



CATÓLICA
ESCOLA DAS ARTES

PORTO

THE POTENTIAL OF PRIVATE AND PUBLIC CREATIVE ACTIVITIES IN THE EFFICIENT CULTURAL INTEGRATION OF AFGHAN REFUGEES IN PORTUGAL

Dissertation submitted to the Universidade Católica Portuguesa
to obtain the Master's degree in Enterprise Management for the Creative
Industries

Afra Safa

Porto, September 2024



CATÓLICA
ESCOLA DAS ARTES

PORTO

THE POTENTIAL OF PRIVATE AND PUBLIC CREATIVE ACTIVITIES IN THE EFFICIENT CULTURAL INTEGRATION OF AFGHAN REFUGEES IN PORTUGAL

Dissertation submitted to the Universidade Católica Portuguesa
to obtain the Master's degree in Enterprise Management for the Creative
Industries

Afra Safa

Work supervised by
Prof. Doutora Laura Castro

Porto, September 2024

Abstract

Amid the growing influx of Afghan refugees following the Taliban resurgence in 2021, Portugal, with its emerging status as a host nation, faces both challenges and opportunities in refugee integration. This dissertation explores the role of cultural and creative activities (CCIs) in the integration of Afghan refugees in Portugal, focusing on their potential to foster social cohesion, cultural preservation, and community engagement. While previous literature has explored CCIs' role in refugee well-being in countries like the UK and Germany, this study aims to fill the gap in the Portuguese context.

Using a mixed-methods approach, including interviews with Afghan refugees and stakeholders in Portugal's CCI sector, the research investigates how creative fields such as music, arts, and cultural heritage can facilitate integration. By exploring the Afghanistan National Institute of Music (ANIM) that has been resettled in Braga, the study emphasizes the potential of cultural and creative activities to bridge cultural divides, preserve Afghan heritage, and promote mutual understanding between refugees and host communities.

The dissertation highlights the critical need for more targeted, culturally sensitive policies that address the specific challenges Afghan refugees face, such as language barriers and socio-economic hurdles while offering practical recommendations for the design and implementation of CCI-based integration programs. Findings reveal that cultural and creative activities are not only pivotal in easing cultural integration but also in providing Afghan refugees with a platform for identity reconstruction and community participation, helping foster a more inclusive society.

This research contributes to the broader discourse on refugee integration, offering valuable insights for policymakers, NGOs, and cultural practitioners working in Portugal and similar contexts globally.

Keywords: Afghan refugees in Portugal; ANIM; Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs); refugee integration; identity reconstruction; refugee policies

Resumo

No meio do crescente afluxo de refugiados afegãos após o ressurgimento dos Taliban em 2021, Portugal, com o seu estatuto emergente de nação anfitriã, enfrenta desafios e oportunidades na integração de refugiados. Esta dissertação explora o papel das atividades culturais e criativas na integração dos refugiados afegãos em Portugal, centrando-se no seu potencial para promover a coesão social, a preservação cultural e o envolvimento comunitário. Embora a literatura anterior tenha explorado o papel das ICC no bem-estar dos refugiados em países como o Reino Unido e a Alemanha, este estudo pretende colmatar a lacuna no contexto português.

Utilizando uma abordagem de métodos mistos, incluindo entrevistas com refugiados afegãos e partes interessadas no setor das ICC em Portugal, a investigação investiga como campos criativos como a música, as artes e o património cultural podem facilitar a integração. Ao explorar o Instituto Nacional de Música do Afeganistão (ANIM) que foi reinstalado em Braga, o estudo enfatiza o potencial das atividades culturais e criativas para colmatar divisões culturais, preservar a herança afegã e promover a compreensão mútua entre refugiados e comunidades de acolhimento.

A dissertação destaca a necessidade crítica de políticas mais direcionadas e culturalmente sensíveis que abordem os desafios específicos que os refugiados afegãos enfrentam, tais como barreiras linguísticas e obstáculos socioeconómicos, ao mesmo tempo que oferece recomendações práticas para a conceção e implementação de programas de integração baseados nas ICC. As conclusões revelam que as atividades culturais e criativas não são apenas fundamentais para facilitar a integração cultural, mas também para proporcionar aos refugiados afegãos uma plataforma para a reconstrução da identidade e a participação comunitária, ajudando a promover uma sociedade mais inclusiva.

Esta investigação contribui para o discurso mais amplo sobre a integração dos refugiados, oferecendo informações valiosas para os decisores políticos, ONG e profissionais da cultura que trabalham em Portugal e em contextos semelhantes a nível mundial.

Palavras-chave: Refugiados afegãos em Portugal; ANIM; Indústrias Culturais e Criativas (ICC); integração de refugiados, reconstrução de identidade; políticas de refugiados

Abbreviations

ACM- Alto Comissariado para as Migrações (High Commission for Migrations)

ADO- Afghan Diaspora Organization

AIMA- Agência para a Integração, Migrações e Asilo (Agency for Immigration and Ethnic Minorities)

AMIF- Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund

ANIM- Afghanistan National Institute of Music

AYO- Afghanistan Youth Orchestra

CCI - Cultural and Creative Industries

CEAS - Common European Asylum System

CIIE-FPCEUP- Center for Internationalization and Education Sciences - Faculty of Education of the University of Porto

CPLC - Community of Portuguese Language Countries

CPR- Conselho Português para os Refugiados (Portuguese Refugee Council)

CRC - Convention on the Rights of the Child

ECHR - European Convention on Human Rights

EU - European Union

IDPs- Internally Displaced People

INE- Instituto Nacional de Estatística (National Institute of Statistics)

IASFM- International Association for the Study of Forced Migration

IPA - Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis

MIPEX - Migrant Integration Policy Index

NAMM: National Association of Music Manufacturers

NGO- Non-Governmental Organization

OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PRC- Portuguese Red Cross

PTSD- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

RTP- Rádio e Televisão de Portugal

SEF- Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras (Foreigners and Borders Service)

SMEs - Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises

UNHCR- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Table of Contents

Abstract

Resumo

Abbreviations

Introduction.....	3
1. Definition of Terms.....	8
1.1. Who is a refugee?	8
1.2. Who is the host/local community?.....	13
1.3. What is integration?	14
1.4. What is Cultural Integration?.....	15
1.5. What is considered the Culture and Creative Industries (CCI)?.....	18
2. Methodology.....	20
2.1 Research Design.....	20
2.2 Research Limitations.....	30
3. Review of Literature	34
3.1. Refugees.....	34
3.2. Integration.....	42
3.3. Portugal Integration Policies.....	46
3.4. Theoretical Framework.....	48
3.5. Cultural and Creative Activities in Reconstruction of Identity.....	52
3.6. Examples of Creative and Cultural Industries in the Integration of Migrants and Refugees.....	56
4. Demographic Shift in Portugal	64
4.1 A Changing Population	64
4.2 Portugal as Part of the EU.....	68
4.3 Immigration and Migrant Settlement in Portugal.....	70
4.4 Granting Asylum as a Policy for Portugal	71
4.5 Pros and Cons of Portugal's Immigration Policies.....	72

5. Where Do Afghan Refugees Stand in the Context of Portugal.....	75
6. A Case Study of Afghanistan National Institute of Music (ANIM).....	79
6.1. What is ANIM?.....	79
6.2. Why Is ANIM Important for This Research.....	81
6.3. Their Story and Resettlement in Portugal.....	82
6.4. Cultural Clashes and Connections Formed.....	97
6.5. Key Points Cultural Clash.....	118
6.6. Music as a Tool to Connect or Divide.....	121
7. Insights and Strategies for ANIM	125
7.1. Education Path and Financial Matters.....	125
7.2. Strengthening Local Marketing and Outreach.....	127
7.3. Evaluation of Efforts.....	129
7.4. Suggestions for the Future.....	130
Conclusion.....	135
Bibliography and References	136
Appendix I.....	145
Appendix II.....	157
Appendix III.....	163
Appendix IV.....	167
Appendix V.....	180

Introduction

Forced migration, particularly of refugees, represents one of the most critical humanitarian challenges of the 21st century. Among the largest and most vulnerable displaced populations are Afghan refugees, whose displacement is the result of successive decades of conflict, political instability, and systemic turmoil in Afghanistan. The most recent wave of displacement followed the withdrawal of U.S. and international military forces, leading to the resurgence of the Taliban. The subsequent imposition of Taliban rule, coupled with economic collapse and severe deterioration of human rights—especially those concerning women and girls—has triggered a mass exodus. Afghan refugees, escaping these dire conditions, have sought sanctuary not only in neighboring countries such as Iran and Pakistan but also in Europe, where nations like Portugal have responded to the call for humanitarian action.

Given the protracted nature of Afghanistan's crisis, and the unlikelihood of the diaspora returning in the foreseeable future, the question of how best to integrate these refugees into their host societies becomes both urgent and complex. This integration process presents both significant challenges and unique opportunities. Increasingly, the role of creative activities as facilitators of integration has gained scholarly and policy attention, recognized for their potential to foster cultural engagement, preserve and reconstruct identity, and promote social cohesion. This dissertation critically explores the role of creative activities in the integration of Afghan refugees within Portugal, with particular emphasis on the sociocultural dynamics and policies shaping their lived experiences and integration trajectories.

a. Background

Portugal, historically a country defined by emigration, has in recent years transitioned into a host nation for diverse immigrant populations. Traditionally, its immigrant communities have been composed of European nationals, such as Ukrainians, or individuals from Portuguese-speaking countries like Brazil, who share cultural, linguistic, and religious affinities with the host society. However, recent years have seen a marked increase in refugees and immigrants from non-Portuguese-speaking and non-European countries,

including the Middle East and North Africa. These groups, often fleeing conflict or persecution, have increasingly sought refuge in Portugal as part of broader international and EU relocation initiatives.

In this context, the arrival of Afghan refugees, particularly after the Taliban's resurgence in 2021, represents a significant shift in Portugal's demographic and humanitarian landscape. While this influx has prompted Portugal to assume a humanitarian role, providing refuge and seeking to integrate displaced individuals, it also serves to address internal challenges such as an aging population and associated social and economic issues. However, the integration process remains fraught with complexities, as legal, cultural, and social barriers—ranging from language obstacles and cultural misunderstandings to resistance to adaptation and change—render this process precarious. These difficulties are particularly acute given the significant number of unaccompanied minors among Afghan refugees, whose vulnerability heightens the risk of marginalization.

Conversely, the creative industries—including sectors such as the arts, music, cultural heritage, theater, creative writing, and photography—offer a promising avenue for fostering integration. These activities facilitate cross-cultural dialogue, personal expression, and community building. The potential of the cultural and creative activities in easing the integration of refugees has been widely explored in countries with more extensive histories of refugee reception, such as the United Kingdom and Germany. This dissertation seeks to extend such exploration within the Portuguese context.

b. Research Problem

Despite Portugal's active commitment to integrating Afghan refugees, significant gaps persist in understanding how cultural and creative activities contribute to or, conversely, hinder this integration process. This dissertation seeks to address the paucity of research on the specific ways in which creative activities can act as a bridge between Afghan refugees and Portuguese society. The study offers insights into the challenges and opportunities that arise when fostering integration through cultural expression and creativity.

While there is a growing body of international research exploring the role of creative activities in refugee well-being and integration, much of the existing literature tends to generalize refugees as a homogenous group. This over-simplification, often driven by media narratives, overlooks the nuanced individual circumstances, cultural backgrounds, and identities of refugees. This study emphasizes the need for more focused research that recognizes the diverse experiences, histories, and identities of refugees, each shaped by distinct national, ethnic, and linguistic contexts. Similarly, host countries are not monolithic; they consist of varied communities, each reacting differently to the influx of refugees. Consequently, this dissertation advocates for a more nuanced, case-specific approach to understanding the integration of Afghan refugees in Portugal, with the aim of developing more tailored solutions.

c. Research Questions, Aims, Objectives

The research questions guiding this investigation are:

- What are the key challenges and barriers Afghan refugees face in integrating into Portuguese society?
- In what ways can cultural and creative activities enhance the social and cultural integration of Afghan refugees in Portugal?
- What CCI management considerations are essential when designing cultural and creative programs for Afghan refugees in Portugal?

The primary aim of this research is to examine how cultural and creative activities can facilitate the social and cultural integration of Afghan refugees in Portugal, smoothing the transitional processes that both Afghan refugees and host communities undergo. The specific objectives of the study are:

- To identify the key characteristics, struggles, and challenges faced by Afghan refugees in Portugal and propose potential solutions.
- To propose cultural and creative initiatives for Afghan refugees and identify areas for improvement from a CCI management perspective.

d. Significance of the Research

This research offers a critical contribution to the discourse on refugee integration, particularly within the context of Afghan refugees in Portugal. By examining the intersection of creative sector and integration processes, the study sheds light on how creativity and culture can serve as powerful tools for fostering social inclusion. Afghan refugees bring with them a rich cultural heritage, and this research seeks to explore how that heritage can be preserved and incorporated within the Portuguese context, fostering mutual understanding. The findings of this research will offer practical recommendations for policymakers, cultural practitioners, and NGOs, providing valuable insights for those working to enhance the integration of Afghan refugees both in Portugal and in similar contexts globally.

e. Limitations

This study is geographically confined to Portugal and focuses exclusively on Afghan refugees. While the findings will provide important insights, they may not be directly transferable to refugee populations from other countries or to other socio-political contexts. Additionally, the focus on creative activities does not encompass the full spectrum of challenges associated with refugee integration, such as economic or legal barriers.

Furthermore, the language barrier presents a methodological limitation. Interviews conducted with Portuguese participants were in English, which may have introduced minor nuances of language misunderstanding. Interviews with Afghan and Iranian individuals were conducted in Farsi/Persian, which were subsequently translated. While care was taken to ensure accuracy, there is an inherent risk of losing certain cultural or linguistic subtleties in translation. Additionally, the author's inability to speak Portuguese may have limited access to certain studies and sources in Portuguese.

Finally, while the author has striven to minimize bias, it is acknowledged that personal experiences and perspectives may have unintentionally influenced the analysis. Although efforts were made to present an objective account, including peer reviews by third parties, there may still be instances where personal judgment affected the interpretation of findings.

This potential bias, however, was mitigated through extensive cross-referencing with existing literature and the inclusion of multiple perspectives during the review process.

f. Structure

This dissertation is organized as follows: Chapter One defines key terms and concepts that will be referenced throughout the study. Chapter Two presents a comprehensive literature review, addressing the Afghan refugee wave with a comparison of global and local experiences, and examples of the role of CCIs in refugee integration. Chapter Three outlines the research methodology, including the theoretical framework and data collection methods. Chapter Four examines the shifting demographics in Portugal that affects the local community and migrants. Chapter Five explores the conditions of Afghan refugees in Portugal. Chapter Six focuses on the case study of Afghan students of Afghanistan National Institute of Music (ANIM) who are refugees in Portugal, providing analysis and discussion, while Chapter Seven offers insights, recommendations and solutions based on the findings. The concluding chapter summarizes the study's key findings and implications. The chapters are followed by a list of references and appendices that include the transcription of the interviews conducted with the subjects and the authorizations signed by them for the interviews to be used in this dissertation.

1. Definition of Terms

In order to elucidate the objectives of this study and to accurately assess the conditions, status, and aspirations of the Afghan immigrant population and the Portuguese local community we seek to address, as well as the audience for whom this thesis is intended, it is essential to establish a clear understanding of the key concepts involved; terms such as "refugee," "immigrant," "asylum seeker," "assimilation," and "integration" are frequently misinterpreted, largely due to their misrepresentation in mass and social media. This semantic confusion often results in a distorted comprehension of individuals' circumstances, legal status, and rights, thereby creating significant obstacles and hardships on the path to effective integration. A precise and contextualized understanding of these terms is, therefore, indispensable to the success of this inquiry.

1.1. Who Is a Refugee?

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), a refugee is simply a *person forced to flee their country because of persecution, war or violence* (UNHCR, n.d.).

The term in question is both expansive and multifaceted, encompassing a wide array of interpretations and socio-political realities. It is important to acknowledge that its definition varies significantly across political entities and institutions, each shaped by their distinct priorities, objectives, and ideological frameworks. Moreover, the term is frequently conflated with related concepts such as "asylum seeker" and is often erroneously linked to issues of illegal immigration and human trafficking (UNHCR, n.d.). Clarifying the term's meaning is crucial for this research, as it provides a foundation for delineating the legal rights and protections afforded to refugees within a given nation-state. In the context of Portugal, this clarity is essential to understanding the state's obligations towards recognized refugees. This groundwork further allows for a nuanced exploration of the role that creative activities play in fulfilling or responding to these legal and humanitarian responsibilities.

The UNHCR, widely regarded as the most authoritative body for defining refugee status, provides a detailed explanation of what constitutes a refugee. According to the UNHCR, a refugee is an individual forced to flee their country of origin due to persecution, conflict, or violence. This displacement is driven by a well-founded fear of persecution based on factors such as race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social

group. Often, the possibility of returning to their home country is either severely limited or altogether non-existent due to continued threats or an inability to ensure personal safety. Key catalysts for such displacement typically include war and violence, frequently exacerbated by ethnic, tribal, or religious conflicts. The UNHCR further highlights the gravity of this issue by presenting alarming statistics: 73 percent of all refugees and individuals in need of international protection originate from just five countries—Afghanistan, Syria, Venezuela, Ukraine, and Sudan. These figures underscore the critical relevance of this research, emphasizing the urgent need for deeper investigation into the systemic and geopolitical forces at play (UNHCR, n.d.).

As previously outlined, it is essential to differentiate between an "asylum seeker" and a "refugee," as the two terms, while related, carry distinct legal and humanitarian implications. According to the UNHCR, an asylum seeker is an individual who has fled their home country and is in the process of seeking refuge in another nation. This person is applying to be recognized as a refugee, aiming to receive legal protection and aid (UNHCR, n.d.). To qualify, the asylum seeker must prove that returning to their country of origin would pose a direct threat to their life or safety. In contrast, a refugee has already been granted this status and is therefore entitled to the associated rights, protections, and assistance (Amnesty International, 2024). This research specifically focuses on acknowledged refugees in Portugal, whose asylum claims have been accepted, thus placing them under the protection of the state's legal and humanitarian frameworks.

In this regard the 1951 Geneva Convention is of significance which represents the cornerstone of international refugee law, serving as the primary legal framework governing the status and rights of refugees. This Convention articulates the definition of a refugee and delineates the legal protections, social rights, and other forms of assistance that signatory states are obligated to provide. Additionally, the Convention outlines the responsibilities of refugees toward their host countries and specifies certain groups, such as war criminals, who are excluded from refugee status. Initially, the Convention was tailored to address the needs of European refugees following World War II; however, the 1967 Protocol extended its applicability globally in response to the evolving nature of displacement (UNHCR, n.d.).

Portugal is a party to the 1951 Geneva Convention of Refugees, and later acceded to the 1967 Protocol, which removed the geographic and temporal limitations of the original Convention, thereby extending its applicability to refugees worldwide (“States Parties to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol,” 2011).

This means that Portugal is legally bound to adhere to the principles and obligations outlined in the Convention and its Protocol, including the protection and rights afforded to refugees and the responsibilities expected of both the refugees and the host country.

Under the 1951 Refugee Convention, host countries have certain obligations regarding the education, housing, and food for refugees:

Education: Refugees have a right to primary education on equal footing with citizens. Access to secondary and higher education should also be provided, subject to local availability.

