right to work, waiting times for claims to be processed and temporary accommodation. The theoretical concept of liminality was developed by Victor Turner (1969, p.95) in the context of pre-industrial societies, as a state of individuals 'betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial'. Ghorashi et al., (2018) have elaborated on liminality in refugee contexts, exploring asylum seekers' agency in liminal spaces in Europe. While they point out that the painfulness of waiting in limbo for asylum decisions is always present, individuals in those situations found ways to resist and demonstrated their agency in reflecting on their situation and building ideal dreams of future lives (Ghorashi et al., 2018). They write that by 'emphasizing the various forms of refugees' agency (despite the intensity of structural constraints) and being receptive towards their positive energy in the early years of their stay can help guide them more effectively towards realizing their dreams in one form or another' (Ghorashi et al., 2018, p. 386). In this view, while the experience of liminality is a structural one, which is not chosen by refugees and asylum seekers, they were able to resist this and exercise agency through their encounters with in-betweenness, although this may be limited.

Additionally, perspectives on resilience have been offered as a positive alternative to a deficit narrative towards refugees' experiences (Güngör & Strohmeier, 2020). Resilience is frequently defined as the capacity to 'bounce back' from adversity, and is often presented as a skill that can be developed, for example by children in schools (Public Health England, 2014). Vickers & Parris (2007) have explored the use of the term resilience in the context of workers who were made redundant. They note that resilience can be used as an individualising, neoliberal term to justify redundancies, and point out resilience as a descriptor implies that someone would recover easily and be 'unchanged' by a difficult circumstance (Vickers & Parris, 2007, p.114). However they suggest that this was frequently not the case in their research, and that people were often deeply changed by their experiences, both in their personal identities, and professional lives. Groeninck et al., (2020) have explored the idea of the development of resilience in liminal contexts which refugee families experience. They critique a diametrically polarised view of refugee families as either passive victims on the one hand, or as resilient, 'bouncing back' or 'adapting' on the other. Rather, they suggest that 'a more nuanced understanding of resilience in relation to vulnerability is required that simultaneously recognizes families' attempts of restoring or experiencing aspects of a viable life while nevertheless remaining in a situation of social suffering due to structural power relations' (Groeninck et al., p.360). Butler et al. (2016, p.6), have asserted that the traditional concept of resilience can be reframed as an act of resistance, rather than presuming an always positive model of resilience:

> 'we propose to consider resistance in a new light in order to differentiate its strategies from notions of neoliberal resilience that cover over the structural conditions of accelerated precarity, inequality, statelessness, and occupation. Our task is to resist the neutralization of practices of social transformation that follows when the discourse of protection becomes hegemonic, undermining and effacing varied forms of popular resistance or political agency.'

Therefore a view which considers that people are resistant, and a careful construction of resilience as a concept is necessary, in order to distinguish it from the dominant neoliberal paradigm of resilience which puts responsibility on individuals to 'bounce back' from challenges unchanged. In the former view, those who go through the asylum system may be resistant and resilient, and learn how to develop these in nuanced ways.

Conceptions of precarity, liminality and resistance add to theories of social transformation, framing the forces which impact on the lives of sanctuary seekers. These ideas also frame sanctuary seekers' everyday responses and encounters with change by contributing to understandings of how refugees learn, recognising that they are responding to a complex and challenging set of circumstances characterised by continual change. Berlant's 'cruel optimism' may apply to how sanctuary seekers and educators working with them are responding to precarious conditions and have conceptualised the future. Including perspectives on resistance allows for more scope to consider people's agency in navigating the varied challenges that they face through those conditions that can be understood through precarity and 'cruel optimism'. I also decided to adopt an alternative view of 'resistant' resilience that does not ignore the change that people go through in their responses to processes of social transformation. In the following section I will explore the final component that makes up the theoretical lens of this thesis, discussing conceptualisations of learning, particularly considering the differences between how formal, non-formal and informal learning have been framed, in order to build a framing of learning that is relevant in refugee organisations.

3.4. Conceptual approaches to learning, literacies and pedagogy

In the previous sections I touched on ideas of learning and pedagogy and how they have been explored in the context of precarity. In the following passages I will delve more deeply into the field of learning, to build a framework of how I approach learning in this thesis. I will discuss the divergences between how learning has been theorised particularly considering how framings of informal learning have been developed as a lens to consider the everyday. I will also consider how perspectives in the field of literacy have framed learning, challenging dominant development discourses. Additionally, I tie together ways in which learning, literacy and social change have intersected, and may be drawn together to build a theoretical framing for this thesis.

Formal learning has been defined as learning which happens in structured environments such as schools, colleges and universities, involving a planned curriculum, and typically involves assessment and the award of a qualification (Johnson & Majewska, 2022). It has been suggested that formal learning has won the 'conceptual battle' over informal and non-

formal learning to become the learning that is most regularly valued and considered because of the primacy of considerations of planned learning that happens in institutions such as schools and universities (Souto-Otero, 2021 p.366). In this view, most discussions of education and learning tend to be implicitly about *formal* education and *formal* learning, which has become the hegemonic view in much policy discourse and practice. It has additionally been observed that the dominance of formal learning in policy agendas has been problematic in contexts in the Global South in which non-formal education is valued (Takayanagi, 2020).

UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) has defined non-formal education as:

> "Education that is institutionalised, intentional and planned by an education provider. The defining characteristic of non-formal education is that it is an addition, alternative and/ or complement to formal education within the process of the lifelong learning of individuals. It is often provided to guarantee the right of access to education for all. It caters to people of all ages but does not necessarily apply a continuous pathway-structure; it may be short in duration and/or low-intensity, and it is typically provided in the form of short courses, workshops or seminars. Non-formal education mostly leads to qualifications that are not recognised as formal or equivalent to formal qualifications by the relevant national or sub-national education authorities or to no qualifications at all. Non-formal education can cover programmes contributing to adult and youth literacy and education for out-of-school children, as well as programmes on life skills, work skills, and social or cultural development" (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012, p.11).

This definition demonstrates that non-formal education has been seen to cover a very broad spectrum, has been closely tied with formal education (non-formal may 'complement' formal education) and that it may have varied outcomes. Non-formal education has been often applied as a concept to educational programmes in the Global South and observes that this can serve to build it as lacking something from formal programmes in the North (Rogers, 2005). Non-formality could be applied to the programmes of learning which are offered, or about the contexts where the learning would take place (Rogers, 2014a).

The organisations which were the sites of this study could be framed as offering non-formal educational opportunities. They did not lead generally to formal qualifications, with no final exam at the end of the classes that they offered and were ensuring that people had access to lifelong learning that they wanted in local community settings, although some learners were accessing more formal classes at local colleges in addition. This concept could be said to characterise the organisations and the environments that they offered, and some of the learning opportunities that arose there. Rogers (2005) remarked that there have been numerous conceptualisations of non-formal education, and that there has been a lack of unified theoretical framing around the concept, impacting how it has been practised. Although there are many overlaps with informal learning, and as I will explore later, there were many opportunities for informal learning within these non-formal educational spaces, it seems important to distinguish between the two conceptually in order to consider how both intended and unintended learning was taking place, and to distinguish this from more formal educational settings such as colleges.

Manuel Souto-Otero (2021) comments that informal learning has been frequently defined around what it is not, namely formal learning. Although it is regularly neglected in policy, there has been much conceptual discussion of informal learning. Hager and Halliday (2006) have also posited that the balance of focus in policy, practice and research of lifelong learning has been too much on formal learning, rather than on informal learning (Hager and Halliday, 2006). Informal learning has been depicted using the metaphor of 'the base of the iceberg' (Tough, 1979), referring to the largest part of the iceberg which is hidden below the surface of the water it is floating in, because it is the largest amount of learning which happens daily for everyone, but that it often goes unrecognised. This characterisation of informal learning suggests that it is often neglected in considerations of learning, and in studies of education, with a typical focus on more formal learning outcomes. Informal learning frequently happens socially in our connections with other people (Openjuru et al., 2016). Rogers (2014b, p.20) puts forward that 'informal learning is ubiquitous, universal and continuous; it is part of the process of living in a social context'. Additionally, Rogers and Horrocks (2010, p.133) have put forward that informal learning can occur in concentrated 'episodes' that are a part of processes of transformation in life. Particular life changes and events may instigate and shape episodes of informal learning throughout life. This

additionally aligns with Hager and Halliday's (2006, p.129) conceptualisation of informal learning as embedded within a process of development or transformation. Moll et al., (1992) have discussed the ways in which through informal learning, people build up 'funds of knowledge' skills and knowledge that we use throughout our lives, but that are not necessarily recognised formally and are often tacit. Hager and Halliday additionally (2006, p. 5) argue that examining informal learning more deeply should underlie a shift from seeing 'learning as preparing towards learning as becoming'. They posit that a neglect of informal learning has also been linked with a conceptualisation of learning as solely acquisition, rather than considering learning as a part of complex processes and social practices (Hager and Halliday, 2006). These accounts frame informal learning as diverging from policy agendas that posit rigid understandings of educational attainment, and towards a more 'life-wide' (Tuckett, 2017) understanding of learning that may be happening in various unplanned ways in different circumstances.

As informal learning has an extremely broad scope, it would be helpful to consider its components. Rogers (2014a) differentiates between different kinds of informal learning; self-directed, task conscious, incidental and accidental. The latter two, incidental and accidental learning are not planned by either learners or educators, and this has made them more difficult to explore in research, because people may not necessarily recognise them as learning (Rogers, 2014b). A neglect of informal learning from discussion of education and learning has particularly failed marginalised groups. For example, Ismail (2023) comments that women from the Global South may engage in informal, rather than formal learning, observing that this learning has been less valued by researchers and policy makers. Achara et al., (2019) point out that in the case of indigenous women's education, already established self-directed and unintentional informal learning processes as well as intergenerational learning are neglected in research. These accounts suggest that a deficit approach to the knowledge of indigenous women, essentialism with regards to their identities and that through a focus on formal and non-formal learning, policy for education has been instrumental rather than transformative.

Although these distinctions between formal, non-formal and informal have been observed, this is not to suggest that they exist on a binary, or are starkly separated. Mahoney (2001) argues that formal and informal education are not polarised opposites, with educators

moving between different kinds of approaches, and facilitating learning in a wide range of settings which may span the above definitions of informal and formal. Rogers (2014b, p.10) remarks that 'the boundaries between them [informal, non-formal and formal learning] are often blurred as they merge into each other', and that these boundaries will vary depending on the context. Malcolm et al., (2003, p.1) comment that 'it is more accurate to conceive "formality" and "informality" as attributes present in all circumstances of learning.' In this study, I particularly highlight the prominence of informal learning in organisations, but this was regularly occurring within planned activities more in line with definitions of non-formal learning, and there were more and less formal spaces and times for learning within the organisations, which I will discuss in more detail later.

In addition to concepts around learning, discussions in the field of literacy are also useful in building a conceptual framework for this project. Robinson-Pant (2004) suggests that although women's literacy has been regularly presented as a key to development, that this notion has been problematic in its focus on development agendas, and neglect of how women may actually approach literacy. Within the field of literacy, scholars in the field of New Literacy Studies have argued for a perspective of literacy as a *social practice* (Street, 1984). Rather than a fixed view of literacy, this perspective emphasises multiple *literacies*. Rather than focussing on a pre-planned outcome, this view opens the idea of literacy to include different kinds of knowledge, as well as considering alternative ways people engage with literacy. This view sees literacy as located in the everyday, understanding it as everywhere in the life of a person, who engages in many kinds of literacy tasks which may often not be acknowledged (Openjuru et al., 2016). Recognising that literacies are situated in cultural and social contexts is also useful in framing the learning of those who have moved across international borders. For example, Blommeart et al., (2005) have considered how space has oriented multilingualism, considering that with globalisation, and the movement of people, knowledge of languages can be reoriented by place. They argue for a reframing of multilingualism away from individual competence, focussing on what knowledge people do or do not have, but rather as their environment enables or not.

It should also be noted that there are many overlaps between conceptualisations of literacy and education which are concerned with non-formal and informal learning and considerations of social change. Paulo Freire (1970) put forward that as an alternative to a

'banking' style of education that education should be transformational, suggesting 'the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it. This approach has been influential in criticisms of dominant agendas and curriculums in literacy. It has influenced some approaches in participatory ESOL (e.g. Cooke et al., 2015). Although it should be noted that it has been questioned whether approaches labelled as Freirean in education and literacy are always liberatory, and Cooke and Kothari (2001) have argued that Freire's approach has often been misappropriated by development agencies to promote a corporate or neoliberal agenda, rather than used as a truly participatory approach for communities.

Takayanagi (2019), through her exploration of the informal learning and literacies of Maasai women in Kenya, has suggested that there are strong links between women's informal learning and the agency that they have in bringing about social change that is needed in their lives as well as in resisting many of the challenges they face in the form of patriarchal and colonial oppression. Framing learning which is not necessarily planned by an organisation or institution, and locating the everyday as a key concept in learning opens the potential for considering the role of agency and counters a deficit narrative, as it acknowledges that people are learning all of the time, in a variety of ways. Additionally, separating learning and literacy from a notion of education as a formal pathway, and of learning as something which leads to formal qualifications and progression is needed in a study of learning with those who are refugees because of the interruptions that many of those experiencing forced displacement experience in their formal education.

bell hooks, who was mostly situated in a more formal Higher Education environment, discussed an approach to education that was an 'interplay of anticolonial, critical and feminist pedagogies' (hooks, 1994, p.10). She presented the potential for the classroom when guided by these approaches: 'when the classroom is truly engaged, it's dynamic, it's fluid. It's *always* changing' (hooks, 1994, p. 158). Talking about the experience of teaching in formal educational environments, hooks commented that 'It's very important to emphasize habit. It's so difficult to change existing structures because the habit of repression is the norm. Education as the practice of freedom is not just about liberatory knowledge, it's about a liberatory practice in the classroom' (hooks, 1994, p.147). This conceptualisation presents the problems and promises inherent in formal educational environments. This relates to the

concept of 'precarious pedagogy' (Fisher, 2011) discussed earlier, with educational systems reproducing structural oppressions, and classroom approaches adopted that can pose alternatives. Like conceptions of 'precarious pedagogy', hooks was also rooted in a more formal view of learning because of her role as a teacher in a university setting, but her work is also relevant in less formal contexts.

In the above section in which I explored conceptualisations of precarity, I discussed that 'precarious pedagogy' (Fisher, 2011) has been suggested as a way that precarity can be considered by educators, opening the potential of pedagogy to a broader set of encounters than may be expected in the classroom. In addition, the concept of 'public pedagogy' from a critical perspective has also opened the view of pedagogy away from the proliferation of social and cultural norms, towards also viewing it as a means by which those norms could be unsettled (Hickey-Moody et al., 2010). Burdick et al., (2013) have pointed out that there have been numerous framings of public pedagogy in many contexts, and although these accounts are often from critical, feminist or activist perspectives, that its meaning is not always explicated or deconstructed. Biesta (2013a, p. 15) has proposed that public pedagogy can be seen in three ways, as '*for* the public, *of* the public or in the interest of *publicness'.* He proposes that the latter has the potential to be 'about the creation of ways of being and doing that, on the one hand, resist and push back the logic of the market and that, on the other hand, resist and push back incursions from the private sphere' (Biesta, 2013, p.23). Henry Giroux (2004, p.60) has observed that adopting a cultural studies perspective towards public pedagogy acknowledges 'the primacy of culture's role as an educational site where identities are continually being transformed, power is enacted, and learning assumes a political dynamic as it becomes not only the condition for the acquisition of agency but also the sphere for imagining oppositional social change.' Although traditional conceptions of pedagogy have been closely tied with formal education, considering an engaged/public pedagogy framing fits with a perspective of informality in learning and literacy from a social practice perspective.

By exploring informal learning, the everyday becomes much more important, and the focus widens from planned learning objectives to daily life and interactions, some of which may happen in the classroom environment, but most outside. This project was based in community organisations working with sanctuary seekers, which are often characterised as

non-formal educational environments, some of the nuances of which I have already considered. The framing of education and learning within this thesis is critical of a deficit framing or a linear narrative of lifelong learning as an uninterrupted journey in education throughout life. By centring informal learning rather than formal outcomes, alongside framings of social transformation, precarity and resistance, the learning that happens in refugee organisations diverges from narratives that learning is a linear progression through a series of pre-planned objectives, but that it follows a more unpredictable route, that is dictated by the people who are navigating the everyday challenges that I describe in later chapters. A social practice approach to literacy is also useful to this thesis as it presents the idea that knowledges and ways of making meaning of those who may not fit in with the dominant culture may have been neglected in explorations of education and learning. As I discuss in the findings sections, the ways in which learning and social change were related were regularly informal and related to people's everyday practices that were a part of coping and resisting precarious circumstances. Alongside this, a consideration of precarious, public pedagogy can frame ways in which learning responds to change as well as how people exercise agency and how change can happen through learning.

3.5. Conclusion

Social transformation and learning are related in numerous ways. I have explored major and minor social transformation, and many of the day-to-day negotiations of this change, and how these relate to learning, both to learn to cope, as well as drawing on and disorienting prior experiences of learning. The precarity which results from social transformation at a major scale has drawn questions about agency to respond through everyday actions. Berlant's (2011, p.100) conception of Cruel Optimism is useful to reconsider what responses to change may look like, for example, 'maintenance not making', and Butler et al.'s (2016) re-conceptualisation of resilience as resistance, offer the opportunity to reframe how people resist precarious circumstances. In the case of people who are refugees and asylum seekers, the challenges which arise from the UK asylum system, including precarious migration status and experiences of liminality mean that people are encountering varying challenges daily. This impacts on how people can access learning programmes, as well as the kinds of informal learning that people want or enact. This chapter has built a theoretical framing for this thesis which looks beyond linear progression and pre-determined outcomes, in terms of

how it views both social transformation and learning. This perspective is suitable to consider how people navigated social transformation that was out of their control, while also considering how they learned what they needed in order to respond to, adapt to or challenge this change and the organisations' role in this. A combination of the perspectives of social transformation, precarity and learning form a theoretical framework for this thesis, framing how I consider what was going on in the organisations I did my fieldwork with. Examining 'precarious pedagogy' (Fisher, 2011) also opened questions of how organisations and the people in them may be adapting materials and spaces to respond to precarious conditions, often without realising it, in ways that look beyond individual attainment to solidarities and resistance of precarious structural circumstances. In the latter chapters I will explore the main themes of this thesis which came from my fieldwork, and in the discussion chapter (chapter 8) I will draw these together alongside the concepts discussed in this chapter to consider how learning and change are related in organisations supporting refugees and asylum seekers in the UK. In the next chapter I will discuss the methodology of the study, ethnography, introducing the sites I conducted research with, as well as considering my positionality and some of the ethical issues I encountered.

Chapter Four- Methodology: an ethnographic approach in two organisations

4.1. Introduction

In the previous chapters I explored the policy environment in the UK around immigration, as well as in the fields of adult education in England and Scotland, which have fostered challenges for those who are refugees and asylum seekers in the UK in accessing formal educational opportunities. I have also outlined how third-sector organisations may be filling some of these gaps. When exploring the theory around learning and social change, I began to consider how learning which occurs in organisations may be related to change, and wanted to explore learning which may not usually be acknowledged in typical framings of education. In this chapter, I explore the methodological approach of ethnography and how this was developed and applied in order to complete this study, as well as how the data was analysed once it was collected. I provide outlines of the two organisations which were the sites of the research, situating these in order to build a picture of the spaces in which I immersed myself throughout the process. I also delve into reflection on my own positionality, and how I situated myself within the research process in order to build a reflexive standpoint. Ethically, there were many evolving considerations throughout this research project, and I develop these within this chapter. Throughout this research project, there was a lot of change to the original plans I had made, some of which I decided on intentionally, and some of which was due to factors outside of my control (particularly Covid-19). I also try to document these evolutions here, and reflect upon how my own role impacted on the research as it evolved.

4.2. Development of the methodology

In the opening chapter of this thesis I outlined how my experience of returning to the UK and volunteering with organisations supporting sanctuary seekers instigated my initial interest in this topic and later development of this research project. My intersecting experiences as a teacher, former economic migrant, community volunteer and researcher combined to motivate me to research the topic of education for people who are refugees and asylum seekers in the UK. My experiences in Scotland and England had led me to note

the different approaches of the respective governments towards adult education, as well as experiences in organisations in both places. In the first stages of my PhD project, I undertook a discourse analysis of policy documents, exploring how adult education was included or not, between England and Scotland. I have discussed some of the findings from this research in previous sections, and this exploration formed part of the initial scoping of the literature which helped me to form this study. I was also volunteering as a teacher at the start of this PhD project at an NGO supporting refugees and asylum seekers, teaching classes online during 2020 and 2021 because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Through my research and experience I was driven to explore change and the relationship between change and learning in organisations.

As discussed in the previous chapters, there is a complex and intersecting policy environment in the UK, with structural challenges arising from migration and education policy as well as austerity cuts to public services and the third sector. I have explored how these factors impact ongoing social change which leads to precarity for people who are refugees and asylum seekers in the UK. I developed a main research question which aimed to explore the relationship between learning and social change in organisations supporting refugees. There are two sides to this question, the first being how social change impacts on learning, and the second considers how learning may lead to change. Therefore the following research questions were developed:

In organisations supporting refugees and asylum seekers in the UK, how do processes of learning relate to social change?
   a. How does social change impact on learning in organisations?
   b. How does learning in organisations facilitate social change?

This study was situated within two organisations. The first was a Lifelong Learning Centre in Glasgow, Brooklea learning, and the second was a charity aiming to support integration for refugees in Norwich, Unity Hub.[16] I will outline these organisations in more detail later in this chapter. I selected these organisations through personal connections, as I had lived in both cities previously. In Glasgow, I had not been to the organisation before but knew a colleague

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[16] The names of the organisations given are pseudonyms.

who had volunteered there and spoken about it to me, and in Norwich I had volunteered with the organisation for around a year before doing research there. The research was conducted in late 2021 and throughout 2022. I moved to Glasgow for the fieldwork there, but I am permanently based in Norwich. There were some interruptions to the fieldwork due to Covid-19, in December 2021 there were restrictions in Scotland related to the Omicron variant and I returned to Norwich during this time. I returned to Glasgow and continued the research in February 2022. The fieldwork in Glasgow was more 'intense' with me spending more days per week at the organisation, and fieldwork in Norwich was a bit less so. Unity Hub in Norwich had a summer break which also interrupted fieldwork.

Fieldwork in Glasgow: November 2021 – April 2022

Fieldwork in Norwich: May 2022 – December 2022

When I revisited my initial plan for this research, which I wrote in 2020/2021, I realised that I had also planned for the contingency that classes may be held online, due to Covid-19. However, in the end I only observed in-person activities, as at that time the organisations had resumed their in-person activities.

I feel that my perspectives about the ontological and epistemological dimensions of the research are continually evolving, and it is challenging to neatly categorise them. I am guided by social-constructivist theory epistemologically, and I am interested in the rich and nuanced ways in which people interact with one another, and re-create and interpret the world. This means that a qualitative approach is suitable for my research. I am also influenced by critical theory, particularly from a social justice perspective. This has brought me to question how hegemonic structures in our society may be reproducing inequality, and how they may be challenged.

However, I believe that social constructivist perspectives can be restricted by a neglect of the non-human in shaping reality (Barad, 2003). The critical paradigm can also be problematic, sometimes being interpreted in elitist ways, implying that some people who are oppressed are in need of liberation by others (Mack, 2010). Furthermore, Hall and Tandon (2017, p.7) have noted that 'The epistemologies of most peoples of the world, whether Indigenous, or excluded on the basis of race, gender or sexuality are missing… Without a much deeper analysis of whose knowledge, how that knowledge was gathered and how transformative

change is encouraged through deeper attention to knowledge democracy, public engagement in knowledge sharing simply reinforces the existing colonized relations of knowledge power'. This suggests that epistemologies which are valued in academia neglect many of those valued by the Global Majority. I am still exploring these areas, but feel it is important to acknowledge the colonial routes of knowledge production in the academy (e.g. Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). I decided upon qualitative methods because they were suitable for my research questions and epistemological perspectives, and my continual reflexivity was informed by a critical stance. I wanted to maintain an openness to acknowledge alternative epistemological standpoints and be aware of how my own education and cultural experiences impacted on how I have chosen to approach research. I will explore some of these ideas in more detail later in this chapter alongside my positionality and how this has shaped the research.

4.3. Ethnography

In chapter 3, I explored theoretical conceptions of informal learning, discussing how it is ubiquitous and often the result of spontaneous, unplanned interactions. Alan Rogers (2014b, p.36) has pointed out that methods such as surveys and interviews alone can make it difficult to reveal what informal learning may be occurring, especially if it is unintentional. I also know from my experience of working with organisations, that spaces are variable, and that participants may attend sporadically, and that classrooms may not always look the same every week. These factors, alongside the research questions and focus, meant that I developed an ethnographic approach for this study, to observe and investigate within the organisations and reflect upon learning that was occurring within the everyday. Ethnography has been put forward as an appropriate methodology for investigating learning and change within organisations as it is concerned with the exploration of groups and what happens within them (Gregory, 2005). I decided that I would like to be able to observe a range of different activities and talk to multiple stakeholders in the organisation, rather than simply focussing on one factor, such as limiting myself to exploring outcomes from English classes, and only speaking to students.

Ethnography has its roots in anthropology, but has developed a great deal since its conception and has come to be conceptualised in different ways across disciplines. Street,

(2001, p.93) suggests 'proximity and distance held in tension simultaneously' is important in ethnography, as the ethnographer attempts to immerse themselves in field sites, while being able to observe and note occurrences which may not necessarily seem out of the ordinary. Heath and Street (2008, p.32) also remark that 'ethnographic research has come to mean "making the familiar strange"' for the researchers involved.[17] As I will explore later, this was something that involved a process of learning for me as a researcher, as I was relatively familiar with the environments I was researching in. It has also been noted that ethnographers also attempt to make the strange familiar, exploring and describing settings for those who may not be familiar with them, discovering and describing 'what is going on' (Openjuru et al., 2016, p.21).

Madison (2020, p.21) puts forward that when combined with a critical theoretical perspective, the ethnographer can take up the role of *critical ethnographer*, which frames ethnography as 'critical theory in action' [emphasis mine]. In this view, critical ethnography can be seen as embodying a social justice standpoint. The process of becoming an ethnographer for me involved a combination of reorienting how I saw the organisations and people within them and my observations of them, as well as reflecting on how my own critical perspective may impact the research I was doing. As I will elaborate in the coming paragraphs, the methods I used evolved throughout the process of the research project.

4.3.1. Ethnographic Methods

Hammersley and Atkinson (2019, p. 3) have posited that 'In terms of data collection, ethnography usually involves the researcher participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, and/or asking questions through informal and formal interviews, collecting documents and artefacts'. Expanding on this framing of ethnography, Madison has put forward that:

> 'Critical ethnography adheres to a cross sections of methods. Ethnography is
> generally defined by its aim to engage, interpret, and record the social meanings,
> values, structures, and embodiments within a particular domain, setting, or field of
> human interaction. Because the central approach of the researcher or ethnographer

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[17] A term that they note may first have been used in the 18th Century by poet-philosopher Friedrich von Hardenberg.

is to spend time in the field, to participate in daily life, and to develop trust and close communication with members and interlocutors of a social world, it follows that the *critical* ethnographer is particularly concerned with how human actions and experiences are generated by these social worlds and, in turn, how these social worlds are generated by them.' (Madison, 2020, p.4), [emphasis original].

During this PhD study I used participant observation during different activities offered by the organisation. This meant that I observed and took part in English classes, conversation cafes, community lunches, allotment sessions as well as liminal moments like break times and periods before and after more formal planned activities. The fact that I was a participant observer means that I also played a role in the spaces, and participated in activities that were occurring. This could vary depending on the day or activity that was going on, and some days I sat in classes and made notes while activities went on, while other days teachers asked me whether I could help some students, or I would get involved with assisting with a task such as making tea or coffee. My research was overt and I explained who I was and what I was doing to those people that I was observing. I was also a noticed person in the spaces. During class times, students and teachers often turned to me and asked me questions, or asked me to do things as I mentioned above. I was aware that as I was taking a critical ethnographic approach, my involvement and action in the process was a part of the research, and that my research could not be guided by 'a golden rule of objectivity' (Madison, 2020, p. 5).

I kept detailed fieldnotes, throughout the time spent with the organisations. I mostly handwrote notes during the days in the form of 'scratchnotes' (Sanjek, 1990), and sometimes I took voice-notes, phone memos, drawing diagrams and took photos. I then typed out these notes in more detail during the evenings when I got home, and compiled everything together digitally, using Microsoft OneNote, which was a convenient and secure platform to host all of this data (which I had been recommended by another PhD researcher). These fieldnotes formed the basis of notes which are quoted throughout the following chapters, as well as the photos and diagrams I have included. Although these are my typed-up notes, they have a certain style to them. I wrote my typed fieldnotes predominantly in the present tense as that felt appropriate to the moments I was recording as I was attempting to immerse myself in the day's events while recording them. I was also

less concerned about structure and grammar when typing my fieldnotes, to maintain a free-flow of writing. When I quote from fieldnotes in the following chapters, these are from the original data and I have mostly kept these unchanged unless stated otherwise. This process was challenging, as I would try to notice everything I possibly could, and would worry about forgetting details. Especially at the beginning of fieldwork, I would note down how the spaces were set up, and walk around the local community observing the buildings and spaces. While I was in the organisations, I would generally make notes in a notepad. After I left the organisations, my mind would be full, and I would create voice notes while walking, and phone memos on the bus home. Gorman (2016) points out that there are different social implications to using either a phone or a notepad when making notes, reinforcing power dynamics. For example some people who may be being observed did not have access to smart phones, and I always made notes while in the organisation in my notebook. Sanjek (1990), citing Ottenburg, has remarked that as well as collecting fieldnotes, ethnographers also collect 'headnotes', and while the former stay the same, the latter evolve and change, and are an important part of the process of ethnographic research. These headnotes were also important in my processes of data collection. A 'headnote' could be something that is remembered by the researcher, but that they had not noted or only briefly mentioned in their initial 'scratchnotes'.

Throughout the fieldwork process I conducted semi-structured interviews (Robson & McCartan, 2016) with staff and students. These conversations were held within the organisations, during breaks between classes, when we could find the time to speak. Using a semi-structured approach was important to me, as I did have particular topics I wanted to ask people about, but I also wanted them to be able to elaborate on matters that were important to them, and be able to follow up on interesting threads in the conversation. I transcribed the interviews manually, which I found re-immersed me in the data, and was a useful part of the process of data analysis. I also conducted what I have subsequently come to refer to as research workshops, which I will outline further in the next section.

4.3.1.1. Overview of data collected

Table 4- Fieldwork in Glasgow: November 2021 – April 2022

Participant observation	ESOL classes. Observed classes 3-4 times per week. 2-8 Participants in each class. (8 was maximum allowed at the time because of Covid rules). Two of the weekly classes were considered 'family classes' and were aimed at parents of young children.
Participant observation	Other activities: 'International café' hosted weekly (from February)– less formal conversation group attended by participants from the ESOL classes Lunches and break times A community lunch
Interviews	With 2x tutors, (interview guide Appendix B)
Research workshops	2x research workshops – workshop 1 - 3 participants, workshop 2 - 4 participants (6 unique participants). For these it was a mixture of people with widely varying levels of English, and I planned questions and activities such as ranking and discussion [Appendix C]

Table 5- Fieldwork in Norwich: May 2022 – December 2022

Participant observation	ESOL classes: 2 days per week, 2 hour classes, 4 different levels running simultaneously taught by different teachers. Between 6-30 participants in classes depending on the levels of students.

Participant observation	Other activities:
	Allotment sessions –held once per week – 3 hours
	Refugee week – Community garden event – 4 hours
	Community lunches, breaktimes
Interviews	1 staff member
	3 participants of the classes (participants in Norwich wanted to do an interview rather than a research workshop)
	[Interview guide Appendix B]

While I was conducting the participant observation, I did not record the audio, as some of the participants of classes did not want to be recorded. I recorded the audio of interviews.

In each site, I asked some staff members to do a semi-structured interview based on informal conversations that we had, I felt that their knowledge would add important insights to the findings, and that it would be useful to be able to quote this. These were semi-structured interviews, and I used a rough interview guide [appendix B], but these often took the form of conversations, and there were topics unique to Glasgow and Norwich. As I will explain in more detail in the following section, I undertook some research workshops in Glasgow, and interviews in Norwich with learners/participants in the organisations. In Glasgow I invited participants from all the different ESOL groups with the help of the tutors. In Norwich I asked participants of ESOL groups and the interview participants were members of a group that wanted to practice speaking English, and were keen to do an interview (rather than a workshop). The interview guide for participants is also included in appendix B.

4.3.2. An evolving methodology

In my initial proposal for this doctoral research project, I designed a multi-stage approach to the methodology, implementing first an ethnographic stage, and second a Participatory

Action Research stage. There has been some debate about the role of ethnography and its compatibility with participatory research which aims for change. For example, Hammersley and Atkinson (2019, p.19) argue that ethnographic inquiry should not necessarily be directed towards stimulating change, but rather that its main goal of research is the production of knowledge. Wright and Nelson (1995) also highlight the challenges in combining these two methodologies, pointing out that the meaning of participation differs between participant observation and participatory research, highlighting that ethnography intends to *observe* change and PAR intends to *create* change. But this argument has since been challenged by a critical ethnography approach, which 'takes us beneath surface appearances, disrupts the *status quo*, and unsettles both neutrality and taken-for-granted assumptions by bringing to light underlying and obscure operations of power and control' (Madison, 2020, p.5). By taking a critical approach to ethnography, it is more compatible with a Participatory Action Research approach.

Despite my plans to include a stage influenced by Participatory Action Research, through the first ethnographic stage in Glasgow, I realised that this would be challenging. Classes tended to be multi-lingual and groups with various levels of English language ability. There was also a certain amount of unpredictability about who would turn up, with many participants having other commitments, such as childcare, as well as regularly picking up new participants who were referred by other organisations. These factors made it difficult to plan activities spread over more than one workshop, to plan to use interpreters, or to ask participants to do activities in their own time. It was also difficult to know what activities to plan. Ethically, I was also torn because of the limits on people's time and that they told me they really wanted opportunities to learn English, rather than to participate in research. I decided to plan some research workshops in Glasgow, using some activities inspired by participatory action research, but that could not really be called PAR. I reframed these activities as more of a part of the critical ethnography, like the interviews I undertook, rather than as a separate stage. I saw these workshops as being a way of speaking to learners in the organisations, and asking them questions. I kept these very flexible, planning a variety of activities and accepting that I may not have control over who would come, and indeed, only one person was the same across the two workshops. In the end, these ended up as research workshops, which were more of a continuation of the ethnographic field work, than

anything like PAR. These took place in Glasgow and I led two sessions in which I asked questions on participants' experiences of learning and living in Glasgow. The particpants had varying levels of English so I used a variety of activities, including ranking different factors around education, and some discussion questions (appendix C). In the end, I reflected that although I had been eager to include participatory methods, the ethnographic approach was much more useful in answering the research questions that I had developed, and worked more for the participants, who wanted to spend their time in English classes rather than in research workshops. In Norwich, participants told me that they would rather talk to me individually, and building on the experience of Glasgow, I decided to conduct some additional interviews, as a part of the ethnographic approach. This experience brought home the challenge of doing participatory research which is meaningful to both the researcher and the subjects of the research in a short space of time. Having some flexibility in my research plan meant that I could adapt the methods used to suit the participants. The participants of this study had very varied lives, and organisations were often busy and evolving spaces. The process of conducting an ethnographic study in this context meant adapting to these necessities, and being flexible in the research process. Although this could sometimes be messy and I needed to adapt initial plans, this is a feature of ethnographic research, and I felt on reflection that the ethnographic approach suited this research context.

4.4. The research sites

4.4.1. Brooklea learning, Glasgow

There are difficulties with beginning to describe a typical day in this organisation because it was always different, usually with a new participant arriving, or a different event occurring. In order to provide an insight into the organisation, the following is a description of one day in early February, developed from my fieldnotes, to which I have added a few details to add context and clarity, such as the time of year.

Figure 1. Streets and buildings near Brooklea learning

"I get off the bus on a cold winter's day in Glasgow, I have a fifteen minute walk from where I get off to the organisation. I'm not too far from the city centre of Glasgow, but the bus connections are limited. This area has a lot of social housing, and there are two schools on this road. Just before you reach the organisation, there is a small row of shops, some of which have the shutters down. I found out later that some were closed permanently and some were only closed on certain days or times. There is a shop selling filled rolls, which is really popular with the high school students at lunchtime.

It is early 2022, shortly after the Omicron outbreak of Covid-19. The Scottish government have more restrictions than England, and when I arrive at the organisation, temperature checks are done for everyone. A friendly woman, Shirley[18], greets me and checks my temperature[19] and asks whether I would like a cup of tea. The first class of the day has been cancelled because the teacher's daughter had tested positive for Covid-19,[20] so the first activity of the day is an international café. This is a chance for people to chat with each other and play some games in English. Shirley, one of the staff, tells me that she has put some music on so that people feel comfortable speaking, and I notice some quiet reggae playing from a small CD player. Shirley speaks in a Glaswegian accent, quite quickly, and often says my name when we are talking, I notice that she does this with participants too.

It is possible to divide the main classroom to make two smaller rooms as there is a sliding partition which can be pulled across the centre, but at the moment, it is opened to one large room. The windows are open, even though it is raining outside to make sure the room stays

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[18] All of the names given are pseudonyms.

[19] A requirement of the Scottish government at the time due to Covid-19. Everyone coming in or out of the organisation had to sign in, recording the time and their temperature on a sheet.

[20] At this time in Scotland, the government guidance was still for the entire household to isolate if someone had tested positive for Covid-19.

well-ventilated [due to Covid-19]. A woman from Eritrea arrives, and Shirley welcomes her and tells me her name, but she speaks quietly, and it is difficult for me to understand – it sounds like Suram. Next, a man from Palestine, Mohammed and a woman from Iran, Roya, arrive. A couple of others arrive later. Shirley helps them to sign in and takes temperatures. The digital thermometer is a bit temperamental, and it sometimes takes a while to get a reading. Alice, another tutor, arrives and apologises for being late (although she isn't very late at all, a couple of minutes). She is carrying a canvas tote bag and says she has brought some games. She takes out some whiteboard markers and asks everyone to write their names on the small whiteboard, so we can get to know each other. I see the Eritrean woman's name is spelt very differently to how she pronounces it, and we practice saying it. Alice uses a wipe to clean the marker after each person has used it. Alice also makes some tea and coffee for everyone who wants it. Then we start to play a quiz game. Many of the questions use some quite difficult vocabulary, but she finds one about the medals at the Olympics, and one about the five senses. To answer the questions, she has some tiles with letters on, which she asks them to spell out the words on. Yasmin knows the word 'bronze' and someone else knows 'gold'. Alice and Shirley need to tell them some of the vocabulary, and then they are keen to try and spell them using the letter tiles. Everyone claps when someone gets the answer right. One popular question is on the colours of the rainbow, and people point to colours they can see.

Later on, another teacher, John, arrives, and hurriedly says that the partition needs to be drawn across because he has a class starting in five minutes. Mohammed and Shirley get up to help with this. There is then another game about telling the time. It's like bingo. Alice reads the time out, they listen and get a card to put on a bingo card if they have it. Everyone seems to enjoy it. At the end of the café, everyone says they will come again next week".
(Glasgow Fieldnotes, February 2022).

This example, from a month or so into my time with the organisation in Glasgow, shows how people arrived and used the organisation. This was an example of a less formal conversation café, but there were also classes and community lunches while I was there. When I arrived at Brooklea in November 2021, the organisation had a relatively new CEO, who very warmly welcomed me, and gave me a lot of information. By February she had left for a new role, with others telling me that the stress of consistently seeking funding had been very difficult.

While I was there, a new CEO was hired, who had previously worked at the university and he told me that he was interested in Paolo Freire, and in reaching out to the community. The organisation has been around since the early 90s, but the building is very modern and was built in 2015, funded by Lottery money. The learning and event space was downstairs, and as I mentioned above, this could be adapted to fit different uses. There was a reception space at the front, with a reception desk, a waiting area with sofas, and some toilets. Like many other places in Scotland, the bathrooms provided free sanitary products. Before reaching the reception, there was a small corridor and you needed to be buzzed in or have someone open the door for you. There were offices upstairs in which the administrative staff worked, and the teachers planned classes and printed materials there. I was at Brooklea mostly during winter and spring and there were a couple of charitable 'giveaways' held in which the organisation had coats which participants could come and pick up. This was usually an event, but then people were able to drop-in and pick things up when they were attending classes for a while after this. This meant that for a while there was a coat rail with warm coats on it in the reception area that anyone could take from if they wanted. Likewise, there were times when they gave away food, and once, slow cookers. Next to the main room which was used for classes, there was a small kitchen, and tutors always offered people a cup of tea or coffee when they arrived which they would make there. There were often snacks, such as cakes or biscuits around too.

The participants at the organisation varied a lot. Everyone who worked there told me that numbers before the pandemic were much higher and the space used to be a lot busier. The Scottish government had put strict restrictions on the numbers of people who could be in the classrooms, so class sizes were limited to around seven participants while I was there, or more if the big room was used. This was easing by the time I left in Spring 2022. There were learners from many countries including Sudan, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Vietnam, China, Portugal, Palestine, Türkiye, Kuwait, Iran, Syria, Iraq, Angola and more. People were signposted to the organisation from different places; social workers, the job centre, word of mouth. Towards the end of my time there one tutor told me than some of the ladies were referred by a case worker who supports survivors of FGM (female genital mutilation). At the end of a course usually the tutors gave the learners a feedback form which asked for

information about how they found courses, what they enjoyed and what they would like to learn in the future.

The teaching staff were usually referred to as tutors. The tutors almost always refer to service users as learners, rather than students. Some of the tutors were from the field of adult literacy (i.e. they had been trained to teach those who already spoke English as a first language) and had moved more recently into ESOL as demand has risen. Some of the tutors were from an English language teaching background. I met one volunteer who was supporting some of the classes and helping people with one-to-one support, but most of the people supporting learning in the organisation were paid. Some of the tutors told me that they thought there might be more need for volunteers in the future, but that they had mixed feelings about volunteering to do something for which they usually were paid. I will elaborate on this further in a later chapter.

4.4.2. Unity Hub, Norwich

Below is an example based on my fieldnotes to give a sense of the organisation in Norwich, Unity hub. I have added a shorter extract from my notes than that for Brooklea because I outline the somewhat different activities of the organisation in more detail below in addition (English classes, allotment and refugee week activities).

'It is a very hot Tuesday in July, I walk through Norwich city centre, past some charity shops and a breakfast café. The charity is located on a small side road. There are already some groups of young men outside chatting, one holds the door open for me. Inside, one teacher Peter says 'hello' to me and tells me he is teaching a new group of the beginner learners who are working on literacy. He is photocopying some of his handouts for the class. Some of the participants are helping to move the tables for the classes. The big room in the space hosts two classes, and they move some blue partitions across to divide the space into two. I say hello to Kelly who is waiting to use the photocopier. She tells me she is teaching the Entry 2 class today, which is taking place at another building the organisation uses, which is a very short walk away, over the main road.

Today Annie is teaching the Entry 1 class. She tells me she usually teaches online and feels a little nervous as she is just covering the class today. Later she says it went great and she was pleased with the class. Chloe who is in charge of organising the ESOL classes says hi and asks

me if I need anything. She seems very busy, and goes to talk to two men who haven't been to the classes before. As the class time approaches, it gets busier and busier, and there are not many chairs left. We are in the middle of a heatwave so it is very warm inside the classroom. People greet each other and move up to make room as more and more people arrive.' (Norwich fieldnotes, July 2022).

Unity Hub is a Norwich-based charity which works specifically with refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. It provides different services for adults and families who have migrated to the UK, especially asylum seekers and refugees. There is the opportunity for people to access advice, and they often support with issues such as working with the local authorities, helping with bureaucracy, and signposting to other services. While I was doing fieldwork, they also offered activities including English (ESOL) classes, a homework club, a women's dance class, football, martial arts, a homework club for children in school, and they have an allotment in which they held sessions to visit. At the time I did the research, there were 7 staff members. There were many volunteers with the organisation, and most of the above activities are also supported by volunteers. Volunteers started and left while I was there and there were a number of volunteers who had been teaching there for a few years. There was a period of change shortly before I started the research, in which the former Chief Executive left, and there was a new Chief Executive, and quite a few other long-term staff members had left at the time I started my research. UH is also involved with organising many of the activities for Norwich Refugee week (also a national event in cities across the UK), which occurs in June. They work closely with other organisations in Norwich, and there is a partnership of organisations supporting refugees.

4.4.2.1 English classes at UH

One of the most popular services UH offers are their adult ESOL classes, which are held on two days per week, and they had one online women's-only class. There were around 4-5 levels of ESOL taught (sometimes bigger classes would be split if there are more volunteers): pre-entry (beginner), entry 1 (elementary), entry 2 (pre-intermediate), entry 3 (intermediate) and level 1 and above (upper-intermediate/advanced). The most popular classes were the beginner level groups. These classes were in line with the National framework for ESOL. The levels were quite approximate, and the volunteer teachers said

that there could be big variations in English ability within the classes, especially in the lower and upper levels. Some of the students also attended other classes at other, formal institutions in the city providing formal ESOL classes, including a local college, an adult education centre, and private language schools. These were all more formal with a set curriculum, and for those classes to be free they would need to join a waiting list for council support, or obtain a scholarship (This was the case with the private language schools). There was also one other charity in Norwich offering free classes and some of the students also attended classes there in addition. The ESOL co-ordinator at the time Chloe assessed newcomers and put them in a suitable class, and tried to match this to their formal class. The classes took place in the UH building, and across the road at a small community building, which was lent to UH for the classes. Sometimes one class was held in the CEO's office while I was there (if that extra class is running). The online classes had a dedicated core of attendees, and they were quite popular with a few, as well as a few of the volunteers who say they preferred teaching online.

There were a wide variety of participants at the classes. There were usually regulars, who attended most weeks, and there were often new arrivals. People dropped in and out, as their availability changed. There were people from many different countries including Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Türkiye, Eritrea, Syria, Portugal, El Salvador, Ukraine who spoke a wide variety of languages. Migration status also varied, there were people who were seeking asylum, who had gained refugee status, people with spousal visas, Indefinite leave to remain etc. There was not a check on peoples' status before coming to class, and anyone was able to join regardless of migration status. A register was taken in each class to keep track of who was going to class, which students signed, and this was later input into a database by a staff member.

The large numbers of asylum seekers housed in hotels in Norwich was a real challenge for the organisation in the latter months of my research there. This meant that there were much larger numbers of participants attending classes, and that the organisation had to stop funding bus tickets for asylum seekers as they could not accommodate so much demand. During my research, the organisation was also trying to find a new space in which to host the classes, which would be larger, although this had been challenging. At the time of writing, the organisation has moved to another space, so that all the English classes were together.

At the time I did my research, they had just started to recruit volunteers from amongst the participants in higher level classes to help as teaching assistants in the lower-level classes. There were sometimes participant-volunteers there to help with translation and working with individuals in the beginner classes.

People were often late for class, and there was often a lot of noise in the main room, which hosted the two lower-level classes, which were also the busiest. When teaching, there were often interruptions, like a new student arriving, or someone coming in the room to get something. There was a break halfway through the class which everyone seemed to enjoy, and a lot of people made themselves tea or coffee and there was often fruit or snacks provided by the organisation. The English classes were quite a flexible space, and they had an informal atmosphere, quite different from a college for example. As different students came each week, there was not a formal curriculum and most teachers tended to plan classes based on what the students had asked for. UH had subscriptions to quite a few resource websites and through these memberships, teachers could access lesson plans, materials and worksheets on which classes can be based. Teachers had the freedom to decide on their own lesson plans, so there could be quite a bit of variety. Some teachers did not use resources like listening activities or videos because of the noisy environment in the main room, but others did use these. There were resources like whiteboards, markers and a photocopier and there were exercise books for students who needed them.

4.4.2.2. Allotment

The organisation had an allotment, and ran drop-in sessions on one day a week which anyone could attend, at around 11-3. These are run by Tom who also worked for another charity in Norwich. The allotment was more popular at certain times of year, such as the summer and when they were harvesting vegetables. There were a few regulars who liked to go there, when I went there would be around two or three people at one time. There were also some small plots in the allotment which were the responsibility of some people who would drop in at other times to take care of them, although Tom said some had not been for a while. It was a peaceful space, and they grew quite a few different vegetables, usually things that had been requested by the participants. They usually took a lot of breaks and had tea, coffee and sometimes snacks. For example, there was a lot of mint there, growing in a bathtub, so it was possible to have fresh mint tea. Participants and Tom did whatever jobs

need doing in the allotment on that day, such as weeding, watering, planting etc. There was no toilet there which could be a disadvantage for female or older participants if they wanted to stay longer. Tom said he wanted to build a compostable one but that it was difficult to get permission from the council.

 The allotment was a very relaxed and informal environment, and although Tom may go in with a set of jobs which may need to get done that day, there was certainly not a planned curriculum. He said that for some this was a place either for them to relax, and improve mental health, or for others to work and grow vegetables in order to save money (and maybe both). Tom was very knowledgeable about plants and gardening, and some of the participants asked him questions about how to grow things, or things like where they can get seeds from, in the local area. Participants could also share their knowledge, for example, one participant when I was there was really great at weeding a very annoying bindweed, and she showed me the best place to dig it up. During the chats at the break people often talked about food and how they would cook with certain vegetables in their countries.

In addition to the allotment, I also observed some public events which made up part of Refugee Week in 2022, which were organised by UH. These were open to participants and the public, and were held in different locations around Norwich. Refugee week is a national event which aims to highlight the cultures and contributions of people seeking sanctuary in communities around the country (Refugee Week, n.d.). UH organises events in Norwich, and I discuss an event at a community garden in chapter six.

4.4.3. Differences and overlaps between the organisations

The organisations in Norwich and Glasgow had some similarities, as they were both non-formal learning environments, working with people who are refugees, asylum seekers and with other migration statuses. There were also several differences - most of the teachers in Glasgow were paid due to courses and activities being funded by the local council, and UH worked with many more volunteers. UH in Norwich had more services and staff targeted towards supporting refugees and asylum seekers specifically, whereas in Glasgow, the organisation was accessed more widely by the local community, and some people were Scottish but accessing other classes or services. I think it is also interesting to note that both place and time of the research had a big impact on differences between the two

organisations. Doing my research earlier in the pandemic, in Scotland, which had more severe restrictions, I noticed that fewer people were allowed to attend, and the windows had to stay open. In Norwich, where I did the research several months later, after all restrictions had been lifted in England, spaces were much busier. Additionally, the changing seasons were really present in my fieldnotes, with people in Glasgow often wearing winter coats in the classrooms because of the cold weather, contrasted with the warm weather of summer when I did the bulk of my research in Norwich. While I was in Glasgow, Russia invaded Ukraine, and during my time in Norwich the organisation saw increases in people from Ukraine using their services.

The organisations had different terms that they used to talk about the people that they worked with. In Glasgow, they mostly used the term 'learners' to talk about the people who attended classes and activities. In Norwich, they mostly used the term 'participants'. Some individual staff members also used the term 'students'. When looking back on my fieldnotes, I realised that I used both of these terms, typically mirroring terminology that the organisations themselves used. Throughout the thesis I use both of these terms, as well as sometimes the word 'students'.

4.5. Researcher positionality and reflexivity

The importance of reflecting on researcher positionality within the field of ethnography, has become important, as a way of signalling a self-awareness of the researcher as well as a way of revealing to readers, the location of the researcher. Heath and Street (2008, p.30) advise researchers to 'get to know yourself as a constant learner'. Hammersley and Atkinson (2019, p. 16) propose researcher reflexivity within ethnography; 'This accepts that the orientations of researchers will be shaped by their socio-historical locations, including the values and interests that these locations confer upon them'. Madison (2020, p.6) remarks that reflecting on positionality when doing critical ethnography 'is vital because it forces us to acknowledge our own power, privilege, and biases'. She puts forward that through contextualising our own positionalities 'we take ethical responsibility for our own subjectivity and political perspective, resisting the trap of gratuitous self-centeredness or of presenting an interpretation as though it has no "self," as though it is not accountable for its consequences and effects' (Madison, 2020, p.8).

Millora et al., (2020, p.16) posit that researchers, regarding the communities that they work with may 'come from both a place of sameness and a place of difference which compels us to reflect on the assumptions we hold on how a particular "culture" operates.' I related to this point, as I undertook research in the UK, in the organisations I described above, the likes of which I had volunteered with for a number of years before doing research. I was familiar with these spaces and felt comfortable within them. But I was also coming from a place of difference, both from staff and participants, inhabiting my position as a PhD researcher, as well as my positionalities as white British (English)[21] woman, native English speaker and teacher which set me apart from sanctuary seeking participants. I have already outlined the complicated role that I inhabited within the organisations and how I came to research with them, and will now also reflect upon some of my other intersecting identities which I believe have played a role in the research.

I am a white, British woman who was born in London and grew up in the East of England. My experience of formal education while I was growing up was of attending a state school in a relatively affluent area. I was the first in my family to attend university at 18 (although both of my parents completed degrees through distance learning later in life). I have been the first in my family to complete a Master's and start a PhD. Although I had never really considered this as being unusual, meeting so many people as a PhD student who had family members working in academia was a surprise to me, and made me more aware of the impact of socio-economic status on progression routes through education. After my undergraduate degree I qualified as an English language teacher and have lived and taught English in Vietnam and Singapore, and studied semesters of my Master's degree in Malta and Estonia. I have experience of economic migration and of being an international student, from a privileged passport perspective. For example, my British passport and degree from a British university have allowed me to acquire working visas relatively easily when I was a migrant living outside of the UK. I think the experience of living, working and studying in South-East Asia and Europe impacted how I began to see knowledge as socially and culturally constructed. Street (1993) put forward the idea of culture as being a verb, rather than a noun, being more as something that is done, rather than as having a fixed boundary often ascribed to culture,

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[21] Although I would have usually identified myself as British, living and undertaking research in Scotland made me much more aware of my Englishness.

and I feel my experiences of living outside the UK contributed to me relating to this perspective. Although I have been a migrant, I do not have experience of forced migration, and my whiteness has meant that I have not experienced racial discrimination, and have benefitted from white privilege in the UK and in international contexts.

I have volunteered as an ESOL teacher in community settings in the UK, in Glasgow and Norwich, since 2018. Through these volunteer roles I have worked closely with people who are refugees and asylum seekers. I also count many people who have experienced the UK asylum system as close friends and colleagues. My partner is not British and we experienced almost three years of family separation because of visa restrictions and bureaucracy, and now he lives in the UK with a spousal visa. This has meant I have confronted some of the impacts and costs of some of the UK border regime policies, although in a different way to those who go through the asylum system in the UK. These encounters have additionally impacted on my critical perspective about the Home Office and migration policy. Some of my frustrations about my own circumstances and the experiences of people I knew were big motivations for me to continue to be an active volunteer with organisations, as well as to continue research this particular topic.

All of these intersecting and entangled identities and experiences influence my positionality and have had an effect on the research process. Examining my positionality reflexively, my experience of living in multiple parts of the world reoriented my 'epistemological relativity' (Street, 2001, p.93), meaning that I was made more aware of my own assumptions about knowledge and how it may be constructed by the social spaces I have passed through. My critical perspective has been deepened by both my personal experience of the UK visa system, and my regular community activism and work with people who are refugees.

I also found myself examining my role within the organisations, both how I performed it, and how others saw me. For example, my experience as an ESOL practitioner has also impacted on how I may view the classroom, and my interactions with staff members at organisations. As a volunteer with the organisation in Norwich, I did find it difficult to separate this role of teacher, as participants and staff already saw me this way. Additionally, my Britishness and whiteness have impacted on power relationships between participants, with some people consistently referring to me as 'teacher' even when I had outlined my role as a researcher. I am also a 'native speaker' of English, and the majority of the participants in organisations

were multi-lingual, and spoke English as an additional language. I can speak very basic Vietnamese and Spanish, but I do not know the majority of the languages of participants in the organisations. My Englishness also meant that I had different cultural knowledge to Scottish staff members in Glasgow. I had not experienced the Scottish education system for example, and the tutors would sometimes comment on differences between cultural situations such as dialect and food. My privileged status as a PhD researcher also impacted how staff members in organisations saw me, with many making comments that it was impressive, and coming across at first as being shy about their own teaching abilities. Throughout the research process I have critically reflected on how these positionalities may be influencing my approach and my representations of the data, and what people may have shared with me. Acknowledging these perspectives is important because I believe that the researcher plays an active role in shaping the data, and through considering my positionality, reflexively was able to be more aware of this when doing data analysis, and holding my own role in the ethnographic research more consciously in mind.

Within the field of ethnography, there are debates about the positionality of the researcher as insider or outsider in the field of study (Robinson-Pant, 2016). The context of organisations supporting refugees is perhaps complicated from the traditional anthropological roots of ethnography researching with indigenous communities, because this research was with multi-cultural, multi-lingual groups in UK settings. I entered the space in some ways and for some as an outsider, as a British passport holder and PhD researcher. However, organisations work with very diverse participants with differing migration statuses in the UK, who have moved to the UK at different times, living in different countries previously, and that there were also teachers and volunteers who were also from different parts of the UK. Therefore, the binary of insider/outsider does not neatly encompass the complexity of doing research in these spaces. McNess et al., (2013) remark that categorising groups as being either inside or outside of a particular community is overly essentialist. Even in "mono-linguistic" groups, 'the insider/outsider distinction pushes us to categorise and polarise people's identities, roles and knowledges' (Robinson-Pant, 2016, p.40). Overall, a reflexive view of positionality, that acknowledges and situates myself within the spaces I was researching with was often a challenge but was an important part of the research, because

of how my experiences and standpoints have an impact on the ethnographic data that I collected.

4.6. Ethics

I went through the institutional ethics procedures of the University of East Anglia before starting the fieldwork for this project, gaining ethical approval in the summer of 2021 (Appendix B). However, gaining access to the organisations and the participants and seeking consent was a multi-stage process. In Glasgow, I emailed the director of the organisation, and we met on a video call to discuss my research, which she was keen for me to do. I needed to wait for around a month after this meeting for in-person classes to resume, as at this time Scotland was coming out of Covid-19 restrictions. In Norwich, I had been teaching an online class with the organisation, and I also emailed more formally about my research to the CEO. When I returned to Norwich from Glasgow, I met with a Development Worker at the organisation to discuss the research.

Because I was conducting research at an uncertain period (for example, emerging from pandemic lockdowns), I had to plan for many contingencies which did not end up emerging. For example, my ethics application also sought permission to observe online classes. The ethics board did not like that I did not know which I would be observing, and I needed to respond that I would need to observe whatever organisations were doing at the time, which was open to change. When I gained permission from the organisation in Glasgow to do fieldwork, they told me that they would shortly be starting in-person classes again, and advised that I should come in-person. Although as I have mentioned, there were some interruptions to this within my fieldwork. In Norwich, classes were also slowly moving back to in-person classes, and when I did my fieldwork, they were hosting mostly in-person activities. When I travelled to Glasgow I also needed to complete a risk-assessment as the university was advising that only online research at this time be conducted, and I needed to justify my fieldwork by showing that only in-person classes were occurring. This highlights the challenges of planning and conducting fieldwork during the period of Covid-19, because rules and regulations were frequently developing.

One aspect that I felt was challenging from an ethical perspective was negotiating between what the university ethics board felt was important, and the nuances of the particular

cultural groups that I was researching with. Robinson-Pant and Singal (2013 p.417) have suggested that existing ethical codes and paradigms prevalent in Northern institutions may 'tend to be rather restrictive and insensitive to multiple and complex cultural and contextual differences'. It has been observed that university-based researchers occupy a particular territory between institutional ethics procedures on the one hand and 'situational' ethics procedures in the field (Millora et al., 2020). There were elements of the university ethics procedure which became problematic while in the field. For example, the consent forms which the ethics board recommended to use were several pages long, with many sections. Although I phrased these in plain language, many people were not interested in reading the whole document. I was also concerned that long consent forms may reproduce bureaucratic challenges which people encountered through the Home Office. However, the ethics board insisted that I use the long ready-made consent forms (Appendix C). Although it was not required by the ethics board, I also created much shorter, translated versions which I used as well. I spent some time during the beginning of the first class that I met people going through the consent forms with participants, and explaining what my role was. I used some techniques from my background as a language teacher such as 'concept checking questions' to check participants' understanding of my role. I was surprised that the university ethics committee was more concerned about detailed and wordy consent forms than about considering other forms of gaining consent which may be more appropriate for participants who are from non-British cultural backgrounds. Additionally, I did gain permission to obtain oral consent which was requested by some participants as they had cultural reservations about signing their names on documents.

All of the names given throughout the thesis of the people I encountered in the organisations, and of the organisations themselves are pseudonyms. Many of those who are forcibly displaced have fled persecution and have real fears around their safety if they are publicly identified. Anonymising names was a way to minimise the risk that taking part in the study would lead to their identification. In some cases, I have anonymised the places where a particular participant came from, when it felt as though they could be identified by this information, or if there was a particular issue of safety for them. I have noted the times that I have done this. Assigning pseudonyms to the organisations was a choice on my part to attempt to add an extra layer of anonymity to participants. However, on a local level due to

the limited number of organisations working with refugees (particularly in Norwich), it may be possible for those familiar with local organisations or working in the field of sanctuary to identify the organisations, which they were made aware of when I started this study.

4.7. Data analysis

Data analysis was an ongoing, iterative process which started in the field, and continued well into writing the empirical chapters of this thesis. Using a form of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) I started to compile informal 'codes' and ideas of themes that were emerging towards the latter parts of fieldwork in both sites. I did not strictly follow the steps of thematic analysis, but rather began with these codes as a guide to think about key areas from the data, and used them as a way to organise my large amounts of notes, and begin to draw out what themes were present. I used colour-coding throughout my fieldnotes and transcriptions to keep track of these. Throughout the process of fieldwork, I sent regular 'reports' to my supervisors, summarising my pages of data more succinctly for them. This process, also began to help me think about themes from my data by encouraging me to think about the key areas I wanted to present to them. After both stages of fieldwork had been concluded, I entered a stage of immersion in the data, and re-read all the notes and transcripts, and digitally, through OneNote, labelling and highlighting parts which felt relevant, as well as revisiting my summary reports for supervisors, with a second re-reading more purposefully drawing parallels between particular codes I had highlighted.

When I started writing the empirical chapters (chapters 5, 6 and 7) of this thesis, I was continually revisiting fieldnotes, photos, interview transcripts, and analysis was ongoing. I also engaged my 'headnotes' (Sanjek, 1990), sometimes thinking of particular events or conversations which I knew had happened, but when I found them in my fieldnotes they were presented as very minor. There were some events and conversations which began to jump out as important after they had happened, because of other events that happened later, or through my process of reading and beginning to write the thesis. Throughout the data analysis I also wrote my literature review (chapter 2 of this thesis) and went back to my theoretical reading (chapter 3), which helped me to more deeply explore areas I wanted to focus on, especially regarding precarity, informal learning and social change. Throughout the writing of this thesis, as I drafted and finalised chapters exploring literature and theory, and met regularly with my supervisors, I also revisited my data analysis as these cast new light on

data from my fieldwork and made me see it in different ways. I re-wrote and re-organised these chapters numerous times, throughout the process of building this thesis. I repeatedly went over the different forms of data to discover and draw out themes relevant to learning, with my research questions in mind. I explored the data considering issues which I had not originally had in mind, such as those around experiences of precarity, which came up repeatedly from the participants. In this way I tried to be accountable to the stories I heard and observed, while also seeking insights into learning. The three data chapters that follow were constructed through this process.

4.8. Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored the methodology of this study, discussing ethnography, the sites of this research project, and my own positionality within it, as well as ethical challenges in the process. This PhD research project has certainly been a journey, developing over several years. I have encountered a lot throughout the research process - spaces, objects, challenges and above all many different people in the field sites of the study. Throughout the process I built relationships with a variety of different people and places within the organisations. As Madison (2020, p.2) notes, 'Fieldwork, above all, is relational. Your work is inextricable to your relationships in the field: Without relationships there is no ethnography'. I became much more aware of where and how I was situated within these sites, and as an ethnographer this was also a part of the data that I collected. I found that ethnography was an appropriate methodology for this study because it allowed me to observe everyday learning in very culturally diverse groups in non-formal environments that was occurring. I also enjoyed the research process as I was able to build connections with people over an extended period of time, and felt incredibly immersed in the process.[22] As I will explore in the following chapters, the learning and change I observed was dynamic and related to the wider structural challenges people experienced and the evolving space of the organisations themselves. I was able to see how people responded to change and coped by adapting what they learned as well as where their learning may lead them and others. In the following chapters I will outline the findings of these months of fieldwork, building up a picture of the organisations and the people who were learning and working there.

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[22] I think that I particularly valued the process of doing fieldwork because it took place shortly after Covid-19 lockdowns, and I was not sure initially whether I would be able to do fieldwork in-person at all.

Chapter 5: Educators' and learners' experiences of precarity

5.1. Introduction

"Fiza[23] says she is very frustrated being without all the documentation, and feels like she is forgotten, at one point she says 'I am just a refugee'." (Glasgow fieldnotes, March 2022).