Housing: Refugees must be given access to housing on terms as favorable as those available to citizens, though not necessarily for free.

Food and Public Assistance: Refugees should receive the same public assistance (including food aid) as nationals, with many governments and international organizations playing a key role in ensuring food security (“States Parties to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol,” 2011).

In practice, the quality and availability of these services may vary depending on the country’s resources, infrastructure, and capacity to accommodate refugees.

In the case of minor refugees that the case study in this research is focused on, the 1951 Refugee Convention itself does not specifically differentiate between minors and unaccompanied minors in its text. However, additional frameworks, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), as well as policies from the UNHCR and other international agencies, provide extra protections and considerations for unaccompanied minors. Such rights include:

Appointment of a Guardian: Unaccompanied minors are typically appointed a guardian or representative to protect their interests and guide them through legal processes.

Family Tracing and Reunification: There is an obligation to make efforts to reunite unaccompanied minors with their families.

Child-Specific Services: Unaccompanied minors should have access to services specifically designed for children, such as specialized healthcare and education programs.

Protection from Exploitation and Harm: Additional protection mechanisms are put in place to protect unaccompanied minors from trafficking, exploitation, and abuse.

In addition to the established international conventions, various legislative acts and frameworks within the European Union further safeguard the rights of refugees. The EU has implemented a robust legal framework that ensures protection and assistance to refugees, complementing global efforts. Moreover, specific conventions and regulations focus on the protection of vulnerable groups, particularly unaccompanied minors. These legal provisions address the unique needs and challenges faced by unaccompanied refugee children, ensuring their rights to protection, care, and access to essential services. Together, these conventions form a comprehensive legal structure that upholds the rights and dignity of refugees across the European Union. Some of these conventions and legal frameworks include:

A. European Union Asylum Acquis (Common European Asylum System - CEAS)

The Common European Asylum System (CEAS) is the main legal framework that governs asylum and refugee policy within the EU and sets standards for the treatment of asylum seekers and refugees across the EU and includes specific measures for the protection of children (*European Commission*, n.d.-a).

B. European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)

The European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) is binding on all EU member states. It provides important protections for refugees, including minors, particularly under the following provisions:

In this convention inhumane treatment – applies to deportations or situations where individuals, including minors, might face ill-treatment is prohibited.

Moreover, the right to private and family life has been ensured– which protects the family unity of refugees and plays an important role in family reunification cases, including for unaccompanied minors (Council of Europe, 2022).

C. EU Action Plan on Unaccompanied Minors (2010–2014) and Successor Policies

The EU Action Plan on Unaccompanied Minors aimed to improve the protection of unaccompanied minors, focusing on prevention of unsafe migration routes and trafficking, reception and procedural guarantees, such as assigning guardians and prioritizing their asylum claims, finding durable solutions, including family reunification and integration into the host country (European Union, n.d.).

These frameworks collectively establish a comprehensive, rights-based approach to safeguarding minor refugees and unaccompanied minors within the European Union.

By all of these conventions, the refugees are also obliged to obey the laws of the host country, including criminal, civil, and immigration laws, provide truthful information during the asylum process and cooperate with authorities, register and maintain legal residency by complying with documentation requirements and participate in integration efforts, such as language and cultural programs. They need to also pay taxes and fulfill financial obligations if employed, respect the terms of refugee status, including not returning to their home country void political activities that could endanger public order or the security of the host country and seek employment and contribute to the host country's economy when able.

By fulfilling these obligations, refugees contribute to the host country's society and ensure their continued legal status and protection while benefiting from the rights and support offered under international law.

In Portugal, refugees, including unaccompanied minors, are entitled to a range of rights under international, European, and national laws. These rights include education, social welfare, healthcare, and residency, which align with the broader obligations set out by the

UN Refugee Convention and European Union directives. In summary Portugal as an EU member state is obliged to provide the rights below to unaccompanied minor refugees:

Education: Refugee children between the ages of 6 and 18 are guaranteed free access to education, including in cases of unaccompanied minors. The government is obliged to provide additional support, such as education-related allowances, to ensure access to school materials and transportation.

Social Welfare and Housing: Refugees, including minors, are entitled to social welfare benefits if they face economic hardship. This includes financial assistance for those at risk of social exclusion, unemployment benefits, and child or family allowances. Refugees may also be placed in temporary housing or receive assistance in finding accommodation, though challenges with overcrowding and resource allocation exist.

Health and Integration Services: Refugees have access to healthcare and integration services, such as language training, under the same conditions as Portuguese citizens. Specialized support is available for unaccompanied minors to facilitate their transition and integration into society.

Financial Support: While Portugal is obligated to provide necessary support, the financial allocations for refugees, particularly those under 18, are part of the broader social welfare system. The country also receives EU funding for refugee resettlement, including unaccompanied minors, and partners with civil society organizations to assist with integration.

In return, refugees, including minors, are expected to comply with Portuguese laws and enroll in mandatory education. Failure to comply with laws may lead to penalties, including the revocation of refugee status in serious cases (Asylum Information Database, European Council on Refugees and Exiles, 2024b).

1.2. Who Is the Host/Local Community?

The local host community is the settlement, village, city or country that is local to the place where refugees have sought asylum to. The UNHCR Master Glossary of Terms defines the host community as *a community that hosts large populations of refugees or internally displaced persons, whether in*

camp, integrated into households, or independently. And provides the definition for the host country as *the country in which a non-national stays or resides, whether legally or irregularly.* (UNHCR - The UN Refugee Agency, n.d.-b)

The role of host communities in addressing refugee integration is multifaceted and essential for creating a supportive environment conducive to acculturation. Host societies play a critical role not only in providing immediate necessities such as housing and healthcare but also in fostering an inclusive social climate. Integration is most effective when host communities embrace multiculturalism, which acknowledges both the distinctiveness of the refugee experience and the value of cross-cultural exchange. The success of integration relies heavily on mutual adaptation, where host communities demonstrate openness to newcomers while refugees adapt to new social norms and practices. Local institutions, such as schools and workplaces, act as bridges, facilitating cultural understanding and providing opportunities for meaningful engagement. Furthermore, the attitudes and behaviors of local populations significantly influence the psychological well-being and sense of belonging of refugees. A welcoming and tolerant host society can alleviate acculturative stress, reduce social tension, and enhance the long-term outcomes of integration efforts (Berry & Sam, 2016).

1.3. What Is Integration?

As explained in the methodology chapter, Berry's theory of acculturation is a comprehensive framework for understanding how individuals and groups from different cultural backgrounds adapt when they come into contact. John W. Berry identified four primary acculturation strategies: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. These strategies are based on two dimensions: the degree to which individuals maintain their original cultural identity and the extent of their interactions and participation in the larger society. The four terms are explained below:

Assimilation: occurs when individuals do not wish to maintain their cultural identity and seek daily interaction with other cultures.

Separation: This is when individuals hold onto their original culture while avoiding interaction with others from the local host community.

Integration: represents a balanced approach where individuals maintain their original cultural integrity while also participating actively in the larger social network of the local host community.

Marginalization: This is characterized by a lack of interest in both cultural maintenance and interaction with other groups, often resulting from exclusion or discrimination.

Cultural Adaptation (relationship sought among groups)

		Cultural Adaptation (relationship sought among groups)	
		Low	High
Maintenance of heritage culture	High	Separation	Integration
	Low	Marginalization	Assimilation

(Worthy et al., 2020)

Berry emphasizes that these strategies are influenced by both the preferences of the non-dominant group and the attitudes of the dominant society. In other words, the cultural attributes of different communities impact the strategy taken up by the migrant group. Integration can only be pursued effectively if the dominant society is open and inclusive towards cultural diversity. Successful integration requires mutual accommodation, where the non-dominant group adopts some of the basic values of the larger society, while the dominant group adapts national institutions (like education and health) to meet the diverse needs of all groups.

1.4. What Is Cultural Integration?

The definition often regarded as the classical interpretation of culture was articulated by 19th-century English anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor in the opening paragraph of his seminal work *Primitive Culture* (1920):

“Culture . . . is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.”
(Burnett Tylor, 1920)

The Encyclopedia of Britannica considers culture as a set of behaviors of the Homo Sapiens, indicating that culture includes language, ideas, beliefs, customs, codes, institutions, tools, techniques, works of art, rituals, and ceremonies, among other elements (White, 1999).

In the context of integration, Berry's Theory of Acculturation defines *culture* as a complex whole that encompasses the ideas, norms, values, practices, and social behaviors that characterize a particular group or society. It involves both tangible elements, such as language and artefacts, and intangible elements, such as customs, beliefs, and ways of thinking. Culture is not merely a static entity but a dynamic process that changes over time, especially when different cultures come into contact through processes like acculturation (Berry & Sam, 2016).

Culture serves as the framework through which individuals and groups define and make sense of themselves and their world. It is fundamentally tied to the context in which individuals live, including their historical experiences, social interactions, and environmental conditions. As such, cultural definitions can differ depending on various contexts, such as intercultural encounters or acculturation processes (Berry & Sam, 2016).

According to Berry & Sam (2016), Cultural integration is one of the acculturation strategies where both cultural maintenance and active participation in the larger society are pursued. This approach involves retaining aspects of one's original culture while engaging and interacting with the new cultural context. It is essential in multicultural societies, as it fosters mutual understanding, respect, and cooperation among different cultural groups.

The importance of cultural integration lies in its potential to create a cohesive and inclusive society. When both dominant and non-dominant groups value diversity and engage in meaningful intercultural interactions, social harmony and psychological well-being are promoted. Integration requires specific conditions, such as minimal levels of prejudice, low ethnocentrism, and positive intergroup attitudes, which help in forming a collective sense of belonging within a diverse society.

Furthermore, research indicates that cultural integration leads to better mental health and lower levels of stress compared to other acculturation strategies, such as assimilation or

marginalization. Integrated individuals often exhibit higher life satisfaction, greater social support, and improved adaptation outcomes. This makes cultural integration a preferred approach in contexts that aim to balance cultural diversity with social cohesion (Berry & Sam, 2016).

Berry's theory of Acculturation suggests that *cultural integration* can be achieved through a process of mutual accommodation between the non-dominant cultural groups and the dominant society. This involves several key strategies:

Support from the Dominant Society: For cultural integration to be successful, the dominant society needs to be open and inclusive toward cultural diversity. It should actively support the presence and participation of various cultural groups. This means adopting policies and practices that promote inclusivity, such as anti-discrimination laws, multicultural education, and equal opportunities in employment and social services.

Adaptation of Institutions: National institutions, like educational systems, healthcare, and public services, should be adapted to reflect and serve the needs of diverse cultural groups. For example, schools can implement multicultural curricula that represent and respect different cultural histories, languages, and traditions. Healthcare services can provide culturally sensitive care and employ staff who understand the cultural backgrounds of their patients.

Promotion of Intergroup Contact: Encouraging meaningful and positive interactions between different cultural groups is essential for integration. This can be facilitated through community programs, cultural exchange activities, and intergroup dialogues that promote understanding, cooperation, and shared experiences. These activities help reduce prejudice, build trust, and foster a sense of belonging among all cultural groups.

Addressing Prejudice and Discrimination: The document emphasizes the need to reduce prejudice, ethnocentrism, and negative stereotypes within the dominant society. This can be achieved through public awareness campaigns, diversity training, and education that challenge discriminatory attitudes and promote appreciation of cultural diversity.

Balancing Cultural Maintenance with Participation: Integration involves both maintaining one's cultural identity and actively participating in the larger society. This dual focus can be supported by providing opportunities for cultural expression (such as cultural festivals and events) while encouraging participation in mainstream social, political, and economic life.

Providing Social Support: Ensuring that both the dominant and non-dominant groups have access to social support systems is crucial. Social support can come in the form of community networks, mentoring programs, language and job training services, and psychological support to help individuals navigate the challenges of living in a multicultural environment.

By implementing these strategies, societies can create an environment where cultural integration is possible, promoting both diversity and social cohesion (Berry & Sam, 2016).

1.5. What is Considered the Culture and Creative Industries (CCI)?

Cultural and creative industries (CCIs) encompass a broad range of sectors rooted in individual creativity, cultural heritage, and intellectual capital. These industries include architecture, crafts, audiovisual production (such as film, television, and video games), fashion, design, music, literature, performing arts, and the visual arts. CCIs play a critical role in economic growth, generating approximately 3.95% of the European Union's value-added, and employ around 8 million people, primarily within small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (European Commission, n.d.).

Beyond their economic contributions, CCIs have significant social and cultural impacts. They foster innovation across various sectors, contribute to cultural diversity, and promote social cohesion. CCIs also play a vital role in driving sustainable transformation, particularly in the context of the EU Green Deal, by enhancing local economies and communities through initiatives that blend cultural heritage with new technologies and green practices. Moreover, sectors like fashion, design, and performing arts not only preserve European cultural heritage but also act as ambassadors of creativity, innovation, and craftsmanship globally (European Commission, n.d.).

CCIs foster cultural diversity and innovation, which indirectly support integration and multiculturalism. The role of CCIs in promoting cross-cultural exchange, social cohesion, and community-driven projects suggests they are vital in creating environments where diverse cultural backgrounds can interact harmoniously. By offering platforms for creative expression and cultural preservation, CCIs contribute to a multicultural society that values inclusivity and shared cultural heritage, which can ease the integration process for migrants and promote social unity.

In conclusion, it is imperative to recognize that the precise definition of key terms like "refugee," "asylum seeker," and "integration" is not merely a semantic exercise, but foundational to the clarity and accuracy of this discourse. Without clear, agreed-upon terminology, the entire framework of analysis risks being undermined, resulting in misinterpretations and skewed conclusions. A robust understanding of these concepts ensures we are aligned in our objectives and enables us to meaningfully assess and address the real challenges of integration.

2. Methodology

This chapter outlines the research methodology employed in examining the role of cultural and creative activities in the integration of Afghan refugees in Portugal, with a particular focus on a group of young Afghan music students who were taken out of Afghanistan after the resurgence of Taliban and were settled in Portugal to study in conservatories in Braga and Guimarães. The study employs a qualitative approach to gain a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted integration process facilitated by engagement in cultural and creative activities.

Given the unique context of these refugees—transitioning from a turbulent socio-political environment in Afghanistan to a drastically different setting in Portugal—the methodology integrates various data collection and analysis techniques. These include in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, such as Portuguese supervisors and instructors, an Iranian translator, a Portuguese member of the UNHCR and the Afghan students themselves, along with a comparative review of existing research on similar integration experiences in Portugal and other European and non-European countries.

By leveraging qualitative methods, this research aims to capture the nuanced experiences of these young refugees, highlighting how participation in music education within the conservatory impacts their cultural integration as well as their emotional and social well-being. The following sections detail the research design, participant selection, data collection procedures, and analytical strategies, providing a framework for this research.

2.1 Research Design

2.1.1 Research Philosophy and Type

This research delves into a humanities subject, necessitating a reliance on qualitative methodologies. Interviews with individuals intimately involved in the subjects' lives and decision-making processes provide primary data. Additionally, the study incorporates observations of events, behaviors, and developments, along with an interpretive analysis of existing research.

Embracing the tenets of interpretivism, a common philosophical framework in qualitative studies, the research acknowledges the subjective lens through which the researcher

constructs meaning from the gathered realities. Consequently, the findings are recognized as inherently subjective and not universally representative. Due caution must therefore be exercised in drawing broad generalizations.

Moreover, dealing with humanities subjects and unmeasurable matters such as integration, culture and creative activities, this research tends to be qualitative in nature as it is being studied through observation and interviews. Nevertheless, for better understanding elements of quantitative explanations have also been utilized throughout the study.

2.1.2 Research Strategy

This study explores the role of cultural and creative activities in the integration of Afghan refugees in Portugal. To do so the study is focused on a group of young Afghan music students from the Afghanistan National Institute of Music (ANIM) who were settled in the conservatory of Braga following the rise of the Taliban. The research strategy builds upon an existing theoretical framework and employs case study methodologies, incorporating elements of narrative inquiry to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the integration process.

A) Theoretical Framework

The research takes Berry's 1992 groundbreaking *Acculturation and Adaptation in a New Society* article also known as the *Acculturation Theory* as the theoretical foundation of the work. It was revised several times and was republished by the name of *The Cambridge Handbook of Acculturation Psychology* in 2000. It provides a framework for understanding how individuals and groups adapt when they come into contact with different cultures. Berry's model emphasizes that acculturation is a bidirectional process involving both the individuals adapting to the new culture and the host society's attitudes and policies towards cultural diversity. It highlights the importance of support systems, policies promoting multiculturalism, and the individual's own strategies in determining the outcomes of the acculturation process.

In summary, Berry's theory of acculturation, developed by psychologist John W. Berry, is a comprehensive framework that explains how individuals and groups adapt to a new cultural

environment. Acculturation refers to the process of cultural and psychological change that occurs when individuals from different cultural backgrounds come into continuous first-hand contact. Berry's model identifies different strategies and outcomes of acculturation based on the attitudes and behaviours of individuals towards their own culture and the new culture (Berry, 1992).

Berry's theory of acculturation is widely used to understand the experiences of immigrants, refugees, and ethnocultural groups. It provides a framework for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to develop strategies that support the successful integration and well-being of individuals undergoing acculturation. In the context of this research, Berry's model can identify the most effective strategies and interventions to facilitate the cultural adaptation and integration of the Afghans into Portuguese society.

The emphasis of Berry's theory on social and cultural differences which causes different incorporated approaches to integration by different ethnic groups makes this theory a remarkable solid foundation for this research.

B) Case Study

Initially aiming for a broader and more inclusive research scope, it became evident that a more focused approach was requisite for practical implementation. Moreover, it was understood that conducting more focused research would be beneficial to understanding the specific problems of specific groups of refugees which helps to find tailored solutions.

Thus, the students of the Afghanistan National Institute of Music were chosen as the case study for this research. To construct a comprehensive and multifaceted narrative, not only the students themselves but also several key individuals who were involved with their resettlement program in various ways were studied.

The selected case study group was chosen since it embodies specific characteristics: they are Afghans from Afghanistan, young, as this is the most effective age for integration, inclusive of both genders and various ethnic groups, residing in Portugal, and critically, engaged in a creative endeavour as their principal pursuit.

C) Narrative Inquiry

In line with the aforementioned methodology, the research employed a targeted interview strategy. Participants were purposefully chosen based on their relationship to the subject of study. This included samples from the students, their conservatory supervisor, Sofia Sousa Rocha, orchestra conductors Tiago Silva and Constança Simas, translator Laleh Esteki, psychologist Ana Rita Fernandes, and a UNHCR representative, Leonor Cutileiro. These interviews aimed to triangulate the situation by capturing diverse perspectives from Portuguese, Afghan and third-party individuals involved and fostering a comprehensive understanding.

To facilitate open and honest disclosure, the interviews adopted a semi-structured format akin to open discussions. This approach aimed to create a comfortable environment, encouraging participants to readily narrate their experiences and observations with greater ease and candour. Additionally, in specific instances, Farsi/Persian was employed as the interview language to cultivate a sense of intimacy and psychological safety, thereby promoting more profound and nuanced expression.

D) Sampling Strategy

The sampling strategy for this research is non-probability sampling, as opposed to probability sampling, driven by the specific criteria necessary to address the research objectives. Non-probability sampling was chosen due to the unique characteristics required of the participants, making it impractical to use a random sampling method.

The participants were selected based on the following criteria:

Nationality: They are Afghans from Afghanistan who lived in the country until the resurgence of the Taliban, providing a focused cultural context relevant to the study.