As I read through the fieldnotes and transcripts from my fieldwork, I started noticing that the phenomenon I now recognise as 'precarity' was everywhere. As I explored in chapter 3, precarity has been described as an 'ambivalent figure' (Zembylas, 2018, p.97), embodying continually shifting structural forces and how they impact on lives. People were constantly sharing their experiences of precarious working conditions, and of precarious visas and living situations. These challenges seemed to largely stem from the hostile policy environment towards people who have migrated to the UK that I discussed in chapter 2, as well as wider structural challenges around gig economy employment, and factors relating more to the organisations themselves such as underfunding. These experiences were often also exacerbated by the pandemic. In the quote above, which I will expand on in greater detail in the next section, Fiza, a woman from a North-East African country[24] who was seeking asylum in Glasgow, said that she was having problems relating to going through the asylum system, expressing that her experience with navigating a precarious visa status in the UK left her feeling forgotten. Her immigration status was not certain, impacting on her everyday life and learning in the organisation as I will elaborate on later in the chapter. Visa statuses were precarious for many participants because they were not long-term and were consistently uncertain, whether through the processes that they went through to obtain status, or for striving to obtain them for family. For many in the organisations and their family members, the right to live in the UK was reliant on ongoing bureaucratic processes such as form filling, attending appointments with the Home Office and passing assessments such as specific ESOL level exams or the 'Life in the UK' Test. Employment could be precarious through short-term or zero-hours contracts, or uncertainty over the right to work, meaning that stable employment was unreliable. The experiences of precarity of those in the organisation varied,

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[23] All names of participants have been anonymised using pseudonyms.
[24] I have anonymised the country that Fiza was from.

and some were distinct, but some were similar and overlapping with one another. I also observed how people responded to this precarity in different ways. In chapter 7 I will explore how learning played a key role in coping with this continual uncertainty. In the following sections I will explore how different actors in the organisation experienced precarity, and how these overlapped and diverged. Firstly, I will examine how participants experienced unreliable and uncertain visas, often bringing these challenges with them to the organisation. These issues with visas regularly created interruptions to learning and barriers to putting down roots in the UK. Next, I explore educators' encounters with institutional precarity, often exemplified by their lack of time to do work, and inconsistent short-term employment contracts, leading many to over-stretch themselves and needing to juggle and balance full work-loads. I will also explore the fact that many educators and participants seemed to share some of these experiences of precarity, but that this is not always acknowledged. Lastly, I will discuss gendered experiences of precarity for many participants in organisations, as many women and men have differences in problems that they face, encompassing paid and unpaid labour.

5.2. Experiencing precarious visas

There were many ways in which people at both organisations brought up their experiences with challenges related to their visas, and how this fostered precarity in their lives. The vignette below from my fieldnotes from Glasgow expands on the short quote which opened the chapter.

"*Grace is showing her resident's permit card to Fiza and Fiza asks, 'how did you get that one?' and says that she (Fiza) has been waiting for her card and her passport back for over a year, although she said she has managed to get it for her children. Grace is saying that she had worked very hard to make sure that she got all the documents needed for herself and her three children. She said that she was able to apply because her husband had an Italian passport, although he has not moved to the UK with her, she said he is currently living in [her home country in West-Africa], and she said he is not being supportive of her. She said she thinks he is with another woman and has been asking her for a divorce, and trying to threaten her as well, by saying that he will 'send me back to Africa'. She said he was very difficult to work with because she had to ask him for some documents to get her children's paperwork sorted out. She also had difficulties because her oldest son's father was French*

and didn't have paperwork for Italy, so was trying to sort out his paperwork for staying in the UK.

Fiza says she is very frustrated being without all the documentation, and feels like she is forgotten, at one point she says 'I am just a refugee'." (Glasgow fieldnotes, March 2022)

This extract from my fieldnotes is an example of how the two women, Fiza and Grace, responded to and navigated insecure visa statuses which made life precarious for themselves and their children. Grace was from a West African nation and Fiza was from North-East Africa (they spoke to each other in English) and each of them had previously lived in Italy before moving to the UK. Their teacher Florence had told me that they were both single mothers, and had both left abusive partners to set up their lives in Glasgow. They both attended the family ESOL classes at Brooklea in Glasgow when they were able to, amidst their childcare and other commitments.

The liminal, short-term nature of Fiza and Grace's visa statuses gave themselves and some of their children an immigration status which meant that their stay in the UK was not guaranteed. Without secure migration status such as Indefinite Leave to Remain, Grace and Fiza faced uncertainty about their futures in the UK. They had both had similar experiences with the UK Home Office[25], negotiating the visa system, and unresponsive lawyers and Fiza was still waiting to get her passport back after applying for asylum. They had also moved from African nations, living for some time in Italy, before leaving abusive husbands and moving to Glasgow with their children. Grace offered a lot of personal advice, based on her own experiences with visas, and offered to go with Fiza to Citizen's Advice[26] to seek further support (I will delve into this aspect of their exchange in a later chapter). Grace was very chatty and friendly, and liked asking questions to the other women in this class.

This exchange shows some of the negative impact of experiences of precarity on these women's lives, and in relation to their children's futures. They talked about how frustrating the process had been, and Grace later mentioned the detrimental impact on her son's mental health who she said had had 'suicidal thoughts', but that since getting his visa, 'he has been offered a job in an Italian restaurant which has also really supported him and

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[25] As I mentioned in chapter 2, because immigration is not a devolved policy area, the Home Office oversees policy on visas and immigration for the whole of the UK.
[26] Known as Citizen's Advice Scotland

helped him feel less lonely as an Italian speaker' (Glasgow fieldnotes, March 2022). Their experiences with visas for themselves and their children which were changeable and unreliable, were shared within the organisation, and motivated what they wanted to learn when they were there. They were both particularly concerned about their children and trying to make sure that they would be able to have more visa stability, demonstrating how single, or unsupported mothers who migrate have sole responsibility of thinking about their children's visas as well as their own. Conversely, getting the visa (as with Grace's son) meant more security, and the beginnings of setting down roots. As I will expand upon in more detail in a later chapter, Grace and Fiza's strategies for coping were tied up with peer mediation and support to ensure that they and their children could gain more stable visas.

Grace also spoke about her experiences of racism while living in Italy, and expressed the idea that people in Scotland were friendlier towards her. She also talked of the importance of being able to come to the organisation and feel supported. There was some kind of relief in her being able to put Italy behind her, and an eagerness to start a new life in Scotland. This also may have related to her experiences with men, and an eagerness to start a new life without her former partners.

Grace's experience with her husband who was being uncooperative with her about documents that she needed for her visa, shows one of the ways that people who are forced to migrate may need to navigate additional factors or difficulties which may also impact on their experience of settling in a new country. Grace, who needed to flee an abusive relationship, was required to communicate with her former partner, and needed his co-operation to secure the right paperwork, exacerbating her challenges with the Home Office. Not only was the visa complicated to apply for, unreliable and short-term, but Grace's personal circumstances added to these difficulties. Grace showed during this exchange that she was caught in a matrix of factors which made her life precarious, such as her husband's co-operation, endlessly waiting for the right documents, her own visa status and regulations around this, experiences of racism and her children's welfare and futures. All of these were interconnected, making her experience of precarity complex and deeply felt.

There were many other instances in which people shared their experiences of precarity, and sought support with these within the organisations:

"Later Alice tells me Pedro was showing her an email he has received from the Home Office saying that his daughter does not have permission to join him in the UK, and that he is getting advice from the citizen's advice bureau. She said it's causing him a lot of stress"
(Glasgow fieldnotes, February 2022)

Precarious visas, that is, processes and procedures around securing visas that were seen as causing or adding to their experience of precarity, were often mentioned by participants. Pedro for example, had a Portuguese passport and was also Angolan, and although he was able to move to UK relatively easily when he did as an EU citizen, he now encountered issues with the visas of some of his family members who did not have Portuguese passports. He asked tutors to read him emails, which had terminology that he struggled to translate. He had a busy working life, and was trying to learn English, and having to understand and respond to visa-related communications added to his problems. This is an example of how educators were asked to help informally with reading official emails and letters, acting as literacy mediators. Although organisations were offering the opportunity to learn English, participants also needed to learn essential skills/knowledge about how to navigate issues with official documents and visas.

5.2.3. Visas, education and ambitions

In another example I observed Alice acting as a mediator for someone in the organisation:

'Ceyda showed her (Alice) an email from someone saying that they can arrange college classes for her, but Alice said it was from a Gmail address and she did not know who the person (sender) was. She (Alice) asked Ceyda whether she had paid any money and Ceyda said no. Alice said she wasn't sure who it would be from, so was suspicious. Shirley (another tutor) asked why a Gmail account would be bad and Alice says because it is not a college or organisation, so could be from anyone.' (Glasgow fieldnotes, February 2022).

There were very long waiting lists for local colleges and many of the learners in both organisations wanted to go to college and attend more ESOL classes. This also resulted in much email and official communication that learners wanted help deciphering. In this example, Alice was warning Ceyda to be careful because she did not recognise the email address, and it was not from an official college email. As well as interpreting emails, Alice also acted as a safeguard for the students. In this case, Alice warned Ceyda not to pay

anyone money and explained how to identify a genuine sender; that the email should be from an address ending with the college name, or the local authority. This was also shared with Shirley, another tutor. As well as demonstrating the lack of classes for ESOL learners, this example also shows the concern that Alice had for her learners and how she shared her knowledge about the digital risks, as well as ways of identifying the sources that correspondence may come from. Educators in the organisation were a source of this kind of knowledge for participants and were important in mediating participants' onward journeys to college.
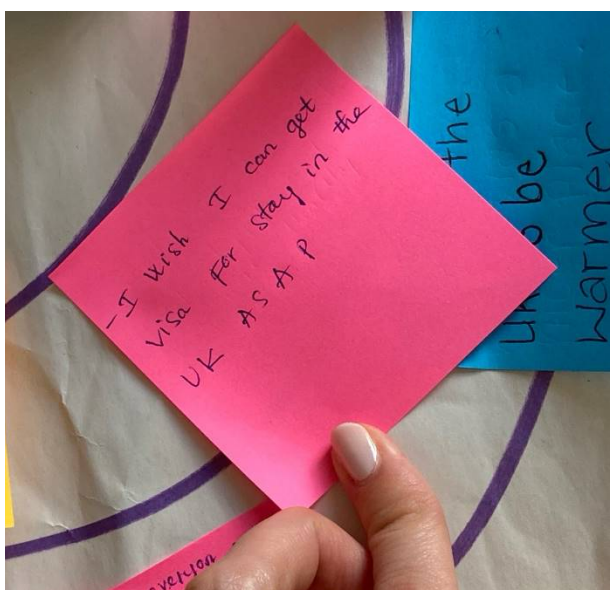
Figure 2: 'I wish I can get visa for stay in the UK ASAP' - Tina

Another participant, Tina, who was an asylum seeker, wrote the post-it note pictured at a workshop in Glasgow. She told me that when she received her refugee status, she would be able to start her life in Scotland properly. Tina was from a South-East Asian country, and was a musician. She was very outgoing and liked talking to the other people in class. She said: "*I don't have visa now, so if I want to performing music on another country, I have invite from the event, different country, erm, Germany and France, I don't have visa so I cannot travelling, this one difficult for me … if I got work visa, then everything easy, easy for me*" (Tina, Glasgow workshop, April 2022). There were multiple motivations for people to want stable immigration status -   Pedro (who had permission to work) was eager to gain visas for his family, while Tina wanted to gain a visa to be able to take work (and travel) opportunities more aligned with her expertise as a musician.

For Tina, being an asylum seeker meant that not only was she unable to be paid for work playing music, but that she was not able to travel for jobs or to see family. This barrier to working and travelling meant that she could not plan, or take up invitations she had received from other countries to play music there. Tina, as an asylum seeker, presented the idea that once she got her refugee status, many things in her life would be much easier. Because her visa was continually uncertain (that is, her status was likely to remain uncertain

for a while), this meant that she was not able to make plans securely. In the meantime, she was developing a particular vision of what life would be like in the future if and when she received her refugee status. Many participants were focused on their immediate visa situation and the challenges it posed for everyday life, and this meant that they hoped that many of their problems would be resolved as soon as their next visa status was secured. It also seemed that they viewed visa status like a ladder, in which each rung was better than the one below – for example, refugee status was higher than being an asylum seeker; and indefinite leave to remain was even higher than refugee status. Unfortunately, as is demonstrated by the quote below, people with other types of visas still faced problems and other forms of precarity.

"My husband, he say to me, you need to go to city college because I came to England by visa. Every two years, every two years I have an exam, until five years. Yeah next year I get a "DIFNET" [indefinite leave to remain] I need an exam, B1, same as Nadia. I need to learn English, after "DIFNET" I English, 'life in the UK' sorry, I have two exams." (Tujela, Norwich interview, November 2022)

Tujela was a Kurdish woman with a passport from a middle Eastern country living in Norwich with two young children. She mentioned that unlike many of her friends in the organisation in Norwich, her visa was a spousal visa, and that she did not have refugee or asylum seeker visa status. This spared her some of the stress involved with the asylum process, but even with this visa, she had pressure on her to make sure that she learnt English to a certain level because of the exams required for those who have these visas. In this quote she repeats the word "exam" three times, and stresses the importance of the B1 English exam and the Life in the UK Test, as these are central for her visa and remaining in the UK. This meant that she was studying English at the organisation and at the local college, and had also studied with another organisation in Norwich, on top of a busy childcare schedule. She also said that after she had done these language exams, she needed to do the 'life in the UK' test. The ability to remain in the UK was insecure because it was reliant on the outcome of exams. Like Tina, Tujela also saw her visa status a bit like a ladder that she needed to climb, making progress in a steady linear manner, from rung to rung. She and her husband characterised education as important because it was aligned with the exams needed for Tujela's visa, likewise,

creating a linear picture of learning, as making continual upwards progress, alongside their visa status. I will explore some of Tujela's strategies for navigating the precarity caused by her experiences with the visa in a later chapter.

For many of the participants in the organisations, precarious visas and learning were interconnected and framed similarly. Learning English was often presented as a gateway to being able to achieve other goals (e.g. getting a job, learning to drive), and likewise getting a permanent visa (e.g. citizenship) was seen as a gateway to a more secure life (also to getting a job, travelling to work or see family). The data suggests that visas were precarious because they were never certain or fixed, for example, paperwork needed to be filed continually and exams had to be passed to be able to keep visas. This also needed to be done for children, partners or other family members. Sometimes education was specifically brought up as a part of this process, such as taking exams to apply for a more secure visa status. Sometimes references to learning were more abstract, such as talking about the English level people felt they needed to achieve in order to get a job. McWilliams and Bonet (2016) have discussed how young people who migrate, particularly refugees and asylum seekers are hopeful that when they arrive in new homes that they will be able to achieve aspirations through educational attainment, but that this is often contrasted by their experiences in educational systems. People such as Tina and Tujela also had ambitions for the future, and they were confident that when they had attained more secure status in the UK, they could live better lives, or to repeat Tina, 'if I got work visa, then everything easy, easy for me'. Applying the framework of 'cruel optimism' (Berlant, 2011), the temporary status of visas meant that people felt that their lives would be improved if they could just achieve permanent status, and it was likely true that this would reduce a root of precarity in their lives but as I will explore later in this chapter, work was also a source of precarity for many people. The overarching structure of the Home Office and UK visa system kept people's hopes and energies focused on one particular branch of precarity in their lives in order to survive. People with insecure visa status experienced this additional branch of precariousness which British citizens and people with Indefinite Leave to Remain do not necessarily, and this is one divergence in the ways in which the experiences of some, (mostly participants) in the organisations deviated from others (mostly staff). As I will discuss in more detail in chapters 7 and 8, informal learning was often used as a strategy for coping with structural precarity.

5.2.3. Interruptions to learning and putting down roots in the UK

Tasfia, a staff member at the organisation in Norwich highlighted some challenges which asylum seeking participants at the organisation faced when they were told they had to move to new cities by the Home Office. As mentioned in chapter 2, housing for people who seek asylum in the UK is temporary and people may be moved by the Home Office at very short notice. At one point during my time doing field work, many families were told that they needed to move from Norwich to another UK city, over one hundred miles away. She told me:

"many people, they make connections in Norwich and then … things like just starting to have a routine you're just starting to you know, find your feet and then suddenly they have to move and it's really unsettling for some of our families. Like last week we had a few families move um, out of Norwich after like (several) months and it was quite difficult for the parents, like the parents were relieved to be finally moving and get their own house but then there's so many more new questions that come into the equation. It's like, OK (claps) now we have to find a new school to register the children, we need to find the new uniform, that's going to cost, and then you need to think about like so much more, the travel, how they're going to get to places, food, it's just constant, (L: yeah) constant, disruption." (Tasfia, Norwich interview, December 2022)

This is a demonstration of how lives could continually change for people seeking asylum in ways which were outside of their control. This instability generated disruptions in their lives in Norwich, as well as disrupting journeys through education. Tasfia highlighted the disruptions to their children's schooling, as well referencing informal learning that might need to be done, in figuring out where to go in a new city. This created a precarious environment for people seeking asylum in Norwich in which having a routine became difficult. Having a routine disrupted like this represented a barrier to the journeys which people envisioned for themselves. Within the organisation, this movement of people to new cities manifested itself in the absence of people from classes and activities. Tasfia's quote shows how their movement impacted on the staff members there. As well as causing disruptions to the lives of asylum-seeking families, the precarious nature of where they might be placed to live also created extra worries for organisation staff who cared about what happened to their participants.

5.2.4. Precarious visas in Scotland and England

As elaborated in chapter 2, visas and immigration are not a devolved policy area and are the remit of the UK Home Office. This was reflected in the shared experiences of participants at the organisations, and challenges with visa status were spoken about in both Norwich and Glasgow. One difference I observed may relate to the nature of the organisations themselves, rather than representing a regional difference. In Norwich, as the organisation specifically aimed to work with refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, there were staff members who were trained to support and signpost people with visa issues. In Glasgow the organisation was aimed at providing adult education, so did not have staff members trained in these areas. This was reflected in fewer discussions that I observed about visas during class time in Norwich, with people tending to talk to me about this when we spoke one-to-one (demonstrated through the experiences I relayed in the above sections). In Glasgow, since there were not particular staff members in the organisation whose jobs were to engage with people about visa challenges, teachers seem to have been approached more often with queries relating to visas (for example Pedro asked Alice about an email from the Home Office during a class in Glasgow). This had the effect that responses to challenges in Norwich were more on an individual basis, and were private exchanges, rather than raised in front of classes, or with peers as they were more often done in Glasgow. This may mean that people in Norwich were able to get more tailored advice, but on the other hand may have lost opportunities for peer mediation and support. In the following section I will discuss how precarity particularly impacted staff in the organisations.

5.3. Educators' and learners' responses to institutional precarity

5.3.1. Educators' labour and time

It was not only participants who needed to navigate experiences of precarity. Teachers in the organisations also spoke about different kinds of precarity in their own lives, often relating to their employment in the organisation.

"John told me that he is contracted for 10 hours with Brooklea and that this class will have funding until at least March. He has been having problems with finding permanent jobs – he says he has worked many sessional contracts as a temp with [different organisations]. He

says he was let go from that last role during the pandemic…He says that he has been looking for other work teaching online but there are fewer roles now that China has put limits on tuition.[27] *Contracts at Brooklea depend on funding and there have been times when they have said that they may only have volunteer roles. He told me that he works more than his contracted hours most of the time, and teaches an extra class in the time allocated for lesson planning. He also has had to deal with registering new students and admin around (the hours that he is paid for).*" (Glasgow fieldnotes, November 2021).

In this account about John, a paid tutor in Glasgow, he told me that he was employed on a short-term contract with the organisation, as well as in his other professional roles. John was an ESOL teacher who was very experienced, and many of the other tutors in the organisation spoke highly of his knowledge of ESOL teaching. This account was one of the first times I met him. He highlighted his precarious working life, both in and outside the organisation. He told me he had experienced continual short-term working contracts and had been made redundant from a more recent role in another job during the pandemic. He said that in the organisation there was a lot of work that needed doing, but not enough paid hours to do it in. He also said that he had chosen to work more hours than he was employed to do. In my notes I describe him as full of 'nervous energy', like he had drunk a lot of coffee. On another day I made this observation in a mixed class in which he was teaching two different ESOL levels at once; "*John divides his time between the two groups, which seems very challenging, a little bit like spinning plates* [my description]. *He has recorded himself doing some speaking which means he can have two activities going on at once*" (Glasgow fieldnotes, November 2021). John was essentially teaching two classes at the same time. He told me that there was a volunteer that used to come and help him, but they had not been coming recently.

This demonstrates some of the ways educators navigated the stretched resources of the organisation. John seemed to push himself very hard, attempting to make the most out of every hour that he was paid for. Choosing to teach during the time allotted for planning meant that he would be doing unpaid work in order to plan the lessons. This response to precarity meant that he was juggling his workload. By teaching two classes at the same time,

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[27] Around the time I was doing my fieldwork in Glasgow, the Chinese government introduced a policy to prevent Chinese citizens from paying for private English tuition for their children, which meant that there were far fewer online teaching jobs for teachers of English available.

John's response showed the pressure that he put himself under to cater to as many students as he could. He asked me for support when I was in his class, and said that he would sometimes have a volunteer assistant, who was not around when I was there. John's response to the limited resources (i.e. The low number of paid teaching hours) at the organisation, was to try to do the job that was needed in half the time – or do the work of two teachers at the same time.

Other tutors in the organisation in Glasgow commented about why they might feel the need to do extra work at the organisation:

"*Florence said she feels really bad for the learners [that the class is ending], which is why they have worked very hard to make sure that they have new classes to go to. She said she considered offering to volunteer to teach, but then realised that this would be doing herself out of a job.*" (Glasgow fieldnotes, March 2022).

The quote about Florence was at the end of a course, when the funding had finished for the class that she taught. She expressed how she feels bad about the students not being able to continue with the class. She also brought up the fact that she did consider volunteering, but then realised that this would negate the need to employ someone in this role, continuing the problem. This 'choice' was something she thought about doing, and the organisation did recruit volunteers, so she saw this as an option for continuing the class. Tutors were aware that the participants relied on classes, and they wanted to be able to provide them. But as this was a paid job for Florence at the time, if she volunteered, she would no longer get paid for teaching the class, impacting her income.

John and Florence were navigating precarious funding in the organisation in different ways. John was trying to maximise the efficiency of his time to an extreme, and Florence was considering the option of volunteering because of the emotional weight of the classes ending. Many of the staff ended up working extra hours 'for free' because of the structural challenges with funding. This could also be seen in another example from my notes; "*Alice says there are 3 new learners who would like to have lessons on Zoom but they aren't able to, on days that she is working. She says she is trying to make sure that her hours are on the same days and that she [worked] too many extra hours that she wasn't paid for last year*" (Glasgow fieldnotes, 17/2/22). Alice had realised that she had been working more hours

than she should have been, and was trying to make sure that she did not end up in the same situation again. Like Florence, she was not able to volunteer her time. The lack of funding for paid time meant that there was a dilemma presented to educators between supporting students fully, and taking care of themselves and making sure that they were not overworked. Alice and Florence were friends and often worked together. Florence often reminded Alice that she should make sure to take breaks and take care of herself, and not to take on too much. This is an example of a time that support and solidarity was expressed between those working in the organisations to navigate precarity.

Short-term funding for the organisation created uncertainty for staff about their contracts, as well as guilt about their students, contributing to a kind of exploitation as they regularly worked more time than they were paid for. The management at the organisation, had not specifically asked staff to volunteer or work more than their contracted hours, and it was something that they did on their own. But as there were volunteer tutors at the organisation, Florence told me that her offer of volunteering to teach would have been accepted if she had offered. John was working more in the time he was paid for, and Florence contemplated working without payment. Gemignani & Giliberto (2021) and Falk et al (2022) have explored the idea that support staff working with people who are refugees and asylum seekers often end up overworked and suffering from burnout. Because they get to know people that they are working with, they feel a sense of responsibility towards them, so work more than they are paid for. In the case of teachers in Glasgow, they were aware of many of the problems faced by their students (some of them explored in the previous section), and this seemed to make them keener to continue working in a precarious role, and give unpaid time to help to support their learning. This idea also came up during my Norwich fieldwork.

 "Chloe, (who organises the ESOL classes taught by volunteers) told me that she is not able to get through all of the admin needed in the time that she is paid for, so it is difficult to prioritise what to do. Sometimes she will need to teach a class if a volunteer can't come in, and says, 'well you know what it's like during the class time' and I say 'yes'. She said that it has been so busy recently because of new asylum seekers being placed in local hotels. She said everyone at the organisation is feeling really stretched, and finding it a challenge to balance the workload. She told me that she also works another part-time job, and does a

part-time degree with the Open University. I ask whether she would work at the organisation full-time if the opportunity was there and she says yes absolutely, this is her dream job, and would love more time. But the funding is not there for that right now." (Norwich fieldnotes, September 2022).

In Norwich, there were slightly different challenges relating to tutors' contracts, as all of the ESOL teachers were volunteers. Staff at Unity Hub had similar stresses and worries to those in Brooklea in Glasgow. Being a volunteer alleviated some of this for those particular teachers, although it sometimes seemed that it created more stress for some of the paid staff at the organisation because volunteers were able to drop in and out more readily than a paid worker would. Chloe might have to unexpectedly cover a class more often than if she were managing paid teachers. Some volunteers also mentioned to me that they were using the role to gain experience to help them get a permanent paid role at a private language school. Some of the problems for staff members in Norwich are illustrated by the quote from Chloe above. She needed to work in another job, and balanced her time between these roles and her university studies. She had been a volunteer teacher, and was employed as the staff member in charge of the ESOL classes during the pandemic. She told me that she loved the job, but that there wasn't enough funding and therefore hours to do all the work that was needed during the time given, which made things difficult. She also mentioned that the previous person in the role had advised her not to work more than these hours, because it would be difficult to stop.

Chloe had a busy life beyond the organisation, and could not leave her other job unless she was offered additional hours at the organisation. Her response to this limitation in hours was drawing a line, and trying not to work much more than the paid hours. It would be very difficult for her to give more time than she was paid for, because she was balancing three part-time responsibilities. Like John in Glasgow, this was another act of juggling in response to precarity. Similarly to the experiences of staff members in Glasgow, there was more work than time or funding available. Staff like Chloe, Florence, Alice and John felt that they could do more, but often advised each other not to do more than is necessary and to look after themselves. They did not want to let participants down, but also needed to negotiate the limitations, and were forced to draw a line under how far they could contribute their own time.

Kouritzin et al., (2022) use the idea of 'magic time' in the context of Higher Education and ESL educators to conceptualise the unpaid time spent working on expected activities such as lesson planning and replying to emails in the neoliberal university. In my study, organisations' resources were so stretched that they need to rely on unpaid labour, whether this was formally as recruited volunteers, or informally through 'magic time' of staff members. For volunteers, this was agreed, but for staff members at both organisations, this was implicit, and not formally agreed to, but they ended up feeling like they should undertake unpaid labour. Although no one specifically asked them to, staff members were feeling like they should do unpaid work anyway.

5.3.2. Differences in educators' labour between England and Scotland

One of the big differences between the organisations was the fact that most of the classes in Norwich were taught by volunteers and organised by a paid staff member who stepped in to teach when a volunteer was absent. In Glasgow the majority of teachers were paid, and were employed on temporary contracts. This reflects the policy and funding environment differences around ESOL between Scotland and England that I discussed in chapter 2. Scotland has had a history of having policy specifically for ESOL, and greater levels of funding, while England has never had an ESOL strategy, and has seen greater cuts to funding. However, while in Glasgow, I observed the impact of more recent cuts to ESOL and adult and community education funding in Scotland, and my observations are in line with other recent research that has discussed the impact of cuts in the sector (Stella & Kay, 2023). Florence's dilemma about whether she should volunteer to teach the class that she had originally been paid for shows one way in which these cuts are impacting on teachers, and may be leading to more reliance on volunteer teachers of ESOL in Scotland. In England, the organisation had to rely on volunteer teachers from the outset. Lacey and Ilcan (2006, p.35) have put forward the notion that the voluntary sector can be seen 'as a site for providing answers and solutions to social and economic problems that now lie outside the reach of the formal domain of the state.' In this conceptualisation, volunteers feel responsibility to give up their time in order to address gaps in funding which are caused by structural neglect. Volunteers had a wide variety of motivations, ranging from wishing to continue to teach during retirement, to enhancing their experience of teaching to get a job in the future. On the one hand, the practice of volunteering could be viewed as less precarious than a temporary paid

contract, with volunteer teachers knowing from the outset that they will not be paid for a role. But for participants in the class there could be more uncertainty, as teachers were absent more often, and a staff member might need to teach a class at the last minute. The use of paid temporary contracts or volunteers both seem to reflect the different levels of support in policy for ESOL in both nations, with Scotland having more funding but the experiences of teachers reflecting the fact that this support is waning.

5.3.3. Funding frustrations

As well as the lack of time, unreliable funding also caused exasperation among staff members in Norwich:

"we definitely try our best … within the charity sector to secure funding is really difficult because most of the funding is temporary so there'll be like (clicks fingers) one year, two year, three year, so that's kind of the same thing across all the charities in the sector... so I don't think it's uncommon for us to feel like 'ohhh I need to think about the funding or worry about it', but in terms of like being able to support the participants is more like frustration in the sense that there's so many people and are we able to support people how we would like them to be supported?...you have to take into consideration there's an increase in demand, it's obviously going to be difficult to give everyone the same amount of time as we did prior to like maybe a year before. It's just not possible" – (Tasfia Norwich interview, December 2022).

Tasfia talked about how frustrating having short term funding was, to the organisation. In fact, during our interview, she repeated the word 'frustrating' or 'frustration' several times when referring to lack of funding, as well as challenges for participants. Funding was temporary, and therefore precarious, and it was something which staff members needed to 'worry about'. But she highlighted that the most frustrating part of a lack of funding was feeling that she was not able to support participants to the level she felt the organisation should. The fact that the organisation staff would not be able to 'give everyone the same amount of time' that they used to, recalls how John acted like he was spinning plates in his English classroom to manage multiple learners. Time becomes stretched to the point that something has to give, and the quality of services could be impacted. Tasfia's comments show how this result can impact negatively on staff members. Funding is a means to having more resources, but it was the feeling that they would be less able to support people that

really frustrated Tasfia. Not being able to help participants appeared to have a large impact on the emotions of educators and staff in organisations, seeming to cause stress, frustration and guilt that they were not able to do more. This suggests that precarious funding and working conditions can impact negatively on the mental health of those working with refugees and asylum seekers in organisations.

5.3.4. Precarious funding's impact on learners

The uncertain funding that organisations had impacted on learners greatly. While I was at Brooklea in Glasgow, some of the courses had limited funding of around twelve weeks, and as I mentioned above this caused stress and anxiety for staff as they searched for other classes and additional funding so that learners could continue to access opportunities to study ESOL. When I asked people what they would like to have more of in the organisation, or what change they would like to see, they usually answered that they would like to have more ESOL classes. In Glasgow the short-term, restricted funding meant that there were often interruptions to classes, and that learners may experience spaces of time in which they are not able to access either non-formal or formal ESOL, or they may be moved between multiple teachers. In Norwich, as classes were taught by volunteers they did always have access to the non-formal classes, but these classes were typically very busy, and they also had many different teachers. Many people told me that they were attending non-formal classes because they felt that the one day per week of ESOL offered by the local college was not enough, and they wanted more opportunities to practice speaking English. In Norwich, while I was at the organisation when new hotels housing asylum seekers opened the demand for learning opportunities increased greatly and classes became much busier. The organisation did not receive any increases to its funding alongside this, and needed to stop giving participants bus tickets to travel to and from class as it could no longer afford to do so, which it had been able to do previously. As one of the hotels was about an hour and a half away on foot, and buses cost around £5 a day at the time, this meant that many people were not able to access many of the activities. Although learners in both Glasgow and Norwich were eager to access regular opportunities to learn English, there were many barriers to this, and their opportunities were restricted by limited funding.

5.4. Precarious work lives and shared experiences?

Many participants at the organisation also had experiences of precarious working lives. In the area of employment, many of the learners and staff had some shared experiences, particularly when it came to precarious working contracts. However, staff did not tend to relate their experiences to participants, but rather to me or each other. Below is one example of a learner who was navigating a precarious working life.

"*Pedro told me that he worked as a cleaner when he first arrived in the UK which was very challenging because he was working with a Polish man who also could not speak English so it was hard for them to communicate with each other. He said he told his manager when he interviewed for his current job as an Amazon delivery driver that he could not speak much English and wanted to learn more. The manager told him that it is ok, because his job was to drive and make deliveries so he does not need to speak. But Pedro told me that he does still need English for the job (on Monday he mentioned that it involves calling people) and for everyday life.*" (Glasgow fieldnotes, December 2021).

People who are seeking asylum are generally not allowed to work in the UK legally, apart from certain exemptions, but people with refugee status and those with most other types of visas are allowed to seek employment. In Glasgow, participants frequently seemed to work in types of employment such as factories, warehouses and delivery driving. These are notoriously precarious kinds of sectors, usually having zero hours contracts, or in the 'gig economy', in which workers pick up shifts when they become available. Often participants did not know when they would be working very far in advance. This posed problems for them being able to continually attend class, and interrupted learning at the organisation. Pedro would do as much paid work as he could, and I stopped seeing him in class regularly after a while. His spoken English was amongst the most fluent of all the participants I met, and I think this was because he was used to speaking a lot in his working life and had gained a lot of confidence. Being allowed to work when moving to the UK for Pedro positively influenced how he learned to speak English while he was working in this role. But he had told me that he wanted to attend classes in order to improve his vocabulary and written English. His employers did not provide any support to learn English and in fact his manager had told him he would not need to speak English in his role, which was disputed by Pedro's experience. Pedro was concerned that his level of English posed challenges for him in his

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job, but that the job prevented him from coming to English classes regularly, a catch-22. Pedro's working schedule was unpredictable and this could impact on his plans for learning English at the organisation.