Activity: They are studying music, a creative activity that is currently banned in Afghanistan, highlighting a significant cultural and political dimension.

Reason for Relocation: They were brought to Portugal precisely because of their involvement in music, which underscores the role of cultural and creative activities in their integration process.

Age: They are young, an age group that is generally more adaptable and responsive to integration programs.

Institutional Support: They are supervised by a public conservatory, representing a key example of a state creative institution facilitating their integration.

This purposive sampling method ensures that the selected participants are directly relevant to the research questions, allowing for an in-depth exploration of how cultural and creative activities contribute to the integration of Afghan refugees in Portugal. By focusing on this specific group, the research can yield rich, contextualized insights into their unique experiences and challenges, which would not be possible with a broader, random sample.

2.1.3 Time Horizon

This research employs a cross-sectional time horizon, as opposed to a longitudinal one, due to practical constraints. As with any cross-sectional study, it provides a snapshot of a specific moment in time, capturing the current experiences, perceptions, and conditions of the participants. This approach allows for the efficient collection of data within a limited timeframe, making it feasible given the scope and resources available for this research.

While a longitudinal study would have provided insights into the changes and developments in the integration process of Afghan refugees over an extended period, it was not practical due to constraints such as time limits, and access to participants over a prolonged duration. Consequently, a cross-sectional design was deemed appropriate to achieve the research objectives within the practical limits imposed.

By utilizing a cross-sectional approach, the research can effectively gather comprehensive data on the integration experiences of ANIM students in Braga at a specific point in time. This methodology enables the identification of current challenges, successes, and the role of cultural and creative activities in their integration, providing valuable insights that can inform policy and practice in similar contexts.

2.1.4 Data Collection Methods

Data for this study was collected through a combination of discussion-based interviews, literature review, and participant observation, each method carefully chosen to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the research topic and a well-rounded perspective.

a. Discussion-Based Interviews

Interviews are a qualitative research method well-suited to understanding how creative activities influence Afghan refugee integration in Portugal. They provide depth of understanding, allowing for the exploration of personal experiences, perceptions, and emotions, which are often missed by quantitative methods. The context-specific knowledge gained from interviews helps to address the unique cultural, social, and local challenges involved in integration. (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Charmaz (2016) suggests that interviews offer flexibility, enabling the researcher to probe emerging themes and unanticipated insights during conversations, especially important when studying complex integration processes. They also capture diverse perspectives from multiple stakeholders, such as refugees, artists, NGOs, and policymakers, providing a comprehensive view of how creative activities impact integration.

Using interviews demonstrates cultural sensitivity, building trust with vulnerable populations like refugees and overcoming language barriers through real-time clarification. The exploratory nature of this research benefits from interviews, as they help uncover both the tangible and intangible benefits of creative activities in the integration process (Ager & Strang, 2008).

Thus the primary method of data collection comprised discussion-based interviews conducted with a diverse array of individuals representing varied perspectives and roles.

Students: Interviews with the Afghan students involved in the study provided firsthand insights into their unique experiences and viewpoints as Afghan immigrants and as musicians.

Portuguese Supervisors, Trainers, and Conductors: Interviews aimed to elucidate the educational and training framework from the perspectives of those responsible for guiding

and evaluating the students. It also yields the perspective of the Portuguese side as the host of this group of Afghan refugees.

Iranian Translator: An Iranian translator facilitated interviews with Iranian students, ensuring impartiality and adding a layer of cultural context. Interviews with the translator and Afghan students were conducted in Farsi to foster a comfortable environment and elicit authentic responses.

In conducting interviews for this research, the ethical guidelines established by the International Association for the Study of Forced Migration (IASFM) were strictly adhered to. (International Association for the Study of Forced Migration (IASFM), 2018) These guidelines emphasize respect for participants' autonomy, minimizing harm, and ensuring informed and voluntary participation, particularly for vulnerable populations such as displaced individuals.

Participants were provided with a clear explanation of the research purpose, the role of their interviews in the study, and the potential use of their statements. For Afghan refugees, these explanations were given in their native language, Persian/Farsi, to ensure accurate communication and to avoid misunderstandings caused by language barriers. This approach aimed to mitigate the risk of losing critical nuances in translation and to foster a sense of trust and clarity.

A key principle of the IASFM guidelines is voluntary and informed consent. (International Association for the Study of Forced Migration (IASFM), 2018) All participants were made fully aware of their rights, including the option to remain anonymous. They were also informed about the possibility of their words being quoted in this dissertation. Consent forms were provided, signed, securely stored, and submitted to the university along with the dissertation confirming their understanding and agreement. Participants were free to withdraw their consent at any point without any consequences.

For those who chose to disclose their identities, explicit permission was obtained to include their names in the research. In one case, a female Afghan student opted to keep her camera off during the interview, a decision I fully respected to ensure her comfort and

autonomy, in line with the principle of ‘do no harm.’ (International Association for the Study of Forced Migration (IASFM), 2018)

Although both Afghan students were adults at the time of the interview (20 years old), I took additional steps to ensure ethical integrity. I communicated with their manager and school to secure permission for the interviews and to confirm that the process aligned with institutional guidelines. This coordination underscored the collaborative and transparent nature of the research process.

Confidentiality was a paramount consideration. No part of the information shared by one participant was disclosed to any of the other participants, ensuring that their statements and experiences did not in any way effect their dynamics with each other. This approach fostered a safe and trustworthy environment for open and honest dialogue.

The IASFM guidelines also emphasize the importance of cultural sensitivity and addressing power imbalances in research. To mitigate power dynamics, I carefully framed questions in a manner that allowed participants to choose how much they wanted to disclose. They were encouraged to refrain from sharing any information they were not comfortable discussing. At no point were participants pressured to answer questions they preferred not to address, ensuring that their autonomy and sense of agency were fully respected throughout the interviews.

By adhering to the IASFM ethical principles, this research not only aimed to gather valuable insights but also prioritized the dignity, privacy, and agency of all participants, reflecting the core values of ethical research with displaced populations.

b. Literature Review

An essential component of data collection was a comprehensive review of existing literature, including preceding research, and studies, newspapers and news outlets and other forms of media such as documentaries. These materials were studied for the purposes below:

Theoretical Framework: Identifying and analysing relevant theoretical frameworks to ground the research in established theories and concepts.

Comparative Analysis: Review of analogous studies conducted in Portugal and other contexts to provide comparative insights into integration experiences.

The literature review served to frame research questions and to interpret findings within a broader academic and practical context.

c. Participant Observation

Participant observation is a valuable research method that allows researchers to immerse themselves in the daily lives of the people they study. By observing behaviors in their natural context, researchers gain a deeper, more authentic understanding of social dynamics (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). This method helps build trust with participants, leading to more genuine insights and offers flexibility by allowing researchers to adjust their focus as new information emerges (Spradley, 1980). It also enables the collection of rich, contextual data, both qualitative and quantitative, making it ideal for exploring complex cultural or social phenomena (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011).

Therefore, supplementary to interviews and literature review, participant observation was taken as a methodology in this research. The observations involved:

Documentary and Performance Observation: Observing documentaries and performances by Afghan students provided additional insights into the practical outcomes of educational and training processes.

This method facilitated a deeper understanding of contextual dynamics that might not have been fully captured through interviews alone.

2.1.5 Data Analysis Methods

The combination of Narrative Analysis, Discourse Analysis, Thematic Analysis, and Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) offers a comprehensive approach to understanding the integration experiences of Afghan refugees in Portugal. Narrative Analysis helps uncover personal stories and subjective realities, revealing how individuals make sense of their integration (Riessman, 2008). Discourse Analysis examines the role of language and societal influences, showing how broader societal discourses shape the

refugees' experiences (Gee, 2014). Thematic Analysis identifies recurring patterns, allowing the study to extract key themes around common challenges or success factors in integration (Braun & Clarke, 2016). IPA adds depth by focusing on how individuals interpret and emotionally process their experiences, offering insight into the personal, lived aspect of integration (Smith & Larkin, 2009). Combining these methods provides a rich, multidimensional view of the refugees' integration journey.

2.1.5.1 Narrative Analysis

Narrative Analysis was employed to synthesize diverse perspectives from various sources, including websites, official announcements, news outlets, and media coverage focusing on the journey of Afghan refugees and ANIM in Portugal. By weaving together narratives from Afghan students, their Portuguese supervisors and instructors, an Iranian interpreter, and a Portuguese representative from the UNHCR, this method facilitated the creation of a cohesive narrative that captures the multifaceted realities of integration.

2.1.5.2 Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

On a more personal level, IPA was crucial for analyzing the in-depth stories shared by participants. This method allowed for a deep exploration of individual experiences, emphasizing the influence of culture, lived experiences, and trauma on the integration process. By focusing on the participants' personal narratives, IPA helped maintain the richness and depth of their stories, providing insight into the emotional and psychological aspects of their integration. Aware of the possible intervention of personal bias, high levels of self-awareness were practiced to limit researcher influence on the narratives.

2.1.5.3 Discourse Analysis

During interviews, elements of Discourse Analysis were applied to examine the social pressures, peer influences, and personal concerns reflected in the participants' speech or demeanour. This analysis helped contextualize the interviewees' language, revealing underlying cultural and societal influences that impact their experiences and perceptions of integration.

2.1.5.4 Thematic Analysis

Thematic Analysis was used on the transcribed interviews and other collected materials to identify recurring patterns, themes, and subjects. This method facilitated the discovery of shared experiences and insights, allowing for the identification of hidden realities and commonalities in the participants' integration journeys. By categorizing themes and similar narratives, Thematic Analysis contributed to a broader understanding of the integration challenges and successes faced by the Afghan refugees.

Together, these methods provided a comprehensive and nuanced analysis, capturing both the individual and collective dimensions of the integration experiences of Afghan refugees in Portugal.

2.2 Research Limitations

As a master's thesis research project whose subject matter strives to tackle an issue in an interdisciplinary sphere between creative and cultural industries and humanities, and because of the humanitarian and cultural dimensions of the matter, this study faced several limitations that impacted the scope and depth of the research. However, these limitations and challenges were identified and recognized, and measures were taken to limit their impact and influence on the final result of the research.

2.2.1 Outline of Limitations

Time Constraints: The study was conducted within a limited timeframe, which restricted the ability to gather extensive data and perform a more comprehensive analysis. It also restricted the ability to observe the study case for an extended period to analyze changes and developments.

Access to Participants: Reaching out to key individuals, and people in charge, particularly officials, proved challenging, as many did not respond, limiting the range of perspectives included in the study.

Unaccompanied Minors: Among the Afghan students who were chosen as the case study are many unaccompanied minors. Approaching and accessing these individuals was

complicated due to ethical and legal considerations, impacting the depth of insights from this group.

Personal Bias: As a Farsi speaker Iranian immigrant in Portugal, the researcher's personal experiences may have influenced the perspective of the study, necessitating careful reflection to minimize bias in the analysis.

Language Barriers: Communicating with Portuguese individuals in charge in English posed challenges on some occasions, potentially leading to misunderstandings and affecting the quality of information collected.

Translation Issues: Interviews conducted in Farsi needed translation, which could have resulted in the loss of subtle nuances, potentially impacting the accuracy and richness of the data.

Political Correctness: The need to navigate cultural sensitivities and avoid offending any group limited the depth and directness of questioning, potentially influencing the authenticity of responses and the ability to explore certain topics fully.

2.2.2 Mitigation Action

The limitations above were acknowledged and mitigated in several ways to ensure the research's validity and reliability.

Time Constraints: To limit the limitations forced by time constraints, key interviews and data sources were prioritized to focus on the most relevant information within the available timeframe.

Access to Participants: When access to an individual was denied alternative contacts and networking were considered. Indirect gathering of data from available sources such as documentaries and records of past interviews and speeches were also utilized to gain perspectives from individuals that the researcher could not access. Alternatively, the silence or lack of response from several sources was taken into consideration as a form of information in itself.

Unaccompanied Minors: Ethical guidelines were followed in this case and interviews were only conducted with members of the group who were considered adults and permissions were sought from the official guardians where possible. Alternatively, other sources such as documentaries and interviews in the past were used, focusing on general observations rather than direct interviews.

Personal Bias: Engaging in reflexivity, regularly monitoring personal biases, and seeking peer feedback was practiced to maintain objectivity.

Language Barriers: Clear and simple English was used during interviews and phrases were verified often. With follow-up questions accurate communication and comprehension were ensured.

Translation Issues: With the researcher's background in translation studies as a Bachelor's degree accurate and reliable translation of Farsi to English was ensured. Acknowledging that no translation is flawless by peer checking the translations it was ensured that as little information as possible was lost in translation.

Political Correctness: The questions were framed carefully to encourage open dialogue while maintaining respect for cultural sensitivities. In some cases, switching to the mother tongue of the subjects fostered a comfortable environment for honest responses.

2.2.3 Value Provided

Despite the limitations, this study offers valuable insights into the unique experiences of Afghan music students in Portugal. It highlights their treatment, challenges, and the role of music in their integration process. These findings suggest that creative engagement can support adaptation, potentially extending to other Afghan refugees in Portugal, providing a broader understanding of integration dynamics.

This chapter detailed the qualitative methodology used to explore the role of cultural and creative activities in integrating Afghan refugees in Portugal. A case study of young Afghan music students settled at a conservatory in Braga will be analyzed through interviews, literature review, and observations. This multifaceted approach aims to capture the complexities of their integration journey and the potential of CCIs in this process. While

acknowledging limitations, the research strives to contribute valuable insights to inform future initiatives supporting refugee integration through cultural and creative endeavours.

3. Review of Literature

This literature review chapter examines a wide range of research, reports, papers, books, and theories from around the world related to refugee conditions and integration, with a special focus on Afghan refugees. It explores the global experiences of forced displacement and the social, economic, and cultural challenges that refugees and host communities face in different countries. By reviewing various theoretical frameworks and case studies, the chapter highlights how integration policies, particularly in Europe and Portugal, shape the experiences of refugees and compares them to the conditions and efforts carried out in Portugal. Additionally, it investigates the studies carried out on the role of creative activities, such as arts and culture, in facilitating social and economic integration for Afghan refugees.

3.1 Refugees

This section reviews the selected literature on refugees and introduces the global context of forced displacement, emphasizing the scale and complexity of the refugee crisis, with Afghanistan standing out as one of the largest sources of refugees. The literature highlights how refugee movements are primarily concentrated in developing countries, though Europe remains a key destination for many seeking asylum, including Afghans. The challenges and responses of host nations, particularly regarding integration, form the foundation for understanding the specific case of Afghan refugees in Portugal, which will be explored further in relation to their social and economic contributions.

3.1.1 Global Refugee Crisis

The *UNHCR Global Trends Report* for 2023 offers an extensive analysis of forced displacement trends across the world, highlighting the growing scale of global displacement due to conflict, violence, human rights violations, and climate change impacts. This report announces that as of 2023, the number of forcibly displaced people around the world reached a record 117.3 million, marking a sharp increase from previous years. This includes refugees, internally displaced people, asylum seekers, and stateless individuals and includes people fleeing from conflict zones, persecution, economic misery and effects of climate change (UNHCR - The UN Refugee Agency, n.d.-a).

UNHCR report on Global Trends (2023) announces key conflict zones, such as Sudan, Ukraine, Afghanistan, Syria, and regions in Latin America, that continue to generate vast numbers of displaced individuals. Afghanistan continues to be the largest source of refugees globally, with 6.4 million Afghan refugees (UNHCR - The UN Refugee Agency, n.d.-a).

Although the waves of refugees coming into European countries are depicted more in the media, according to the UNHCR report, developing countries carry most of the weight of hosting these populations, with 75% of displaced individuals residing in low- and middle-income nations that often struggle with economic problems and resources for their citizens. Iran (3.8 million), Turkey (3.3 million), and Colombia (2.9 million) are among the largest refugee-hosting countries (UNHCR - The UN Refugee Agency, n.d.-a).

A shocking statistic on the refugee trends in 2023 is the increasing number of children who are displaced. Children, who account for 30% of the global population, make up 40% of all forcibly displaced people. Many face severe vulnerabilities, including a lack of access to education and healthcare (UNHCR - The UN Refugee Agency, n.d.-a).

Additionally, the report includes that statelessness remains a problem among displaced refugees in many regions. 32,200 stateless people were granted citizenship in 2023, although an estimated 4.4 million people worldwide remain stateless. Many stateless individuals continue to face significant barriers to safety and basic rights (UNHCR - The UN Refugee Agency, n.d.-a).

The *UNHCR 2024 Global Trends Report* emphasizes the important role that European countries have played in responding to the increasing displacement crises, particularly regarding asylum seekers and refugees from Ukraine and other conflict zones. By the end of 2023, European countries continued to provide asylum and temporary protection to millions of displaced people, especially from conflict-affected countries like Ukraine, Afghanistan, and Syria. The war in Ukraine, in particular, led to a substantial influx of refugees to Europe.

3.1.2 Afghans as Refugees

The *UNHCR Global Trends Report 2024* outlines in detail the situation of Afghan refugees, emphasizing the challenges they face as part of one of the longest-standing refugee crises in the world.

Based on this report as of 2023, there were 6.4 million Afghan refugees, making Afghans the largest refugee group worldwide. This represents an increase of 741,400 (13%) from the previous year, largely due to increased displacement in Iran and Pakistan. Afghanistan's position as a major source of refugees persists despite efforts at repatriation.

Pakistan and Iran which both sit at the borders of Afghanistan host approximately 95% of all Afghan refugees. Pakistan shelters around 2 million Afghan refugees, while Iran hosts about 3.8 million due to language proximity.

Afghan refugees are also present in over 108 countries, but the vast majority remain in these neighboring countries, contributing to the protracted nature of this refugee situation.

Security concerns and economic instability continue to impede large-scale voluntary returns to Afghanistan. Despite being the largest repatriation program in UNHCR history, returns have significantly slowed. In 2023, the number of Afghan returnees hit an all-time low, with most citing challenges related to reintegration and limited economic opportunities in Afghanistan (UNHCR - The UN Refugee Agency, n.d.-a).

The UNHCR information web page *Afghanistan Refugee Crisis Explained* notes that Afghans seek asylum, especially in Europe, due to a combination of ongoing conflict, political instability, human rights violations, and economic hardship. The Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021 marked a significant turning point, triggering a massive wave of displacement. Many Afghans fled their homes, fearing the return of a repressive regime known for its severe restrictions on human rights, particularly for women, ethnic minorities, and those perceived to have worked with Western governments. The collapse of the Afghan government and the subsequent rise of the Taliban regime created an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty, driving many Afghans to seek safety abroad (UNHCR, 2024).

Another significant factor is the persistent conflict that has plagued Afghanistan for over four decades. Years of war, including the U.S. invasion post-9/11, internal conflicts, and

insurgent violence, have made daily life in Afghanistan highly dangerous. Many Afghans have lived in fear of targeted violence, bombings, and assassinations, particularly those with ties to the former government or international forces. This long history of violence, coupled with the resurgence of the Taliban, has left many Afghans with little hope for peace and security in their homeland.

In addition to security concerns, economic collapse has been a major driver of Afghan displacement. The country's economy, already fragile, deteriorated further after the Taliban takeover, with many Afghans facing unemployment, food shortages, and lack of access to basic services like healthcare and education. The international sanctions and freezing of Afghan assets exacerbated the economic crisis, leaving millions of Afghans in dire need of humanitarian assistance. These deteriorating conditions pushed many to flee, seeking better opportunities and stability abroad (UNHCR, 2024).

The UNHCR 2023 *Global Trends Report* categorizes the Afghan refugee crisis as one of the world's largest protracted refugee situations, meaning most Afghan refugees have been displaced for more than five years, often across multiple generations (UNHCR - The UN Refugee Agency, n.d.-a).

3.1.3 Europe as a Destination

The UNHCR 2023 Trends Report explains the role of Europe in the global refugee crisis as mostly granting asylum to stateless refugees. According to this report in 2023, European countries remained a critical destination for asylum seekers, particularly from conflict-ridden regions like the Middle East and Africa. Germany continues to be one of the largest European recipients of asylum applications.

However, the report points out that the distribution of refugees across European nations is still uneven with countries like Germany, Poland, and Czech Republic bearing a disproportionate share of the responsibility for hosting refugees compared to other nations.

European countries have utilized temporary protection mechanisms to handle the large-scale arrival of refugees, especially from Ukraine. This has allowed for quicker processing and support for refugees in immediate need (UNHCR - The UN Refugee Agency, n.d.-a).

According to the UNHCR report page on the Afghan situation for many Afghan asylum seekers, Europe represents a beacon of safety, stability, and opportunities for a better life. The European Union's response to the Afghan crisis has been a mix of humanitarian support and asylum offers, although the process can be challenging due to varying asylum policies across member states. Nonetheless, the chance to rebuild their lives in a secure environment drives many Afghans to undertake dangerous journeys to seek asylum in Europe (UNHCR, 2024).

3.1.4 Refugees in Portugal

According to the UNHCR Portugal *Relocation and Humanitarian Admission*, as a member state of the European Union, Portugal is obligated to engage in various programs concerning the admission of refugees into its territory. Since 2018, Portugal has actively participated in intra-EU relocation initiatives, such as the transfer of asylum seekers from Italy and Malta, and, since 2020, the relocation of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children from Greece. This relocation process allows EU Member States to exhibit solidarity by redistributing asylum applicants from countries that experience an unevenly high influx of asylum seekers to other member states that agree to assume responsibility for processing their asylum claims. Additionally, this process encompasses the transfer of recognized refugees and individuals granted subsidiary protection to another EU Member State, where they will be afforded comparable levels of protection (UNHCR Portugal, n.d.).

3.1.4.1 Portugal's Refugee Demographics

The European Commission 2016 report *Demographics of Immigration in Portugal* suggests that traditionally, immigrants from Portuguese-speaking countries have constituted approximately 44% of the migrant population in Portugal. Borrego (2016) argues that the largest immigrant communities have predominantly originated from member states of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLC), particularly Brazil and Cape Verde. As reported by the European Commission in 2015, Ukrainians emerged as the third-largest immigrant group in Portugal, followed by nationals from Angola and Guinea-Bissau. The same report indicates that, while the proportion of Muslims within Portugal remained

relatively low in 2015, it was on an upward trajectory, comprising 4.12% of the foreign national population and 0.15% of the overall population (Borrego, 2016).

Compared to other EU member states, Portugal has hosted a significantly lower number of refugees from non-European countries. This source suggests that at the peak of the refugee crisis in 2015, while Germany received 316,098 asylum seekers (MacroTrends, n.d.), Portugal took in only 851 refugees. The journal Politico's article *Portugal to Syrians: Come West* also agrees with these claims reporting that by March 2016, merely 149 refugees had arrived in Portugal from camps in Italy and Greece. Furthermore, this journal notes that of the 872 refugees admitted to Portugal that year, only 19 were Syrians, five Iraqis, and four Afghans; the largest group was Ukrainian, seeking to join compatriots who constitute the country's largest non-Portuguese-speaking immigrant community (Ames, 2016). These figures illustrate a relatively small number of non-European and non-Portuguese-speaking asylum seekers in Portugal up until 2021, suggesting that, until then, Portuguese society had been less exposed to the profound societal changes seen across the EU due to mass migrations from 2013 to 2015.

However, since the 2016 report, there has been a notable increase in both the volume and diversity of migrants arriving in Portugal. The National Institute of Statistics (INE) reported a total of 117,800 permanent immigrants in 2022, representing a 252% increase since 2017. Simultaneously, MacroTrends indicates that the refugee population in Portugal rose to 59,777, reflecting an extraordinary 2,154.88% increase from 2021, when the number was just 2,651 (MacroTrends, n.d.).

A report by Statista that conducted a review on the number of asylum seekers in Portugal in 2021 and 2022 suggests that this change is not merely quantitative but also demographic. Portugal has increasingly received refugees from non-European countries, with statistics from 2021 and 2022 showing that Afghans constituted the largest group of asylum seekers, significantly outnumbering Indians and Ukrainians, who ranked second and third, respectively (Statista, 2024).

Drastic demographic changes in a short period often have significant effects on public opinion. *Maioria dos portugueses quer menos imigrantes e menos emigrantes* published an

article on 17th September 2024 in which it quotes a survey run by Católica Lisbon School of Business & Economics. According to RTP this survey that was published on the same day showed that the majority of participants are concerned about the levels of emigration (70.1%) and immigration (73.1%) in Portugal, while 71.7% want a reduction in the flow of immigration and 81.2% believe that the departure of people to other countries should be stopped (RTP Notícias, 2024).

3.1.4.2 Afghan Refugees in Portugal

It is significant to mention that according to UNHCR Portugal in 2021, the Portuguese government established a humanitarian admission scheme for individuals fleeing Afghanistan. This initiative enabled many Afghans at risk due to the Taliban's resurgence to seek refuge in Portugal and remain there while their asylum applications were under review.

The Asylum Information Database and European Council on Refugees and Exiles report *Access to the territory and push backs*, suggests that in 2021, Portugal played a pivotal role in the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Afghanistan. Following the Taliban's resurgence, the Portuguese government swiftly announced its commitment to providing refuge to Afghan citizens who had collaborated with Portuguese military forces deployed to Afghanistan. Additionally, the government extended its humanitarian gesture to individuals who had worked with the European Union, NATO, and the United Nations missions in Afghanistan. Particular emphasis was placed on vulnerable groups, such as women and girls (Asylum Information Database, European Council on Refugees and Exiles, 2024a).

The same article continues to elaborate on a specialized protocol that was implemented to facilitate the reception of Afghan evacuees in Portugal. According to the information gathered by CPR, the processing of asylum applications and the issuance of temporary residence permits were expedited. Moreover, the vast majority of initial decisions rendered in favour of these applicants granted them refugee status, with the Asylum Information Database announcing this number to be 98% of approved cases for asylum seekers from Afghanistan.

The Asylum Information Database & European Council on Refugees and Exiles (2024) claims that information from the Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras (SEF) reports a cumulative total of 768 applications for international protection were submitted by Afghan individuals in 2021. In subsequent years, the Portuguese government maintained its policy of facilitating humanitarian admissions for Afghan families seeking reunification. However, The Asylum Information Database and European Council on Refugees and Exiles (2024) report that applications for family reunification visas that are submitted to the ACM or AIMA must meet the following criteria such as the ability to travel from a third country, as applicants must have *logistical ability to travel from a third country, as the persons concerned must be outside Afghanistan to request the relevant visa; financial ability to travel – as costs must be fully covered by the persons concerned; prior identification of a hosting entity in Portugal to ensure the provision of support*, conditions which has made the reunification procedures almost impossible for many Afghan families (Asylum Information Database, European Council on Refugees and Exiles, 2024a).

For Afghan refugee statistics in 2023, the Asylum Information Database and European Council on Refugees and Exiles (2024a) quotes AIMA informing that a total of 472 individuals evacuated from Afghanistan arrived in Portugal adding that *It is unclear how many of them applied for international protection*. Which shows a concerning absence of information on this front.

3.1.4.3 Immigrants and Refugees as An Asset

Bahar & Dooley (2020) focus on independent research and policy solutions and challenge the common perception of refugees as merely a strain on resources, demonstrating that if integrated right they bring significant economic and social benefits. These include filling labor shortages, driving entrepreneurship, fostering innovation, and contributing to international trade and knowledge diffusion. The authors argue that with the right policies and support systems in place, refugees can actively enhance local economies.

To fully capitalize on the potential of refugees, they advocate for public-private partnerships, investment in skills training, and efforts to reduce barriers to employment and education.

This approach, termed a "win-win-win" model, benefits refugees, host nations, and their countries of origin by ensuring economic growth and stability for all parties involved.

Moreover, Bahar and Dooley (2020b) highlight the cultural contributions that refugees bring to their host countries, emphasizing their ability to enrich the local culture through knowledge sharing, skills transfer, and innovation. They emphasize the role refugees play in knowledge diffusion. They often bring new ideas, technologies, and management practices that boost innovation in their host countries. This exchange of knowledge works both ways—refugees contribute their experiences from their home countries and learn from their host nations, creating a two-way transfer of skills that enhances both societies.

Similarly, the article by UNHCR India (2023) *Refugees as assets to their new countries*, argues against the misconception that refugees are a burden, instead highlighting their capacity for entrepreneurship, innovation, and strengthening labor markets. The narratives of individual refugees, such as Ahmed and Taslima, demonstrate how with proper institutional support, they can thrive and contribute significantly to their new societies. Despite this potential, refugees often face substantial legal and social barriers that hinder their integration and contribution. The article calls for collective responsibility and inclusive policies to unlock the full potential of refugees, fostering economic and social benefits for both refugees and host nations.

By advocating for a change in perspective, the UNHCR India article underscores the importance of inclusive strategies, legal reforms, and access to services, which would allow refugees to become fully integrated and active members of their new communities. Through this approach, refugees not only gain stability but also play a pivotal role in revitalizing economies and diversifying social landscapes (Mundia, O. & UNHCR India., 2023).

3.2 Integration

3.2.1 Global Challenges to the Integration of Refugees

In *Refugees as assets, not burdens*, Bahar and Dooley (2020b) emphasize that integrating refugees is critical for both social cohesion and economic growth in host countries, especially in the European Union, which has faced an influx of refugees in recent years. They

establish that successful integration helps refugees rebuild their lives while contributing positively to their host societies. However, integration remains a multifaceted challenge, encompassing economic, social, cultural, and political dimensions. Dimitrov and Angelov (2017) highlight that one of the biggest hurdles in Europe is the lack of uniform integration policies. Different countries have varied capacities and approaches to integrating refugees, leading to inconsistent outcomes and opportunities for those seeking refuge. This fragmentation hinders coordination and results in unequal treatment based on refugees' host countries.

Public perception also plays a significant role in the challenges of integration. Refugees are often viewed as economic burdens rather than assets, especially in nations with high unemployment and limited resources. Negative perceptions, exacerbated by misinformation and populist rhetoric, can fuel social tensions and polarize communities (Dimitrov & Angelov, 2017). On the other hand in a broad study conducted in Australia, Alcott & Watt (2017) found that refugees who adopt the acculturation strategy of integration are perceived more positively by the host population compared to those who remain separated. This suggests that how refugees are perceived is influenced more by their integration approach than by their racial or ethnic background. However, one must consider that this study was done in an already multicultural society and might not yield the same results in societies that were less exposed to foreigners.

Reyes (2014) establishes that cultural integration also involves identity reconstruction, as migrants navigate between maintaining their cultural heritage and adapting to their new environments. It highlights how migration reshapes individuals' identities, reflecting a form of cultural negotiation that parallels the process of integration. This identity reconstruction, combined with external factors like political pressures and social environments, adds complexity to the integration process. Additionally, Hudson (2013) points to the gendered aspects of integration, especially for migrant women, who face unique challenges related to both their refugee status and gender roles within new cultural contexts.

Economic challenges further complicate the integration of refugees. Many arrive with limited or unrecognized qualifications, making it difficult to find suitable employment. The

costs of providing housing, healthcare, and social assistance strain the resources of host countries, especially in disadvantaged regions. Despite these challenges, promoting transparent policies, providing skill recognition, and encouraging social participation through activities like sports can foster better integration outcomes (Dimitrov & Angelov, 2017).

3.2.2 Integration of Afghan Refugees in Portugal

A New Beginning in Portugal is a report conducted to evaluate the work of the Portuguese Red Cross (PRC) in the temporary Resettlement center in Lisbon where Afghan asylum seekers were settled for seven to eight months before they were allocated to their more permanent housings in different cities around the country. The Afghanistan National Institute of Music (ANIM) students and staff who became the case study of this research were also among those housed in this resettlement center. The report concludes that the integration of Afghan refugees in Portugal poses several challenges and opportunities, particularly for unaccompanied minors and young adults who have fled Afghanistan after the Taliban regained control in 2021. One major issue is the mismatch between the needs of Afghan refugees and the capacity of local institutions to provide adequate support. Although Portugal has strong inclusive policies and a commitment to refugee integration, high levels of decentralization and bureaucracy in the relocation process often complicate implementation (Carolo et al., 2023).

Afghan refugees, especially unaccompanied minors who constitute a significant number of migrants from this country, face mental health challenges due to traumatic experiences, including anxiety and PTSD, and may struggle with social isolation, discrimination, and frequent housing relocations (Carolo et al., 2023).

Carolo et al. (2023) recognize language barriers and access to education as significant obstacles to integration for Afghan refugees in Portugal. While some refugees have been integrated into the Portuguese educational system, access to Portuguese language classes remains a challenge, particularly for adults. Most importantly the report points out the absence of physical education and arts from the curriculum of Afghan minors in this camp as a missed opportunity for fostering social integration through creative and physical

activities. Despite these challenges, some Afghan refugees have been able to pursue their musical education, providing a sense of continuity with their cultural heritage (Carolo et al., 2023). However, the report does not elaborate on the frequency, quantity or quality of musical education provided for this group. This is important since the interviews taken for this research made it clear that the ordinary curriculum education and musical education were only provided after four months of their stay in the camp which signified the longitude of the time the children spent without either of the activities.

Carolo et al. (2023) suggests that solutions to these barriers include community-based programs that promote social cohesion through sports, arts, and mentoring initiatives. The PRC has implemented programs aimed at addressing these needs, particularly through partnerships with local NGOs and institutions. Sports activities, such as football and dance lessons, have proven effective in promoting emotional expression, social inclusion, and physical health, while mentoring programs offer crucial emotional support and guidance to unaccompanied minors. These initiatives help bridge the gap between formal institutional support and the personal, cultural, and social needs of refugees.

In conclusion, while Portugal has made considerable efforts to integrate Afghan refugees, significant challenges remain in the areas of education, mental health, and social inclusion. Enhancing access to language education, arts, and physical activities, as well as expanding mentoring and community support programs, could further improve the integration process. Developing evidence-based evaluation of these initiatives will also be crucial for refining and enhancing integration strategies moving forward (Carolo et al., 2023).

In this regard it is important to note that Portugal has had lesser contact with the Afghan diaspora than some other European countries, therefore, it is crucial to also review the research done in countries that have been host to a larger number of Afghan migrants in the past.

Danish Refugee Council et al. (2019) provides a comprehensive literature review on the engagement of Afghan diaspora organizations (ADOs) in Denmark, Germany, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. The key focus of the report is on the mapping, challenges, and mobilization of these diaspora groups and their organizations. The study highlights how

Afghan diaspora communities in Europe, shaped by decades of conflict and displacement, have evolved, contributing to both their host countries and Afghanistan through humanitarian aid, development projects, and social integration initiatives.

The Afghan diaspora is a highly heterogeneous community, divided along lines of ethnicity, political affiliations, time of arrival, and generational differences. These divisions impact the way Afghan communities interact, both within themselves and with the larger society. For instance, in countries like Denmark and Germany, there is a clear distinction between older generations that arrived in the 1970s and 1980s, who are more focused on preserving Afghan culture, and younger generations more concerned with integration into the host society. This generational gap often influences the priorities and activities of diaspora organizations (Danish Refugee Council et al., 2019).

One of the report's significant findings is the role of Afghan Diaspora Organizations (ADOs) in fostering integration, cultural preservation, and humanitarian assistance. Despite the large number of ADOs identified the report underscores that these organizations often face substantial challenges, including a lack of coordination, divisiveness, and limited funding. Most ADOs rely heavily on volunteers and donations, which creates instability in their operations. Moreover, while some organizations are active in development efforts in Afghanistan, insecurity and lack of local cooperation present significant barriers (Danish Refugee Council et al., 2019).

Additionally, Across the different countries, younger generations often see education as a critical path toward successful integration. In Denmark, for instance, younger Afghans increasingly pursue university education, viewing it as a means to secure better jobs and contribute to Danish society. This focus on education helps bridge cultural divides and promotes more liberal attitudes among younger Afghans, easing their integration into the host country. The report reflects on challenges and cultural clashes within families and between newcomers and host communities. In the United Kingdom, for example, younger generations of Afghans are more willing to adopt local social norms, while the older generation may resist. This often leads to tensions within the Afghan diaspora community regarding social values and integration. Additionally, it suggests that in Germany, Afghan

diaspora members tend to prioritize integration into German society rather than forming strong connections within the diaspora itself. The report notes that many Afghans in Germany emphasize learning the language and building relationships with Germans in workplaces, schools, and community settings. However, the complex asylum processes and long waiting periods for refugee status can delay full integration, contributing to anxiety and uncertainty (Danish Refugee Council et al., 2019).

Danish Refugee Council et al. (2019) concludes that despite these efforts, Afghans often struggle with systemic barriers, such as limited access to formal integration programs, funding challenges for diaspora organizations, and social divisions within the diaspora.

Rezaei et al. (2023) explore the integration challenges Afghan immigrants face in Western Australia, particularly focusing on the social dynamics within the Afghan community. *Afghan immigrants in Western Australia* highlights the existence of divisions within the Afghan community based on ethnic, religious, and regional lines. The community is fragmented into various groups—Pashtuns, Hazaras, Tajiks, and others—reflecting historical ethnic tensions in Afghanistan. These divisions hinder the development of strong intra-community relationships, which, in turn, affects overall integration into Australian society. Ethnic discrimination within the community, such as the reluctance of Pashtuns to establish close ties with Hazaras, mirrors the political and social divisions that existed in Afghanistan.

Rezaei et al (2023) also acknowledge the dominance of community leaders as an obstacle to integration, particularly for younger Afghan immigrants. These leaders, who often hold conservative views and prioritize religious and cultural preservation, limit the ability of younger members to organize cultural activities that align with their preferences, such as music or dance events. This generational gap contributes to the sense of alienation among younger community members and further complicates their integration into both the Afghan and broader Australian communities.

Women, especially, face additional challenges within the Afghan community. The research highlights gender inequalities, particularly in terms of decision-making and financial independence within Afghan families. Afghan women often struggle to reconcile traditional cultural expectations with the more liberal Australian social norms. These challenges are

compounded by community pressure, where women who attempt to adopt more modern lifestyles may face criticism or exclusion from their communities. These barriers further complicate their integration into Australian society (Rezaei et al., 2023)

3.3 Portugal Integration Policies

In the paper *Refugees as Assets, Not Burdens*, Bahar and Dooley (2020b) stress that policy plays a crucial role in unlocking the potential benefits that immigrants can have for the host society. Countries that grant refugees formal labour market access, freedom of movement, and the ability to start businesses see better integration outcomes. These policies not only allow refugees to become self-sufficient but also boost local economies through increased tax revenues and job creation. Furthermore, refugees often take up roles in critical sectors, which native workers may be reluctant to fill, thereby addressing labour shortages in these areas.