One participant in Glasgow, Raheem from Sudan told me about how he worked night shifts at a warehouse, and then would attend English classes during the day. '*He said "it is hard work, I don't like"…he said he wants to learn to drive in the UK but that it's difficult without a high level of English because of the [driving] test… I ask him why he wants to get a driving license and he says he wants to be a delivery driver. He says "it's a better job"*' (Glasgow fieldnotes, March 2022). Raheem was not happy in his current job role and his attending classes at the organisation was motivated by a desire to get a better job. Raheem's experience also highlights that the specific technical language on the UK driving test is challenging for people who are learning English as a second language. As I mentioned earlier, similarly to how participants negotiated precarious visas, Raheem perceived that he would be able to negotiate his experience of precarious work through learning English, and getting a better job. He, like Pedro, was working in a precarious job, and balancing this with English classes during any free moments.

Sometimes the topic of precarious work came up as a topic during classroom discussions, as I will explore below.

"*The subject of work comes up in the lesson, and one learner, Mohammed, says that he works as a delivery driver for [a large fast-food delivery company]. He says it is annoying because he may have to wait around for a long time waiting for orders. John asks him if he is on a zero hours contract and he says yes. John tells the story of a previous student who worked for Amazon, but had to spend a lot of money commuting to work, and was paid minimum wage to work the night shift there.*" (Glasgow fieldnotes, November 2022).
In this extract, John asked Mohammed for more details about his work life, asking him whether he was on a zero-hours contract, and relating this to a previous student's experience. He turned this into a learning opportunity because the class was about different jobs and took the opportunity to discuss some vocabulary which was not in the textbook he was using. The discussion about precarious employment also linked with John's own experience with precarious working which I discussed earlier, although John did not talk about his own situation in front of the class, but in a private conversation with me. Why did

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John decide not to share his similar experience of precarious working with the students, choosing instead to relate this to a previous student? In my time in Glasgow, despite the precarious contracts of tutors, I did not see them share how this impacted them, rather apologising to students and rearranging classes for them. Although teachers would sometimes share personal details about their lives, this was usually related to their families, or more positive stories. It was interesting that teachers and learners actually seemed to have many similar experiences with precarity, especially when it comes to their working lives. But teachers do not seem to choose to relate these to learners.

Teachers were certainly aware that their students faced difficulties with their lives in the UK, and I think they may have been reluctant to share their own encounters with precarity because there were many areas in which their experiences did not overlap. For example, teachers did not have the same difficulties with language and racial discrimination, and knew the problems that people faced with their status in the UK, especially if they were going through the Asylum system. It was also possible that teachers did not make connections of shared experiences because of the types of employment usually undertaken by participants. In the example mentioned previously about Pedro, he worked as a delivery driver, driving a van and needing to go outside to deliver packages. Once he told me '"my hands are very cold when I am working", but he added that he can't wear gloves because he uses a touch screen' (Glasgow fieldnotes, February 2022). During the time in Glasgow I often noted that the classroom was cold because the windows were open, due to the organisation following Covid-19 restrictions, and Alice shared with me (not the learners) that her hands were very cold at work, but it was still an indoor working space. The types of contracts given to teachers which were short-term and precarious, with a lot of pressure to do work in a short space of time, presented a lot of similarities to those that some of the students had, although there were still many differences. Perhaps there were hierarchies in how people experienced precarity, and students were often seen as experiencing extreme examples of precarity, which may have prevented teachers from drawing connections that would trivialise student precarities.

It seemed that because staff had comparatively better experiences, that they discounted their own difficulties. Educators' responses to precarity were focussed on the students, and did not seem to be politicised or focussed on organising to work for different conditions for

themselves. The 'cruel optimism' (Berlant, 2011), that they might be striving for the best lives for their students, and trying to help them with navigating enormous precarity prevented them from acknowledging and organising around their own smaller but significant experiences of precarity. This also relates with Wendy Brown's (2015, p.210) concept of 'shared sacrifice', and the argument that people have been made to feel that they need to sacrifice something (like their time) to make up for structural limitations, such as underfunding of adult education.

5.5. Gendered experiences of precarity

Some of the challenges that people faced seemed to be divided along gender lines, with some difficulties particularly affecting either women or men. There were also services provided by the organisations which were divided by gender with the organisations in Glasgow and Norwich at the time both offering classes which were specifically only for women.

"*Florence mentioned how one difficulty for many women learners is the lack of childcare facilities. Many women can't go to class because of childcare commitments. She said this is frustrating because it only seems to affect women because they are the ones who look after children. That means that men are the ones who can speak English in the households and women are often left without this (chance) to learn*." (Glasgow fieldnotes, April 2022).

Throughout my time in Glasgow, there were many instances in which women would not be able to come into class because of issues with childcare. Florence and Alice were particularly concerned about female participants, and often related their own experiences of bringing up children as an example of why this might be the case. Florence summed this up during a conversation towards the end of my time there, which I have quoted above. Brooklea did not have the ability to offer childcare on site. There could occasionally be some flexibility. For example, while I was there, occasionally women did bring their babies along with them to the space. People were not sent away in these circumstances, but usually stayed for shorter lengths of time. Florence's assertion that women were the ones who took responsibility for childcare did seem to be true in the majority of cases. I could only see one exception, in which I noted '*Shirley says Paul's wife also comes to this class, but not at the same time. She notes that he and his wife take it in turns to go to the class on Fridays*

because one of them has to look after their children.' (Glasgow fieldnotes, March 2022). In this case, Paul and his wife, both from Sudan, took it in turns to come to class and shared the childcare between them. But typically this was not the case, and women were generally the ones who were responsible for childcare. Florence also particularly cared about this issue, as is demonstrated by the earlier quote from her. She felt that the women-only classes (which she taught) were important, and found the lack of childcare frustrating. It is another example of how a lack of resources within the organisation could lead to frustrations for staff members over concern for students. It also shows how Florence's own experiences as a mother shaped how she saw the learners, giving her a particular concern for the barriers which women might face in attending classes.

Likewise, in Norwich, childcare was also an issue for some of the participants. Similarly to Glasgow, there were not childcare facilities on site, and participants tended not to bring children. While I did research, an online women's-only class was accessed by mothers of young children. Some mothers did bring babies from time to time, but usually did not bring toddlers or older children while I was observing the in-person classes. ESOL classes were not held during the school holidays, so this could have been a reason for this. Once or twice people did bring young children, and they were asked by the teacher not to bring them again next time, but they are allowed to stay for that lesson.

Sometimes female participants spoke about their experiences with childcare. "*At the start of class, Tujela mentioned that her daughter had been sick with flu so she had been taking care of her and hadn't slept well (her daughter is just a baby) and that her son had also been in the hospital a lot recently; he had a cataract on one eye, and this is why she has not been in class much recently.*" (Norwich fieldnotes, September 2022.) In this quote from my fieldnotes, Tujela had been absent from class for a few weeks because her children had been sick. Her husband worked full-time so if the children need taking care of, then she needed to be with them, and was not able to seek childcare from her network of friends. I also noted that some female participants were late to class because they were dropping off children at school in the mornings. Although class was scheduled to start at 11am, to try and avoid this issue, it still impacted some participants who lived further away. This shows the many ways in which women were particularly impacted in accessing classes.

Women's experiences of negotiating childcare also seemed to vary and depend on the health and sleeping patterns of children, as well as on when nurseries and schools were open. Relying on friends and family for childcare was not always certain, as Tujela emphasised that she did not have her family in the UK and that she did not have many friends she could ask to look after her son. All of these factors meant that precarious childcare availability could prevent (mostly female) participants from attending class, but not always at predictable times. Teachers were always flexible about this. Sometimes in Glasgow they would text participants to check on them, which is how we knew that the reason they were not in class related to childcare. In Norwich participants were not texted, but participants would often mention this the next time they were in class, if they were a regular participant. The fact that this challenge impacted women in both Glasgow and Norwich indicates that this is widespread among female ESOL learners in the UK.

On the other hand, men tended to have their own challenges, usually relating to precarious, gig-economy employment which I spoke about in the previous section. Women also took on roles like this, but the majority of people I spoke to working in precarious employment were men like Pedro and Raheem. This suggests that while visa precarity was a shared experience, precarity related to labour differed, depending on gender. For women this was usually the unpaid work of childcare, impacting how regularly they could attend classes. For men it was precarious employment, usually in the form of shift-work which meant that they may have trouble accessing classes regularly.

5.6. Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored different experiences of precarity, in visas, through working contracts, in daily life - with families, and with childcare. Visas were a particular source of precarity for those who were seeking asylum or had other kinds of insecure migration status, and meant that people had to devote a lot of time and energy to navigating this. Due to the non-devolved nature of immigration, visa status caused uncertainty for people in both England and Scotland. I have also explored the role of precarious employment in different lives. This created different uncertainties compared to unstable visas, and it was often experienced by both staff and participants in the two organisations in different ways. Precarious employment seems to be relatively ubiquitous, and this is perhaps also an indication of a wider structural, societal problem involving employment practices (such as

the proliferation of short-term/ zero hours contracts etc). Organisations were implicitly relying on unpaid labour from paid staff, and staff responded to a lack of time and funding to do their work in different ways but all of them seemed to feel a strong sense of responsibility to their students. Staff were juggling numerous responsibilities and often ended up overworked or feeling guilty and suffering from emotional stress if they could not do more. Some participants were also juggling heavy and unpredictable workloads, or did not have access to regular childcare which posed numerous obstacles to attending classes at all.

Throughout this chapter I have explored the uncertainty that precarity causes people and how it impacts their everyday lives. The different types of precarity that people experienced show that there were differing and sometimes overlapping experiences felt by everyone in the organisation. Difference across gender, marital status, visa status and employment meant that they experienced precarity in diverging ways that were ubiquitous throughout many people's lives. The ways in which work could be divided along gendered lines, meant that there were sometimes diverging precarious conditions created by the labour that people did. The organisations and staff within them also experienced precarity, in terms of funding particularly, creating uncertainty, and impacting how people related to each other there. All of these different experiences of precarity created varied barriers to learning and difficulties in accessing classes, as well as contributing to stresses and pressures on educators. Although this chapter has highlighted a lot of challenges and uncertainties for those within organisations, the following chapters will explore how organisations and those within them adapted to these precarities, and facilitated learning to navigate them.

Chapter Six- Learning spaces: adaptabilities, opportunities and means to respond to precarity

6.1. Introduction

The organisations that I conducted fieldwork with were non-formal spaces of learning, rather than formal educational institutions. There was a great deal of flexibility to the teaching-learning spaces and there were often changes and repurposing of spaces to adapt to different circumstances or desires. This chapter will explore the learning environments offered by the two organisations, and it will particularly set out the many ways in which the learning spaces, times and other resources took on the quality of being flexible, demonstrating adaptability to a variety of learners and contexts. I lay out how educators and learners used the space, exercising agency to do so and facilitated and drew on informal and non-formal learning to respond to their experiences of precarity which I discussed in the last chapter. This adaptability of the learning spaces was also a feature of non-formal and informal learning that occurred there, and this chapter will explore this and the implications of this feature for the organisations, teachers and learners in this context. In this chapter I will explore how the space, materials, and lessons changed and were changed by those in the space, what they utilised, and how this impacted learning. I will also examine how staff, volunteers and participants used space, furniture and materials to transform (or in some cases not) learning processes, and how the objects and space-imposed opportunities and challenges for learning.

6.2. Learning spaces and adaptations

6.2.1. Changing the classroom space

Both in Norwich and in Glasgow, the physical space itself could be adapted depending on the size and makeup of the classes. By physical space I refer to the rooms and corridors which made up the organisation. In Glasgow, there was a dividing wall that could be drawn across to break a large room into two smaller ones. In Norwich, screens were used to break up the space. Tables and chairs could also be moved around depending on how teachers and students wanted to have them arranged for a particular class or activity. It varied how people in the space would move objects or how they would re-purpose it for different goals.

Below is an account from a class that I was teaching in Norwich. At the moment this happened, there was only one student in the classroom; Nadia.

"*Halfway through the class two women came in and smiled at us, and started moving the furniture. We were a bit surprised, and I said hello, wondering if they wanted to join in the class. And then they started praying and I realised that they wanted to use this room, as it is smaller and off to the side [of the main teaching room] as a prayer room! We looked at each other and smiled and I said that we could start the break time, and Nadia agreed.*" (Norwich fieldnotes, October, 2022).

During this class, Nadia and I were using a very small office as the classroom, and the person whose office it belonged to had been coming in and out during the class. Usually there were other students there, and we expected them to arrive late. The two women who were not usually students in the class, using the space as a prayer room had surprised us. The women had not said anything, and I had initially assumed they had wanted to join the class, because it was quite common for new students to arrive late and drop in and out of groups. In reality, they did not want to join the class at all. It shows that they felt comfortable repurposing the space in the organisation, and had an expectation that we would be willing to share the space with them. Nadia, the learner also needed to be flexible and she was not put off about the interruption to the class. The women who came in demonstrated that they had agency to adapt spaces within the organisation themselves for what they wanted to use it for and the fact that the women felt comfortable enough to repurpose space for themselves meant that the space could be inclusive to their particular needs at that moment. Perhaps their past experiences had also led them to assume that prayer would be prioritised over class time so that this would not be a surprise to us. The malleability of the room meant that they were able to have a prayer room when they wanted it. But it also meant that myself and Nadia, although we felt surprise, needed to go along with this event and start the break time, as the room was very small and it felt like they had greater need of the space. But it also could have involved my own and Nadia's assumptions about whether people praying would want to share the classroom with us. Reflecting later, maybe the room could have been used both for the lesson and for prayer. If there were a more formal curriculum and more formal relations in place, it would have been more difficult to be adaptable in regards

to this event because a teacher would have less flexibility to adapt lesson plans in line with events happening in that moment.

This event also says something about the lack of space in the organisation, as one room needed to be repurposed for multiple uses by different actors. This sharing of one room creates a sense of communality, but also a sense of 'making do'/'making it work' with what was there. Multi-purposing and adaptability of the space helped the organisations to continue to work with the very diverse participants and make the best of limited resources. The same applied to the people in the space who also might have to be similarly flexible, because of the very varied cultural backgrounds of those there, and the varied life experiences they have (some of which were explored in the previous chapter). For educators in non-formal spaces working with people from very diverse backgrounds, there were regular challenges like this to expectations that might be held about the space in the classroom and who decided how the classroom space would be used. Although in this case learners had a role in repurposing the space, power still tended to lie with teachers about how it was ultimately used or repurposed.

Likewise, the space was adaptable in Glasgow, but I observed that it was usually repurposed by the teachers, rather than by learners. There were times in which the physical space of the organisations needed to be changed at the last minute:

"*John (the ESOL teacher) arrives, and hurriedly says that we need to draw the partition across the room as he has a class starting in 5 minutes. Mohammed and Shirley get up to help him with the wall panels.*" (Glasgow fieldnotes, February 2022).

This was an example from Glasgow in which the space needed to be quickly changed to accommodate a class which was about to start. The space transformed from one room to two. John had arrived five minutes before the class, and there was another activity happening, with the room being a large open-plan space at this point. Another staff member and a student helped with this change. It was quite common for everyone to get involved with helping to move furniture. This brought a sense of co-creating space, but it was usually guided by the teacher, suggesting a more traditional view of who can make decisions about the space. Although sometimes students might have moved chairs or tables to sit with friends or to see better. Again perhaps this shows that the students felt comfortable to do

this. But most of the time, movement in Glasgow was led by the teacher, and even if it was not, it seemed in line with habit or expectations about what the classroom might look like.

Moving the furniture depending on what activity was being done was quite common. Because it could be unpredictable how many people would show up to class each session.

Figure 3: Diagram of a classroom, drawn in OneNote, Glasgow fieldnotes.
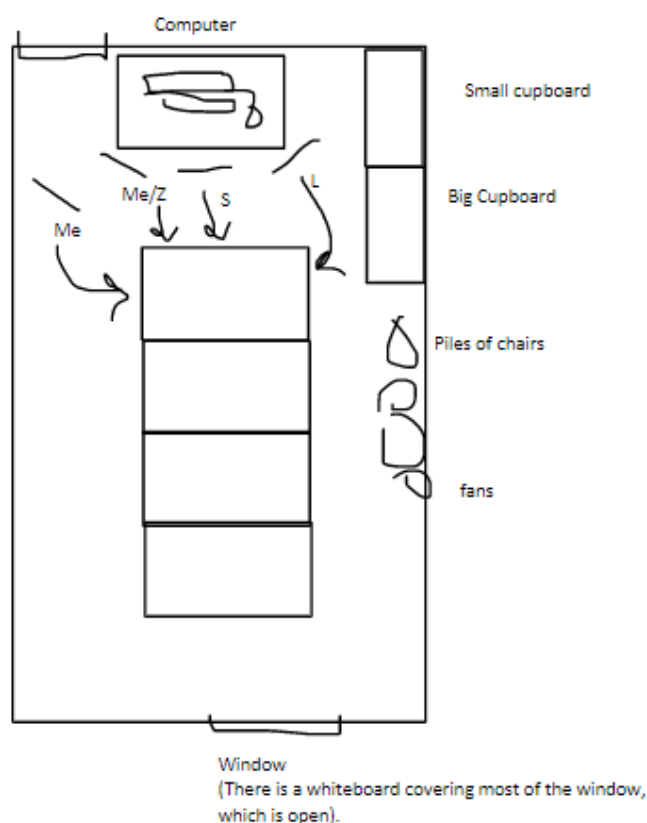
During the class, the teacher Shirley moved the students around the classroom, depending on the activity. When the class started they were doing some activities on the computer, and then moved on to the tables. Shirley in this example, adapted the classroom and the learning activities depending on who was there and how the class progressed. In this case there were two women, Leyla and Zoha and another student who arrived later. In this class, while they were sitting at the computer they were completing an activity about body parts, in which a flashcard was on the screen and they were asked to spell a word. Shirley observed that they were finding the vowel sounds of words difficult, and she went upstairs to get something. I noted that '*when Shirley comes back she has some sheets of paper and encourages the students to move to the main table in the centre of the room which involves turning the chairs around* (see figure 3)' (Glasgow fieldnotes, February 2022). She talks about vowels in English and uses the examples of all our names to showcase different vowel sounds in words, the worksheets included some practice activities. This seemed to form a part of the non-formal nature of the space, and gives an insight into the learner-centred pedagogical approach of the tutors in Glasgow. The activities and the set-up of the classroom could be changed and in this example it was the teacher who exercised agency to do so.

There were times when I observed the teachers changing activities in response to particular needs or wishes the students had, even during the course of the lesson itself. This is demonstrated in the following quote from my fieldnotes; "*The next page has some questions. Florence asks Zoha to read the first one which is 'What time does your child start school?'. Zoha says 'no', and F says, 'that's right, your baby is not in school yet', Florence takes the paper from Zoha and edits the questions in pencil so that they are more relevant to Zoha's situation. She gives it back to Zoha and says 'can you read my writing?' and Zoha says yes.*" (Glasgow fieldnotes, February 2022)

The materials in this class were designed for ESOL-learning parents to help them to know more about the school system in Scotland, and this activity was around learning language for telling the time. In this class, Zoha had indicated that the worksheet did not reflect her situation, and Florence had edited it. She adapted the questions which were based around going to school, towards having a baby, changing the questions to '*what time does your child have a nap'* etc. The ability to be flexible meant that Zoha was able to answer questions that were more relevant for her. I mentioned in the previous chapter that the organisation in Glasgow valued 'learner-centred' education, and this is one example of an educator adapting materials to make them more relevant to a learner. In this case, it was useful to Zoha's life as a mother of a baby. Florence felt that a curriculum which was designed for a particular group of learners needed some flexibility, because parents' children might be different ages, attending different kinds of schools across Glasgow, all within this class which was aimed at families.

Figure 4: Image of worksheets and a clock that learners could use in Glasgow

In this family ESOL class, the tutors were also able to order some materials to share with students. Telling the time in English was one area which they had found learners wanted a lot of practice with. They ordered a clock to help with this, which some of the learners responded to eagerly, moving the hands of the clock to aid with answering questions. Moving the hands of the clock was a helpful tool in numerous classes, and I wrote at one point that it was a 'meeting point' between the tutor and the student as they both leaned over the clock to interact with

it (Glasgow fieldnotes, February 2022). Having a prop to demonstrate times (rather than a worksheet) seemed to be very helpful for some participants. The clock was also more adaptable than a printed page, as it was movable and students could alter it themselves.

In Glasgow, as the courses were supported by different funding streams, they were limited in length. It meant that when funding for a class finished, tutors sometimes did not have a new class to put learners in. In Norwich, which permanently utilised volunteer teachers, classes were ongoing, and were not limited by specific course lengths. This meant that classes permanently operated, apart from during the school holidays. Although course lengths were shorter in Glasgow, Alice told me that there was some room to be able to extend one particular project she was working on:

"Alice: *so we just condensed all that into a four week course and sometimes the four week course ran on a bit longer, it wasn't a four week course, it may have ran for six weeks*
Lauren: so it could be flexible?
Alice: yeah it could be flexible just because of what we covered and the course as well covered so much as you can probably see from the work that we sent out as well. Yeah so there was a lot of information there, but we just took our time and got on with it as well and we were very lucky that the learners were very happy to go along and if they felt that they wanted it to extend, they would say 'could we do this a bit more, could we do this a bit more', so there were parts of the project or the work that we were doing with the learners that they maybe said 'this bit I'm not so sure of', or 'this bit I need additional support with', so if there were things, we would maybe give out more lessons on, we made the time… reading the time, on a watch or things like this as well, timetables, days of the week, days of the month, holidays, so because a lot of people said that even they had difficulties with when the children were in school, so things like in-service days, the parents didn't know what an in-service day was, a bank holiday, what's a bank holiday" (Alice interview, Glasgow, November 2021).

This meant that the tutors were able to adapt the course length depending on what the participants wanted to learn. In this case they discovered that there were certain areas of input that parents needed, so they were able to extend and develop these. There were certain topics that were requested by learners, which surprised Alice and the other tutor

running the course. This shows how British/Scottish teachers were often unaware of the facets of British/Scottish schooling that may be unusual to newcomers. A bank holiday became something unusual. And even I had to check what Alice meant by an 'in-service day', because in England I had only heard these referred to as 'inset days' (an abbreviation), days in which children do not go to school. It shows that the vocabulary useful to newcomers depends on their circumstances (e.g. This course was for parents), and that this vocabulary may not be immediately obvious to teachers. Indeed, it goes further than simply vocabulary, to concepts and cultural norms. Teachers were imparting these implicit ideas alongside formal materials. The adaptability of the course meant that Alice and her colleague were able to add in elements as they arose which they may never have anticipated themselves. The fact that she told me her students were from a wide range of countries and educational backgrounds meant that these surprising learning events were unpredictable, even with experience of teaching. Having an openness to be able to extend the course and there being room for the teachers to exercise agency and adapt materials and respond to surprises that arose was important in allowing for these moments of cultural learning, as they were frequently about unconscious perspectives, and were regularly unplanned and unexpected.

Many participants in Glasgow seemed to hold traditional views about how a classroom should be utilised. Perhaps this was because the space was already mostly 'classroom-like' when they arrived, with tables and chairs usually set out in some way. As I will discuss in the following sections, the main ways in which participants 'transformed' the space, were through their use of technology, or by offering to help teachers when they moved furniture. In Norwich, the participants were more likely to use the space for other purposes at times outside of class time, e.g. family events, and the tables and chairs were not set out in a distinct or predictable way each day. At the beginning of classes in Norwich, early arrivals helped to get out the chairs and set them out, and they were put away after classes. Perhaps viewing the multiple uses of the space allowed for more flexibility of how they viewed it, leading to events such as repurposing a classroom as a prayer room, discussed in an earlier section. Through having the option to move items of furniture, and the flexibility to have phones out on the desks along with more traditional classroom stationery like notebooks, pens and pencils, participants were able to have some say in how the classroom

space was used for their learning. But there was certainly a limit to this agency and even in Norwich, during class time, there was still a fairly traditional approach taken. Differences may also have been down to the nature of the two organisations, with the charity in Norwich acting as a community organisation which supported refugees and asylum seekers, and in Glasgow the organisation was more explicitly aimed at lifelong education.

In Glasgow there was also a less formal session once per week, which the tutors Alice and Florence were very happy to have funding for. This was known as a conversation café, and did not follow a set curriculum, and there were hot drinks and snacks provided (as there were usually during classes in Glasgow). Usually, the tutors facilitated some games and encouraged conversation around particular topics. This was a popular session while I was there, and there were usually regular learners from the different classes there who attended. In my notes I commented that 'there was a lot of laughter' while people were acting out sports during a game a bit like charades, or 'everyone [would] clap and cheer' when someone was winning a game (Glasgow fieldnotes, February 2022). Although classes were friendly times, the games and laughter in this session were clearly popular. This could be as a release from the pressures of life, or as an alternative to the more formal nature of having worksheets which were more the norm in the ESOL classes.

6.2.2. The edges of the organisation?

Sometimes learning events happened beyond the confines of the building itself. I attended some events in Norwich which were deliberately held outside of the walls of the main building that they usually used, to connect with the local community.

"*Ela taught us about the alphabet [of her native language]. She had brought a small object to represent a word for each letter of the alphabet. Each character was printed on a card, in different colours. I think it must have taken some time to prepare. It was a bit windy in the garden, and sometimes the objects and cards would blow away, and we would need to catch them.*" (Norwich fieldnotes, June 2022) [Figure 5 shows this activity, after some of the cards have been blown by the wind]

Figure 5: Refugee week event in Norwich

This event was a part of the Norwich Refugee Week, in which the organisation had organised small classes taught by speakers of different languages who were participants and volunteers at the organisation from sanctuary-seeking backgrounds including classes in Tigrinya, Arabic and Kurdish. This event was held in an outdoor setting, a local community garden. We were gathered around a table in a small group in the garden, and there were children playing, food venders, and people socialising. This created an informal atmosphere, and one which felt relaxed and mostly cheerful. But there were also challenges, in this case, the wind proved challenging and altered the carefully prepared learning materials of the teacher. The class teacher was an experienced teacher from a formal educational background, having taught in primary schools in her home country. There was a contrast between the colourful pre-prepared materials, and the natural elements which were out of anyone's control within the space. Moving outside of the formal building of the organisation opened some new possibilities but also posed these new, unexpected challenges. The wind's interaction with the class was surprising, but also afforded opportunities to laugh and interact freshly with the materials, in unplanned ways.

This Refugee Week event also posed the opportunity to the local community, outside of regular participants and volunteers at the organisation to meet each other and created different kinds of learning encounters. This event reminded me of the policy literature in England and Scotland about integration, which posits that integration should be a 'two-way' process, by offering the opportunity for sanctuary seekers to share their own languages with local residents. As the geographical location of the organisation was a short distance away from the city centre in Norwich, the chance to meet people in a new location brought the opportunity for different people to attend activities. Opening the invitation as a city-wide activity also invited this chance for wider participation. It would have been interesting to see

whether these kinds of informal language sharing activities would have been popular in the long-term, although these particular classes did not continue as they were one-off events.

The organisation in Norwich also had an allotment which participants could go to once per week over the course of a day with a member of staff. This quote is from when I was speaking to the staff member, Tom who facilitates the allotment sessions: *'he said a few of [the people with their own beds in the allotment] haven't been recently, and often this is to do with positive reasons, like they get onto a course at college or get a job, but he will just leave them be, and there is enough room. He says that usually what happens will be that people will come, build up confidence, and then maybe mean that they have something come up in their lives that means they don't have as much time to come'* – (Norwich fieldnotes, June 2022). Visiting the allotment was a way for participants to cope with some of the issues of life, but when they had navigated these issues, they may not have wished or been able to attend any more. When people did get refugee status, or a more secure visa, they may have been able to start working more, and it often meant that they might not need to come to the organisation as frequently. This shows the flexibility of the space, as well as the staff member, Tom, who facilitated sessions there. By giving some outdoor space for participants to access, and maintaining a flexible attitude to those who attended, for how long or for what purpose, the allotment was a calm space (contrasting with the very busy and noisy English classes), in which participants could come and go as they needed to.

Tom's comment that he would 'leave [the allotment beds] be' was a good example of how this open approach relates to the concept of 'precarious pedagogy' (Fisher, 2011) which I discussed in chapter 3. Staff were aware that participants were experiencing precarious circumstances in their lives, and their outlook on how people could come and go from the organisations was in line with this. As I will discuss in more detail later, learning opportunities offered by the organisations were frequently used to cope with precarity, but since a feature of precarity is continual change and uncertainty, these learning opportunities needed to be responsive to this.
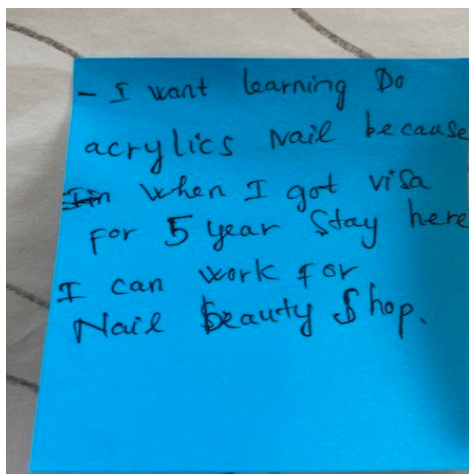
Figure 6: A note written by Tina in a workshop in which she stated she wanted to learn to do acrylic nails

In Glasgow I also had an unplanned opportunity to move beyond the walls of the building when a participant invited the tutors and other participants to go to a nail salon that her friend was opening in the city. Tina had told me in one of the workshops that one of her goals was to learn how to do acrylic nails. [see picture]. She said that she was not able to take on paid employment until she had gained her refugee status, so that she was not able to start this yet. But her friend had opened a nail salon, and she was playing the violin at the opening to support her. By going there, I saw the space that Tina hoped to be the site of her future learning, how to do acrylic nails. She was also able to observe what was going on while in the space. The space was a community of people from her home country (in South-East Asia), in Glasgow. But Tina was also restricted within this space by the external rules imposed through migration policy which I discussed in chapter 2. Due to Home Office rules, she was not allowed to be paid to play the violin, and still was not able to see through her goal of learning how to do acrylic nails until she was allowed by her visa status. But the space itself and the community she had built meant that she could observe what was happening there. She was able to play the violin there for her friend (although she told me that she was allowed to be paid for it), which was still an act of agency on her part. She was able to put herself in spaces that would bring opportunities for informal learning that would help her to achieve her future dreams.

The organisations were not always contained within the walls of the buildings that they occupied, and the learning activities of participants were not always neatly contained within the activities that the organisations organised. The blurred lines between the different spaces that learning could take place within facilitated an openness that was especially important for the kinds of non/informal learning that was occurring. As I will elaborate in chapter eight, this was additionally important because of the very varied experiences, backgrounds and ambitions of the participants that organisations worked with.

6.3. Breaktimes, snacks and informal learning opportunities

In the following section I will explore how time was broken up during the day at the organisations, with a particular focus on the time *between* classes, in particular 'break times', or the time to have snacks and hot drinks. There were also examples of food and snack times changing the atmosphere in the classroom, making the space feel welcoming, inviting participants to connect with something in the classroom beyond traditional learning interactions.

"In the middle of the two tables is a blue bowl with some biscuits, which Alice has put there (wagon wheels, penguins and 'go ahead' biscuits). There are also two bottles of hand sanitiser and a black pen to one side. There is also a box of sugar which Alice gave Roya with her tea." (Glasgow fieldnotes, February 2022).

Some of the tutors in Glasgow would provide snacks and offer tea and coffee to students and any visitors. This was funded by the organisation most of the time, although at times there was one tutor who would bring in snacks she had picked up with her own money. Sometimes these snacks would be utilised, sometimes participants would turn them down because they did not want them or because they were fasting for religious reasons. These snacks were not a part of the planned learning activities, but seemed to create a welcoming atmosphere which created certain conditions for learning. Sometimes people would talk about the snacks, for example, Roya commented that she did not like the Wagon Wheel, or there was a conversation about how to pronounce the word 'biscuits'. This kind of learning interaction also challenges the traditional view of 'the classroom', as in most UK educational establishments like schools, eating and drinking is not allowed during class time. Eating and drinking in such formal educational contexts are not seen as part of the learning that is prioritised, and tend to be associated with non-educational moments in the school day. They constitute a 'break' from formal educational times when learning is seen to happen. In contrast, in the adult non-formal learning environments I observed, encouraging and facilitating snacking and hot drinks, signalled that the space was different from formal learning environments. The learning was not seen as stopping to have hot drinks or snacks, but these became a part of learning processes as conversations could flow and cultural observations were exchanged, there was not necessarily a solid line drawn between these encounters and formal learning activities.

Providing snacks and drinks also fitted in with a concern of staff in the organisations that participants may have difficulties because of the cost-of-living crisis. In both Norwich and Glasgow the organisations also provided food and coat giveaways while I was there. Some of the tutors in Glasgow took their role of bringing snacks very seriously, and would sometimes talk about when they would next stock up on them for future classes. Offering someone a hot drink, even when they were late for class was also seen as important. I also began offering to make hot drinks for everyone while I was there. This welcoming atmosphere went some way to breaking the ice, and with late arrivals, it possibly signalled that their lateness was not going to prevent them from accessing the class, because they were immediately welcomed by the offer of a hot drink. However, in both cities, tutors seemed to remain in charge of break times, and participants did not initiate break times or help themselves to cups of tea if they were not offered them. This could have been because the participants did not feel confident to do this. Who was allowed in the small kitchen space may also have been linked with Covid-19 restrictions at the time, which were still quite strict in Scotland while I was doing my fieldwork. It also meant that when the tutor in Glasgow said it was break time, there was less of a division between 'class time' and 'break time', which stands in contrast to classes Norwich.

In Norwich, there was a break time in the middle of class, rather than snacks offered during class, and usually people took the opportunity to have tea or coffee, and sometimes have biscuits or fruit which were provided by the organisation. Participants tended to make tea and coffee for themselves, rather than teachers making it for them as was the case in Glasgow. Although this used to be different before the pandemic, as there were also community meals after English classes in Norwich. Having the opportunity to have some food, even snacks do seem to be important.

During my time spent at the organisation's allotment in Norwich, there was also a break time in which there were snacks and hot drinks. The informal conversation that happened at the break times, between classes seemed to be important for learning because it offered an opportunity for participants to choose the subjects of conversation. For example, during the break of one class in the summer of 2022, participants asked questions of me and of each other about politics in Britain (it was around the time when Boris Johnson had resigned as Prime Minister). This is shown in the following extract from my fieldnotes:

"The conversation moved to politics, a couple of the students asked me about when Boris Johnson would leave (he announced that he was resigning last Thursday, about 5 days ago). I said in the news it said it would be in September. They asked why it was so long, and I said because they needed to choose a new leader. Hozan said that one of them is Kurdish [he meant a minister in the government], I asked whether it was Nadhim Zahawi (the former minister for education), and he said yes, he said that he is 'forgetting he is Kurdish' and doesn't support Kurdish refugees. Someone else asks whether Boris Johnson was very popular in the UK, and I said maybe he was quite popular [in the past], but I didn't think he was that popular anymore. I also said that in Norwich he may be less popular because we have a Labour MP. Bowen and An mention about how in Hong Kong it has become like North Korea and someone asks what is happening in NK, Hozan says Kim Jong Un, someone looks for the word, and someone says it is 'dictator'." (Norwich fieldnotes, July 2022).[28]

This conversation was spontaneous and represented a more student-led opportunity for non-formal learning, as it was not planned by the teacher, but rather suggested by the learners themselves. I never saw British politics as a planned subject of a lesson in either Norwich or Glasgow, perhaps because teachers were reluctant to discuss politics with students. But this conversation showed that these students were very curious about British politics, and were keen to discuss how British people perceived the situation at the time. This also perhaps links to expectations about formal schooling. When I personally trained as an English language teacher, I was told not to discuss politics in the classroom. The teacher was supposed to occupy a neutral position, particularly in relation to political party matters. But the participants in this class were curious about what had been going on in the news, and also relished the chance to find out what British people thought about it. They also got the chance to share their own thoughts, and teach something themselves, for example, I had not known that Nadhim Zahawi was of Kurdish origin before this conversation. They shared their own opinions based on their lived experiences (e.g. that Zahawi was forgetting he was Kurdish, or that Hong Kong was becoming a dictatorship). This was a potentially controversial subject area, and one participant suggested that it was 'serious' and tried to change the subject after this. Perhaps they were aware that there was potential for

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[28] This conversation took place in summer 2022, just after Boris Johnson had resigned, but before a new Prime Minister (Liz Truss) was chosen through a leadership race within the Conservative Party.

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disagreements amongst a diverse group of learners and wanted to steer the conversation to safer waters. Having serious conversations is sometimes avoided during class time, but it is interesting that break times could offer the opportunity for unplanned informal learning, which could be considered a little risky for educators. But perhaps a little discomfort allows for learning which is more based on the experiences and perspectives of learners themselves. The openness of a break time, offered unstructured, unanticipated topics for discussion and learning that may not happen within class time. It was an opportunity for a conversation and learning that was more led by the students in the class, rather than planned and led by the teacher.

At break times, participants also got the opportunity to make social connections and speak in languages other than English with people who speak the same languages as themselves. In Norwich, people could also meet those who were in other classes. It is hard to know whether the snacks and hot drinks *during* class time which were offered in Glasgow would have worked well in Norwich, as classes in Norwich were typically much larger. I would note that having drinks and snacks did create a welcoming atmosphere in the classrooms in Glasgow but that having these at breaktime in Norwich did signal a switch which tended to facilitate interesting informal discussions during the break. In general, having the opportunity to have hot drinks and snacks, whether during class or during a twenty-minute break was very important to both participants and teachers to get to know each other, and undertake informal learning that was more up to the students themselves and not as possible during more formal lessons. This shows the importance of taking time to have breaks for informal learning, but also how sharing snacks and hot drinks were important to facilitating these informal learning opportunities.

When I spoke to Tasfia, a staff member in Norwich, she emphasised the importance of social connections for participants:

"I think it's important to consider that the social element is just as equally important 'cause people don't come here just to learn English but to also, you know, make friends, meet new people, ...so I think understanding that it's not just about learning English but the social aspect as well.... it's nice like at the end of the English classes. like people stick around and which is nice, like you know, people are hanging around having conversations. Like that's a

really important part of it because even if they can't speak, if they don't have the same languages, they're trying to communicate in, you know, English which is nice to see"
(Tasfia interview, Norwich, December 2022).

The informal, open and flexible space built by the organisation contributed to building cross-cultural social connections. As well as meaning that participants could practise using English with one another, Tasfia emphasised that making friends was one of the reasons that people would sign up for classes. Although this social aspect is not recognised as a formal learning outcome in English by the ESOL curriculum, 'integration' implies building these kinds of connections. Making friends is tied to informal learning and Tasfia placed value on the time after the class, as facilitating this. This time at the 'end of the English classes' was not explicitly written on the timetable of the organisation, but it was a time that participants did utilise. Tasfia emphasised that they may have been communicating in English, which meant that they were using/practising the skills gained in English classes. It is also implied that making connections with other people was necessary for facilitating informal learning which I will return to in the discussion chapter. This shows how the time between and around classes was incredibly important in providing opportunities for connection and learning.

6.4. Digital adaptability: Non-formal tools for learning
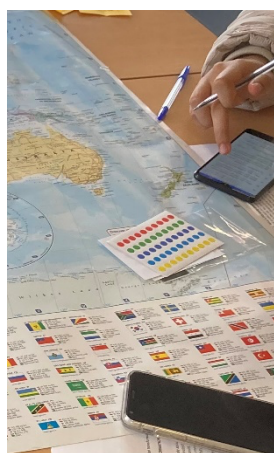
Figure 7: Learners use phones during class in Glasgow

Digital technology was used as a flexible tool in numerous ways in Glasgow and Norwich. The picture is of a participant checking something on their phone during a workshop in Glasgow. Participants and educators used phones and laptops quite frequently during class-time, and in this section I will discuss the different ways they used technology to aid learning, and supplement knowledge (e.g. For translation).

"Alice asks Roya what she did at the weekend, but Roya is not sure what the question means. Alice says to me that she sometimes uses her laptop to translate, and types the question there. She turns her laptop to Roya and then she nods and tells us, in simple words. Baby, cook, clean. She mimes that her daughter is breastfeeding and says 'milk', and she says that her granddaughter is 3 months." (Glasgow fieldnotes, February 2022).

Technology was used frequently as a translation tool, in both Norwich and Glasgow. In this class, Alice used her laptop as a way to communicate questions to Roya, who was a beginner in English. She typed the question in English and it was translated into Farsi, which Roya read. Alice was making an effort to get to know Roya, who was a relatively new student, despite the language barrier. Technology was used alongside prior knowledge of words which may have been taught previously, and in this case Roya used gestures with her body to tell us that her daughter was breastfeeding. Technology could be a part of communicating and learning, but it was supplemented with 'offline', and bodily interactions too. In another case in Glasgow the class was completing an activity relating to health and schools: '*There are also some words related to health and illness: 'temperature, fever, vomiting etc.'. Florence often looks up translations on her phone and at one point uses her phone to show a picture when they are not sure about nits and headlice*' (Glasgow fieldnotes March 2022)*.* Florence was going through activities with students and none of them knew what nits or headlice were in English. In this case she looked up an image on her phone and all the women recognised the picture, telling us what the word was in their languages. This added some adaptability to printed classroom materials. Although some would have images on them, it was not always predictable what language students might not know in the class itself, and technology (computers and internet) was often a speedy way of solving this in a visual way, which learners instantly recognised. I also often observed students in Norwich using translation apps on their phones, which they pointed at printed materials and which showed the words translated in their own languages on the screens. Both learners and educators were utilising technology frequently as an embedded part of learning, alongside 'offline' interactions. When I revisited photos from my fieldwork, I noticed that there were mobile phones sitting out on the table at numerous times, and I had also mentioned this in my notes. Once, when a participant sent me some pictures that she had taken in one of my workshops, I even noticed my own phone was sitting out on the table, since I used it for notes, making recordings and taking photos. I had not even noticed the phones in the pictures at first, as they seemed like a natural part of the classroom. I have included some examples of pictures below which show how participants' phones were often sitting out on desks during class time and workshops.
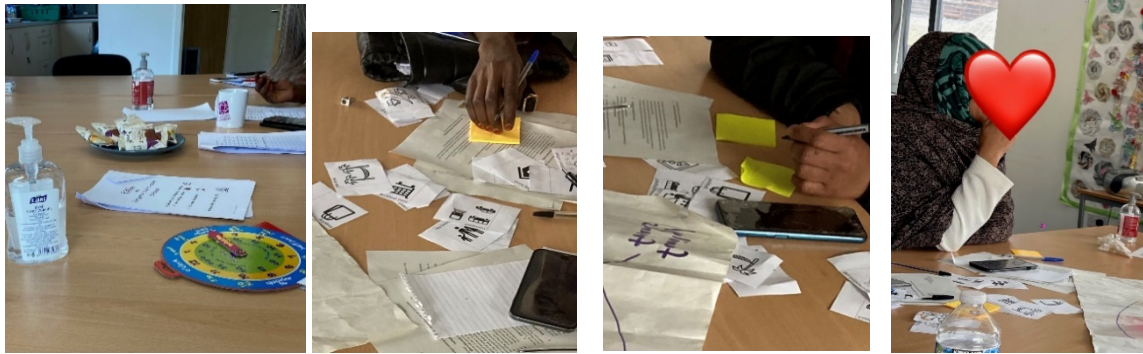
Figure 8: Use of phones in the classroom

In these non-formal educational spaces, phones have become a relatively ubiquitous piece of classroom equipment, like notebooks or pens. But classroom stationery was something which the organisations often provided for learners (both in Glasgow and Norwich), whereas phones were something which participants brought themselves, as they were a part of their wider lives.

However, this use of technology was not necessarily shared equally among all students and teachers. One learner in Glasgow had an older non-smart phone, and once I observed him using it as a calculator during a game about everyday finances: "*Paul uses his phone (quite an old, non-smart phone) to do the adding and subtraction, apart from once when Florence helps him add it up on the paper*" (Glasgow fieldnotes, February 2022). This phone would not have been able to look up pictures or translate words, although he still used it in the classroom as a tool to aid with one of the activities. Some participants in Norwich also told me that they had limited data on their phones, so may not have been able to use them as frequently. Some people expressed individual preferences about technology, although this typically seemed to refer to laptops and using Zoom to attend lessons, as the same participants regularly used their phones to help them in class. These examples demonstrate that there were inequalities between who had access to different types of technology in their lives which they could bring with them to the organisational spaces.

Mobile phones were repurposed for multiple different uses in the classroom. For example, they were used as a clock, a translator, a search engine, a database for personal information (like checking postcodes or phone numbers), as a camera, for receiving phone calls, and sending or receiving messages. Phones were utilised by different people in different ways at different times during class. Phones were something that individuals brought with them to

the class, rather than being provided by the organisation, which meant there was the potential for them to act in the interest of that individual, but also that there was the potential for inequality caused by digital divides. For example, who gets to have a model with reliable features, access to internet, a camera etc. and whether they had access to the data they need to perform particular tasks. Some charities in the UK provide phones for sanctuary seekers, and in Norwich, data was sometimes provided for participants. Some participants mentioned that their use of technology was limited due to lack of access to internet for a variety of reasons. One participant at a workshop in Glasgow, Ateef, told me that she was not able to use technology at home to learn. "*And watching the video no. no free time watching them*", she also told me that her child was crying too much for her to be able to use her phone or go to online classes. This means that technology was not an equal tool, despite people using it in relatively free ways throughout their times in the organisation. Use of technology as a tool for learning varied depending on access to resources and personal circumstances as well as individual preferences.

Sometimes there were words or expressions which came up in class that were more difficult to translate using software, or even that there were expressions in English which were not known by teachers. This is exemplified by the below quote from my fieldnotes in Norwich in which I was observing a class taught by Michael, a volunteer ESOL teacher.

"*At one point, Patricia asks what 'ride or die' means. She said she wants to know because she heard it in a song and shows me some lyrics on her phone. Michael says 'you could look it up in urban dictionary'. I look it up on my phone and say it is someone who you would do anything for… They say they have seen it on Instagram.*" (Norwich fieldnotes, July 2022)

Patricia had heard an expression in English on social media and through song lyrics, and then had sought the meaning of this from their English teacher. Michael did not know what the expression meant. He seemed a bit annoyed that the class had been interrupted and indicated that things should move on. Perhaps he thought that the expression 'ride or die' was an inappropriate or not very useful one. Patricia and her friend who was sitting next to her were keen to look at me for the answer, and although I had heard the expression before, at that point I also did not know what it meant. Michael's suggestion about 'urban dictionary' is another online tool, which is a search engine containing slang expressions. I googled the phrase and found the meaning, which I told them.

Listening to music in different languages can be a way to practice that language, but when slang or newer expressions were used, the learners in this class did not know what it meant. They asked their teacher to help them with the meaning of 'ride or die', but even the two of us 'native' English speakers did not know the slang term used in pop music. Although teachers are expected to be experts, they may not always have the cultural knowledge which students expect them to. Technology and access to the internet meant that this could be quickly checked upon. I think the women had also specifically chosen to ask me about the expression, because I was younger than Michael (who was retired), and they hoped I might know the cultural reference. This could usually be the kind of learning facilitated by friends, in more informal settings.

In Glasgow, there was an example of a teacher showing a class how to use technology for learning outside of class time;

"*Florence says she wants to find (a literacy app). She finds it on her phone but can't find it on her laptop to show them, so they gather around her phone. It is a phonics app. Florence says that it is designed for people who already speak English who are learning to read, but that it is also good for ESOL learners because it helps with the sounds of the letters. She says she wants to share this because it is a useful tool. Mariam and Ateef take a picture of it on their phones (they asked about Wi-Fi but there isn't any available, so they say they will download it later) and Grace downloads it with her data I think. Florence says she doesn't know why she hasn't shown this before.*" (Glasgow fieldnotes, March 2022).

Florence had mentioned this app before, but this was the first time she had shown it to participants during class time. Firstly, Florence used her own device to show the learners how to use the app. Although she planned at first to show them the app using her laptop (presumably because the screen is larger), in the end she needed to change to using her phone as it did not appear to be available on the laptop. She showed them a few examples of how to use the app to pronounce letters and words. She told me later that this app was developed by an educator in association with a local college and that it was very useful for literacy learners. Because the organisation did not provide Wi-Fi for learners, some of the learners were not able to download the app. But they did use their phones to take a picture of it so that they could remember it later. However, Florence did ask Grace in the next class whether she had used the app, Grace said that she had not: "Florence asks whether she has

looked at the app and Grace says 'believe me, I'm really busy', and Florence says 'yes I am sure you are'." (Glasgow fieldnotes, March 2022). It was interesting that Florence decided to introduce this tool from a more formal context which incorporated phonics, which has been criticised as tool for teaching literacy from a 'social practice' perspective (Papen, 2015). In the end it was not really utilised by the students in this class in the times that I asked them about it.

This example does show how educators bring in examples of technology which participants might find useful later for learning outside of the classroom. Perhaps in this case having access to Wi-Fi would have been very helpful in allowing them to download the app, and given the participants a chance to practise using it with Florence to familiarise themselves with it, and giving a chance to ask questions. This was the only example I saw of a guided use of digital tools in the classroom, and it was quite unstructured. Perhaps it was difficult for educators to plan these kinds of opportunities because participants have access to different kinds of technology, and factors such as Wi-Fi were not reliable. Educators may also not have felt confident to teach about using technology to learn.

I did hear about examples of participants using mobile apps themselves to enhance their learning. Nadia told me that she was first able to find the organisation in Norwich because of her engagement with a neighbourhood app:

"*in the pandemic I write, I wrote the next door application: "when I was live in London, I have a friendship group, is there any friendship group in Norwich, in [suburb of Norwich]", I wrote it, and a lady, a woman, is very friendful for me, it's very helpful for me, er, answer me, and she learned something online, she is very helpful, I, she found this, (gestures) Unity Hub, she found Unity Hub for me*". (Nadia interview, Norwich, December 2022).

Not only did Nadia's use of the app mean that she was able to find the classes at the organisation, but she also made a new friend, whom she told me '*is very special for me, we meet every month*'. Nadia's use of the App 'Next Door' was purposeful, she wanted to find a similar organisation that she had accessed in London, where she lived before she moved to Norwich. Nadia told me that she moved to Norwich during the pandemic, and had wanted to make connections like she had had in London. She had wanted to be able to make friends, and practice speaking English. She was successful in two ways, she made a British friend

whom she saw regularly when we spoke, and she learned about the organisation which she went to every week for the English classes. This shows how participants utilised technology to find learning opportunities, as well as how others intervened and mediated this process. The app acted as a platform to build a new network to ask for advice, which Nadia did not yet have in the Norwich area. She was then welcomed at the organisation, and joined the online classes which were held during the pandemic, and then moved to in-person classes when these opened.

Others told me about how they used technology outside of the classroom. When I asked Tujela about how she felt about her upcoming B1 exams she said "*I'm stressed because I can't speak perfect, perfectly yeah, usually I'm looking… I'm watching TV and I'm looking in YouTube, I …I searching to B1 exam, how to pupil exam, is a good idea for me*". (Tujela, Norwich interview, November 2022). She told me about how she was using technology at home to learn as a demonstration about how stressed she was feeling about her exams. Tujela supplemented the work done in class with her own research using TV, YouTube and search engines. In this way, technology spanned the learning done in the classroom, but was also used at home, stretching into other spheres of life. But additionally, for Tujela she used the fact that she was utilising technology at home as an example of being stressed, rather than using technology recreationally, it symbolised that she was continually striving to make sure that she passed her upcoming exams.

It seems that technology could often be used as a tool when there were limits to how educators or students knew how to communicate. As teachers did not typically speak the language of students, they were able to supplement this lack of knowledge using digital tools. Additionally, other kinds of knowledge, such as slang, could also be supplemented by digital tools. Knowledge of which digital tool to use varied. For Michael, the suggestion to use Urban Dictionary mentioned above, was one which seemed slightly outdated to me, and I would have just searched for a term on Google. Advice about different apps, or translation tools was also given in class. In the case of Florence, she did set aside some class time to show the students how to use the literacy app. But almost all of the time, these came up somewhat spontaneously, and they were suggested as a response to something that came up in class.

I would suggest that the majority of the time, educators and participants were not consciously planning their use of technology in class. Perhaps in a more formal setting, there would be more conspicuous use of technology such as an interactive whiteboard or a projector. These were not utilised (or visible) during my time in either of the organisations. In my experience of teaching in the past, using these kinds of tools in the classroom requires planning before class. In these non-formal settings, technology was used in a less formal way to match the setting. There was also a contrast with a more traditionally held view that mobile phones are a distraction or interruption during formal education, for example mobile phones are banned in most UK schools and the department for education (applying to England) announced plans to make this a national policy in 2023 (Department for Education, 2023). There were occasions when I saw someone's phone ring and they needed to go outside to take a call (always encouraged to do so by the teacher). But most of the time they were used as a tool, for example to think of a word, translate, define, look up a picture, make a note etc. The informal use of technology contributed to the flexible atmosphere within the space, as digital technology could be used in adaptable ways to suit particular needs or interests which arose in class, rather than something which had been pre-planned by the teacher. I would argue that there is not a particular kind of 'digital learning' in non-formal spaces working with sanctuary seekers, but that this was ubiquitous, and part of a more complex process of learning, relying on flexibility and also contributing to the changeable nature of spaces.

6.5. Inflexibility?

While I noted that there was a lot of flexibility inside the spaces, there were certainly areas in which this adaptability was absent. Firstly, I have already mentioned in the last chapter that participants were often expected not to bring their children to the spaces. There was some flexibility with this, as sometimes they did, but on the whole, they were not able to. This seemed to be down to rules around health and safety, or safeguarding.

Every opportunity cannot be taken for an unplanned discussion, and often these may be in line with the personal interest of the teacher, who retained a good deal of authority in the space. Lessons were still structured by teachers, with worksheets photocopied and decided prior to class. Although there was a value placed upon planning learner-centred classes,

particularly in Glasgow, there was still a reliance on teachers to teach/lead the classes. Additionally teachers were overwhelmingly British people, in both Glasgow and Norwich. During my time in Norwich some participants (who spoke English as an additional language at higher levels) were recruited as volunteers in order to help out with classes. But I wonder how much autonomy most learners had to change the direction of lessons, and whether this would be something that they would want, as they usually looked to the teacher as a guide. This could be informed by traditional experiences of education. Formal schooling may follow a particular format, with the teacher as central and with students as following the teacher's lead. Although the non-formal spaces were less rigid, there were still values and rules taken from more traditional learning environments. Teachers provided printed handouts, and at one teachers' meeting I attended, teachers noted that students seemed to like using worksheets to learn.

Tasfia emphasised that if there was a move at the organisation to focus more on formal classroom learning, then the informal side of the space could be lost. She said that: '*a big element of it is our social aspect, and that informality helps people realise it's a safe space and to associate like a feeling of comfortableness and safety within that space um so I think it's really, it's a key part of what makes Unity Hub what it is and if we did add a more formal aspect and more classroom-based I don't think it will have the same impact, as it does here in an informal environment*' (Tasfia interview, Norwich, December 2022). At the organisation, there had been discussion about making the classes follow a more formal curriculum (this has not happened in the time since). Tasfia's words conveyed that she felt that a more formal curriculum would jeopardise the social benefits that arose from the less formal nature of the classroom environment. The safety and comfort that people felt there was fostered by the less formal nature and was also part of what contributed to people feeling as though they could bring up topics that they were eager to explore more (such as the earlier discussion about British politics) or to repurpose rooms in the way that they wanted to.

6.6. Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored ways in which the organisations were adaptable. Different actors within and around the organisations exercised agency to change and adapt spaces, times and tools to facilitate different kinds of learning. The non-formal nature of the

organisations contributed to making the space adaptable, and this was used by teachers and sometimes learners to suit non-formal learning that was itself flexible. Break times were important times for informal learning which was more guided by participants, and snacks and hot drinks contributed to facilitating an environment that made people feel comfortable to use the time in this way. Digital technology was also used ubiquitously in flexible and adaptable ways, depending on who was using it and the circumstances. All these factors contributed to a non-formal environment in which change was possible, although there were some limits to this possibility. Changeability could occur in the physical structure of the classroom, the technology that was used for learning, or how people used the space. The way that participants viewed the purpose of the space also seemed to change, although for educators this was perhaps more fixed at times. There were also times in which the organisation, teachers and learners applied rules and boundaries preventing flexibility, sometimes seemingly influenced by prior expectations and experiences informed by formal education. And sometimes there was a lack of physical space, which imposed limitations, but perhaps also facilitated some flexibility. There were also times in which the edges of the organisational space were blurred and seeped beyond its physical walls. The non-formal nature of the spaces encouraged this adaptable way of learning because they were less bound by strict learning objectives and forms of assessment, or standards that were governed externally. The organisations were able to take a more open approach with objectives that were more about the social and integration. This allowed people to take a longer-term approach, such as improving their English fluency, making friends or simply to access a safe space each week. It also meant that the organisations could cater for the very wide variety of life circumstances which was touched on in the previous chapter. The learning that took place was more contextual, which meant it could be more flexible, fitting to different people in multiple ways. In the following chapter I will examine this learning more deeply, exploring the varied learning that people were doing during their time in the organisation.

Chapter Seven: Navigating and facilitating change through informal learning

7.1. Introduction

Nadia: *our teacher is very very…um interesting person and [we] learned about culture, British culture, English language, life rules and other things, I learned lots of things [from] her…*

Lauren: *You mentioned 'life rules', what do you mean by 'life rules'?*

Nadia: *umm… example… our taxes, our NHS appointment, and er, historical things and many things about life, meeting other people.*

(Nadia interview, Norwich, December 2022)

In the above quote, Nadia mentioned that her teacher, as well as teaching English, also taught her about 'life rules'. Nadia was conscious of the varied learning that she wanted to do to build her life in the UK, and is one of the people who had different and rich understandings about what they wanted to learn in the organisations. As I have explored in the previous two chapters, everyone within the organisation was experiencing a precarious environment, and informal learning was sometimes facilitated through the flexibility offered by spaces. This chapter explores the learning that was going on in greater depth, as well as how people were sometimes also facilitating change through this learning. People utilised the situation they found themselves in as well as the complex and multiple roles and identities they held, to learn to negotiate precarious circumstances and develop future pathways for their lives. As I discussed earlier, participants' experiences of precarity in their lives were often fostered by structural conditions, and macro-level social change which was outside of their control. However, as I will explore in greater detail in this chapter, people in the organisations were regularly engaging in and facilitating informal learning to navigate social change, demonstrating that they had agency to learn what they needed for the present, as well as building towards future aspirations. Learners and teachers were both involved in navigating change and collaborated to facilitate learning about life in the UK and how to work in the wider precarious environment. Much of this learning was to negotiate high stakes situations with visas, and in the latter part of the chapter I will discuss how people learned to navigate precarious visas in varied ways.

7.2. Varied motivations and strategies to learn

Tujela spoke about how life for her had changed since she moved to the UK. She also spoke about her goals for further change through her aspirations for the future:

"*She said that coming to the UK was like a fresh start for her, she said; 'before 2019, I am birth' and that she really wants to work, 'I want to work, to be a teaching assistant or a nurse, I want go to university' - although she said that she had left school aged 10 originally.*" (Norwich fieldnotes, November 2022).

Tujela, who was a Kurdish woman, had moved to the UK with a spousal visa in 2019. This is an exchange from my fieldnotes which I wrote immediately after we had an interview together. After we had finished the interview, she made some comments which I hadn't recorded but which I wrote in my fieldnotes. I remember she said 'I am birth' a few times, because I wasn't sure what she meant at first and had asked her to repeat it. She related her experience of leaving school early, but that coming to the UK was so much of a fresh start she related it to being born again. She marked a shift before and after she moved to Norwich. In her interview she suggested that she did not see herself as well educated in her home country, as she emphasised that she had left school early. The expression 'I am birth' suggests that perhaps the experience of moving to a new country changed how she saw herself and her relationship with education. She talked later about how she saw herself working in a professional role, and going to university in the future.

Some of Tujela's perspectives about education and learning had been shaped by her move to the UK, and she talked about her previous vision of herself as a learner. Although she said that moving to the UK was like a 'birth', she still noted that she had not achieved what she saw as a high level of schooling in her home country when she was growing up. Her view of education was tied to her formal learning in school which were not high. She felt that her prospects for the future were not good with this level of schooling. When she moved to the UK she seemed to have formed a new perception of her learning identity, and had developed aspirations for future possibilities, especially in different kinds of employment. She talked about feelings of aspiration and hopefulness. She framed being a newcomer in the UK as a positive opportunity to start again with a journey in formal education. She positioned her future self as a professional, and the route to this as one day being a student

in a university. She spoke about these aspirations in this order, first stating the jobs she wanted, and then about the education. It is possible that the jobs were seen as more long-term goals, and the formal education as something she saw herself as needing to achieve these goals. This demonstrates that Tujela saw (formal) education in the UK, particularly Higher Education, as a pathway to achieve her employment goals for the future. But additionally, by positioning herself as having a fresh start with formal education in the UK, she showed her agency in choosing this identity for herself. Tujela deliberately pursued learning that was important for her legal status to live in the UK, as well as for building a future here.

Tujela's husband encouraged her to keep learning, and asked her to tell him what she had learned in class – "*he is help to me, he helps to me when I back to (local college), he ask to me: what you learn today … do you know how to use, one example present perfect, Tujela-can you tell me one sentence about present perfect do you know, yeah, he's help me, he want me to learn soon*" (Tujela interview, Norwich, November 2022). She had help from her family to support her learning, and her husband felt that it was important that she learned English so that she could stay in the UK. Tujela utilised multiple resources for learning, non-formal and formal classes, as well as getting the informal support of her husband who quizzed her on what she had done in class to try to help her. Her husband also sometimes embodied the role of 'teacher' in supporting her to achieve a more secure visa status. Tujela herself also offered help to others, as she told me that some of the Kurdish women in Norwich with lower levels of English would ask her to help them with shopping. In our interview, Tujela said: "she said to me 'you are speaking better than me, come on with me let's buy a perfume with me". This demonstrates how networks of family and friends can help to support the learning that was required to navigate their visa status, as well as their daily life.

In a previous chapter I outlined that experiences with unstable and unreliable visas impacted greatly on what participants wanted to learn. Although, different visa routes and circumstances meant that this varied widely, and resulted in a multiplicity of motivations to learn. Some participants like Grace, whom I introduced in chapter 5, had unsupportive family members who added to the precarity they experienced, but for others, support from peers and family for informal learning to navigate precarity was important. Tujela's husband

acted as an informal teacher, asking her to tell him what she had learned in class, to help her to achieve the prescriptive language goals set by the Home Office for visa requirements. This shows how more formal learning could be drawn out and acted upon in informal environments, in this case, in the car on the way home from class. Learning did not stop when she left the classroom, and although when she spoke to me, she had a deliberate plan of what she wanted to learn, based on necessity to maintain her regular visa status, Tujela's formal view of learning was also accompanied by more informal moments of learning with her family.

On the other hand, the perception that Tujela had a clean slate when arriving in the UK does suggest that she has been made to feel that the learning that happened before her arrival was not valued. This related to Blommeart's (2004) research which has suggested that prior learning and literacies, both formal and informal, of forced migrants living in European countries may not be acknowledged by authorities who issue visas or educational institutions. In this exchange, Tujela's ideas about education that she had picked up from these wider social expectations come across as prescriptive. She saw herself as following a cumulative pathway through education, and she was focussed on certification and formal qualifications because this was what she needed to build her life in the UK. In part, this seemed to be related to her ascribed role as a migrant, and in a previous chapter I mentioned her emphasis on the importance of exams in obtaining a visa which allowed her to remain in the UK permanently.

When I spoke to her, Tujela's identity as a learner was interconnected with that of her ascribed status as a migrant. Her need to focus on formal education was also a tactical strategy which she and her husband deployed. She had high ambitions and dreams for the future, as well as immediate and urgent needs. The stakes were high for Tujela and her family, if she did not pass her B2 exam, then her UK visa and settled status and life in the UK would be at risk. This meant that she needed to be conscious about the types of learning opportunities that she pursued, and needed certified routes to navigate her visa, which was still precarious (even though she emphasised to me that she has a family visa, rather than being an asylum seeker like many of her Kurdish friends in the organisation). This demonstrates that precarious immigration status can influence how newcomers see their previous learning experiences as well as how they develop strategies for future learning,

particularly through formal learning. Additionally, she was negotiating the structural challenges of the UK visa system but was also retaining her grander ambitions, and this seemed to be a big motivator for her. Although the visa system dictated a lot of what she was learning in the present, systematic challenges did not dictate everything. Furthermore, as I will explore later in this chapter, she also continued to maintain her Kurdish identity and prior experiences of learning while building her life in the UK.

Although Tujela's direct focus was on formal education, some participants explicitly talked about less formal kinds of learning. In the opening quote to this chapter, Nadia, related her experience of becoming a learner in the UK when she first arrived: *"our teacher is very very…um interesting person and [we] learned about culture, British culture, English language, life rules and other things, I learned lots of things [from] her…"* (Nadia interview, Norwich, December 2022). Nadia's experience with this teacher when she first moved to the UK showed that she valued being an adult learner, beyond being an English language learner. Nadia highlighted that 'life rules' were an important part of navigating a new role when settling in a new country. The emphasis for Nadia was on the 'life-wide' aspects of learning, and on all the things that were needed when moving to a new location. It shows that organisations and teachers within them can act as the main point of learning for these areas for some, and that learning subjects such as 'life rules' are just as important for newcomers as learning the language. Hager and Halliday (2006) have discussed that informal learning regularly goes unrecognised by policy-makers. Focus in adult education for migrants is often on English language, and learning 'life rules' is not usually covered by formal curricula. Formal tests such as the 'Life in the UK' test are tests of memory and ask general knowledge questions based on a text book.[29] Life rules represent something more expansive, and suggest aspects that more closely relate to everyday life in the UK. Nadia's teacher, alongside Nadia, needed to navigate the lack of this kind of life-wide learning in formal settings, facilitated by the policy environment. It is an example of collaboration between teachers and

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[29] The Life in the UK test is the test which people have to do to gain permanent residency or citizenship in the United Kingdom. According to the official website which sells study materials for the test, people taking the test will be asked questions about: The values and principles of the UK, Traditions and culture, the UK's history, the government and the law and getting involved in your community – they can learn about these from a text book sold online.

learners to counteract this neglect, and their agency in pursuing learning that newcomers want when they move to the UK.

In this exchange, Nadia was talking about a teacher that she had when she lived in London, after she first moved to the UK. When she moved to Norwich during the pandemic, she wanted to find a similar learning environment, and in the previous chapter I talked about how she used a mobile app to find out about the organisation in Norwich. She wanted to improve her English, but also wanted an environment where she could learn 'life rules' about life in Norwich, as she was in a new city. In this case the way to do this was to make sure that she had access to a community education space, in which she could do the kind of learning that she felt was necessary for her life in the UK.