An example of policy making in this regard is reflected in by Gheisareh-Dehi (2017b) in her dissertation *Factors Contributing to Successful Integration of Afghan Women Refugees in the UK* where she analyses the factors contributing to the successful integration of Afghan women refugees in the UK. The study identifies that many Afghan women maintain traditional roles, facing significant barriers to language proficiency and access to education and employment. The UK's integration policies are critiqued for their inadequacy and lack of customization to refugee needs. Effective integration is viewed as a two-way process involving both individual efforts and supportive governmental policies. The study concludes with recommendations for more tailored and development-oriented integration strategies.

Since the presence of Afghan refugees in Portugal is a new matter hardly any official or academic evidence could be found that clarifies a unified integration policy regarding the special case of Afghan refugees in Portugal.

In a report published by the Asylum Database it is observed that since 2021, CPR has been running a pilot community sponsorship project in Portugal, funded by AMIF. After conducting extensive outreach and capacity-building efforts aimed at potential sponsor groups, two families were hosted under the project in 2023. The first family was preselected

by the government and placed with CPR for refugee resettlement. CPR then paired this family with a sponsor group, considering the refugees' characteristics the sponsors' welcome plan and potential integration outcomes. The second family was hosted through a named sponsorship, linked to the emergency evacuation of Afghan nationals. Currently, CPR is collaborating with five established sponsor groups and assisting emerging ones, with the goal of hosting over 40 individuals through the program. The arrival of new families is awaiting approval from national authorities (Asylum Information Database, European Council on Refugees and Exiles, 2024c).

3.4 Theoretical Framework

John W. Berry first introduced his theory of acculturation in the late 1970s, formalizing it in 1980 with the identification of four acculturation strategies: assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization. His approach offered a bi-dimensional model, emphasizing the balance between maintaining one's cultural heritage and engaging with the host society. This framework shifted the conversation from traditional assimilationist views, providing a more nuanced understanding of how individuals and groups navigate cultural transitions.

Berry continued to refine his theory throughout the 1990s and 2000s, placing greater emphasis on the psychological impacts of acculturation, such as acculturative stress, and the role of the host society in shaping acculturation strategies. His 2016 work, *The Cambridge Handbook of Acculturation Psychology*, which has been the theoretical source of this dissertation, marked a significant revision, highlighting how multicultural policies and societal openness influence the feasibility and success of integration.

Over the years, Berry's theory has become one of the most cited frameworks in cross-cultural psychology, offering insights into the adaptation of diverse groups, including immigrants and refugees. It remains a foundational model for understanding the psychological and sociocultural dynamics of acculturation in modern, multicultural societies.

Berry's theory of acculturation is a foundational framework for understanding how individuals and groups adjust when exposed to a new cultural environment. As Berry notes,

acculturation involves managing the tension between two dimensions: "Issue 1: maintaining one's heritage culture and identity or contact Issue 2: a relative preference for having contact with and participating in the larger society along with other ethnocultural groups". Individuals and groups, based on these two concerns, adopt one of four acculturation strategies: assimilation, separation, integration, or marginalization (Sam & Berry, 2016).

Assimilation occurs when individuals or groups decide to relinquish their original cultural identity in favor of fully adopting the dominant culture. Berry defines this as "when individuals do not wish to maintain their cultural identity and seek daily interaction with other cultures". This strategy might be motivated by a desire to avoid discrimination or fit into the host society more seamlessly. However, it often comes at the cost of cultural dislocation and identity conflict. For the Afghan students at ANIM, the process of complete assimilation would likely mean a loss of their Afghan musical heritage, which forms a crucial part of their identity and artistic expression (Sam & Berry, 2016).

In contrast, separation happens when individuals prioritize their original culture and resist engaging with the new cultural environment. As Berry describes, separation occurs "when individuals place a value on holding on to their original culture, and at the same time wish to avoid interaction with others". While this strategy allows cultural retention, it may lead to social isolation and hinder the ability to engage meaningfully in the host society. In her study on Afghan women in the UK Gheisareh-Dehi (2017b) also embarks on the fact that social and community factors as well as inefficient integration programs to give sufficient education and language proficiency have contributed to the marginalization of Afghan women in the UK in a way that they avoid mixing with the host society and maintain their traditional roles in the family and rely on other family members for their day to day needs in the bigger society. For Afghan music students, separation could limit their opportunities for cultural exchange and restrict their integration into the Portuguese community (Sam & Berry, 2016).

Sam and Berry (2016) believe that marginalization is perhaps the most detrimental strategy, as it involves disconnection from both the heritage and the host culture. Sam and Berry (2016) note that marginalization is defined as "when there is little possibility of, or interest in, cultural maintenance (often for reasons of enforced cultural loss), and little interest in

having relations with others (often for reasons of exclusion or discrimination)". This strategy often results from exclusion or discrimination by the host society, and it can lead to high levels of stress and social alienation. For refugees, marginalization can be particularly damaging, exacerbating feelings of loss and dislocation (Sam & Berry, 2016). Afghan refugees in Portugal were forced to flee their country. The minors among them which were the case study for this thesis are also in positions where they might be subject to enforced culture loss. Thus, avoiding marginalization is crucial for the Afghan students, as it would mean losing ties with both their Afghan roots and their new environment in Portugal.

Integration, considered the most favorable strategy by Berry, allows individuals to maintain their cultural identity while participating fully in the host society. This strategy, Berry explains, involves "When there is an interest in both maintaining one's original culture and having daily interactions with other groups". Integration is associated with better psychological and sociocultural outcomes, as it enables individuals to navigate both their heritage and new cultures without sacrificing either (Sam & Berry, 2016). For the Afghan musicians in Braga, integration means being able to continue their Afghan musical traditions while also engaging with the Portuguese conservatory's artistic and cultural life.

Berry's theory is highly applicable as a theoretical framework for examining the acculturation of Afghan refugees in Portugal, especially ANIM students who are the case study for this dissertation. It provides a structured lens through which to assess how these young musicians are navigating the balance between retaining their Afghan musical traditions and adapting to their new life in Portugal. Their acculturation process, particularly within the cultural and creative industry of music, is best understood through the integration strategy.

Furthermore, Berry's framework emphasizes the role of the host society in supporting successful integration. The conservatory in Braga offers a space that allows for the coexistence of Afghan and Portuguese cultural identities, fostering a multicultural environment that aligns with Berry's emphasis on "the acceptance by both dominant and non-dominant groups of the right of all groups to live as culturally different peoples within the same society". This mutual accommodation is essential for Afghan students, whose

musical heritage is a crucial part of their identity, while their education at the conservatory serves as a bridge to their new cultural context (Sam & Berry, 2016).

By using Berry's framework, the dissertation can explore how the cultural and creative activities, specifically through music, act as conduits for acculturation. The conservatory enables a form of integration where Afghan identity is preserved and showcased through music, while also allowing the students to engage with Portuguese society. This aligns with Berry's observation that integration is most successful in societies that promote multiculturalism, where "positive mutual attitudes among ethnocultural groups" prevail. Hence, Berry's theory not only frames the individual strategies of acculturation but also contextualizes the societal conditions that facilitate or hinder the integration process.

3.5 Cultura and Creative Activities in Reconstruction of Identity

Many studies and research have explored the effect of creative and cultural activities on refugees and migrants. *Art, Refugees and Mental Health*, a study carried out in the UK, argues that creative activities, including arts and culture, play a critical role in supporting the mental health of refugees, offering them essential means to process trauma and reconstruct their identities. This report found that engaging in creative activities helps refugees express emotions and experiences that may be difficult to communicate verbally, especially given the language barriers they often face. For example, participants in projects like Art Refuge used art as a therapeutic tool to cope with anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), while also fostering a sense of empowerment and control over their narrative (Counterpoints Arts & Baring Foundation, 2023).

The research highlights that these arts-based interventions not only benefit refugees on an individual level but also promote social integration. The authors point out that through group workshops and performances, refugees build social connections, reducing the isolation and loneliness that many experience during the asylum process. For instance, the Write to Life program by Freedom from Torture enables participants to share their stories through creative writing, strengthening a sense of community and belonging. These social bonds often persist beyond the duration of the projects, helping refugees integrate into the wider society (Counterpoints Arts & Baring Foundation, 2023).

Additionally, the research emphasizes the role of arts in helping refugees reclaim their identities after experiencing displacement. Counterpoints Arts & Baring Foundation (2023) report explains that many refugees lose a sense of self during resettlement, and participation in cultural and artistic activities allows them to reconnect with their heritage and create new aspects of their identity. A notable example is Artcore's Silent Library Project, where refugees and asylum seekers engaged in creative projects like making collages and word art, which allowed them to reflect on their culture and personal histories while learning about British culture. The research establishes that this process of identity reconstruction is vital not only for individual well-being but also for fostering cross-cultural understanding within host communities (Counterpoints Arts & Baring Foundation, 2023).

The Spiral Plait: Integration, Arts, and Migrant Women also emphasizes on the reconstruction of identity by using creative activities, but it also taps into the gender gap within the integration of migrants. Hudson (2013) argues that art, and cultural activities play a crucial role in facilitating the integration of migrants and refugees, particularly women, into society. The study emphasizes that grassroots integration through the arts allows refugee women to engage with their identities and cultural heritage in ways that promote personal empowerment and societal connection. This approach contrasts with top-down, state-imposed assimilation policies, which often fail to consider the unique needs of migrant women and their communities. By fostering artistic expression and community collaboration, these projects help bridge cultural divides and create a more inclusive society.

Hudson (2013) also highlights the significant gender differences in the refugee integration experience. Migrant women often face distinct challenges, such as social isolation, limited access to services, and gender-based discrimination. These issues can exacerbate feelings of exclusion from the host society. Based on this research, it is clear that integration efforts must be tailored to address these specific barriers. The study underscores the importance of creating safe, supportive environments where women can explore their identities and build social networks through creative and cultural work. Such spaces allow migrant women to renegotiate their roles and identities within their new communities (Hudson, 2013).

Furthermore, Hudson (2013) focuses on a different aspect of the integration debate by considering the role of heritage and identity work in the lives of refugee women. Rather than viewing integration as a process of conforming to the dominant culture, the study argues for a model of "integration from below", where migrant women engage in creative practices that reflect their own experiences and aspirations. This approach acknowledges the complexity of identity formation in the context of migration and encourages the development of hybrid, fluid identities that can coexist with broader societal values (Hudson, 2013).

Ultimately, the study's findings suggest that creative activities and cultural projects not only promote integration but also challenge exclusionary narratives about national identity. By engaging both migrant and host communities in artistic collaborations, these projects foster mutual understanding and respect. This bottom-up approach to integration, which centers on the voices and experiences of migrant women, offers a promising alternative to traditional assimilation policies and highlights the transformative power of the arts in building inclusive communities (Hudson, 2013).

Hoefel et al (2023) also explore the role of creative activities, art, and culture in aiding the integration of migrant women, particularly in Lisbon. They consider this matter to be both profound and multi-layered. The study *Graffiti, Migrant Women, Intersectionality: Artistic Experiences in Portugal* delves into the experiences of a female Angolan migrant graffiti artist, Moami, whose work navigates the complexities of migration, gender, and race, employing graffiti as a medium to challenge oppression and assert her presence in a society that frequently marginalizes her as a Black, female migrant. This research offers critical insights into how artistic practices can both reflect and resist the structures of coloniality and patriarchy, providing a nuanced understanding of integration beyond conventional frameworks.

Hoefel et al (2023) underscore that Moami's experience is emblematic of the broader struggles faced by migrant women in urban spaces. The artistic process, particularly in Lisbon's urban landscape, allowed Moami to create visual narratives that reflected her dual identities as both an Angolan and a resident of Portugal.

The research highlights several challenges faced by migrant women like Moami. One major issue is the persistent marginalization of women in graffiti subcultures, which are historically dominated by men. Moreover, the intersectionality of her identity as a Black woman and a migrant exposed her to additional layers of oppression, including racism and xenophobia deeply embedded in the social fabric of Lisbon. Her graffiti pieces, often inscribed with messages of empowerment and resistance, serve as socio-political commentaries to assert her right to belong (Hoefel et al., 2023).

The research also highlights the specific outcomes of Moami's engagement with graffiti as a form of integration and resistance. Despite the barriers she encountered, her work garnered recognition both within Portugal and internationally. These achievements underline the transformative power of art in transcending local limitations and enabling migrant women to assert their agency on a global stage. Additionally, her involvement in community projects, particularly those aimed at educating children about empowerment through art, showcases how creative practices can foster social inclusion (Hoefel et al., 2023).

This research is particularly pertinent to the dissertation at hand, as it explores a vital, often overlooked dimension of integration in Lisbon—the gendered experiences of migrant women and the role of art in their social and cultural positioning. Unlike many studies that focus solely on economic or policy-driven integration processes, this work provides an in-depth analysis of how creative expression becomes a vehicle for identity negotiation and social resistance. It also highlights the limitations of traditional integration models, which often fail to account for the intersectional oppressions experienced by migrant women. Through the lens of graffiti, this study reveals how art functions not just as a cultural activity, but as a dynamic, transformative force that challenges societal structures, offering migrant women a platform for visibility, empowerment, and change (Hoefel et al., 2023).

The most recent and relevant literature at hand is an evaluation report conducted by several institutions in Portugal on the work done by the Portuguese Red Cross temporary resettlement centre on the integration of Afghan asylum seekers in Lisbon. In this report Carolo et al (2023) acknowledge that creative activities, art, and culture are instrumental in

promoting the social integration of migrants and refugees since cultural and artistic activities, such as drama, music, and community-based projects, provide a crucial platform for these individuals to connect with their host society. It reports on initiatives like drama therapy, which allowed non-verbal and creative forms of communication, and musical education at the National Music Conservatory in Lisbon, yet does not embark on the quality or quantity of such activities.

Despite the report's favorable evaluation of the work by PRC, Carolo et al (2023) acknowledge briefly that the program faced several significant challenges. The most prominent issue was the lack of access to a holistic educational experience that included physical education and arts in the formal school curriculum for Afghan minors. The absence of such subjects, particularly for young migrants, indicates a reductionist view of their educational needs and hampers their full integration. Additionally, while the Portuguese Red Cross and its partners made notable strides in fostering inclusion through cultural activities, language barriers and logistical constraints, such as the availability of appropriate venues for sports and arts, posed considerable hurdles to the successful implementation of these initiatives.

Moreover, Carolo et al (2023) suggest that the absence of structured evaluation and measurement tools prevented a comprehensive assessment of the program's long-term impact. The research points out that while the initiatives showed promise, the lack of consistent funding and reliance on volunteer efforts limited the sustainability of the activities.

3.6 Examples of Creative and Cultural Activities in the Integration of Migrants and Refugees

The title of the 2024 Venice Biennale, *Foreigners Everywhere*, curated by Adriano Pedrosa, aptly encapsulates the prevailing issues surrounding stateless individuals, migrants, and refugees. Their precarious journeys, marked by suffering and constant friction with host societies, particularly in Europe and the United States, have emerged as some of the most pressing subjects in contemporary global discourse. With conflicts proliferating and older

crises remaining unresolved, it is increasingly unrealistic to presume that migrants will soon return to their homelands. The cultural and artistic realms are deeply intertwined with these social realities, and the Biennale's thematic focus on migration is far from incidental; it serves as an acute reflection of these ongoing global struggles.

In a review of the Venice Biennale, *The Guardian* insightfully remarked, “Maybe we shouldn’t expect too much coherence.” This observation captures the inherent complexity of the migrant experience—each individual brings a unique history, cultural background, and set of expectations. These differences cannot be easily subsumed under broad terms such as “refugees” or “migrants.” Without thoughtful approaches to integration, this diversity risks creating societal fragmentation. It is within this context that creative and cultural activities possess immense transformative potential. The arts can create spaces for dialogue, promote mutual understanding, and draw people closer when other forces are driving them apart. CCI’s play a pivotal role in fostering integration through artistic and cultural exchanges that celebrate diversity rather than allowing it to become a source of division.

The CCI’s approach the subject of immigrant and refugee matters in different ways. Contemporary artists, particularly in the fields of visual arts and fine arts, utilize their platforms to mirror societal realities, thereby contributing to broader awareness. Ai Weiwei, for instance, uses his fame to draw attention to the refugee crisis, exemplified by works such as *Law of the Journey* (2017), a massive installation symbolizing the perilous voyages of refugees. Another significant work involves his reenactment of the tragic image of a drowned migrant child in Lesbos, powerfully blending art and advocacy. Similarly, French artist JR engages the public with works like *Kikito* (2017), a large-scale installation at the U.S.-Mexico border, which humanizes the complex issues of immigration and border politics. His installation, featuring a massive image of a Mexican child peering over the border wall, underscores the innocence and humanity often obscured by political rhetoric. Both artists reflect the ability of the CCI’s to create platforms for empathy and conversation, encouraging audiences to reconsider the narratives surrounding migration and identity.

In the same geographical context, the work by architects Ronald Rael and Virginia San Fratello is an example of another approach of the CCI’s to this matter. The artwork *Teeter-*

Totter Wall (2019) is a number of installed pink seesaws through the slats of the U.S.-Mexico border wall in Sunland Park, New Mexico, and Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. The installation allowed children and adults on both sides of the border to play together on the seesaws, symbolizing the interconnectedness of people across the divide. The project aimed to demonstrate how actions on one side of the border affect the other, using the simple but powerful image of a teeter-totter to convey unity and shared experiences across the wall. This artwork gained significant attention for its hopeful message about cross-border connections in the face of divisive politics. Another way of looking at it is to see this interactive creative project to bridge cultural gaps and provide a human image of migrants to the host communities.

Some initiatives go further by directly involving refugees in the creative process. A notable example is *Green Light – An Artistic Workshop*, a project by Danish-Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson in collaboration with refugees. Launched in 2016, this initiative brought together migrants, refugees, and locals in workshops to build green lamps designed by Eliasson, with the proceeds from the project going toward supporting refugee organizations. In addition to assembling lamps, participants engaged in language lessons and creative workshops, offering them not only an opportunity for creative expression but also a platform for social integration, skill-building, and economic empowerment. Such projects serve a dual purpose: at their core, they provide refugees with psychological relief from the trauma of displacement, while also creating opportunities for community building and personal development. In its most successful iterations, the project helps refugees reclaim a sense of purpose, identity, and agency, which are often lost in the face of prolonged displacement and inactivity.

CCIs can be instrumental in empowering refugees beyond mere participation. For instance, Reza Derakhshani, a renowned photographer and photojournalist, has long championed the role of visual storytelling in inspiring resilience within vulnerable communities. Since 1983, Derakhshani has been dedicated to teaching photography as a tool for empowerment, and in 2001, he founded Aina NGO in Afghanistan, followed by the Reza Visual Academy in 2014. The academy offers photography training to young people in fragile societies, such as

refugee camps, with the aim of equipping them with the skills needed to document their experiences and articulate their stories. By fostering self-confidence and independence through visual storytelling, the Reza Visual Academy contributes to the creation of more stable, peaceful societies. Photography becomes a powerful medium of expression and a tool for refugees to assert their narratives in a world that often marginalizes their voices.