Nadia's strategy to learn in the UK could be seen to disrupt some traditional paradigms of learning for migrants. Firstly, although she wanted to improve her English language skills, this was only a part of the picture for her. As I explored in the literature review, policy aimed at 'integration' of migrants in the UK is overwhelmingly focussed on English language education, and that there is a lack of acknowledgement about other kinds of learning which may be needed. Nadia's story also shows that she had agency in finding ways to navigate this neglect of the kinds of 'life rules' which she felt was important to life in the UK.

Additionally, the fact that Nadia wanted to learn 'life rules' draws attention to cultural knowledge that is taken for granted, for example by people who have grown up in a particular area. It shows how internal movement within the UK can also require learning this cultural knowledge, in Nadia's case between London and Norwich. This highlights that there is much life-wide learning relating to migration that could be made more explicit within non-formal and even in formal education, as Nadia appreciated the chance to learn 'life rules' from a teacher, rather than informally, through her everyday encounters in Norwich. This can challenge a paradigm of adult learning that presents learning as a linear progression, which frames learning as a cumulative journey of acquisition, progressively gaining knowledge on the way, and independent of other processes, social connections or change. Nadia's story echoes with several theories around informal learning that were discussed in chapter 3, suggesting that the relationship with learning and migration results in informal learning 'episodes' (Rogers & Horrocks, 2010, p. 133), that are embedded within complex processes

of transformation in their lives, and social connections that they build (Hager and Halliday, 2006). Nadia, moved to a new context and sought opportunities to find the knowledge that she needed to build her life, purposely initiating these informal learning episodes, many of which were unconscious. For newcomers to the UK, or to a new city within the UK like Nadia, the chance to bring informal learning opportunities into a classroom environment and initiate or continue these learning episodes can be incredibly important.

Other participants also demonstrated that they were eager to learn more than English. This is an example of an exchange I had with Grace in Glasgow: *'I chat with Grace who fills out a piece of paper that is being collected, she writes what she would like to learn; computing, ESOL and sewing. She shows me her sewing on her phone (it looks very good!).'* (Glasgow fieldnotes, March 2022). This was at a 'community café' event, in which the new CEO of the organisation was trying to reach out to the local community and find out what people were interested in learning. She is interested in learning ESOL, but also computing and sewing. She was already a good sewer, as she showed me some pictures on her phone after this conversation, and told me she wanted to learn to make different styles of clothes. She wanted to add to the learning that she had already done in this area and looked to Brooklea as a way that she might be able to do this. When she was asked what she wanted, Grace showed that there was other 'life-wide' learning that she wanted to do, that she saw herself doing in the future. Although everyone I spoke to was very eager to access more ESOL classes, people such as Grace also had other ambitions around learning, and ESOL was often seen as a route to these.

7.3. Building relationships for learning

"*While we are waiting for the class to start, Alice mentions that Roya used to be a teacher in Iran. Roya says some small phrases about her job, she says 'manager' and '700 pupils', and I think this means that she was a headteacher there. She says that she taught Farsi... [later in the conversation] Roya shows me a photo of a woman, around my age and says 'mine', I ask 'is she your daughter?' and she says yes, and says she lives in Glasgow. Then she shows me a picture of her son, who Alice says lives in London. She shows a picture of him with some other people, and I ask, 'are they his family?' and she says no, and looks through her notes,*

and finds a sheet with the word 'colleagues' written on it, she shows me this, Alice says 'colleagues'." (Glasgow fieldnotes, 10 Feb 2022).

This conversation that happened before a class in Glasgow demonstrates some of the shifting and overlapping identities and roles which Roya, a participant in the class with Alice navigated. Roya had moved to the UK relatively recently to help support her daughter with her daughter's new baby. When I met her son, a few weeks after this exchange, he wanted me to know that she was not a refugee or asylum seeker, and was rather here with a visa staying to help with the baby, but would return to Iran in the future. Alice brought up Roya's professional background as a teacher in Iran. Roya told us about this role, and remarked on the fact that she was a headteacher. When Roya moved to the UK, she became an English learner, and she was at a beginner level of English, but had a high level of formal education in Iran. In this exchange she was proud of the number of students that she oversaw, and had related to Alice as another teacher, and to me, and although I had introduced myself to participants as a researcher, the participants often also saw me as a teacher. This short exchange shows multiple, overlapping roles which Roya navigated in the classroom, between grandparent, parent, English learner, headteacher and migrant.

During this exchange, Roya moved the conversation to that of her family, and talked about her role as that of mother and grandmother. She showed me pictures of her two children. In notes from another class I remarked "she is very happy when she is talking about her family" (Glasgow fieldnotes, 14 February 2022). Although Roya's previous role of teacher was brought up by Alice, the teacher of this class, it was the role of mother and grandmother that Roya initiated herself in this example. In Glasgow, the tutors Alice and Florence also often encouraged participants to share their experiences as parents in the class. They were also both parents themselves, and both taught a family class together, which related to bringing children to school. Alice was also a grandmother of two, one of whom was a baby at the time. They often related with participants through (grand)motherhood. In this case, Roya was also a recent grandmother, and the two women certainly connected over this identity. In this exchange, roles were entangled with one another, and which was presented swaps back and forth (e.g. between grandmother, teacher and student). While Roya showed the picture of her son in London, she referred back to an English word which Alice had taught

her in a previous lesson. I asked who is in the picture with him, and she found her notes and tells us that they are his colleagues. Through this conversation about family, she also became a learner again, checking her notes from a previous class. Roya made notes during classes, and I noted that she wrote neatly and carefully.

This drawing on of multiple identities demonstrates one of the ways which students and educators related to one another, by establishing overlapping roles and identities they had in common. Roya took the chance to use her experiences with her family and role as a new grandmother to connect with Alice at the organisation, as well as showing particular English language that she wanted to learn through this context. It is also another example of the extremely diverse variety of motivations to learn which people revealed. Roya was in the UK *because* of these family relationships, and the learning that she wanted to do in the UK was related to this. Because Roya had a particular visa, her future goals were focussed on supporting her family, and she was very motivated by learning functional language such as that around shopping, but was also keen to be able to communicate with local people while she was in Scotland. Alice collaborated with Roya to achieve these goals, consistently relating to these experiences, with her own experiences of parenthood. This facilitated learning for both Roya and Alice, as they constructed notions about grand-motherhood in Scotland.

Alice elaborated on the roles that she and Florence navigated as mothers (and as teachers) in more detail in an interview:

"Florence and myself, got, we-, you know I've got a son and Florence's got a young daughter still at primary school, we were able to tell people about our experiences of the education system in this country as well, so that was good because we felt that it just ..it just let them know that we're all going through this, it's not just.. you're not on your own, we're all going through it together we've all (been) through this experience together ... as parents you go to the school, you feel, and Florence, used to say that as well, she said when I go to the school ... I've got my sensible head on when I'm going to the school, listening to the teacher, I don't wanna get in trouble with anything, that's what Florence used to say as well and it's just so funny because you're just, you get all these letters home from school and they're sooo.. (pause) there's so much wording on these letters, we know what to pick out, we know what's

important what needs urgent filling out or what needs urgent attention, but the parents,
they don't know that, so it's just navigating all that as well" (Alice interview, Glasgow,
November 2021).

This quote refers to a class which Alice and Florence had taught which was specifically for
parents who had migrated to Scotland and wanted to learn more English connected to going
through the local school system. Alice said that she related her own experience as a parent
with that of the parents she was teaching. She emphasised that this shared experience was
important to relate to the students and understand the types of issues that they may have
been going through. This demonstrates that she saw her role as an educator as intertwined
with her identity as a mother. She also had a strong bond with her colleague Florence, and
felt that they experiences complemented each other well. By emphasising that they had all
'been through this experience together', Alice and Florence wanted to highlight areas of
sameness between them and the students in the class. Shared identities of parenthood
created points of relatability in the classroom. In contrast to some of the shared experiences
of precarity which I mentioned went unshared in chapter five, these experiences around
family were communicated by staff. This could be because family was seen as a positive
point of commonality. Alice felt that she could share some of her own strategies for
navigating parenthood and the Scottish school system, as she thought that they would be
useful for the parents that she was teaching, and perhaps also as generally more positive
experiences (while still difficult). This also formed part of a pedagogical approach of Alice
and Florence, which I will discuss more in chapter 8, in order to relate to the students and
share their real experiences with them.

The above quote also demonstrates how Alice, like Florence, felt that she needed to put a
'sensible head on' when she went into her son's school. This shows how even as adults,
parents are still influenced by their past formal experiences of schooling when they go to
parents' evenings and speak to teachers. Through facilitating a class about children going to
school in the local area, this course at the organisation made some aspects of education
explicit to the Scottish tutors. Alice became more aware of some of the past strategies she
had engaged (e.g. putting a 'sensible head on'), which she may have previously taken for
granted. She and Florence by sharing their own experiences of having their children attend

school were also developing their pedagogical understanding of how to talk about Scottish schools, in order to teach the class.

Alice also told me about how she renegotiated her identity as a parent, in particular her experience of being a Scottish parent through her experience of teaching this class. When I asked her whether there was anything that had surprised her, she told me about how some of the learners had not known certain things which she took for granted, for example, about headlice. She had the experience of reframing what was culturally constructed, and what she took for granted of knowing when attending a local school or bringing up children in the UK. Teaching adult students who were also parents but from different cultural backgrounds meant that Alice wanted to relate to them, but that she also experienced unplanned learning about them and aspects of their cultures. She also became conscious about features of Scottish culture that had previously felt 'common sense' and 'everyday' that were not quite so apparent to newcomers. She became aware that as parents, she and Florence had needed to negotiate bureaucratic processes, 'picking out' important information from letters sent home from school. In teaching other parents how to do this, she became more aware of her own strategies in negotiating these processes when her son was in school.

7.4. Educators, learning and identities

Some of the teachers at the organisation in Norwich talked about how they saw their role as educators, and demonstrated strategies of how they deployed these roles to facilitate learning. The following is an exchange I had with one new volunteer at the organisation, whom I had just met, and his experience of adjusting to teaching a group of beginner literacy learners at the organisation in Norwich:

"*Peter says this is a new challenge because he used to teach teenagers in schools. He later tells me that there is a lot of unlearning that he has had to do, teaching that class [of literacy learners], because the sounds in English that we take for granted, are not the same in their languages and he has been surprised with how they struggle with them.*" (Norwich fieldnotes, July 2022).

Peter felt that he needed to adjust to teaching at the organisation, even though he was a very experienced teacher, and in a later conversation he told me that he had also taught

English language learners in the past as well as high school students. This demonstrates something I observed of many of the teachers, which was one of always navigating their role with a sense that they were continually developing. Like Alice and Florence in Glasgow, Peter's conscious 'unlearning' also shows that he felt his role challenged him to change some of his assumptions about the sounds in the English language, and teaching literacy with those who speak very different languages. This shows a strategy of reflection and development which Peter navigated as a teacher, and how many teachers may view their role as a learner alongside that of teacher.

Some teachers also seemed to lack confidence in their roles. One tutor, Shirley, in Glasgow commented to me that she was, in her words *'just a literacy tutor, but now I'm teaching ESOL.'* (Glasgow fieldnotes, February 2022) She explained that her qualifications were focussed on teaching literacy, and when I enquired further I found out that this used to be for adults who were already native English speakers, but now a lot of the funding that the organisation gets is for ESOL. She was well-liked by the students in her class, and would often help out with other activities such as the 'conversation café'. Her comment that she was 'just' a literacy tutor showed that she thought that there was a distinction between the two professional roles, and lacked confidence as an ESOL teacher, even though this was a role she was performing regularly when I was in the organisation.

A lack of confidence in educators' own knowledge also came up at other points, and I think this was at times related to my own presence in the organisations as a PhD researcher. Alice frequently commented that it was 'so impressive' that I was doing a PhD, and would ask for feedback and advice about her classes, as it seemed that she saw me as a more experienced educator.

Educators and other organisation staff in Glasgow usually referred to the participants as 'learners'. But I have explored numerous examples of how educators were also learners, and that this was a role that they were often also conscious of. As I mentioned above, Alice talked about how she learned a lot about participants, and also touched on what she learned about her own understandings of her Scottish/parental identity. Michael was aware of the 'unlearning' that he needed to do to teach literacy learners, as the practice was so different from teaching that he had done in the past, and reconsidered his own position as

an English speaker, and how language works. Therefore 'teachers' were frequently also learners, and at many times they were learning from and with students. Likewise, students' own identities were not always that of a learner, but they moved through other identities, such as teacher or parent etc. These changing positions influenced and facilitated one another. They were not static, or acting in isolation. As touched upon earlier, moving through these identities could also be viewed as a means for navigating a very diverse learning environment with multiple cultures, languages, identities, as a way to build relationships and learn what was needed for the future.

On the other hand, although there were shifts in who was 'learner' and who was 'teacher', this is not to say that there were not uneven power dynamics at play. Educators were often the ones who would initiate conversations. The exchange with Roya earlier in the chapter was instigated by Alice, who was the one who asked numerous questions about Roya's family. In the family class taught by Alice and Florence, they (alongside the organisation) were the ones who were in charge of the class curriculum and guided the materials. Teachers held a lot of power in the classroom, and were frequently the facilitators who initiated and guided activities. On the other hand, participants in classes also demonstrated agency to teach others in the room about particular things. For example people would often bring up the word for something in their own language. To give an example from Roya, she remarked that in Farsi they pronounce the word biscuits 'bis-cu-its' (fieldnotes, Glasgow, 14 February 2022).

The role of who was known as an educator also sometimes shifted and changed and some participants were also recognised as educators by one of the organisations. The status of Asylum Seeker does not allow people to work in most cases. The organisation in Norwich set up opportunities for some of the participants in the organisation to volunteer. Some of those who had higher levels of English language helped with the English classes. Tasfia, a staff member at the organisation said:

"It's so lovely to see the participant volunteers really engaged with the different groups and to, and it gives them a kind of a sense of empowerment ... because it makes them feel like they're able to give back and they do such an amazing job... and it really demonstrates how educated they are like, they are incredibly skilled in different areas it's just so hard to reflect

your intelligence in a language that you don't know or like or that you can't… that you don't… like show on paper" (Tasfia interview, Norwich, December 2022).

This started towards the end of my fieldwork at the organisation, but Tasfia observed that giving some participants a role such as 'volunteer' or 'teaching assistant' rather than as a 'student', led to a 'sense of empowerment'. This makes sense as they were able to share their knowledge, and use the skills that they have, such as multilingualism and their experience of mobility across nations/cultures, to make a difference in classes.

People, both students and educators, were embodying multiple roles and identities in the organisation, which they moved between during their time there. They were sometimes conscious of these and reflected upon it, but were often not aware that they were doing so. People were regularly learning from one another, so informal roles of learner and teacher may swap. There were also more formal roles such as those initiated in Norwich, in which participants became teaching assistants.

7.5. Learning for visa status and hierarchies

Different people in the organisations were navigating different types of visas and identities relating to being a migrant in the UK, and this impacted how they learned. During our interview, and during classroom observations, Tujela also spoke about her roles as a wife and mother, and how these intersected with her Kurdish identity, and how she navigated these. She told me:

"*my son, he speaks Kurdish well and English well, but when I pick up to school my son he says to [me] 'mum no speak English because sometimes is you're wrong… not correct mummy, speak Kurdish language', I say: 'shame for you!' (laughs)*" (Tujela interview, Norwich, November 2022).

Tujela had taught her son to speak Kurdish, and she said she wanted to speak Kurdish as a family at home. She still related strongly with her Kurdish identity, and the language was a very important aspect of this which she wished her son to learn. It was interesting that her son discouraged her from speaking (what he perceived as not good enough) English, and that she laughed about this with me. From Tujela's perspective, she wanted her children to speak both languages, English and Kurdish and she wanted to be able to speak English

confidently with her son's teachers. Tujela said 'shame for you!' in a way like she was acting out telling off her son, with a pointed finger (in the style of: "Shame on you!"). This demonstrates that she was quite confident in her multiple roles as English learner, Kurdish woman and mother, and she thought that it was her son who should be ashamed of trying to hide *her* identity as an English learner. Tujela expressed that she was not embarrassed to make mistakes when she was speaking English and she was relatively confident when speaking. Some children of migrants may end up acting as interpreters for their parents (Orellana, 2009), but Tujela shows that she would rather be independent, and does not want her son to do this for her.

Tujela's son asked her not to speak English at his school because he said that her English ability was 'not good'. Her response to this was defiant, and she insisted that she would try to speak English at school rather than to rely on her son as in interpreter. By exercising her agency in speaking English at school, Tujela attempted to situate herself as a parent who would communicate with the teachers at school directly. She also expressed some pride in being an English language learner, which counters a deficit approach. Tujela's wanted to assert herself in this role to her son, and when she was in the school. This stands alongside her Kurdish identity, which was also very important to her, demonstrated through her desire to speak Kurdish at home. Navigating her intersecting roles of mother, migrant and Kurdish woman, formed a part of Tujela's identity and journey as a learner too, and shows how her complex past and present learning contributed to negotiating life in the UK for herself and her family. Although we only have Tujela's side of this story, she is also perhaps relating how her son may also be navigating his own life within the British education system, as he asks her not to speak "not correct" English at his school.

Organisations were working with people with diverse categories of immigration status, rather than strictly people with refugee or asylum seeker status. Many Kurdish people in the organisation had the immigration status of asylum seekers or refugee, but Tujela told me that she came here with a visa, and had the different status of family visa. This meant that she did not see refugeehood as a part of her identity, although many of her Kurdish friends had status as refugee or asylum seeker in the UK. This shows how organisations hosted participants regardless of migration categories and that migration categories are complex. Although Tujela may have seen herself as leaving her home country for similar reasons to

many of her friends, she arrived in the UK by different means. Migration statuses can also transform, as in the journey from family visa to indefinite leave to remain, which Tujela was striving towards. Within both of the organisations there were many individuals navigating diverse and complex relationships with visas and migration status in the UK. The organisations did not tend to differentiate between different migration categories in accessing adult education. Within the spaces people from across these statuses deliberately built connections with each other which led to learning, as I will explore shortly.

Migration categories such as 'refugee' and 'asylum seeker' can be viewed as bureaucratic labels enforcing the 'everyday border' (Yuval-Davis et al., 2017), and people were consistently employing strategies to navigate these categories. Roya's son's assertion that she was not a refugee or asylum seeker, as opposed to many others who were learning at the organisation, showed that he felt that it was important to make this distinction. Roya had let us know that she had come to the UK to support her daughter with her new baby. This identity of mother and grandmother was much more important to her and her family, than the migration categories assigned by the Home Office, but also these ascribed categories were important as they did not want to be labelled as fitting in with people with refugee or asylum-seeking status. There were hierarchies between different visa statuses, and some were seen as more or less desirable than others.

In Glasgow, Tina also spoke about perceptions of her migration status. She was an asylum seeker, which is a temporary category, which as I elaborated in earlier chapters has been characterised as a 'liminal' status (Ghorashi et al., 2018). As the status of asylum seeker is temporary, and does not allow her to work, she was waiting to gain refugee status so she could gain a more permanent status in the UK. On one occasion, Tina had the following exchange with Ateef:

"Tina: (to Ateef) you asylum seeker yeah, asylum seeker, refugee in Glasgow?
Ateef: uhh… my family visa, husband
Tina: I have some friend they have visa and how she they pick up family from [South-East Asian country] umm, she can't speak… so he would like to learn in here" (Glasgow workshop, April 2022).

Migration categories were very important to Tina, and she was interested in her classmates' status. Tina had just met Ateef, and wanted to know which migration status she had. Participants may wish to know these categories, to share knowledge with one another and also decide whom to ask for advice. But additionally, some people seemed reluctant to share information about what visas they had, probably because they may have understandings about the hierarchy of different categories, as some are seen as higher or more legitimate than others. Tina was also keen to help her friend to come to the organisation to learn, and introduced her as having a particular status (even though this did not matter when coming to the organisation). For Tina, her ascribed role as an asylum seeker also impacted her view of others.

Some participants had European citizenship, meaning that they had more secure visas, but they may be racialised through their conversations with those in the organisation. In an exchange with a volunteer in Glasgow: "Sanjeev tells me that there is a big African community in this area, telling me that people come from countries like Sudan, Eritrea and Angola. He says that 'they will say Portugal, but that tends to mean Angola'." (Glasgow fieldnotes, March 2022). In another conversation during class: "Amar asks Daniela where she is from and she says 'Portugal', and Amar says, 'yes, but Africa?'. Daniela says 'Angola'" (Glasgow fieldnotes, March 2022). It shows a way in which the national identity which the students self-described themselves as - Portuguese - was disputed by some in the space because of their Black African ethnicity. As there was no need to have a particular visa or nationality to attend classes, this was not a necessary negotiation, and seemed to arise from internalised logics about nationality and race. This shows how Black, Portuguese-Angolan learners may have to navigate these challenges around perceptions of their national identity. Further, it is an example of how colonial logics can be present within the organisations, reflecting a hierarchy within the community.

There were power hierarchies demonstrated as people talked about their own identities through visa statuses, and asked questions and expressed opinions about others. There were internalised narratives stemming from the hierarchies within the visa system, which meant that some people experienced a more precarious status than others, and perceived some statuses as more or less desirable. While I was in the organisations, this was not a topic that was explicitly engaged with during class time, and rather came up sporadically, with little

chance for critical discussion. This supports Mayblin's (2019a, p.78) assertion that organisations working with people from a wide range of migration backgrounds may '(re)produce hierarchies of human worth and vulnerability, rather than simply ameliorating, confronting, challenging, and contending with those colonial logics that manifest in state policy'.

For some people, coming to learn at the organisation was important because of the social connections which they built there:

"*At one point I ask Ateef whether she likes living in Glasgow and she tells me no, she says she misses living in Pakistan. I ask her whether she has any friends here, and she says no. She said she likes coming to the class and gestures around to the other women who are talking and laughing together over tea and coffee.*" (Glasgow fieldnotes, March, 2022).

Ateef situated herself as a lonely woman living in Glasgow, and said that she missed her friends and family in Pakistan. This counters narratives of moving to the UK as a solely positive action for new migrants, and shows that moving to the UK can also be a difficult and isolating experience. On the other hand, coming to the class at the organisation gave Ateef more of a sense of community, and even though the other women in the class were from other countries and spoke different languages (Ateef spoke Urdu and most of the other women spoke Arabic), she liked the feeling of being around them while they were talking and laughing. The act of coming to class for Ateef aided her to build a sense of belonging and community in Glasgow, because she felt lonely and did not have social connections in the city yet. Ateef also demonstrated agency in utilising the class for this social purpose, as well as for learning English. This seeking of social connections was also the case for participants in Norwich, and in an earlier quote, a staff member at the organisation pointed out that building social connections was very important for participants, and highlighted that after class "*people are hanging around having conversations*" (Tasfia interview, Norwich, December 2022).

7.5.1. Learning to cope with precarity

In chapter 5, I introduced Grace and Fiza, two women who navigated experiences of precarious visas in the UK. This story is also an example of the organisation acting as a space for a certain kind of informal learning to take place. Both of these women had insecure visa

status in the UK, and were navigating the asylum system. As discussed previously, there are many challenges and precarities inherent in having this status, with many aspects of individual asylum seekers' lives out of their control and dictated by the Home Office. However, the encounter showed that the two women had agency in navigating their migration status, and were able to offer each other advice in how to negotiate this through everyday learning. This shows that the organisation can provide a space in which resistance to structural challenges can take place, and the opportunity to mediate how to navigate precarity. This learning could be seen as an example of learning as a response to change, as well as facilitating change through learning. The following is an extract from my fieldnotes which gives more details from an exchange between Grace and Fiza (both from African nations)[30] at the end of a women's only family class in Glasgow on a cold day in March 2022. Fiza did not usually come to this class, but arrived towards the end with her baby, and this was the first time the two women had met. The teacher, Florence had brought some cakes, and I had noted that the women in the class had been chatting and laughing as they worked through that day's activities:

"Grace tells Fiza that Citizen's Advice were very helpful for the problems which she had. She says 'you have to write to them yourself' (referring to the Home Office), and advises Fiza to follow up constantly about where the passport and documentation is. …

The two women exchange numbers and Grace says I will go with you to citizens advice, because I also need to go and talk to them about something.

Fiza then says that Grace could also go to the Italian embassy in Edinburgh (for some of the documentation relating to her son's visa).

Grace says 'I am very happy living in Glasgow now', and that she is also very happy that she has found Brooklea and this class, saying that it is a good way to meet people and practice English. She said that she experienced racism a lot in Italy. She said in Glasgow people are very friendly and always say hello and ask how she is doing. She said in Italy that was rarely the case, and that people would not speak to her because of the colour of her skin [she is a Black woman]. Florence says she is very sorry that happened to you.

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[30] I have decided to anonymise Grace and Fiza's countries of origin

When they have left and the class is over, Florence [the class teacher] said that she had been really wanting to introduce Fiza and Grace because she knew that they were both in similar situations. She said she is so thrilled that they are helping each other." (Glasgow fieldnotes, March 2022).

Through these challenges, Fiza and Grace sought support and advice from each other. In this case, the classroom became a space for spontaneous, peer-facilitated informal learning about how to navigate issues and cope with precarious visas. Fiza learned about going to Citizen's Advice, and the women planned to take the action of going there together for further support. There was a demonstration of peer support and solidarity between women who were both having similar experiences with visa precarity. Grace was very keen to show support, and shared her own experiences and that of her family. Although Grace was offering a lot of advice, Fiza also offered her own (going to the embassy in Edinburgh). Livingstone and Scholtz (2010) have explored the idea that people cope with changes in life through learning, and I will explore this in more detail in the next chapter. In this case the learning was incidental and informal as Fiza did not set out to learn about how to negotiate her visa issues, but Grace was able to offer advice which did bring about new knowledge about where to go for help, and how she navigated the same issue in her own life. I feel that this represents a kind of opportunistic, 'emergency' informal learning[31], because it was crucial for Fiza and Grace, and it was in response to uncontrolled circumstances.

The organisation as a space, but also as a women's-only space at this time was important in offering the opportunity for this learning to take place. The intersecting experiences of precarious visas, motherhood and gendered violence were shared between the two women. This class was a women's only group. The tutors had discussed with me that many of the participants had requested women's only spaces, sometimes for religious reasons, and sometimes because some of the women did not feel safe around unknown men. Fiza had brought her young child who she was rocking in a pram while she spoke to Grace. Fiza was multi-tasking as she had childcare responsibilities, while she came to the organisation for the opportunity to learn and socialise with other women. Florence, the teacher, had expressed how important she felt it was to have women only classes, because otherwise some of the

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[31] Not to be confused with 'Education in Emergencies', a field of study of education in crisis settings.

women would not come to classes at all. Both Fiza and Grace had experiences of past violence with previous relationships, so this class offered a safe space for them. Grace said that her husband was exacerbating the problems she was experiencing with her children's visas, heightening a sense of precarity by making threats to try have her deported from the UK.

Although Florence, the class tutor, was not involved with a lot of this conversation, she had also helped to facilitate this meeting, as she knew that the two women shared some similar experiences. Florence had invited Fiza to the final class because she had taught her previously and thought it would be good for her to speak to Grace, who had had similar experiences. In this sense, there was some intention behind this learning opportunity, and it was not totally unplanned and spontaneous, but the conversation was a natural one between the two women, with no direct involvement from myself or Florence. Grace and Fiza supported one another as peers, and this event also showed the role of the tutors as facilitators, and the importance of the judgement of educators playing a key role for providing learning opportunities. Adult educators such as Florence can play an important role in setting up informal learning opportunities, and the organisation was a necessary space where this could take place. In order for this learning opportunity to happen, there needed to be some flexibility in who could be invited to the classroom (i.e. Someone who was not usually in the class), and that Fiza felt able to come along and bring her baby. This also links with the flexible environment which I discussed in the previous chapter as in this case flexibility was important in facilitating this event. Additionally, knowledge that Florence had about the students in her classes was important, because she knew that the two women shared some experiences.

7.6. Conclusion

Participants, staff and volunteers in organisations were collaborating to facilitate learning about what people needed to cope with everyday life as migrants in the UK, as well as a lot of learning that was occurring less consciously. As I explored in the literature review, policy created many barriers for those who move to the UK from other countries, and in this chapter I have explored some of the learning which happened in organisations to navigate these challenges. Precarious migration status meant that many people in the organisations needed to have a rigid view of education, following formal pathways in order to remain in

the UK and achieve their goals for the future. Additionally, people learned a lot informally, as part of visa processes as well as in wider aspects of their lives. As a part of this learning, people in the organisations were negotiating a wide range of diverse roles. This navigation was sometimes as a response to precarity and social change, and was sometimes negotiated through the flexibility within organisations. Learning to navigate an oppressive policy environment can act as a form of resistance to precarity and wider social change which dominated individual's lives. Learning to navigate the challenges they faced was something that people were sometimes able to mediate within the adaptable environments of the organisations. This learning made up a part of the unplanned, everyday learning experiences in the organisation as well as forming a part of people's long-term dreams for the future. In the next chapter I will draw together the themes I have explored in this chapter, alongside the previous two, and discuss the conceptual implications of these findings in drawing on wider conceptual literature around social change.

Chapter Eight- Discussion: Learning, social change and agency in refugee contexts

8.1. Introduction

The aim of this thesis has been to explore the learning that was going on in organisations supporting sanctuary seekers, and to examine the relationship between learning and change. In this chapter I bring together the key findings that I spoke about in the preceding three chapters, summarising and reflecting on them to answer the research questions. In the previous chapters I explored how precarity was impacting the experiences of those in organisations, and how the spaces the organisations offered could be used to shape learning. I have explored ways in which people navigated intersecting roles to learn in response to change and to cope with it. In this discussion chapter, I will explore how facilitating learning amidst precarious conditions was challenging but how it raised implications for the use of spaces by organisations, and the kinds of pedagogies that educators employed in these conditions to create meaningful learning opportunities for students. I also discuss the complex relationships between learning and social change, exploring how learning was regularly a response to cope with ongoing change in people's lives, but also how learning could lead to social change in a 'minor key' (Pedwell, 2021). Additionally, I will discuss the implications of this study for conceptualisations of different types of learning in refugee contexts, particularly around informal and non-formal educational opportunities. The precarity that many people experienced was significant but the fact that learning facilitated change in the face of this, demonstrated the agency of staff and learners in the organisations to act in defiance of, and in everyday resistance to wider social transformation that was out of their control.

8.2. Facilitating learning in precarious conditions

It was evident that macro-level social transformation was impacting those learning in the organisations, particularly relating to migration policy, with many participants experiencing challenges with their own and their families' visas and right to live in the UK. Other forms of large-scale transformation were also influential, such as the opening of hotels and dispersal around the UK, lack of access to adult education and working restrictions for those seeking

asylum. Additionally, austerity and policy which impacted funding for the organisations in both locations was also deeply felt as the funding for some classes finished, or as staff became more stretched. All of these factors led to the ongoing threat of continual change that was out of the control of those in the organisations, and that impacted people in differing ways, influencing what people wanted to learn as well as how they were able to learn it. The continual structural change facilitated a precarious environment that manifested both within the organisations and outside of them. This precarity also meant the ever-present threat of significant change in numerous spheres of people's lives. For example, the visa status of themselves or family members threatening their established lives in the UK, employment, or the ability to come to class. People's experiences of precarity also contributed to a sense of liminality meaning that there were barriers to feeling settled or building a sense of belonging in either Norwich or Glasgow. This sense of instability additionally impacted what people wanted to learn. For example, many people wanted to learn to cope with the challenges that they faced, such as learning to navigate the visa processes relevant to them and their families. An uncertainty about the future also affected how people viewed their future learning, for example, with some participants wishing for a more formalised approach to education, which they often viewed as a stabilising force.

Long-term financial uncertainty in organisations seemed to have been a factor related to austerity cuts both to the third sector as well as local councils and other public services which may have also been accessed by participants. For example, the fact that the local college in Norwich's ESOL course was only one day per week was a particular complaint of students, who wanted to go to more classes, and thus attended classes at the sanctuary organisation to supplement their formal education. In Glasgow, the CEO of the organisation explained to me when I initially arrived there that there had been multiple cuts to funding recently because of restructuring by the local authority. This meant that classes were busier, and in the case of Glasgow there was a long waiting list for people to access classes because of Covid-19 restrictions on class sizes. This financial precarity limited the provision that the organisation in Glasgow could offer, and how long-term it could be. In Norwich, limited resources meant that classes were very busy, and that space was at a premium. It has been remarked upon in previous research that precarious funding for organisations means that they consistently need to work looking for new sources of funding, distracting them from

being able to do the longer-term work that their organisation was originally aiming for (Darling, 2022). As Benwell et al. (2023), point out, the structural violence of underfunding of support and organisations is not a spectacular one, in the way that migration policy is often highlighted by politicians and regularly in the media. It is a form of 'slow violence' (Mayblin, 2019a), and the precarity which is produced has become hegemonic and normalised, which means it is often not acknowledged, despite its significant impact on the everyday lives of those who are going through the asylum system as well as volunteers and staff in organisations.

The dispersal of large numbers of asylum seekers to areas in the UK, alongside continual funding uncertainty within organisations was additionally impactful on the organisations' ability to cater for participants' needs. In Norwich, Tasfia remarked that hundreds of new people seeking asylum had been rehoused in hotels in Norwich, but the organisation's funding had not increased in tandem with this, which meant that the organisation could no longer issue bus tickets to participants who were present at activities, which was frustrating to participants and staff. This challenge meant that there could have been large numbers of people who wished to attend activities at the organisation and who were no longer able to. Unfortunately, this negatively impacted people coming to organisations on a regular basis, and stopped some attending altogether. The organisation in Norwich was able to offer a limited number of bicycles to participants, but there was a waiting list for these while I was there. The ability to provide bus tickets was vital for asylum seekers living in hotels to attend classes, who received around £9 per week and could not afford the cost of bus travel, which cost around £5 for a day ticket in Norwich at the time of the study. Therefore, the financial precarity of organisations had a detrimental impact on who could access spaces for learning, with asylum seekers severely impacted. Since I undertook this study, the Scottish Government announced free bus travel for all people who are refugees and seeking asylum, but then subsequently withdrew this promise because of funding limitations (Feerick, 2024).

The increasing challenges of people seeking asylum travelling to classes illustrates one way in which organisations felt the impacts of transformations in policy which was seemingly aimed at making seeking asylum in the UK unattractive. Another such change, which was implemented since I completed the fieldwork for this study, was the decision to reduce the amount of time for people to find new accommodation after their asylum claim has been

granted, which charities have pointed out has increased rates of homelessness and destitution among those with refugee status (Gecsoyler & Taylor, 2023). This shows how organisations need to continually negotiate a shifting policy landscape. Staff within organisations were also caught within this, and needed to navigate precarious circumstances regularly, while trying to meet the needs of participants.

As I discussed in chapter 3, building on conceptions of public pedagogy (e.g. Hickey-Moody et al., 2010), Fisher (2011) has called for a move towards constructing a 'precarious pedagogy'. Framing pedagogy from this perspective moves beyond ideas of individual attainment, towards an acknowledgement of, and an openness to, the complex circumstances in which learners find themselves. This conception also fits closely with the idea of engaged pedagogy (hooks, 1994), in the line of calling on educators to be responsive in the classroom that is characterised by change (although this concept is much more closely aligned with formal educational spaces than those I researched with during this study). Powell (2019) suggests that conceptions of precarious pedagogy have also been overly tied to formal classroom environments, proposing a precarious public pedagogy which moves beyond formal educational constructions of teaching and learning.

The adaptability of the spaces of organisations which I have explored could itself be said to be a response to ongoing and unpredictable social transformation that was occurring. In this way, social change, precarity and adaptability were interconnected. Precarity was a negative state implying that things were not stable, and that change could happen at any time, whereas the organisations' and educators' adaptability were responsive to the cruel demands of precarity, and were open to change when it was needed. This adaptability could be seen as forming a part of a 'precarious pedagogy' (Fisher, 2011), showing how educators were both responding to precarity (in their own lives/contexts) while opening spaces for learners to navigate the challenges of precarity in their lives. The continual threat of change in people's lives because of precarious circumstances was in sharp contrast to the open, flexible spaces that could be adapted to those who used or needed them. It appears that the adaptability of learning spaces was in part instigated and invoked by precarious circumstances, and a regular response to precarity in the lives of participants.

Organisations could similarly be said to also reflect the liminality in the lives of participants because they themselves navigated precarious funding scenarios, occupying in-between

spaces by, for example, bridging gaps between formal education and representing a space between local government and communities. In these ways, organisations providing educational opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers were themselves a product of the precarious system that they worked within, while also working in response to it. Nevertheless, by occupying a status that lay outside of formal educational institutions, organisations had an advantage in that they could remain flexible and open to the diverse goals of participants within their experiences of precarity.

Berlant's (2011) 'cruel optimism', as I explored in more detail chapter three, contrasts the 'fantasy' of the 'good life' framed as possible through neoliberal capitalism, and the everyday lived experiences of precarious living facilitated through life in those very structural conditions. I also noted that McWilliams and Bonet (2016, p.166) in their research with refugee youth about their experiences of formal education in the US remark that there was a tension between 'refugee youths' expectations for educational opportunity and the reality of narrowed pathways through which those opportunities are realized'. In the case of this study, many of those who were sanctuary seekers had aspirations for their future lives and pathways they would like to follow but were being frustrated by their experiences of precarity, through their visas, and restricted access to further educational opportunities or work.

Staff experiences and stories showed that they had certain expectations for the kind of education that they wanted to provide for their students, and that this influenced how they attempted to facilitate learning. As I have elaborated, staff's relations with their learners were highly affective, and were impacted by the scant resources at their disposal. For example, some felt guilty, frustrated, or stretched themselves to the limit in the use of their time, because of the limited paid time they were allocated. In their work-lives, it was as though they experienced 'cruel optimism' (Berlant, 2011) on behalf of their students, and they enacted this through their (over)work as if it would allow learners to get closer to their goals. Despite a desire to provide the best for their students and even with the unpaid time worked, because of the turbulent circumstances of the learners and the organisations' resources, it was not always possible to provide the classes that were needed by participants, as was demonstrated by busy classes in Norwich, or a long waiting list in Glasgow.

Staff members at organisations were operating within a broader policy framework characterised by intersecting factors such as neoliberalism, austerity cuts to the third sector and restrictive migration policy. Wendy Brown (2015, p.10) has asserted that 'neoliberalism transmogrifies every human domain and endeavor [sic], along with humans themselves, according to a specific image of the economic'. As I have touched on previously, she puts forward the concept of 'shared sacrifice' (Brown, 2015, p.210) as one which is promoted within a neoliberal state, as an outcome of a focus on maximising profits for example, cuts to education, or public services, putting the responsibility on individuals to sacrifice something (for example, their time) to make up for these shortfalls. In addition, Kouritzin et al. (2021) have conceptualised the supplemental work of educators in the Higher Education context which does not fit neatly into paid, contracted hours as 'magic time', for example, replying to emails, putting together materials and marking. This concept also applies to those working in the non-formal education sector more widely or indeed those working in charities supporting refugees, specifically. Staff members' feeling that they needed to take on unpaid work or regular overwork echoes the neoliberal individualisation of responsibility spoken about by Brown (2015). Teachers were plugging gaps to aid students' educational goals, as there was no wider, state-level support in the form of reliable policy or funding, whether at an institutional, community, or state level. These factors led to the (inadvertent) exploitation of some educators within organisations as they took on this additional labour. Educators working with sanctuary seekers regularly shouldered the responsibility as individuals for facilitating education that has been neglected at structural levels.

This finding supports McWilliams and Bonet (2016) in their assertion that there was a dichotomy between refugees' expectations and their experiences of precarity within their encounters with education in the country that they arrived in (England or Scotland). Building on this research, educators working with sanctuary seekers were also experiencing a form of cruel optimism, and there was also a contrast between their ambitions for their learners and the reality of what they were able to provide. For organisation staff, this manifested in their overwork. The organisations and the people working within them were regularly shaped in this way by precarious circumstances.

I have additionally explored the ways that educators shared or did not share aspects of their own lives with those they were teaching. Educators navigated multiple roles and identities,

such as their family lives, within the organisations, and were not only embodying professional identities as teachers. Educators assisted one another with their experiences of uncertainty in their employment caused by short-term funding, and related to students their more positive experiences of family. They were perhaps considering which of these experiences and identities to share in the classroom, and choosing between them. For instance, many of the negative aspects of their experiences of precarity were not shared with students, such as their stories of precarious working contracts, or that they regularly did not have enough paid hours to do their work. But some aspects of their lives were shared with participants, such as facets of their family lives or their experiences of formal schooling. This sharing or not sharing was used to build relationships that may have contributed to a sense of safety and belonging in the classroom, but also meant that some aspects of factors of instability which could have been shared, critiqued or explored further were not always done so. This may also be tied to educators' professional identities, with only certain selves used to relate to learners. Perhaps further critical reflective practice of educators could draw out their own working situations of precarity which may be powerful experiences to engage with, in relating to learners but also with one another.

Educators also frequently demonstrated that they held important knowledge about their students, and that this was important in building a 'precarious pedagogy' to foster connections and solidarities to navigate social change. Florence who acted as a kind of 'matchmaker' in pairing Grace and Fiza, showed her judgement and knowledge about the two women, and facilitated a meaningful interaction between them. Educators also collaborated with the practices of participants to seek out opportunities to learn, through their flexibility in being ready to respond to a wide range of requests from participants, or as in the case of the allotment, a simple acceptance that not turning up for some people may be a positive indicator that they had moved on. This builds on the observation of Farrell (2011, p.58) that language teachers may act as 'acculturators' or as cultural workers, but this precarious style of pedagogy goes beyond the role of simply giving advice, and shows the ways in which learning can be facilitated through educators' unique knowledge, creating space for learners to build social connections can lead to this learning to navigate change.

The adaptability which many staff demonstrated regularly, through actions like the amendment of teaching materials, allocation of space, and openness to what may be seen

traditionally as disruptions, seems to form a part of their judgement and expertise as educators. As others have argued (e.g. Puttick, 2023), the non-formal nature of organisations in the community sector as spaces for learning can be an advantage because teachers are not limited to narrow and prescriptive curricula and have more freedom to exercise this adaptability. Rogers has remarked that non-formal education has generally been seen as more flexible, and that this can be taken as a positive and as a negative: 'flexibility may be seen in positive terms - as ' better' than the ' real' thing [formal education] or at least more appropriate to a particular group or groups (rural populations, girls, the very young, pastoralists etc.). Or it can be seen more negatively - as temporary, or as an adjustment to formal schooling, a regrettable necessity caused by factors which will eventually disappear' (Rogers, 2005, p. 250). The latter has been demonstrated in the precarity experienced in the working lives of teachers, and the former has emerged as an important part of the (precarious) pedagogies which educators employ, discussed above.

In addition to the *space* being a non/informal learning environment, it seems that *educators* also needed to be non/informal practitioners in having this adaptability. In other words, teaching in a community space with refugees and asylum seekers required an adaptable approach, and those working in these spaces developed skills which were vital in being able to judge how to facilitate the varied learning opportunities that these participants required. Biesta (2013b) has highlighted the role of teachers' judgement in contributing to meaningful learning opportunities for students depending on specific contexts and circumstances. Additionally, educators' informal knowledge, beyond the ESOL curriculum, for example, knowing which of their students to introduce to each other (as Florence did with Grace and Fiza), their knowledge of the local area, or their own experiences with family, also form a key part of their expertise and approach. This shows that although qualifications in teaching English can be important requirements for those teaching community classes, teachers need to bring other important skills and knowledge, such as their judgement, planning, understanding of others, and an openness to flexibility, to enact this role.

The organisations in this study were important non-formal spaces, not only for learning but also for building environments for people to facilitate change that was meaningful for them. Within the organisations, open spaces popped up because of the ever-changing nature of people's day-to-day lives, through their precarious experiences. Break times and the spaces

in-between classes in both Norwich and Glasgow were important times for people to bring up topics and concerns that were important to them. Informal opportunities, outside of more structured English classes, such as conversation cafes, events outside of the organisations and community lunches were valuable in building open environments. The non-formal space that the organisations offered and the educators and staff within them worked jointly to facilitate a form of precarious public pedagogy that was responsive to the uncertainty and continual change within the lives of participants. In the following section I will look more deeply at the complex relationship between social change and the learning that was occurring within the organisations.

8.3. Learning and change

As touched on above, Berlant's (2011) conceptualisation of 'Cruel optimism' critiques the promise of neoliberal capitalism that if one works hard then they will achieve a 'good life', and asserts that this promise is contrasted with the reality of precariousness for most people. In this study, people were indeed experiencing problematic circumstances in their lives, and were regularly navigating these whilst they were in the organisations. According to Berlant (2011, p.8), 'Cruel Optimism turns toward thinking about the ordinary as an impasse shaped by crisis in which people find themselves developing skills for adjusting to newly proliferating pressures to scramble for modes of living on'. This has implications for how people learn to cope with precarity, with suggestions of how people may develop skills to handle challenges of escalating precarity, even if these new skills may not necessarily change the circumstances themselves. In the literature on lifelong learning, Livingstone & Scholtz (2010, p.22) have remarked that 'humans inherently cope with their changing environment through learning'. Although the theoretical framing of learning as coping arising from lifelong learning has typically struck a more hopeful tone, viewing how people learn to cope with change from that of 'cruel optimism' as a 'scramble' to continue to live, was also a feature of some of the learning that I observed.

The experiences of individuals that I have explored in the previous chapters suggest that the participants seeking sanctuary within this study were negotiating lives within precarious conditions in a variety of ways which guided their learning both within organisations and outside. People were continually learning informally to support themselves with the

challenges that arose through precarious circumstances. For many of the people who were in the UK on different types of visas, or awaiting asylum decisions, their aspirations for their futures remained optimistic, that once they had improved their visa status, they would be able to fulfil many of their dreams. For example, this was demonstrated by Tina and Tujela, who saw their pathways with visas and education as an intertwined, linear journey, as overcoming a series of hurdles in order to gain more permanent status, and later what they perceived to be learning that helped them get a better job in the future. However, there were circumstances when this optimism was not matched by the opportunities and education that they were able to access. For example, Tina was not allowed to work due to her status as an asylum seeker, and this meant that she could not use her skills as a musician, travel for gigs, and could not learn how to do acrylic nails in the nail salon until she obtained her refugee status. Tujela needed to focus on the exams she required for her visa in the short-term, rather than starting work on her long-term goals for the future. Additionally, in Glasgow, the termination of some of the English classes because of transient funding was disappointing to many of the students. Even as more planned goals for longer-term learning were interrupted, people needed to learn, informally and unexpectedly, to cope with these interruptions – such as finding out how they could join alternative ESOL classes.

The continual and unpredictable hurdles that participants experienced because of precarity meant that there was frequently a short-term focus in what needed to be learned and frequent interruptions to learning because of these hurdles. People had high expectations for their learning, but this was contradicted by these interruptions and the realities of the availability of education in the UK. Morrice (2021) has criticised national structures which have been inflexible and not addressed gaps in learning which refugees may experience. Although people had bright dreams for their futures around formal education, such as university, there were many structural barriers to achieving these. This finding shows that the barriers put in place by precarious circumstances caused interruptions to educational pathways which impeded a linear or even a desired journey through education. In order to continue to cope with precarity, journeys in education were regularly punctuated by interruptions like not being able to attend classes, or by episodes of informal learning to deal with changes and challenges that occurred.

The dispersal of asylum-seeking participants from Norwich to another UK city also supports the view of interruptions to lives and learning. In this case, being moved to a totally new city as Tasfia explained to me, meant that people needed to find new schools for children, and new opportunities to learn for themselves whilst starting anew in an unknown city, creating fresh barriers to building a routine. Pedwell (2021) has explored how the routine and social transformation can be related, with routines and habits forming the potential for imagining alternatives for the future. By having routines disrupted, people's opportunities, and thus imaginings for their journeys in the future are also disrupted. This also relates to Berlant's 'cruel optimism', as people's visions of their lives in Norwich were cut short, as well as causing further interruptions to their journeys in education when new challenges caused delays and changes to planned engagement in education which kept receding as people moved towards them, as well as the loss of the networks they had built for informal learning in Norwich.

In addition to the wide range of social turmoil and change resulting in differing experiences of precarity for many of the learners in organisations, people also had a wide range of motivations to learn. This was frequently because of their varying informal learning for coping with social change, and could also be due to a huge variety of factors including their own personal family situations, ambitions, previous life experiences or cultural backgrounds. Rogers & Horrocks (2010) have suggested that this variety of motivations may be frequently the case when working with adult learners, but when combined with the particular case of sanctuary seekers' experiences with precarity, these wide ranging motivations to learn were even more heightened. Although classes were aimed at teaching English, even people's motivations for learning ESOL varied greatly, with some having certain goals around the ESOL curriculum, and some wanting to talk to neighbours or teachers at their children's schools. This created a complicated challenge for organisations, staff and volunteers who wished to teach English and provide wide-ranging and adaptable learning opportunities for participants.

8.3.1. Everyday social change

The relationship between major and minor social change/transformation was also complex. When events which represented major social transformation occurred, I sometimes

expected it to be discussed in the classroom. But this was not necessarily the case, as I noted in my fieldnotes 'This morning we woke to the news about Russia invading Ukraine. It wasn't mentioned during the day.' (Glasgow fieldnotes, February 2022). People in the organisations tended to be focussed on their everyday concerns, rather than broader scale processes. In the classroom, these larger-scale processes were not regularly discussed, although the outcomes of social transformation did manifest in the day-to-day, for example with Ukrainian people arriving at organisations in the following months. Changes such as those in policy tended to create and exacerbate the challenges people were facing, such as trying to secure permanent visas for children. Policy changes were not happening every day, but the precarity they fostered meant that there was a continued threat of change and uncertainty for many people.

This everyday change was often related with the informal times and spaces that were facilitated by the organisations, such as breaks, lunches or allotment sessions. The opportunities these provided to build social connections played an important role in facilitating this kind of change. As I observed in the previous chapters, these were times in which discussion could move towards subjects that were more guided by what the participants were curious about. As some staff members noted when they spoke to me, people could make friends and chat to one another informally. As shown in stories like Grace and Fiza's these social connections could lead to important concrete actions that led to everyday change in their lives. For Nadia, building a friendship with a British person local to Norwich was an important factor in feeling at home as well as learning about the organisation itself. The process of building social connections, informal learning and everyday change were therefore interconnected within and outside of organisations, with people forming friendships and connections and learning from one another, leading to change that was minor but significant for their lives.

Darling (2011, p.409) has noted that there is 'political potential' in charities supporting refugees and asylum seekers which regularly goes unmet. This implies that because of the very diverse populations organisations work with, and the connections that are formed there, these spaces could develop as sites to offer 'alternative visions of asylum drawing upon … a political focus upon justice and rightful presence (Darling, 2011, p.415)'. This was also often the case in my study, with many of the opportunities for building solidarities and

facilitating change frequently occurring during liminal periods like break times. Although classes were non-formal, they regularly adopted a certain formality and ties with traditional classroom environments, which meant that there were fewer opportunities for peer mediation and learning was more frequently guided by the teacher. For example, when Hozan commented during a break time that Nadhim Zahawi had forgotten his Kurdish roots, there could have been an opportunity for further discussion of what that meant and about the politics around mobility, class and policy.

Despite people's regular encounters with precarious circumstances, it would not be accurate to say that people were not exercising agency in their responses to change, or were not finding opportunities to learn informally in the organisational spaces. Precarious visas were almost always short-term and unstable which meant that participants were continually needing to negotiate bureaucratic procedures which required expending energy on continual learning about how to navigate these processes and cope with challenges. As I mentioned above, Livingstone & Scholtz (2010) have commented that informal learning is used to cope with changes in life, and this finding certainly supports this. But in addition, this study shows that as Clayton et al. (2015, p.29) suggest, 'participants were not passively experiencing change'. As well as learning to cope with social transformation, informal learning that served the purpose of navigating transformation could also lead to everyday change. Pedwell (2021, p.11), elaborating on the work of Manning (2016) has suggested an alternative perspective on social change 'one in which the revolutionary and the routine are fundamentally imbricated and minor tendencies, gestures and interactions may be just as important as major events'. In the case of Grace and Fiza, the connection that they made with one another, the solidarity that they shared, and their decision to go to Citizen's Advice together represented an enacted change which was minor but significant in their lives. This type of incidental, peer mediated informal learning and action is unpredictable and often spontaneous.

Reframing notions of change from the 'major' to the 'minor' and the everyday can impact how change, resistance and agency are conceptualised. As Manning (2016, p.2) puts it: 'The grand is given the status it has not because it is where the transformative power lies, but because it is easier to identify major shifts than to catalogue the nuanced rhythms of the minor. As a result, these rhythms are narrated as secondary, or even negligible'. As I

expanded on in chapter three, she characterises minor acts as pragmatic and not as pre-planned. During the course of this study, there were numerous large-scale social transformations, but what I observed were the everyday responses to navigate everyday challenges, with people seeking learning which would aid in handling them. Manning observed that 'The major is a structural tendency that organises itself according to predetermined definitions of value. The minor is a force that courses through it, unmooring its structural integrity, problematizing its normative standards.' (Manning, 2016, p.1). This reflects the ways in which everyday, minor actions responded to, quietly resisted or adapted to, large-scale forces in this study, and the ways in which the major and the minor were inter-related. Although people may not have been discussing large-scale social transformations, their responses and subsequent learning worked to withstand, and at times to resist them at an everyday level.

People in the organisations (both participants and staff) sought out opportunities to navigate large-scale social transformation that was impacting on their lives in a variety of concrete ways. For example, Pedro, who was having difficulties with obtaining a visa for his daughter, sought mediation from tutors in Glasgow. Nadia used technology to seek out a space for learning 'life rules'. Many participants framed learning as a strategy to navigate uncertainty, similarly to their pathways to obtaining permanent visas, and framed these as a route to a more stable life. This learning demonstrates their agency in being able to look for the learning opportunities they needed, despite the limitations of availability of such support. Pedwell (2021, p.161) suggests that framing social change from an everyday perspective also reconfigures how agency can be viewed, as human behaviour can be seen as 'an ongoing interplay of conscious and nonconscious movement, with the latter being vital to the creative potential of emergent gestures and habits.' Berlant (2011, p. 100) asserts that in the context of precarious circumstances and 'being worn out by the activity of reproducing life, agency can be an activity of maintenance, not making'. Although as I explored in the literature review in chapter 2, the policy environment created by Westminster[32] is aimed at making life 'hostile' for those who are migrants, and policy around adult education is limited, the very act of finding opportunities to learn despite this shows how people find ways to

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[32] I am referring to immigration policy, which covers the whole of the UK and is overseen by the Home Office, rather than the Scottish government because immigration is not a devolved policy area.

navigate these openly hostile policy deficits, which can be viewed as explicit acts of agency to continue their learning journeys.

During this study, people demonstrated agency in manoeuvring between being able to maintain their lives as they hoped to, in spite of these structural barriers. This maintenance frequently represented a form of resistance to difficulties enacted by policy, which could be said to be everyday or habitual (Pedwell, 2021) or 'quiet' (Steele et al., 2021), rather than adhering to notions of 'traditional' political activism. People within the organisations also built everyday solidarities in order to facilitate this navigation of social transformation through the sharing of knowledge or by supporting one another. This was shown in the examples of Pedro and Nadya above, or when Tujela told me about her Kurdish friends - "she said to me 'you are speaking better [English] than me, come on with me...'" (Tujela interview, November 2022). People looked for connections, sought advice from others, made introductions and helped friends to navigate precarious and ever-changing circumstances. The building of these solidarities was an important feature of the open and social space that the organisations provided.

As well as the ways in which people showed that they could respond to and quietly resist change by learning to cope with it, they also showed that they could create change. The example of Grace and Fiza demonstrates one of the ways in which people might cope with changes in life through learning, but it also shows that as well as learning being a response to change, there can be some form of change which happens *through* learning. The new connection between Fiza and Grace meant that they went together to seek support. Although the wider structure of the Home Office and the Asylum system were out of their control, their peer support helped them to exercise agency in areas which they could control. Although this was a micro-level change, it still had the potential to be impactful on their daily lives, and represented a strategy to resist the challenging visa bureaucracy of the Home Office and the precarity which came through it. This resonated with a view of everyday change, considering 'dynamics that necessitate ongoing engagement with everyday social relations and routines' (Pedwell, 2021, p.153). Additionally, Giroux (2004, p.60) has highlighted learning as having the potential for both acquiring agency, and as a 'sphere for imagining oppositional social change'. Through this interaction, although Grace and Fiza do not suggest to one another that they should actively resist the UK visa system,

their sharing of knowledge and decision to act to seek more knowledge and support is a kind of resistance to the precarious visas which the two women needed to negotiate. Furthermore, this example also highlights the importance of connections and solidarities in instigating this learning for social change, as the actions would not have happened without the introduction to one another.

Kilgore & Samantrai (2010, p.355) have noted that Black women may become 'unfortunate experts' of survival through their day-to-day experiences and strategies to navigate structural inequalities. In the case of this study, people who have migrated to the UK have also become experts in navigating precarious conditions in order to resist policy and seek out learning opportunities and maintain themselves and those around them. These acts of agency are not heroic in the traditional or individualised neoliberal sense, but instead, here agency takes on under-acknowledged forms such as resignation, accommodation, acquiescence, compliance and even sacrifice which many participants displayed. The minor scale of these actions enabled them to adapt to the continuing challenges, and could lead to change that was significant for them and those around them. It also shows how the minor may act in opposition to the major, and contributes to discussions around how agency can be something achieved rather than possessed openly (Biesta & Tedder, 2007).

hooks (1994, p.12) remarks that 'the classroom remains the most radical space of possibility in the academy.' The example of Grace and Fiza shows that this possibility can also be found within non-formal settings, as it has emerged that learning was happening that led to minor social transformation guided by participants and educators through their solidarities and resistance. The space was there for open and unplanned informal learning and discussion, but additionally, participants felt safe to do this, at times creating the conditions for this change to take place. Furthermore, learning in many cases represented a form of resistance to dominant conceptions of what and how people who are refugees ought to learn. People learned in multiple ways that were responsive to their unique challenges and life experiences. In the final section, I critically discuss some of the ways in which learning in refugee contexts have been conceptualised in the light of the findings of this study.

8.4. Conceptualisations of learning in refugee contexts

In addition to drawing out the entangled relationships between learning and social change, this study also has implications for conceptualisations of learning in refugee contexts. As I have touched upon previously, rather than representing a linear, upwards pathway through education spanning the course of life, refugee adult learning in organisations frequently disrupted this paradigm of educational journeys. Learning was more in line with the kinds of informal learning 'episodes' that Rogers & Horrocks describe (2010 p.133) with these particular learning episodes often aimed at addressing requirements brought about through migration or the circumstances created by social transformation. This also fits closely with Hager and Halliday's (2006, p.130) paradigm of learning as entwined with transformation, and that there is 'no finality to learning. For example, for participants in this study, learning the 'life rules' around moving to a new place, or in consistently engaging in opportunistic or 'emergency' informal learning in order to navigate precarious visas. People were constantly learning, and these instances of learning were occurring in varied ways. Learning in this context was entangled with messy processes of change, with times of greater change often resulting in much learning.

As I elaborated in chapter three, the concept of 'resilience' is often framed as a skill which those who are going through difficult circumstances may develop, associated with being able to 'bounce back' in the face of challenges. However, as Vickers and Parris (2007) have pointed out, the term resilience by definition suggests that something or someone remains relatively *unchanged* by challenging circumstances, and that it has been used as a neoliberal term to put the responsibility on individuals to be resilient, or develop resilience to quickly recover from adversity. On the other hand, the findings of my study support Groeninck et al., (p.360) in their call for 'a more nuanced understanding of resilience' recognising how people attempt to live their lives in a viable way, but also still experience extreme challenges 'due to structural power relations'. The fact that people were continually attempting to cope with social transformation through learning can be interpreted as resilience, but they could not be described as unchanged through these experiences. Their shifting identities, perceptions about education and approaches to learning, were altering all the time in multiple ways. Therefore, when conceptualising resilience within the field of refugee learning, a critical

approach should be taken that does not reduce resilience to 'bouncing back', but as a part of adaptable learning processes which respond to continual and complex social changes. Butler et al. (2016) have suggested focussing on *resistance* as an alternative to individualised conceptions of resilience. Viewing strategies to learn to cope with social transformation as forms of resistance, could construct sanctuary seekers as active agents in processes of withstanding structural forces, while acknowledging the serious impacts of these challenges. In this framing, resistance is highly nuanced, not just representing a proactive reaction to change, but something that was frequently hidden and surreptitious, culminating in everyday actions to navigate obstacles. As I have explored above, people were resisting social transformations through informal, everyday learning that aimed to cope with challenges, and solidarities were a crucial part of this. The modes of resilience that people developed were rooted in this nuanced framing of resistance, established through sharing knowledge and building connections to negotiate precarious circumstances.

Additionally, the concept of aspiration has been explored in refugee communities, and education is often spoken about as a means for many for achieving future dreams. Leo (2021) has suggested that high expectations of refugee youth in the US are often not met due to structural factors. Yosso (2005, p.77) in her application of Critical Race Theory to community cultural wealth, has set out the concept of aspirational capital (among other forms)- 'the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers' – she sees this aspiration as making up a part of community cultural wealth. This ability to maintain hope for the future did seem to be reflected in participants of this study, with most people having ambitions for the future, in spite of current barriers. Perceiving people's future learning goals as a kind of aspirational capital therefore can challenge a deficit narrative towards the education of those who are asylum seekers and refugees. As I presented in chapter 2, policy, particularly in England paints the picture that it is a challenge that too many people are not learning English because of individual failure to seek out opportunities to learn (Bouttell, 2023b). The busy classes and long waiting lists showed that people were very eager to learn English in actuality. In chapter 2 I discussed Suella Braverman's claim that '[multiculturalism has] allowed people to come to our society, and live parallel lives in it. They could be in the society, but not of the society.' (American Enterprise Institute, 2023). The ever-present aspirational capital of participants in

community organisations counters this narrative that frames people who migrate as unwilling to integrate into British society, and many people had lofty dreams for the future, which many saw English as a key to unlocking. People aspired to learn what they needed to live in the UK, and it was regularly the structural challenges they encountered facilitated by a hostile policy environment, that presented barriers to learning 'life rules' about living in British society.

Informal learning was also a key concept that was important in the lives of many in the organisations, but that regularly went unacknowledged. Malcolm et al., (2003, p.1) have commented that 'it is more accurate to conceive "formality" and "informality" as attributes present in all circumstances of learning'. In this study, this was certainly the case, as staff and participants at the organisations moved between more and less formal experiences of learning. There were many 'teaching' moments that echoed formal environments, and I observed some teachers as trying to keep classes 'on topic' (e.g. In the 'ride or die' story). There was a continuum of 'more formal' to 'less formal' within many of the activities. Particularly the 'break times' were informal opportunities for unstructured conversation and learning that was less guided by teachers. These were crucial times, and the presence of tea and snacks also contributed to the informal environment which was especially utilised by learners in classes to instigate informal learning about subjects which were important to them. Informal spaces and times, like the breaks, and chances to eat and drink together were very important opportunities for informal learning, and building connections and solidarities to share knowledge.

The multiplicity of different motivations to learn, as well as their varied journeys with visas, families, work and myriad other life experiences, suggest an approach to pedagogy which is flexible and dynamic. bell hooks puts forward that '[engaged pedagogy is] dynamic. It's fluid. It's *always* changing.' (hooks, 1994, p.158) [emphasis original]. Although hooks mainly applied this concept to the Higher Education environment, I feel that engaged pedagogy can give a sense of the 'fluid' and 'always changing' nature of some of the spaces for learning in organisations. However, this did not seem to be a conscious approach for many of the educators or management staff in organisations. In Glasgow, there was a learner-centred approach to pedagogy which many of the tutors told me about and that I observed, which meant that adapting materials to suit learners was common. In Norwich, there was a more

ad-hoc approach, and people did not talk to me about implementing a particular pedagogy. The open and comfortable feeling that I described during the break times in Norwich was very important and offered an opportunity for more political discussion which was led more by the learners, with them bringing up topics and asking questions which they were curious about. hooks' concept of engaged pedagogy does seem to fit many of the classroom approaches in organisations, with the classroom regularly changing.

Massey's (2005, p.32) conceptualisation of space as 'always under construction' can be useful when thinking about what organisations offer to participants. Thinking about learning, and the spaces where it can be offered as 'always in process, as never a closed system' (Massey, 2005, p.35), implies the ways in which a pedagogy based on the principle of openness within spaces could be developed, creating conditions that could lead to change. This seems necessary as organisations are located in precarious and ever-changing policy contexts. Fisher (2011, p.419) has remarked that 'questions of precarity cannot be divorced from pedagogy' (Fisher, 2011, p.419), in this view, social life is intertwined with learning, and educational institutions are in themselves precarious. A consideration of engaged pedagogy, precarious pedagogy and an understanding of the ways in which space could be changeable, are useful in countering dominant narratives of education and change as upward progression and as enforcing notions of neoliberal capitalist productivity. Biesta (2019, p.1) has commented that education 'is never just an instrument for what individuals or groups desire from it. Education… is never just there to solve "other people's problems," but also has its *own* concern to take care of' [emphasis original]. Organisations working with refugees and asylum seekers are subject to structural precarity, and conceptualisations of learning and education in these contexts needed to be responsive to this. Learning and social change in the sites of this study did not follow a linear narrative through pre-determined outcomes, and were nuanced and everyday, depending on the lives and dreams of the people who used organisations.

By employing a form of precarious public pedagogy that was adaptive to the uncertainty in the lives of learners, educators strayed from formal models and expectations around education. Structural precariousness impacted the institutions, educators and modes of facilitating learning, meaning that there was an unpredictability to activities, and educators were also vulnerable, not just in this precarity, but through their divergence from

pedagogical norms. In other words, this kind of non-formal precarious pedagogy was precarious in its practice as well as meeting people with experiences of uncertainty in their lives.