Among the various forms of creative expression, music is often highlighted as one of the most effective tools for fostering cultural integration. Music's universal appeal and ability to transcend linguistic barriers make it an ideal medium for facilitating cross-cultural communication. Reyes (2014) addresses how identity is shaped and negotiated in migration contexts. It explores various influences on identity formation, such as place, citizenship, cultural orientation, and the interplay between self and otherness. Although it doesn't explicitly focus on Creative and Cultural Industries (CCIs), it does examine the role of expressive culture, especially music, in the construction and communication of identity, particularly for migrants. The paper by Adelaida Reyes provides a detailed exploration of how music functions as a significant marker of national and cultural identity, particularly within the context of migration:

- Music as a Symbolic System

Reyes borrows from linguistics and semiotics to explain that music, like language, has two interconnected subsystems; an expression system (the sounds themselves) and a content system (the meaning behind those sounds). When it comes to identity, music can serve as a *sign* that represents national or cultural identity. However, music only becomes meaningful when its listeners (the interpretants) understand and recognize the symbolic connections between the sounds and the identity being expressed.

- Cultural Adaptation and Identity:

Migrants often find themselves in new environments, and the music they create or continue to perform reflects their efforts to balance their connections to their homeland and their new surroundings. For example, Reyes mentions how Vietnamese refugees in the U.S. use music as a way to maintain ties with their past while adapting to American life. This creates a hybrid

form of cultural expression that speaks both to their Vietnamese heritage and their American experience.

- Music and National Identity:

Music can also be used to signal belonging or difference. Ironically for migrants, it can also highlight their "otherness" in the eyes of the host society while reinforcing a sense of belonging to their community. In the case of migrants like Stravinsky (mentioned as a key case study), music was used to project different identities at different times, depending on his audience. Early on, he emphasized his Russian heritage through music, but later, he adapted to Western styles, showing how music can communicate shifting identities.

- Music's Flexibility in Identity Construction:

Reyes explains that music's role in identity construction is highly flexible and context-dependent. For migrants, the meaning and symbolism behind their music may change as they move from one place to another. This adaptability makes music an especially powerful tool in identity formation. The choices migrants make in terms of what music to perform and how to perform it serve as a creative way to construct and communicate a multifaceted identity.

- Intelligibility and Recognition:

For music to serve as an effective marker of identity, it must be *intelligible* to both the community that creates it and the audience that receives it. Migrant groups use familiar musical signs (such as instruments, melodies, or genres) to make their identity understandable both to their own group and to the wider society.

- Music and the Boundaries of Self and Other:

Building on Fredrik Barth's ideas about identity, the paper argues that music helps to define the boundaries between the "Self" (the migrant group) and the "Other" (the host society). In this sense, music becomes a tool through which migrants can enact their differences from the dominant culture and affirm their distinct identity, while also negotiating their place within the new society.

Ultimately, Reyes argues that music plays a critical role in the identity construction of migrants by serving as both a reflection of their cultural heritage and an adaptable medium through which they can negotiate their new identities in a different cultural context. It acts as a symbolic bridge, connecting their past with their present, and offering a means to express both belonging and differentiation.

Regarding this, the report by Counterpoints Arts & Baring Foundation (2023) has reviewed 12 different CCI projects that are targeted at refugees. These initiatives include fields such as fine arts, creative writing, participatory art and most effectively music. The Hear ME Out Project for example brings the transformative power of music to some of the most vulnerable individuals in the UK—those held in immigration detention centers. Founded over 16 years ago, the initiative was inspired by the resilience of individuals who used music as a tool for empowerment in concentration camps during the Pinochet regime in Chile. Today, Hear Me Out operates across several detention centers in the UK, working with a wide network of artists, including those with lived experience of detention. The project offers detainees the opportunity to co-create original soundtracks, which are recorded and shared with both the public and fellow detainees in concerts held within these centers.

The workshops, which are held inside detention centers and asylum accommodations such as barracks and hotels, provide a safe space for participants to express themselves through music. Many of those in detention face significant mental health challenges, including anxiety and depression, exacerbated by the uncertainty of their legal status and the harsh conditions of detention. Hear Me Out helps to alleviate these emotional burdens by fostering creativity and offering a sense of purpose. The workshops are open and flexible, allowing individuals to join as they are able, often leading to powerful musical collaborations that blend diverse cultural influences and personal stories.

Beyond the immediate impacts within detention centers, Hear Me Out extends its influence into local communities. The project connects detainees with schools, care homes, and community groups through shared music projects, facilitating dialogue between isolated populations and their surrounding communities. Additionally, Hear Me Out supports musicians post-detention, helping them develop professional skills in the arts, such as

recording, performing, and producing music. By doing so, the project not only provides emotional support and empowerment in the present but also opens doors for future opportunities in the creative industries.

Similarly, Music Action International is an organization dedicated to using the power of music to support refugees and those affected by war and conflict. Their programs aim to foster healing, connection, and reconciliation through collective musical activities. Operating across multiple countries, they focus on helping individuals, especially those who have experienced trauma, find their voice and express their emotions in a safe and supportive environment. By engaging in group music-making, participants not only heal individually but also build connections with others, reducing isolation and creating a sense of community.

The organization runs a variety of workshops and programs tailored to meet the needs of its participants. Music Action International's projects include trauma-informed musical sessions where refugees can explore different musical traditions and collaborate on original compositions. These sessions are designed to be inclusive and accessible, encouraging participation from both professional and amateur musicians. Through the creative process, participants are empowered to share their stories and experiences in a non-verbal, emotionally resonant way, which helps them process their trauma and fosters a sense of agency and belonging.

Beyond the immediate benefits to mental health and emotional well-being, Music Action International also works to raise awareness and engage the broader public. Their performances, which often include original compositions created by refugees, are shared with audiences locally and internationally, providing a platform for these powerful voices to be heard. These public engagements not only showcase the talent and resilience of the participants but also challenge negative perceptions of refugees by highlighting their contributions to society through the universal language of music.

This report's focus is on refugee mental health and not integration, however, it concludes with key points, experiences and suggestions that every CCI initiative targeted at refugees and migrants and their integration must consider in their programming. It emphasizes arts-

based interventions, such as theatre, visual arts, music, and writing, to offer refugees a non-verbal outlet to process emotions and experiences, helping to alleviate mental health challenges like anxiety, depression, and PTSD. By engaging in creative expression, refugees can reclaim agency, articulate their stories, and develop coping mechanisms in a safe environment.

The study highlights the importance of considering trauma-informed practices while programming with displaced communities. Many arts organizations working with refugees take a trauma-sensitive approach, recognizing that the past experiences of war, violence, and displacement can have long-lasting psychological effects. Creative activities, such as music or drama, allow refugees to express themselves without relying on verbal communication, which can be difficult not only due to language barriers but also because of emotional blocks from trauma.

Despite the positive outcomes, the paper also identifies challenges faced by arts organizations working with refugees, including funding constraints, the hostile immigration environment in the UK, and the mental health impacts of uncertain asylum processes. Many small organizations struggle to secure long-term funding, limiting their capacity to provide ongoing support. Additionally, policies such as indefinite detention and the lack of work rights for asylum seekers exacerbate the mental health crises experienced by these vulnerable groups.

4. Demographic Shift in Portugal

Portugal, like many European nations, has witnessed considerable demographic shifts in recent decades. These changes are driven by various factors, including declining birth rates, increasing life expectancy, migration patterns, and an aging population. This chapter delves into these demographic trends and their implications for Portugal, examining how the country's low birth rates and rising life expectancy contribute to an increasingly elderly population. It also explores the impact of emigration and immigration on Portugal's demographic landscape, highlighting the challenges and opportunities presented by these trends. The discussion includes the effects of urbanization and regional disparities, the influence of globalization and EU membership, and the significant demographic shifts due to recent immigration patterns. By understanding these dynamics, we can better appreciate the complex and evolving demographic fabric of Portugal and its socio-economic consequences. Thus we can analyze and understand the need for immigration policies.

4.1 A Changing Population

Portugal, like many European countries, has been experiencing significant demographic shifts over the past few decades. These changes are driven by several factors, including declining birth rates, increasing life expectancy, migration patterns, and the ageing population. The following section is an in-depth look at the demographic trends and their implications for Portugal.

4.1.1 Birth Rate and Aging Society

Portugal has one of the lowest birth rates in Europe and its population is ageing at an accelerated pace. According to the National Institute of Statistics (INE)., the proportion of the population aged 65 and over was 22.8% in 2021, up from 18.3% in 2001 (Instituto Nacional de Estatística (INE)., 2021). This trend is expected to continue, with projections indicating that by 2040, half of Portugal's population will be aged 50 and over, and almost one in three will be aged 65 and over (International Longevity Centre UK, 2024).

Moreover, life expectancy in Portugal has increased significantly, reaching 81.1 years in 2020 (78.1 for men and 83.9 for women)., contributing to the higher proportion of elderly

citizens. Additionally, the fertility rate in Portugal has declined to 1.4 children per woman as of 2020, which is below the replacement level of 2.1 children per woman (Instituto Nacional de Estatística (INE)., n.d.).

High unemployment rates, especially among the youth, and economic instability are major factors in this matter. The youth unemployment rate was 21.4% in 2021(Instituto Nacional Estatística (INE)., n.d.).

Additionally, according to INE (2020) report the pursuit of higher education and urbanization are contributing to low fertility rates (Instituto Nacional Estatística (INE), 2020).

4.1.2 Emigration

Emigration from Portugal has been a significant trend since the financial crisis of 2008-2014. This period saw a substantial outflow of Portuguese citizens seeking better opportunities abroad. The trend has had profound implications for the country's demographic composition, labor market, and economy.

a. Emigration During the Financial Crisis (2008-2014)

The global financial crisis had a severe impact on Portugal, leading to a deep recession, high unemployment rates, and austerity measures. This economic turmoil prompted many Portuguese to emigrate.

According to the National Institute of Statistics (INE). and PORDATA, emigration peaked during this period, with over 54,000 Portuguese leaving the country in 2013 alone (Pordata, Estatísticos Sobre Portugal e Europa, 2023).

b. Post-Crisis Emigration (2015-2020)

As Portugal's economy began to recover, the number of emigrants gradually decreased. From 2017 to 2020, emigration numbers stabilized, with annual figures ranging between 27,000 and 31,000 (Pordata, Estatísticos Sobre Portugal e Europa, 2023).

c. Recent Trends (2021-2024)

The COVID-19 pandemic temporarily disrupted emigration patterns due to travel restrictions and economic uncertainty. However, the underlying economic factors continued to drive emigration (Pordata, Estatísticos Sobre Portugal e Europa, 2023).

In 2023, PORDATA reported that approximately 31,000 Portuguese emigrated, showing a slight decrease compared to pre-pandemic levels. The trend remains influenced by economic opportunities and living conditions abroad.

A significant portion of emigrants continues to be young and highly educated individuals, contributing to the 'brain drain' phenomenon (Pordata, Estatísticos Sobre Portugal e Europa, 2023).

4.1.3 Urbanization and Regional Disparities

Portugal faces regional demographic disparities. Rural areas are experiencing more significant population declines and aging compared to urban centres such as Lisbon and Porto. This urban-rural divide has several consequences (Instituto Nacional Estatística (INE), 2023).

Increased migration of younger people to cities for better education and job opportunities, has left rural areas with shrinking and ageing populations.

On the other hand, major cities like Lisbon and Porto continue to grow, leading to increased urbanization and associated challenges like housing shortages and infrastructure strain.

4.1.4 Aging Population Consequences

Like many other developed countries, as analysed above, Portugal is experiencing a significant demographic shift characterized by an ageing population. This trend has profound implications for various aspects of the country's socio-economic structure. This section delves into the consequences of an ageing population in Portugal, focusing on economic growth, service and social security crises, and cultural crises.

a. Economic growth

The ageing population in Portugal poses a considerable challenge to economic growth. As the population ages, the proportion of working-age individuals decreases, leading to a

potential decline in the labor force. This shift can result in lower productivity and a reduced capacity for economic expansion (Domènech et al., 2020).

The labour market tightens with more people retiring and fewer entering the workforce. This can lead to labor shortages in critical sectors, such as healthcare and eldercare, further exacerbating the issue (OECD, 2023).

Moreover, the dependency ratio, which measures the number of dependents (young and old). per working-age individual, is rising. A higher dependency ratio places additional financial strain on the working population, as they must support a growing number of retirees (Villaverde Cabral, n.d.).

An ageing workforce may also be less adaptable and innovative, potentially slowing down the adoption of new technologies and business practices essential for economic competitiveness (Villaverde Cabral, n.d.).

b. Service and Social Security Crisis

The demographic shift towards an older population puts immense pressure on Portugal's service sectors and social security systems.

The demand for healthcare services is set to increase as the population ages, leading to higher healthcare costs and a greater need for medical professionals. The healthcare system may struggle to meet this demand, resulting in longer wait times and reduced quality of care (Tavares et al., 2023).

Additionally, Portugal's pension system faces significant stress as the number of retirees grows. The current pay-as-you-go pension system relies on contributions from the working population to fund retirees' pensions. With fewer workers and more retirees, the system risks becoming unsustainable unless reformed (Sell, 2022).

There will also be an increased need for long-term care services, including residential care facilities and in-home care. This demand may outstrip supply, leading to a potential crisis in eldercare services.

c. Cultural Crisis

An ageing population can also precipitate cultural changes and challenges within Portuguese society. Differences in values, expectations, and lifestyles between younger and older generations can lead to social friction. Younger individuals might feel burdened by the economic and caregiving responsibilities imposed by an ageing population (Urick et al., 2016).

Younger generations are typically more open to new ideas and people and cultural shifts, driving innovation in arts, technology, and social practices. An older population may be less receptive to change, potentially stifling cultural evolution and dynamism (Villaverde Cabral, n.d.).

In short Portugal's ageing population presents multifaceted challenges that require comprehensive policy responses. Addressing the economic, social, and cultural consequences of this demographic trend is crucial for ensuring sustainable development and maintaining social cohesion in the country.

4.2 Portugal as Part of the EU

Globalization and Portugal's membership in the European Union (EU). have significantly influenced the country's demographic trends. These factors have shaped migration patterns, labour markets, and cultural dynamics, leading to notable shifts in the population structure.

4.2.1 Freedom of Movement

EU membership grants Portuguese citizens the right to live and work in any member state. This freedom has led to significant emigration to other EU countries, such as Spain, France, and Germany, particularly during economic downturns.

On the other hand, Portugal has also attracted immigrants from other EU countries, particularly retirees and young professionals seeking a better quality of life or business opportunities.

Moreover, Portugal serves as a gateway to Europe for many non-European immigrants. Portugal's relatively easier immigration regulations are an incentive for global migrants to

utilize Portugal as a route to later migrating to other European countries with stronger economies such as Germany or France (Afp, 2024).

4.2.2 Economic Growth and Stability

EU structural funds and investments have contributed to economic growth and improved infrastructure in Portugal. Additionally, the single market and economic policies of the EU have created more job opportunities, reducing the need for emigration. This economic stability has made the country more attractive to immigrants and encouraged them to consider Portugal for work or investment.

4.2.3 Economic and Social Diversity

Globalization has facilitated increased connectivity and mobility, impacting Portugal in various ways:

a. Migration Flows

Globalization has made it easier for people from different parts of the world to move to Portugal. The country has seen a rise in immigrants from former Portuguese colonies (such as Brazil, Angola, and Mozambique) and other non-EU countries (such as the Middle East, China and India)(Makan, 2022c).

The ease of international travel and communication has also encouraged many Portuguese to seek opportunities abroad. This trend has contributed to significant emigration, particularly among the young and educated population (Observatório Da Emigração, 2024).

b. Labor Market Dynamics

Foreign Workers: The demand for labor in certain sectors (such as agriculture, construction, and services). has been met by an influx of foreign workers. These immigrants fill gaps in the labor market and contribute to economic growth (Makan, 2022c).

c. Cultural Diversity

Multicultural Society: Globalization has led to a more multicultural society in Portugal. The presence of diverse communities has enriched Portuguese culture, introducing new cuisines, languages, and traditions (Diplomatic Portal, 2018).

While cultural diversity brings benefits, it also poses challenges for social integration. Efforts to integrate immigrants and promote social cohesion are crucial for maintaining harmony (European Commission, 2024).

4.3 Immigration and Migrant Settlement in Portugal

In recent history, Portugal has been a country of emigration due to various reasons including economic difficulties and lack of opportunities. However, this trend has been changing in recent years and Portugal has become an appealing destination for various types of migrants such as students, retirees, expatriates and asylum seekers fleeing conflict.

Traditionally, Portuguese-speaking immigrants have constituted 44% of the migrant population in Portugal. The largest communities of immigrants have come from the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLC), primarily Brazil and Cape Verde. According to a 2015 European Commission report, Ukrainians were the third-largest immigrant group, followed by Angolans and Bissau-Guineans (BORREGO, 2016).

The same report indicates that in 2015 the percentage of Muslims in Portugal remained low but growing, constituting only 4.12% of the foreign national population and 0.15% of the total population by 2015 (BORREGO, 2016).

Compared to other EU member states, Portugal has been host to a significantly lower number of refugees from non-European countries. Studies carried out by the MacroTrends show that at the height of the refugee crisis in 2015 when Germany received 316,098 asylum seekers (MacroTrends, n.d.). Portugal received only 851 refugees (MacroTrends, n.d.). Politico journal claims that by March 2016, only 149 refugees had arrived in Portugal from camps in Italy and Greece. Politico also claims that from the total of 872 refugees that year 19 were Syrians, five Iraqis and four Afghans and by far the largest group heading to Portugal was Ukrainian — seeking to join compatriots who make up the country's biggest non-Portuguese-speaking immigrant community (Ames, 2016). These statistics show a very

small number of non-European and non-Portuguese-speaking asylum seekers in Portugal until 2021. Based on these facts one can conclude that up until 2021 the Portuguese society had been less exposed to the societal shift in the EU caused by mass migrations from 2013 to 2015.

Since this report in 2016, INE has reported a total of 117,800 permanent immigrants in 2022 which shows a 252% increase since 2017. Meanwhile, 59,777 refugees were recorded in Portugal which indicates a shocking rate of 2154.88% increase from 2021 when this number was 2,651 (MacroTrends, n.d.).

The change has not only been in the number of asylums but also their demographics. Portugal is being exposed to a larger number of refugees from non-European countries. Statistics show that in 2021 and 2022 the demographics of asylum seekers in Portugal were dominated by Afghans by far outnumbering Indians and Ukrainians who were respectively second and third ranking (Statista, 2024).

Whether facing legal migrants, asylum seekers or illegal migration the abovementioned data shows that Portuguese society is as of this moment going through a significant shift in demographics in a very short period. Considering the lack of previous exposure to non-European asylum seekers combined with the great number of arrivals a cultural shock, fear of the unknown and anti-immigrant views might grow within the society as a reaction (APA Dictionary of Psychology, n.d.).

4.4 Granting Asylum as a Policy for Portugal

As an EU member state Portugal is obliged to participate in several programs regarding the admission of refugees to its territories. For example, since 2018 Portugal has participated in intra-EU relocation schemes, such as the relocation of asylum seekers from Italy and Malta and the relocation of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children from Greece (since 2020). Relocation is a process through which EU Member States demonstrate solidarity by transferring asylum applicants from countries that typically receive a disproportionately large number of asylum seekers to other countries that agree to take over their asylum applications. It also involves transferring recognized refugees and beneficiaries of

subsidiary protection to another EU Member State where they will receive comparable protection (*Relocation and Humanitarian Admission - UNHCR Portugal*, n.d.-b).