8.5. Conclusion

People regularly had aspirations for the future which were rooted in a 'cruelly optimistic' dream for their lives stemming from neoliberal promises of success and individualism. Factors such as the constant precarity, and the ever-changing policy environment impacting the UK visa system gave people many shared challenges but also unique ones. However, people did not learn in isolation, and organisations offered spaces to build connections and solidarities despite the individual problems people had. Precarious approaches to pedagogy responded to consistent transformation/change, while also attempting to build connections and solidarities, leading to meaningful change. By throwing a light on the substance of the day-to-day actions of participants, this study has highlighted the significance of everyday resistance and minor change for people who are learning in organisations supporting refugees and asylum seekers.

People were consistently maintaining their lives in the UK through their navigation of precarity and structural inequalities. Although the challenges that people faced should not be understated, the ordinary resistance and agency that they enacted in their learning encounters observed during this study should be a cause for hope in a typically demoralising policy environment. Further, the experiences and actions of people challenges a deficit framing of education for sanctuary seekers, showing their expertise, knowledge and skills as well as their aspirations and hopes for the future. Organisations could be viewed as providing a vital, adaptable space for people to potentially learn and to teach others what might be needed to act as agents of change in meaningful ways. However, at present because of structural challenges causing financial precarity within organisations themselves, there was limited time, and often limited space for this to occur. As well as highlighting the agency of those who were negotiating precarious and oppressive structural challenges, this study has found that organisations can provide the space which has potential for learning that can facilitate radical and everyday change.

Chapter Nine - Conclusion: The role of adaptable spaces for learning and change

9.1. Introduction: The value of non-formal education

This study has shown that people who are refugees and asylum seekers face a great deal of precarity which can cause many barriers to accessing opportunities to learn. This precarity shapes how and what they were able to learn, although they also regularly resisted change, and had ambitious dreams for the future related to their education. People faced enormous difficulties in their lives, and yet demonstrated their agency by acting in resistance to these obstacles regularly by showing up to supporting organisations, and learning what they needed to navigate a challenging environment. I have also explored how staff members faced precarity in their own lives, and how this could impact on them and their practice. In spite of this, educators were still facilitating learning opportunities for the participants. The study has demonstrated the crucial nature of access to non-formal education for people who are seeking sanctuary in the UK. In this final chapter I will explore some of the key takeaways from this thesis which would be useful to different stakeholders in the field including policymakers, educational researchers, organisations and practitioners working with refugees and asylum seekers in the UK.

The organisations I observed in this thesis offered non-formal educational opportunities. For some of the learners this supplemented more formal college courses, and some of them only accessed these community ESOL classes. Amidst the precarious nature of people's lives, the flexible spaces that organisations offered was incredibly important for them to learn English, make social connections and find opportunities to learn informally about various aspects of life in Norwich or Glasgow. The 'precarious pedagogy' which educators utilised responded to the unpredictable nature of learners' lives, and created valuable opportunities to learn informally and build solidarities for change.

9.2. Policy implications

The divergences between England and Scotland in terms of how the labour of educators was renumerated reflected how the nations had included ESOL in policy frameworks. Scotland's apparent regression in terms of teachers' security and current employment on temporary contracts relates to its more recent cuts to adult and community education and ESOL. Having an ESOL strategy in policy, which is inclusive of non-formal and informal learning, would be a crucial way in which nations could support adult education for refugees and asylum seekers as well as acknowledging the rights of ESOL practitioners. The fact that there has never been an ESOL strategy in England and the loss of Scotland's specific ESOL strategy mean that many of the challenges faced by educators and learners will continue to worsen. Having an ESOL strategy in place would strongly support the learning of English in UK communities, which both sanctuary seekers and migrants and national governments say that they want more of. Additionally, policy aimed at 'integration' of newcomers to the UK needs to acknowledge the important role of non-formal education in community spaces, alongside more formal opportunities provided by colleges, as this is currently lacking in English policy.

One of the big barriers for organisations was resources, with unstable and short-term funding fostering the precarious conditions that staff may experience. Organisations who support refugees and asylum seekers should have access to stable and regular funding, and their role in providing learning opportunities for sanctuary seekers should be more formally recognised in national policy frameworks in adult education. More stable funding could be used to provide more permanent contracts for staff, enabling them to have more time to focus on their students, and would minimise the risk of staff burning themselves out through overwork. Staff members showed that they were very committed to students, and it may be meaningful for organisations to encourage a work-life balance and to support staff in making sure they did not spend additional 'magic time' (Kouritzin et al., 2021) looking after participants. Stable funding could provide more consistency for participants of classes who find that there are regular interruptions to learning journeys because of their experiences with forced migration and with Home Office policies. Funding could be prioritised by organisations to provide transport for participants, as the cost of travel seemed to be a major barrier for participants accessing classes. However, providing sufficient and reliable

funding is a difficult objective considering the structural nature of the problems of funding for NGOs which intersect adult education and supporting forced migrants.

Providing free bus travel for refugees and asylum seekers through the support of local authorities or national legislation would be an incredibly impactful change that would free-up resources of organisations, and mean that more sanctuary seekers could access their spaces. The small amounts of money provided to people seeking asylum which I discussed in more detail in chapter 2 meant that they found it difficult to afford bus travel to attend learning activities in organisations. The Scottish Government had announced that it would provide free bus travel for people seeking asylum after the campaigns of local organisations and a trial in Glasgow in 2023. However, in August 2024, the Scottish Government announced that it was scrapping the policy amidst spending cuts (Feerick, 2024). In November 2024, Oxfordshire County Council approved a pilot scheme to provide free bus travel for asylum seekers, which could provide a useful model for other localities (Evans, 2024). Providing free transportation for asylum seekers, particularly those living in hotels would alleviate some of the physical barriers that people had in attending classes. It would also save the time and resources of the organisations supporting refugees. This would be incredibly impactful in reducing barriers for people accessing educational opportunities in their local communities.

Another important finding was that busy working lives were a challenge for many in attending classes regularly, particularly for men. The limitations in funding fostered by a complex policy environment mean that responsibility is placed solely on individuals to seek adult education (especially in England). This resulted in people having to prioritise work over attending class, or that they attended classes after working long hours or overnight shifts, so felt very tired, or did not attend to classes altogether. It seems that employers should share some of this responsibility, by funding or creating opportunities for ESOL education for employees. As most participants tended to work in gig economy roles, or as delivery or warehouse workers, this would need to be provided by these kinds of employers, and not just for those workers who had full-time contracts. For many, particularly male participants, learning English was tied to performing well in their work roles and their dreams of future roles, so this would make sense for them and for the organisations that they work with. For women in particular, a key barrier to attending English classes tended to be around

childcare. On a national policy level, the provision of reliable funded childcare that is also available to women who are refugees and asylum seekers, could help women to be able to attend ESOL classes more regularly.

I have discussed that policy around immigration has been incredibly hostile in the UK. Although negative rhetoric towards refugees and asylum seekers is usually confined to English politicians, this policy applies to the whole of the UK, thus permeating England and Scotland. This hostile policy has been shown to have impacted how people could learn within organisations, and what they wanted to learn. Although it seems an ambitious goal to change this hostile approach in policy towards migration and migrants, this would be the key way in which politicians could reduce the precarity that sanctuary seekers and their supporting organisations experience.

9.3. Implications for organisations providing learning opportunities for sanctuary seekers

A key conclusion of this study for organisations was the importance of the non-formal, hospitable, and adaptable space that they provide in facilitating learning. Even amidst precarious funding environments, staff and volunteers were consistently facilitating learning that was adaptable and informal. Even with greater levels of funding, it would be important to make sure that spaces still take an adaptable approach, with more flexible approaches to materials and curricula which can be altered depending on the needs of students. The importance of informal learning shows that there is a need for spaces to allow opportunities to build connections between people in the organisation, and foster the space for learning which can encompass the everyday emergencies of life associated with the UK asylum system. This is important alongside the more formal learning that people wanted in their futures. Because participants at organisations had such varied motivations and goals for the future, this adaptability is key in ensuring that the varied learning that people needed was encompassed.

Organisations are regularly framed as spaces which exist in addition to formal learning environments such as colleges. Although the phrase 'stepping stone' is sometimes used to refer to the pathway that organisations provide to college or formal education, this expression can gloss over much of the learning that goes on in organisations because this

learning is valuable and meaningful and works alongside formal learning which is done in colleges and universities. Some participants used organisations as a bridge to reach more formal learning opportunities, but others used them to enrich their experiences of settling in the UK in other ways. In this research study, the learning sites outside the walls of the organisations, and events that represented a space beyond the 'classroom' were very valuable spaces in providing this adaptability. For example, in Norwich, the organisation's allotment and community refugee week events provided unique and important opportunities to learn. In Glasgow, 'conversation cafes' were informal environments for people to speak about subjects that were consequential for them. Break times and the pockets of time before and after classes, were also very important, along with community meals. The act of coming together over coffee, tea and food provided opportunities that were not there in class for people to ask questions about subjects they needed to or were curious about.

Within the organisations there could be greater recognition of how to consciously acknowledge the precarious circumstances of learners within the classroom. Participatory ESOL (Cooke et al., 2015, p.223) has been argued to 'play a part in shaping the life experiences of those who participate, and importantly, this can be done on students' own terms'. This approach to pedagogy, can encourage students to engage with challenges in a way which is led by them, and does not shy away from political topics. Although as the authors point out, the absence of formal curricula in the voluntary and community sectors is also an advantage in allowing the flexibility for teachers to take a participatory approach to ESOL. However, in my research, I did not observe teachers planning classes that would be described as participatory ESOL, even though there was more flexibility, and some were following more traditional pedagogical approaches to teaching, while many were using a kind of 'precarious pedagogy' (Fisher, 2011), albeit not in a conscious way. This could be because of the qualifications and experience that teachers had – with many having CELTA (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults) certificates, teaching in schools, or training as literacy tutors. Additionally, as organisations have such limited resources, there is a challenge in training teachers in participatory ESOL approaches, as there was little time and space in which to do this. In Norwich, where teachers are volunteers, and staff in charge of ESOL had very limited time, further training beyond an initial induction was not offered.

Promoting approaches such as participatory ESOL could be influential in fostering more opportunities for learning that recognises social change from a more dynamic perspective. This could draw out the 'political potential' (Darling, 2011, p.409) of organisations working with people seeking sanctuary, bringing opportunities for more critical discussions of who holds power in spaces and communities and why.

Sanctuary seeking participants in the organisations, had a wealth of experience and knowledge that holds great potential for peer mediation and learning. Fostering the space for these exchanges to take place, and encouraging these conversations in more unstructured environments would allow for more sharing of knowledge and building solidarities. This would also position learners as credible knowledge producers and valorise the agency of learners as both learners and teachers.

I observed some one-to-one sessions in Glasgow, which seemed to be particularly impactful for learners, as they were individualised to their particular life circumstances. In Glasgow many of the classes were very small because of the pandemic, so this was a unique opportunity for this. Growing class sizes may be unavoidable because of the declining funding for adult education. In Norwich there were sometimes participant volunteers - sanctuary seekers who helped as teaching assistants in the classes. These opportunities for support were impactful as many of the challenges people faced varied. As I have explored, solidarities and peer mediation were incredibly important, and it would be beneficial for organisations and educators to build more chances for peer-learning.

The knowledge that staff and volunteers have about participants and the flexible pedagogies that they utilised were incredibly important in facilitating meaningful learning opportunities for participants, and brokering connections to facilitate learning that could lead to change. This implies that sustaining staff members, building time for them to get to know participants and allowing them to facilitate introductions and meetings between people, is very important for all. Valuing the wide knowledge that staff and volunteers have, and building on this to raise awareness of challenges participants face, as well as fostering a supportive and stable environment for them to perform their roles would be powerful in enabling the conditions for educators to facilitate learning that is significant for their participants.

Another takeaway for organisations relates to gender dimensions and improving access to organisations, particularly for women. As I mentioned in the above section on policy, men had challenges which related to their work lives, and women usually encountered challenges in accessing class because of childcare. If organisations were able to not only allow, but encourage, women to bring young children to class, this has the potential of being very impactful for them. If there were reliable facilities to provide childcare, it would potentially increase the ability for many women to attend ESOL classes. The availability of a woman's only class was very impactful in the example of Grace and Fiza, who had both had very negative experiences with men. Online classes during the pandemic were popular with women with young children. Women's spaces for learning (in addition to mixed-gender spaces) in refugee contexts to facilitate peer learning and solidarity would be bring more opportunities for collaboration and peer mediation as well as providing ways to navigate challenges that may particularly impact women.

9.4. Implications for future research

It can be difficult to pin down the impact of the benefits that the informal nature of spaces provides by using quantitative data, or by thinking about concrete outcomes. For many participants, organisations provided a space for powerful everyday learning which was key for them to navigate the process of building lives and of settling in the UK. The ethnographic approach of this study has meant that I have been able to observe how this learning facilitated small change but that was meaningful to the lives of many of those in the spaces.

From a theoretical perspective, the relationship between learning and change has been shown to be intertwined. People in the organisations strived to learn, or to help others learn what they needed to cope with social change, and demonstrated their agency in bringing about everyday change in their own lives, and the lives of those around them. The everyday resistance to structural change that was impacting them demonstrates their agency in how they navigated this. I did not observe much explicit political action, and people rarely commented on wider social change that was going on in the world. Nevertheless, people resisted changes through their actions, fitting with a *prefigurative* notion of change which is adaptable and does not have a fixed vision of the future but works towards meaningful change. This suggests that for those experiencing particularly precarious circumstances,

change has to be typically on an everyday level and learning episodes are usually informal and adapt to challenges as they develop. In surviving, undertaking activities of 'maintenance' (Berlant, 2011 p. 100), and learning what they needed to live their lives, people were shaping futures for themselves, making connections, and sustaining each other in precarious circumstances. This has been a valuable finding that has emerged through this study.

Similarly, learning and change were not always positive experiences for people seeking sanctuary in the UK, with their experiences of precarity meaning they were consistently having to adapt what they learnt under very high stakes (e.g. imminent exams) or to reduce risk to their legal migration status. Additionally, organisations and staff were also navigating a lot of challenges. Education and learning are frequently presented as uncritically positive encounters, and this study has suggested that learning is not always around achieving one's dreams in the present moment, but about maintaining life through precarious situations. However, despite the difficulties, people still consistently imagined different lives for themselves in the future, and had dreams for their future education around this. There is a lot of room for hope through the findings of this project, with many of the people I spoke to striving to learn in the face of enormous challenges. As I mentioned in an earlier chapter, it has been observed that resilience should not be presented as simply a positive outcome of sanctuary seekers' experiences (Vickers & Parris, 2007), but rather as something that is developed through a process of change and navigation of enormous challenges. Everyone in the organisations was experiencing a precarious environment in different ways but through this, many did develop resilience and exercised resistance to the hostile environment in the UK.

People's aspirations for their aspirations in education were often directed towards formal opportunities such as college and university. In the future it would be significant to examine how formal educational institutions such as colleges and universities could work with non-formal organisations such as those in this study to recognise the important learning that already goes on in these spaces. This would be important particularly for refugees and asylum seekers in the UK because of the precarity that they experience in their lives, and continual interruptions to more formal learning journeys. As this study has highlighted, the ways in which people were engaging in informal learning which could both respond to and

resist change, raises new questions about how to recognise or more formally acknowledge this learning in ways that are meaningful to sanctuary seekers. In the light of the continual interruptions to educational journeys caused by policy such as Home Office re-dispersal of asylum seekers, a recognition of less formal learning could be very important as people move towards accessing formal education, or employment in the UK whilst experiencing precarious circumstances. It would also be important to continue to research learning for adults which is not necessarily singularly aimed at skills or the labour market, because of the rich variety of different people who learn in organisations.

9.5. Conclusion: Causes for hope in turbulent times

This study was conducted at a time of considerable social and political change, spanning the pandemic and many changes in policy. The latest general election and change in government in July 2024 suggest there is further change to come, and at present it seems like a hostile narrative towards people who seek sanctuary in the UK from politicians is continuing. The riots that took place in England and Northern Ireland during the summer of 2024 were fuelled by racist anti-immigrant rhetoric and targeted asylum accommodation, with details of charities supporting refugees published as targets on far-right websites. In Norwich, details of a hotel housing asylum seekers were published online as a potential site of a far-right protest, but in the end a crowd of anti-racist counter-protesters were the only ones who attended (Sennitt, 2024). Analysis of these events raises questions about why the majority of the far-right riots were concentrated in English towns, and did not occur in Wales and Scotland. Antonsich & Skey (2024, p.1) argue that 'Scotland and Wales have been able to provide more progressive and inclusive narratives of nation that not only acknowledge ethnic diversity but are articulated in opposition to the dominant English'. The proliferation of anti-migrant rhetoric by politicians in England seems to have fuelled violence towards refugees and asylum seekers and this calls attention to the need for English politicians to consider how their approach to migration may be exacerbating extremist narratives. But the volume of counter-protests, and the resistance to hostile immigration policies is a cause for some hope. A refugee charity in Hull, the site of a great deal of far-right violence in August 2024, has reported that since the riots it has seen a 400% increase in its service users, saying that people had 'band[ed] together' after the riots (Spence, 2024). This underlines the crucial role of charities supporting sanctuary seekers to provide spaces to build community,

amid an overtly hostile environment. It also highlights how sanctuary seekers and organisations are resisting anti-migrant narratives through building solidarities. As I have explored in this study, people have agency to build solidarities and share knowledge that is needed to navigate turbulent social transformations, and organisations are important non-formal spaces for this to occur.

In this thesis I have explored the learning experiences of those in organisations that support refugees and asylum seekers in England and Scotland, aiming to explore the relationship between learning and social change. Some of this relationship was tied with how people who were in the organisations learn, as a response to social change that was out of their control. But I have explored how they were able to build connections and learn informally, in ways that were meaningful to them, and how their learning could demonstrate resistance to these structural forces. Furthermore, by framing social transformation through the lens of the everyday, minor act, that occurs in non-formal spaces, learning can also facilitate change.

As the future remains uncertain in terms of policy, and racist far-right narratives about migration are becoming bolder, this study has highlighted the barriers that oppressive policy environments can cause for those who are seeking sanctuary in the UK, and raises the importance of access to education, stable funding and adaptable environments, like those offered by the organisations in this study. People seeking sanctuary were consistently learning and building solidarities, despite the continual challenges that they faced, and were resisting precarious circumstances in everyday ways that were meaningful for their lives.

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Appendix A: People mentioned and roles

Glossary of people mentioned by name in the thesis and their position in the organisations

Brooklea Learning

Name (pseudonym)	Position in organisation (as referred to by the NGO).
Alice	Tutor
Ateef	Learner
Ceyda	Learner
Fiza	Learner
Florence	Tutor
Grace	Learner
John	Tutor
Leyla	Learner
Mohammed	Learner
Paul	Learner
Pedro	Learner
Raheem	Learner
Roya	Learner
Shirley	Tutor
Tina	Learner
Zoha	Learner

Unity Hub

Name (pseudonym)	Position in organisation
An	Participant
Annie	Volunteer ESOL teacher
Bowen	Participant
Chole	ESOL staff
Ela	Volunteer language teacher
Hozan	Participant
Michael	Volunteer ESOL teacher
Nadia	Participant
Patricia	Participant
Peter	Volunteer ESOL teacher
Tasfia	Support staff
Tom	Staff – allotment
Tujela	Participant

Appendix B: Interview guide[33]

Interviews with staff members:

Tell me about teaching/working here

(teachers) Eg. What did you feel went well in class?

How did the pandemic impact your work? / How have things changed while you have worked here? (Note: I adapted this Q as time went on - Glasgow closer to lockdown, Norwich new hotels opened)

(staff) How has funding changed?

Tell me about [X activity you work on]

What challenges have you faced?

What do you hope for the future?

Follow up questions examples: How has that impacted you? What did you learn from that?

Interviews with learners:

Tell me about what you do here [at the organisation]

Tell me about learning in the UK

Follow up: have you had any challenges? What are the good things?

How is education/learning different in [city] than in your country?

What would you change about learning in the UK?

What are your hopes for the future?

Is there anything else you would like to talk about relating to learning/education in the UK?

Follow-up questions examples: Tell me more about [X]. what did you mean by [X]? How did [X] make you feel?

---

[33] Note: I conducted interviews with some people in the organisations who agreed to do so when they had time. I had an interview guide, but they were very much semi-structured and usually ended up more as conversations., based on what interviewees said.

# Appendix C: Research Workshop activities[34]

Icebreaker

Everyone gets a post-it/piece of scrap paper. Write 3 questions, anything that comes to mind (eg. where do you live?, what food do you like? What's your favourite colour?) Everyone stands up and talk to each other, ask the questions. OR scrunch up the questions and put them in a bowl, take it in turns to answer the questions.

Life in Glasgow

Create cards with different factors about daily life including pictures: my family, children's school, my home, my neighbourhood, transport, learning English, food shopping, other shopping, cooking, cleaning, me-time, add others (brainstorm as a group).

Ranking these things in order of how important they are to you/ in groups?

Sort items – which things do you like, which things can be difficult. (Have 3 faces with happy sad, medium, sort these items between them).
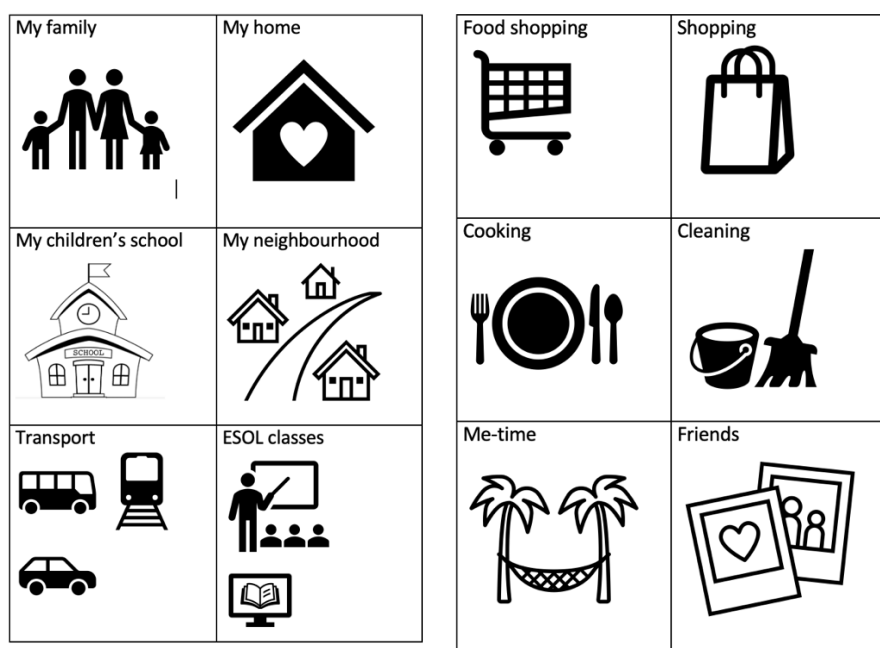
Learning

Introducing the topic

How do you say 'learn' in your language?

Close your eyes: What do you think of when you think of learning when you were younger? Talk to your neighbour, is it the same?

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[34] Research workshop (2x held in Glasgow) – This is the guide I made before the research workshops in Glasgow. I knew that participants had varying levels of English and planned activities around this using knowledge of ESOL teaching. I conducted a mixture of these activities over two sessions alongside discussion points below.

What words do you think of when you think of learning? (could use translation apps if not sure of English words). Is learning different now than when you were younger? How?
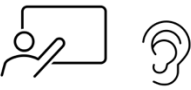
– Discuss as a group.

Matrix ranking

Matrix-ranking style activity – use post-its/stickers to assess each

In the classroom: Working individually, listening to the teacher, working with others (others?)

Studying at home: Whatsapp, Zoom, websites (which ones?), your children, youtube, books, homework...

Do you think there are other ways that you learn?

Discuss as a group.

In a classroom	Working with others
Listening to the teacher	Studying individually
Online classes	Helping my children
Using my phone	Watching videos (youtube, netflix...)
Reading books	Doing homework

Plus blank cards for them to add their own

Wishes for the future

Aim: To talk about ideas for the future and areas for change

Draw 5 concentric circles on the board, label as me, my family and friends, my family and friends, my work/school, my town/neighbourhood and the world. Write a wish for each one.
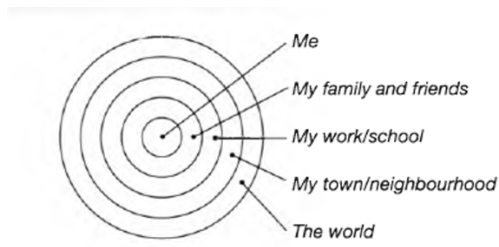
Adapted from 'Teaching Unplugged' – Meddings and Thornbury -p.41

Full group discussion points:

- What things about life in Glasgow are difficult?
- What things are good?
- What would you like to change about life in Scotland?
- How do you imagine the future for you/your family/your community?

- What ways do you learn at home?
- How was learning during the pandemic?
- What do you think of when you think of learning?

Appendix D: Ethics approval letter

EDU ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER 2020-21

APPLICANT DETAILS	
Name:	Lauren Bouttell
School:	EDU
Current Status:	**PGR Student**
UEA Email address:	l.boutell@uea.ac.uk
EDU REC IDENTIFIER:	**2021_06_LB_ARP**

Approval details	
Approval start date:	**15.07.2021**
Approval end date:	**01.10.2023**
Specific requirements of approval:	If the situation is such that the research needs to be conducted face-to-face please contact the Chair of EDU REC to discuss what may or may not need to happen based on the current guidance at that time.
Please note that your project is only given ethical approval for the length of time identified above. Any extension to a project must obtain ethical approval by the EDU REC before continuing. Any amendments to your project in terms of design, sample, data collection, focus etc. should be notified to the EDU REC Chair as soon as possible to ensure ethical compliance. If the amendments are substantial a new application may be required.	

Victoria Warburton EDU Chair, Research Ethics Committee

Appendix E: Participant information and consent form

Lauren Bouttell

l.bouttell@uea.ac.uk

Post-graduate Researcher
2021

Faculty of Social Sciences

School of Education and Lifelong Learning

University of East Anglia

Norwich Research Park

Norwich NR4 7TJ

United Kingdom

Refugee learning and social transformation in two UK communities

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT – for participants: Participant observations and interviews

(1) What is this study about?
You are invited to take part in a research study about learning for refugees in the UK. You have been invited to participate in this study because you attend classes at [redacted]. This Participant Information Statement tells you about the research study. Knowing what is involved will help you decide if you want to take part in the study. Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything that you don't understand or want to know more about.

Participation in this research study is voluntary. By giving consent to take part in this study you are telling me that you:

✓   Understand what you have read.
✓   Agree to take part in the research study as outlined below.
✓   Agree to the use of your personal information as described.
✓   You have received a copy of this Participant Information Statement to keep.

(2) Who is running the study?
The study is being carried out by the following researcher:

Lauren Bouttell, post-graduate researcher at the School of Education and Lifelong Learning at the UEA. She is supervised by Prof. Anna Robinson-Pant.

(3) What will the study involve for me?
I will observe (look at) classes in [Redacted] for the next three months. I will watch, listen and write some notes about what happens. I will sometimes record the sound (audio). I will not keep this forever, it is so I can remember what happens. I will not use your name, and I will not take photographs or videos of you. You do not have to do anything special or change what you normally do. You can talk to me and ask me questions whenever you like.

Later, I might ask you have an interview with me. This will be a short conversation with me about your learning. It will take around 30-40 minutes, we will do the interview either in [Redacted] or over Zoom, it is up to you. I will record the audio, not the video. This will be up to you and you do not have to do an interview, even if you agree to the first part.

(4) How much of my time will the study take?
  I will be in [Redacted] for a few days a week over three- four months. I will not ask you to give up any extra time. If you agree to have an interview with me, it will take about 30-40 minutes.

(5) Do I have to be in the study? Can I withdraw from the study once I've started?
Being in this study is completely voluntary and you do not have to take part. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researcher or anyone else at the University of East Anglia or at [Redacted].

If you decide to take part in the study and then change your mind later, you are free to withdraw at any time. You can do this by talking to me (Lauren) or emailing me.

You are free to ask me to stop participating at any stage. If you decide at a later time to withdraw from the study, excluding your data may not be possible, please let me know if you want to withdraw by December 2022.

If taking part in an interview, you are free to stop the interview at any time. Unless you say that you want me to keep them, any recordings will be erased and the personal information you have provided will not be included in the study results. You may also refuse to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer during the interview. If you decide at a later time to withdraw from the study your information will be removed from my records and will not be included in any results, up to the point I have analysed and published the results (December 2022).

Participating in this study will have no impact on your migration/asylum status in the UK.

(6) Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?
I will follow covid-19 guidance and receive weekly testing from the university. I will not come into [Redacted] if I have any symptoms or test positive for Covid-19. I will be fully vaccinated for Covid-19.

  Aside from giving up your time, I do not expect that there will be any other risks or costs associated with taking part in this study.

(7) Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?
I hope that this study will help make learning for refugees and asylum seekers in the UK better. You can also have the chance to practice your English by talking to me.

(8) What will happen to information about me that is collected during the study?
I will make some written notes and audio (sound) recordings. These will only be for me, and to help me write my study. I will not make video recordings. I will not use any real names in my study, I will use a fake name (pseudonym) when I talk about anyone. The finished project will be part of my PhD thesis, and might be published in a book, journal article or conference paper. When I am finished I will come and share what I find with you.

By providing your consent, you are agreeing to me collecting personal information about you for the purposes of this research study. Your information will only be used for the purposes outlined in this Participant Information Statement, unless you consent otherwise. Data management will follow the 2018 General Data Protection Regulation Act and the University of East Anglia Research Data Management Policy (2019).

Your information will be stored securely and your identity/information will be kept strictly confidential, except as required by law. Study findings may be published, but you will not be identified in these publications if you decide to participate in this study. In this instance, data will be stored for a period of 10 years and then destroyed.

(9) What if I would like further information about the study?
When you have read this information, Lauren will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage during the study, please feel free to talk to or contact Lauren.

(10) Will I be told the results of the study?

You have a right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study. You can tell me that you wish to receive feedback by ticking the relevant box on the consent form. This feedback will be in the form of a workshop at [redacted], or a written information sheet if you prefer. You will receive this feedback after October 2022.

(11) What if I have a complaint or any concerns about the study?
The ethical aspects of this study have been approved under the regulations of the University of East Anglia's School of Education and Lifelong Learning Research Ethics Committee.

If there is a problem please let me know. You can contact me via the University at the following address:

Lauren Bouttell

School of Education and Lifelong Learning

University of East Anglia

NORWICH NR4 7TJ

l.bouttell@uea.ac.uk

If you would like to speak to someone else you can contact my supervisor:

Prof. Anna Robinson-Pant

A.robinson-pant@uea.ac.uk

If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the Head of the School of Education and Lifelong Learning, Professor Yann Lebeau at Y.Lebeau@uea.ac.uk.

(12) OK, I want to take part – what do I do next?
You need to fill in one copy of the consent form and give it to Lauren or email it to her at *l.bouttell@uea.ac.uk*

Please keep the letter, information sheet and the 2nd copy of the consent form for your information.

This information sheet is for you to keep

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM (1ˢᵗ Copy to Researcher)

I, ... [PRINT NAME], agree to take part in this research study.

In giving my consent I state that:

✓ I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.
✓ I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been able to discuss my involvement in the study with the researcher if I wished to do so.
✓ The researcher has answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.
✓ I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I do not have to take part. My decision whether to be in the study will not affect my relationship with the researcher or anyone else at the University of East Anglia or [redacted] now or in the future.
✓ I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time.
✓ I understand that I may stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, and that unless I indicate otherwise any recordings will then be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study. I also understand that I may refuse to answer any questions I don't wish to answer.
✓ I understand that I may stop participating in an observation at any time if I do not wish to continue. I also understand that it will not be possible to remove my data unless the observation is videoed or I am individually identified in some way.
✓ I understand that personal information about me that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about me will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.
✓ I understand that the results of this study may be published, and that publications will not contain my name or any identifiable information about me.

I consent to:

- **Audio-recording**   YES ☐   NO ☐

- **Observations**   YES ☐   NO ☐

- **Would you like to receive feedback about the overall results of this study?**
                                                                             YES ☐   NO ☐

If you answered **YES**, please indicate your preferred form of feedback and address:

☐ Postal: _____

☐ Email: _____

....

Signature

....

PRINT name

....

Date

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM (2nd Copy to Participant)

I, ... [PRINT NAME], agree to take part in this research study.

In giving my consent I state that:

✓ I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.
✓ I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been able to discuss my involvement in the study with the researcher if I wished to do so.
✓ The researcher has answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.
✓ I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I do not have to take part. My decision whether to be in the study will not affect my relationship with the researcher or anyone else at the University of East Anglia [redacted] now or in the future.
✓ I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time.
✓ I understand that I may stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, and that unless I indicate otherwise any recordings will then be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study. I also understand that I may refuse to answer any questions I don't wish to answer.
✓ I understand that I may stop participating in an observation at any time if I do not wish to continue. I also understand that it will not be possible to remove my data unless the observation is videoed or I am individually identified in some way.
✓ I understand that personal information about me that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about me will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.
✓ I understand that the results of this study may be published, and that publications will not contain my name or any identifiable information about me.

I consent to:

- **Audio-recording**   YES ☐   NO ☐

- **Observations**   YES ☐   NO ☐

- **Would you like to receive feedback about the overall results of this study?**
                                                                    YES ☐   NO ☐

If you answered **YES**, please indicate your preferred form of feedback and address:

☐ Postal: _____

☐ Email: _____

....

Signature

....

PRINT name

....

Date