Moreover, in 2021, the Portuguese Government introduced a humanitarian admission scheme for people fleeing Afghanistan which allowed many Afghans who were in danger from the resurgence of the Taliban to flee to EU countries and stay there until their asylum cases are reviewed (UNHCR Portugal, n.d.).

The humanitarian cause of these programs aside Portugal has recognized the potential benefits of granting asylum as a strategic policy to address its demographic and economic challenges. The ageing population and the associated economic issues, such as labor shortages and the sustainability of social security systems, are pressing concerns. By offering asylum, Portugal not only fulfils its humanitarian obligations but also seeks to leverage the influx of refugees to rejuvenate its workforce and stimulate economic growth.

Refugees can significantly contribute to the economy by filling labor market gaps, fostering innovation, and driving consumption.

Moreover, refugees often possess diverse skills and are willing to work in various sectors, including those experiencing labor shortages such as agriculture, construction, and healthcare. By integrating refugees into the labor market, Portugal can mitigate the negative impacts of its ageing workforce and emigration.

On the other hand, the sustainability of Portugal's social security system is under threat due to the rising number of retirees and the shrinking workforce. Refugees can play a vital role in maintaining the balance needed for a robust social security system.

As refugees enter the workforce, they also contribute to social security through taxes and social contributions. This influx of new contributors is essential for sustaining pension systems and other social benefits.

4.5 Pros and Cons of Portugal's Immigration Policies

Portugal has welcomed immigrants for decades, but it was often overlooked as a destination while migrants had opportunities to settle in the United Kingdom, France, or Germany. However,

since 2015, following the political backlash to the Syrian refugee crisis in Northern Europe, immigrants and the networks that guide them have had to alter their routes—making Portugal a popular endpoint (Makan, 2022).

There are several reasons for immigrants to choose Portugal as a destination. The country has the second most-favorable citizenship regime in the EU in terms of naturalization rates and is consistently advancing in terms of integration, as independently evaluated by the 2020 Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) (European Website on Integration, 2024). Although Portuguese legal, social security and healthcare systems are accommodating to immigrants a 2017 report suggests that financial and cultural issues along with a lack of support in communities and integration plans cause refugees and migrants to leave Portugal after a few years (Jurriaans, 2017).

Moreover, the process of getting a legal visa, work permit, and family reunification visa is often bizarrely long with some immigrants reported to be waiting up to three years (Makan, 2022b). This leaves immigrants, desperate and thus vulnerable to exploitation, human trafficking or at least years away from their families. This situation also causes Portugal to lose valuable human resources.

Portugal's demographic landscape is undergoing significant transformations driven by an ageing population, low birth rates, and evolving migration patterns. The ageing population, characterized by a growing proportion of elderly citizens, poses substantial challenges to economic growth, the labor market, and the sustainability of social security systems. This demographic trend necessitates strategic policy interventions to ensure sustainable development and social cohesion.

The influx of migrants, particularly refugees and asylum seekers, offers both opportunities and challenges for Portugal. On one hand, immigrants can help mitigate labor shortages, contribute to economic growth, and rejuvenate the workforce. On the other hand, integrating these newcomers into Portuguese society requires comprehensive efforts to address cultural differences and promote social inclusion.

Portugal's membership in the European Union and its commitment to global humanitarian efforts have shaped its approach to migration and demographic balance. The country's policies aimed at integrating immigrants and leveraging their contributions to the economy are crucial in addressing the demographic challenges it faces.

As Portugal navigates these demographic shifts, it must focus on creating a balanced approach that addresses the needs of its ageing population while harnessing the potential of its immigrant communities. By fostering a multicultural society and implementing forward-thinking policies, Portugal can turn its demographic challenges into opportunities for growth and innovation.

5. Where Do Afghan Refugees Stand in the Context of Portugal

The focus of this study on Afghan refugees in Portugal stems from the recognition that one of the primary obstacles to the successful integration of immigrants and the formation of multicultural societies is the homogenized perception held by host communities. These societies often fail to acknowledge the distinct religious, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic identities of migrants, instead viewing them as a uniform group. Numerous studies, such as the work of Małgorzata Kosmatka-Kos (2017) at the University of Porto, tend to approach refugees and migrants as a monolithic entity. The use of broad labels like “refugees” or “Muslims” reflects a Westernized lens that oversimplifies and generalizes diverse populations, particularly those from the Middle East and North Africa, which contributes to their dehumanization. In response to this issue, the present study narrows its focus to Afghan refugees, dedicating this chapter to examining their unique circumstances in Portugal, challenging reductive categorizations and advocating for a more nuanced understanding of their identities.

The paper, *Hate and Perceived Threats on the Resettlement of Afghan Refugees in Portugal*, by Veiga and Oliveira (2024), critically analyzes public perceptions of Afghan refugee resettlement following the U.S. military withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021. The study explores how these perceptions are shaped by social media, particularly Facebook, employing a mixed-methods approach that combines volumetric and qualitative content analysis. This method captures prevailing sentiments, perceived threats, and expressions of hate speech reacting to news about Afghan refugees in Portugal.

A key objective of this study—and its relevance to the current dissertation—is to assess public sentiment regarding the Afghan refugee crisis by analyzing how Portuguese citizens respond to refugee-related news, particularly in terms of how hate speech and perceived threats are manifest in online discourse. The research examines 1,000 comments from 40 selected Facebook posts to understand the societal fears, prejudices, and challenges involved in refugee resettlement. By investigating realistic and symbolic threats, such as economic concerns, security risks, and cultural integration, the study highlights the challenges Afghan refugees face in assimilating into Portuguese society.

The findings reveal that economic concerns were most frequently cited in opposition to refugee resettlement. Commentators expressed anxiety over the strain on Portugal's resources, echoing sentiments that prioritize helping the Portuguese before addressing refugee needs. There was a recurring belief that Afghan refugees would live on social benefits, worsening the economic condition for native Portuguese citizens.

The study also reveals a dominant presence of Islamophobic comments, with generalized fears framing Afghan refugees as a security threat. These comments often reflect a narrow and reductionist understanding of Afghan and Muslim identities, frequently conflating them with terrorism. This prevailing misconception points to the lack of public education about Afghan refugees and their diverse cultural backgrounds. The recurrent phrase "Europe will be Islamized" illustrates the deep-rooted fears of cultural displacement expressed by many commenters.

Symbolic threats, particularly concerning cultural and religious differences, were also prominent in the discourse. Many users questioned the ability of Afghan refugees to integrate into Portuguese society, expressing concerns about cultural incompatibility and the potential conflict between Islamic customs and Portuguese traditions.

The study uncovered significant instances of hate speech, predominantly of a political nature, often targeting the Portuguese government for its refugee policies. Many commenters criticized political leaders for allegedly prioritizing refugees over the needs of Portuguese citizens. Hate speech related to nationality and religion was also prevalent, with recurring Islamophobic sentiments. One comment alarmingly stated, "In a few years, we will be beheaded by them," reflecting extreme hostility toward Muslims.

Despite the overwhelming negativity, a minority of comments showed positive sentiments, praising the humanitarian efforts of the Portuguese government and the willingness of families to support refugees. However, these positive views were rare, constituting only 9% of the total analyzed comments.

The study emphasizes the role of social media in amplifying hate speech and negative perceptions toward refugees. The authors argue that the polarized reactions on platforms

like Facebook reflect broader societal attitudes toward immigration and multiculturalism in Portugal. They call for greater public education and awareness to combat misinformation and foster more inclusive attitudes towards refugees.

Importantly, the paper underscores the need for integrating Afghan refugees not only into the labor market but also into the cultural fabric of Portugal. Public opinion, as reflected in this study, shows substantial resistance to Afghan refugees, driven by fears of economic burden and symbolic threats to cultural values. Comprehensive educational initiatives are necessary to dispel these myths and foster empathy for refugees. Portuguese society must gain a more nuanced understanding of Afghan identity, which extends beyond the reductive associations with terrorism. This cultural integration is essential to mitigating hostile public perceptions and creating an inclusive environment for refugees.

In conclusion, this research offers valuable insights into the dynamics of Afghan refugee resettlement in Portugal and the broader societal challenges at play. It highlights the urgent need for educational initiatives to bridge the cultural divide between refugees and host communities. Additionally, the study advocates for greater transparency regarding the funding of refugee programs, clarifying that financial support for refugees comes from international and European sources, not from Portuguese taxpayers. Addressing these key issues—Islamophobia, economic misconceptions, and cultural ignorance—is essential for the successful integration of Afghan refugees into Portuguese society. This study provides a rigorous academic exploration of public sentiment and offers practical recommendations for policymakers and educators.

The paper also notes a diminishing public interest in the Afghan refugee crisis over time. Initially, there was a surge of engagement following the humanitarian crisis in August 2021. However, this interest waned as media coverage shifted to the war in Ukraine in early 2022. Ukrainian refugees, particularly those who are white, Christian, and female, have been more warmly received across Europe, including in Portugal. This contrast reveals underlying cultural, racial, and religious biases in how different refugee groups are perceived.

Ukrainians are viewed as more culturally aligned with Western European values, making them more easily accepted. In contrast, Afghan refugees are often seen as outsiders,

burdened with cultural and religious stereotypes that complicate their integration. This disparity in treatment underscores the limitations of Europe's humanitarian response, which is often shaped by implicit biases rather than consistent principles of compassion and solidarity for all refugees, regardless of background. The findings point to the need for greater public education to combat these biases and advocate for equal treatment and support for all displaced individuals, regardless of their origin or religion.

6. A Case Study of Afghanistan National Institute of Music

During the course of this research, the Afghanistan National Institute of Music (ANIM) emerged as a particularly compelling case study. ANIM, a group of young Afghan music students, was recently relocated to Portugal, where they are now continuing their musical education at the Gulbenkian School's conservatory in Braga. This group's narrative is not only intriguing but also critically relevant to the themes explored in this dissertation.

ANIM is an exemplary case study precisely because it encapsulates the core characteristics central to this research: the intersection of youth, Afghan identity, refugee status, cultural heritage, and artistic expression. ANIM's relocation to Portugal, following their displacement due to the Taliban's resurgence, provides a timely and real-world context for studying the immediate and ongoing challenges faced by refugees as they navigate new cultural, social, and educational landscapes. The group's youth, combined with their status as newly arrived refugees, makes their experiences particularly pertinent for exploring how creative activities, specifically music, music performance, composition and music production, can act as a powerful tool for integration, identity preservation, and social cohesion in the host country.

6.1 What is ANIM?

In 2016, Ahmad Naser Sarmast, an ethnomusicologist with a PhD in musicology, then a Research Fellow at Fellow at Monash University's School of Music and Asia Institute in Australia, returned to Afghanistan. Believing strongly in the transformative power of music education, Sarmast made a second trip in 2007 to discuss the implementation of the pilot project with Afghan authorities, focusing on rebuilding music education through the creation of a music school for Afghanistan's most disadvantaged children.

In 2008, after two years of negotiations, Ahmad Sarmast returned to Afghanistan to establish the Afghanistan National Institute of Music (ANIM). With support from the government of Afghanistan, ANIM received generous initial backing from the World Bank, the German Foreign Office, and the National Association of Music Manufacturers (NAMM). Sarmast

transformed the School of Fine Arts music department into an independent entity with international standards. After four years of effort, ANIM was inaugurated in June 2010.

The Afghanistan National Institute of Music (ANIM) in Kabul is the nation's first and only music school after the fall of the Taliban in 2001. ANIM offered both Afghan traditional music and Western classical music education alongside a high-quality general education to talented Afghan children, regardless of gender, social status, or ethnic background. Key ensembles at ANIM include the ANIM National Symphony Orchestra, the Afghan Women's Orchestra "Zohra," and the Afghan Youth Orchestra (AYO).

In 2013, ANIM embarked on its first US tour, achieving sold-out performances at the Kennedy Center and Carnegie Hall, which garnered significant media attention and international support. Following this success, ANIM performed at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, and "Zohra" toured Europe. ANIM has received prestigious awards such as the Polar Music Prize (2018) and the Global Pluralism Award (2019) and continued touring across Europe, the UK, Australia, and other regions.

Despite its achievements, ANIM and Sarmast faced significant threats in Afghanistan. In 2014, Sarmast, the first Afghan PhD in musicology, was injured in a suicide bombing. In March 2020, new Afghan government regulations banned girls from singing in public. In response, ANIM produced a video supporting women's voices, gaining international attention and becoming a symbol of freedom. To ensure ANIM's protection, the nonprofit Friends of ANIM was founded to secure funds for structural and security enhancements for the school (*Afghanistan National Institute of Music | ANIM, 2024*).

With the sudden withdrawal of the American allied forces in August 2021, the Taliban retook Afghanistan, seized Kabul and took over ANIM's property, including the newly built girls' dormitory. Music was banned, and fearing severe punishment, ANIM's students, faculty, and staff hurriedly concealed their association with the school, burying instruments and destroying any school-related communications (*Afghanistan National Institute of Music | ANIM, 2024*).

After a long and hard journey, ANIM and its students were able to move from Afghanistan and have been based in Portugal, where they strive to preserve Afghanistan's musical heritage and advocate for the musical and educational rights of Afghans, particularly women oppressed by the Taliban (*About Us — Afghanistan National Institute of Music | ANIM*, n.d.).

In January 2024, the Afghan Youth Orchestra (AYO) toured Germany and Switzerland, culminating in a performance at the UN Human Rights Council's opening ceremony in Geneva. In March 2024, after public outcry reversed a visa denial, the Afghanistan Youth Orchestra began a UK tour titled "Breaking the Silence" at London's Southbank Centre.

In August 2024, the AYO returned to the U.S. for the first time since 2013, performing at New York's Carnegie Hall during the inaugural World Orchestra Week and at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.

6.2 Why is ANIM Important for This Research

The Afghanistan National Institute of Music (ANIM) represents an ideal case study for examining the role of culture and music in the integration of Afghan refugees in Portugal. ANIM students embody several characteristics that make them particularly relevant for this study. Firstly, they are young Afghans who have spent their entire lives in Afghanistan, experiencing the country's unique social and cultural challenges. This background provides a rich context for understanding the difficulties and opportunities they face in their new environment.

Secondly, these students are accomplished musicians. Their deep connection to music, both Afghan traditional and Western classical, offers a unique perspective on how cultural heritage can be preserved and adapted in a foreign land. Music has been central to their identity and resilience, making their experiences valuable for studying the transformative power of creative activities in refugee integration.

Finally, ANIM students are fresh refugees in Portugal, having recently fled Afghanistan due to the Taliban's resurgence. Their immediate experiences as "fresh off the boat" refugees provide real-time insights into the initial stages of integration, including the social, educational, and cultural adjustments required. This makes them an invaluable case study

for exploring the intersection of cultural preservation, education, and integration in a new country.

6.3 Their Story and Resettlement in Portugal

The narrative in this section has been crafted by reviewing media outlets and news pieces, as well as by conducting long and thorough interviews with various individuals involved. Their accounts enabled the author to compare stories and arrive at a cautious understanding of the events that transpired and the current situation. While the interviews with the Portuguese people involved were conducted in English, the ones with the Iranian and Afghan individuals were conducted in their mother tongue Farsi to create a more intimate setting where subjects would feel more inclined to speak freely.

The individuals interviewed for this section were carefully selected to ensure a balanced representation of perspectives, encompassing both Afghan and Portuguese viewpoints. This approach was essential for capturing a well-rounded narrative, allowing the research to present the integration process from multiple angles. It should once again be noted that the interviews were conducted while adhering to the 2018 IASFM code of ethics to ensure the autonomy, desires and the safety of the participants. Declarations of consent to use the interview for academic purposes and quotes, and to use the real name of the participants were signed by the interviewees without any obligation or force and it was made clear that the consent could be taken at any moment without any consequences. The declarations were submitted to the Academic Services of the Universidade Católica Portuguesa as a separate document to be archived. By including voices from neither both communities, the study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the challenges and successes involved, ensuring that the narratives are conveyed from a neutral standpoint.

Laleh Esteki; Iranian scholar and Fellow Doctoral Researcher at CIIE-FPCEUP (Education Sciences/University of Porto) with experience working as a translator and cultural moderator for ANIM students and several other Afghan refugees in Portugal as a translator for UNHCR. Esteki is fluent in both Farsi and Portuguese and her work focuses on “improving internationalization, and fostering the integration of international students.” (Laleh Esteki, n.d.).

Ramiz Safar; 20-year-old Afghan student of ANIM and instrumentalist of Rubab¹ living in Braga and studying at the Calouste Gulbenkian Conservatory of Music.

Sevinch Majidi; 20-year-old Afghan ANIM student and player of violin, living in Braga and studying at the Calouste Gulbenkian Conservatory of Music.

Sofia Sousa Rocha; head of programs and professor at the Calouste Gulbenkian Conservatory of Music in Braga.

Tiago Moreira da Silva; conductor of the Zohra Orchestra and Afghan Youth Orchestra at the Calouste Gulbenkian Conservatory of Music in Braga.

It is noteworthy that several individuals were invited to participate in interviews for this study; however, despite multiple attempts, they did not respond. Notably, Ana Rita Fernandes, the psychologist for the ANIM students, was approached for an interview, but she did not reply after numerous contacts. Furthermore, and most significantly, Ahmad Sarmast, the founder and director of the Afghanistan National Institute of Music, was invited for an interview. While he initially responded positively, he ultimately did not proceed once the questions were provided. Sarmast serves as the primary contact for ANIM's connections and public relations in Portugal, Europe, and internationally, and is chiefly responsible for their relocation to Portugal. It is plausible that his demanding schedule led to the missed interview.

Most of the insights into the integration difficulties faced by both groups were obtained from third-party sources without direct stakes in the matter. Notably, the Iranian translator and cultural mediator, Laleh Esteki, provided significant information. Esteki, fluent in English, Portuguese and Farsi, has worked extensively with Afghan students and their Portuguese supervisors both individually and as a member of the High Commission for Migration (ACM). Her expertise in intercultural integration and her nationality which brings detachment from both groups positions her as a neutral and scholarly informant.

¹ A traditional lute-like musical instrument local to Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, and parts of India. The Kabuli *Rubab* from Afghanistan[1] derives its name from the Arabic rebab and is played with a bow

It should be noted that the author did not take Esteki's observations or any of the information from other interviewees as the absolute truth but used them to form a nuanced understanding, identify relevant cues, and uncover information that might otherwise have been overlooked.

This narrative has been divided into four sections and covers how the group left Afghanistan and arrived in Portugal. By the end of this section, their new life in Portugal is described and analyzed.

6.3.1 Leaving Afghanistan

In the summer of 2021, following the withdrawal of American, NATO, and international troops from Afghanistan, Taliban militants swiftly seized control of Kabul, the capital and home of ANIM. The Taliban regime, which controlled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001, imposed a strict interpretation of Islamic law that prohibited many forms of artistic expression, including music. Punishments can range from the destruction of instruments and arrests to torture and even execution (Global History Dialogues, 2024b). Taliban also had strict laws regarding the rights of women and girls and strictly limited their education and social life (Shaheed & Sultani, n.d.).

As a mixed-gender music school, the staff and students of ANIM faced immediate and severe danger. Despite this, they received no assistance from any international organization during the initial months following the Taliban's return to power.

Ramiz Safar, who was around 17 at the time, recounts that he did not leave his house for four months due to death threats from Taliban members. After this period, through the efforts of Sarmast, they were instructed to go to the airport to leave the country. However, upon arrival, those without a valid passport were denied entry to the airport. Consequently, a first group possessing passports managed to depart that day. Sevinch Majidi, who was also 17 at the time, corroborates this account but specifies her waiting time for departure as approximately 20 days to one month. She added that during the first few chaotic days, they remained at the airport day and night.

Upon their arrival at the airport, however, the first group was prohibited by the Taliban to take their instruments and thus they left not only their families and homeland behind but were also forced to abandon their instruments.

As the first group arrived in Qatar, with the help of officials, passports for their peers who were still in Afghanistan were provided. Thus, the second and third groups consisting of the professors of the ANIM and some of their family members and the students managed to leave the country, this time with their instruments as was agreed with Taliban by Qatari officials. The students - all of them minors at the time between the ages of 14 to 17- were all unaccompanied and no member of their families was allowed to leave with them. They were promised by Qatari officials and Sarmast that their families would join them in three months.

When asked about those days and months, Sevinch recounted the events with brief, report-like sentences, maintaining a particular detachment in her tone and demeanor, as if unwilling to delve into the emotional details or their effect on her (Appendix III). Ramiz was more forthcoming with the details, expressing gratitude towards those who helped them and refraining from complaints. Nevertheless, he too spoke with detachment, suppressing his emotions while recounting their departure from Kabul (Appendix II).

Conversely, Laleh Esteki, when discussing her experiences with the ANIM students, emphasized repeatedly that their chaotic, hectic, and perilous departure from Afghanistan had a lasting impact on them:

"They were socially humiliated after their bad departure from Afghanistan" she stated, believing that these events fostered a certain resistance towards the West (who they blamed), complicating their integration into their new life in Portugal (Appendix I).

6.3.2 Time in Qatar

Once in Qatar, the group of ANIM students and staff found safety. Depending on the status of their documents, they stayed in a camp for one or two months while their future was being decided. During this period, they had no access to education or specific music programs. Ramiz recalls that they were only permitted to practice music outside the camp while they

waited. According to Ramiz, out of the many countries Sarmast appealed to for accepting ANIM, only Portugal agreed (Appendix II). Consequently, the students and staff were relocated to Portugal to begin their new lives.

6.3.3 Stay in Lisbon

The resettlement of ANIM staff and students in Portugal attracted significant attention from the Portuguese media, with most outlets producing nearly identical reports on the situation. These reports frequently quoted Defense Minister João Gomes Cravinho and Minister João Costa, who reassured the Portuguese public of ANIM's credibility and assured the international audience that Portugal would provide the students with healthcare, education, and social integration (TPN/Lusa, 2021) while these services are paid for UNHCR and the European funds and not by direct Portuguese tax (Asylum Information Database, European Council on Refugees and Exiles, 2024). At that time, neither international nor national news outlets provided detailed information about the specifics of their reception in Portugal.

Upon arrival in Lisbon, the group was housed in a repurposed military hospital that served as a camp. This compound accommodated 273 individuals, including unaccompanied minors, school staff, professors, and their families, who had little to do but wait for their residence processes and biometric data collection to be completed.

Reviewing some media outlets' coverage of this story is interesting since oftentimes it reveals misinformation and bias. For example, In July 2022, several months after the arrival of the ANIM group, The New York Times published an article detailing their situation. It presented an overly optimistic portrayal of the teenagers' experiences in the camp, downplaying the significant challenges they faced during their integration. It failed to mention the seven-month period during which the group remained in a state of limbo. Instead, it focused on praising the Portuguese hosts for introducing new cultural practices, such as new dress norms and novel activities like swimming (C. Hernández, 2022). Crucially, the article omitted the fact that for four of those seven months, the group had no access to either standard education or musical training, and it neglected to mention that the promised reunification with their families had not been fulfilled. Holding back information and portraying an incomplete narrative such as this report contributes to misinformation

and does not allow the problems to be acknowledged and solved. This positive article was published during the time that some of the Afghans in that camp were already trying to leave Portugal since they saw no future for themselves and their families.

Ramiz recounts: “The day we came there, there were about 270 of us with all the professors of the Afghanistan Music Institute and some of our professors with their families, and we all lived in one place. After a series of problems we had, many people who were with us could not bear it and left. They went to other countries. They went to Germany or France.” When asked how those fellow Afghans left, he simply said “Through human smugglers.” (Appendix II).

The long wait of seven months in Lisbon contributed a lot to the frustration and desperate decisions of the ANIM family. The wait was due to their bureaucratic processes and collection of the biometrics and also because the Portuguese state who had initially promised to house them in Lisbon, now found it to be financially difficult to do so. Laleh Esteki the Iranian scholar who became the translator of the group later commented “They were in this hospital for seven months. The conditions were very bad and none of them had learned Portuguese or received proper education, and even their musical education had been limited to two sessions with someone who spoke in Farsi and not English.” She strongly believed that the gap in the education and musical training of AIMA students was a strong source of their regression in their studies, short attention span and other issues that the group later faced. As she stated: “Those seven months had a very destructive effect on the children, both culturally and linguistically. The first obstacle that must be removed is the language that one must learn to be able to meet basic needs. Their English was very poor. They could talk and communicate, but if someone spoke for a long time or with an accent, they would not understand.” (Appendix I).

Sofia Sousa Rocha the tutor of the Gulbenkian Conservatory in Braga who later became the supervisor of the ANIM education also mentioned that the gap in the education had caused the students to grow out of the habits that are needed for studying: “They had lost practice, music practice and school practice. Like how to write, how to be focused, how to manage the books and the notebooks. Some very simple things like how to write the letters. It was

very strange for us because we are used to having some kind of organization. So, the first part of the last school year was trying to organize them.”

After the fourth month of staying in the military hospital in Lisbon without education or musical training, the ANIM students are allowed to visit the conservatory near their camp as guest students. Those playing Western music like Sevinch were lucky enough to have musical training and sessions at this point, however, Ramiz who plays Rubab and his peers who play traditional instruments such as Sitar or Talbla remained without musical education and had to depend on their own improvisations and training within the camp. He recounts: “The ones among us who played traditional instruments, didn't have a tutor, so we went to Portuguese classes, but we made the music ourselves.” And: “We improvised with our ensemble. And we formed ensembles in Lisbon and after four months we were able to go to the Netherlands for a performance.” (Appendix II).

6.3.4 A new beginning in Braga and Guimaraes

After seven months of uncertainty in Lisbon, a decision was made by the Portuguese government to divide the ANIM students into two groups. One group was relocated to Braga, and the other to Guimarães. The majority of these students, being unaccompanied minors upon their arrival in Portugal, were housed in Casa da Criança, in Guimarães, an institution that cares for homeless or parentless children. They attended the Gulbenkian School Conservatory in Braga, where they continued their education and musical training as part of the standard Portuguese public education system. Analyzing their experiences and musical education provides valuable insights into various aspects of their resettlement in Portugal, highlighting both the challenges and successes of their integration process.

A. Life

When asked about the day-to-day life of the ANIM students Sofia Sousa Rocha the head of the conservatory in Braga explained that she was not involved with that part of their lives but still she gave us the basic information. “The youngest among them are in an institution called Centro Juvenil São José or Casa de San José, which is like a residence of adolescents, where they have a tutor and a social educator, so they have supervisors with them.” The older

students are now more independent and they live in groups of four or five in apartments provided by the Portuguese state (Appendix IV).

According to Portuguese law, the state is mandated to utilize European and UNHCR funds to offer specific services to unaccompanied minor asylum seekers. European unified regulations require member states hosting refugee children without family members to provide legal assistance, safe and supervised housing, daily care, healthcare, education, food, clothing, other essential items, and allowances (Guidance Reception Unaccompanied Children, n.d.). To maintain these rights, the children also have certain responsibilities. As a scholar and UNHCR translator, Laleh Esteki noted "They must attend school. If they drop out, they become illegal immigrants. Additionally, those who live with them [supervisors and guardians] should be satisfied with them. As long as they study until the age of 25, the Portuguese government commits to supporting them fully. They receive a stipend and live in buildings managed by an organization caring for homeless children, which includes accepting Afghan children." (Appendix I). However, as Sofia Sousa Rocha explains, upon reaching 18 years of age, refugee children lose some support, such as free meals and allowances, and must reapply for social security as adults to continue receiving assistance (Appendix IV).

Financial concerns are a significant issue for these children. In interviews for a documentary by RTP called *Longe de Cabul*² many of them revealed that they send money to their families in Afghanistan, who are unemployed and living in difficult conditions. For instance, Tarigh

² *Longe de Cabul* is a documentary produced in 2023 by RTP, Portugal's public broadcasting service, which chronicles the experiences of a group of Afghan students from the Afghanistan National Institute of Music (ANIM) who were evacuated from Kabul following the Taliban's return to power in 2021. Through in-depth interviews with the Afghan students, ANIM's founder, and their Portuguese tutors, conductors, and psychologist, the documentary explores the multifaceted challenges associated with integration into an unfamiliar society. Additionally, it highlights the active involvement of Portuguese institutions and communities in supporting the refugees. At the time of this research, *Longe de Cabul* represented one of the comprehensive sources available for understanding the lives of ANIM students in Portugal. While it reflects the perspective of a Portuguese broadcasting network and thus embodies a particular viewpoint, it includes perspectives from individuals who were not accessible for direct interviews in this study. As such, the documentary was employed to complement the primary data collected for this research.

Hashemi, a 20-year-old whose father is also a musician, supports his four sisters and two brothers by sending monthly remittances. Similarly, in the same documentary, Sevinch expressed constant worry about the severe financial hardships faced by their families back in Afghanistan (RTP Play, 2023). It is not hard to imagine that the constant financial and security concerns have impacted the children's ability to focus on their education and musical training. Sofia Sous Rocha explains “...some of them lost this support [state refugee financial support], but they still have social security support, it's a little amount of money, but they also have the support for food and electricity payments and so on. They also have the support of the school...we have the support for lunch and cheaper products in our bar, so we can help in this way.” However, it is evident that this support is insufficient when students also try to financially support their families back home. In the RTP documentary, Sofia Sousa Rocha recounted an instance where a student was sending so much of their allowance to their family in Afghanistan that it jeopardized his own health (RTP Play, 2023). This dual burden of focusing on education and ensuring their families' survival highlights the significant challenges these students face.

Despite the support provided by the Portuguese government through international and European funds, the concerns of these children remain valid. Surviving as a musician is challenging, and the ANIM students, considering their backgrounds, are at a disadvantage compared to their Portuguese and international peers. They often lag in education due to their disrupted schooling and traumatic experiences, making it more difficult to secure employment and stable income after their studies. Their situation is further complicated by the risk of becoming illegal immigrants if they drop out of school.

This dual burden underscores the significant challenges these students face. Sevinch, in the interview with the author, expressed her fears: “I'm afraid I won't be able to finish school well. And I can't progress in society.” This statement reflects the profound anxiety these students feel about their prospects and integration into society (Appendix III).

The case of the ANIM students' families is not just a financial concern but also an emotional and psychological burden. Despite assurances that their families would join them within three months, this has not occurred. Although Portugal has family reunification visa

schemes, these students have been in the country for three years without being reunited with their families.

Both Ramiz and Sevinch, when interviewed, refrained from blaming any individual, organization, or government for this matter. Instead, they expressed hope that the situation would soon be resolved. When asked about the reason for the delay, Sevinch mentioned, “Some said it’s because of the war and some said it’s because there is no room in the camps.” (Appendix III). Ramiz shared that his brother and father are also Rubab players in Afghanistan, and his sisters used to sing before the Taliban took power. “I have two sisters who are younger than me. They are very fond of music. My sister, who is one year younger than me, sings. My father also encouraged her. But now she can’t because of the Taliban. I wanted her to come and study in the same music school with me. But because the conditions are not suitable in Afghanistan, she could not continue. I wish that she can continue and achieve her dream.” (Appendix II). When asked the same Sofia Sousa Rocha’s answer was collected and limited “They expected to receive the families, I think one year ago, in 2023. But the situation has been difficult and they’re still waiting, and we know nothing about that at the moment.” She told the author that ANIM as an institution was responsible for those affairs (Appendix IV).

Laleh Esteki, however, spoke openly about this matter: “They [the Afghan children] asked me, ‘Why have they not brought our families?’ or ‘They were supposed to come.’ But, after the war in Ukraine, Qatar stopped cooperating. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict made the situation worse. The Afghans can’t even come here through Iran; they have to get to Qatar first and then come here. Qatar usually helps a lot, but Afghans were placed in a lower priority. Since their time in Lisbon, both Afghan and Portuguese officials had promised that the families would be reunited in three months. Now three years have passed, and their families have not been reunited. The ANIM students say that the officials are lying.” (Appendix I).

This situation reflects the broader geopolitical complexities impacting the students' lives, adding to their emotional and psychological stress. The delays in family reunification exacerbate their sense of uncertainty and displacement, complicating their resettlement

and integration into Portuguese society. It also highlights the complex and multifaceted nature of their struggles beyond financial issues, emphasizing the emotional toll of prolonged family separation.

But after almost two years the ANIM students in Braga seem to have found a routine for their new life. They attend their classes, go to the gym or swimming pool and shop like any teenager or young adult. The general calm and safety of Portugal seemed to have helped. “We try to figure out the way, a better way, the best way for them to the future,” Sofia Sousa Rocha says. “But now they are in a nest.” (Appendix IV).

B. Music and Education

Once settled in Braga, the ANIM students began to resume their education at the Gulbenkian Music Conservatory. Despite efforts to provide them with a normal educational experience, challenges persist for both the ANIM students and the Portuguese hosts, including their peers, professors, and supervisors. Integrating into a new academic environment is demanding, particularly given the cultural, linguistic, and educational differences the ANIM students face.

Gulbenkian Conservatory, ANIM’s educational host is located near the center of Braga, and has a unique status as an Artistic School in Portugal as it integrates vocational music education with primary and secondary schooling, allowing students to complete their general education alongside specialized music training from grades 1 to 12. Students must pass entrance exams to be able to enroll (Apresentação – Escola Artística Conservatório de Música Calouste Gulbenkian, n.d.).

In primary education, the curriculum includes general subjects and a vocational component featuring instrument classes, choir, ensemble, musical training, and composition. Secondary education offers four specialized music courses: singing, composition, musical training, and instrument (Apresentação – Escola Artística Conservatório de Música Calouste Gulbenkian, n.d.)³.

³ <https://conservatoriodebraga.pt/apresentacao/>

When the ANIM students arrived in Braga it was already mid-August. “We had an official confirmation that the students would come during Aug 2022, which is a time when the schools have their classes organized. The initial challenge was that 48 students arrived, and we were going to integrate them into our structure.” Sofia Sousa Rocha explains in the documentary. “It is a strange kind of body within a school organization where everybody knows each other. An environment that is like a family with students from year one until the twelfth year. Very diverse age groups, that cohabitate in the same space along with the Afghans.” (RTP Play, 2023).

They were accepted and integrated into the school curriculum without any entrance exam or test despite it being mandatory to enroll in the school. “This group of students didn’t have this kind of selection because they have a special status.” Sofia Sousa Rocha explained and went on to say that the integration of the ANIM students in the classes was challenging due to their different levels of music training compared to the Portuguese students. “There is a big gap between Portuguese and Afghan students and the level of training was lower in some of them.” (Appendix IV).

In their interviews for this study, Ramiz and Sevinch both confirmed that they felt and were worried about this gap in their musical skill. “It is very different,” Sevinch said. “Because Afghanistan's schools are public, and we used to proceed accordingly. The subjects we studied were different... We have entered a new country that is familiar with instruments and their level is very high.” (Appendix III).

The divergence in musical practices across cultures significantly influences how music is learned and transmitted. In regions such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, and certain areas of India, traditional music is predominantly acquired through informal means rather than formal educational structures. This process often involves mentorship from Ustads, or masters of traditional music, many of whom cannot read musical notation.

Ramiz articulated his personal experience with this challenge, stating, “Before I was able to continue playing the Rubab in Portugal, for a year I had to only learn notes because in our education system before, it was through ear and listening. It was also complicated to integrate my school grades, and they had to give me grades based on how I played the

instrument.” (Appendix II). This highlights the complexities faced by musicians who transition from oral traditions to formalized music education systems.

In the RTP documentary, Tiago Moreira da Silva, the conductor of the Afghanistan Youth Orchestra, explains this from another perspective; “At times the notes which are written on the music sheet along with the interpretation that the composer gives us aren’t respected by them. I am trying to help them to improve with this.” This issue can be examined from various perspectives. The students' lack of formal Western musical education presents challenges, yet, as Tiago highlights, it also allows for a freer approach to improvisation. He elaborates: “What they really want to do is make music. Play together, improvise. It is what makes them happy. I was astonished the first time I saw it. We are not used to students doing that.” (RTP Play, 2023). Tiago's insights suggest that this unconventional method could be seen as a strength, fostering creativity in music-making.

Tiago Moreira da Silva explains this further in the interview for this dissertation. “They play a lot by the ear. [For them] Their ear is more important than the score, so it's also very tricky for me because we are used to respecting the score and what is written there. For them, what they hear and how they react to it are very important, especially when they are improvising, which is also a very important part of their musical culture.” (Appendix V).

The ANIM students in Afghanistan worked with a blend of Western instruments, such as the violin, and traditional Afghan instruments like the Rubab, Santur⁴, and Tabla⁵. Students playing Western instruments, like Sevinch, primarily faced challenges related to their lower musical proficiency. In contrast, those playing traditional instruments, like Ramiz, encountered more complex issues. The music education system in Portugal, including institutions like the Gulbenkian Conservatory in Braga, exclusively offers courses for Western instruments. This presents a significant challenge for ANIM students, as

⁴ The Santur is a hammered dulcimer, a stringed instrument, traditionally used in Persian and Indian classical music. It is played by striking the strings with mallets called Mezrabs.

⁵ It consists of two hand drums from the Indian subcontinent and has been the primary percussion instrument in Hindustani classical music since the 18th century. It can be played on its own, accompany other instruments or vocals, or be included in larger ensembles.

transitioning to Western instruments at their age is extremely difficult and undermines their objective of preserving Afghan music.

Ramiz explained the situation in the interview. “Some of us were forced to change [our instruments] and in the end, they [some of the Afghan students] chose to do so. In Kabul, most of my peers played the Tabla or played the Rubab. There was no professor here [in Portugal], and our grades had to be determined based on our playing our musical instruments, many of them had to change their musical instruments and majors.” (Appendix II).

While the conservatory’s response to this problem was to ask the students to change to other instruments or majors, Ramiz refused. “After I learned this, there was no Rabab teacher at school, I refused to choose another musical instrument. I've been playing Rabab for 10 years and it was very difficult for me to change my instrument. So, I chose to study composition.” (Appendix II).

However, recognizing Ramiz's talent as a Rubab player, Sarmast invited an Ustad from India to join the team as his instructor. When asked if this request was facilitated through the conservatory, Ramiz clarified that the conservatory played no role in this matter; the invitation was extended through ANIM (Appendix II).

Tiago Moreira da Silva acknowledges that while it is problematic for students to be unable to study their traditional instruments exclusively, those who choose to learn a new instrument or major will ultimately benefit by gaining new skills. “The perfect scenario would be that they keep their instrument and their studies in these instruments for the rest of their studying period. But in Portugal, it's very difficult because you can have teachers from that instrument, but they are not able to be in an official Portuguese educational system... So, the solution they found is also good. For them, it's tricky because they need to balance the two instruments and practice the two instruments, but in the end, they will for sure earn more tools and develop more skills with two different instruments,” he explains (Appendix V)

ANIM students participate in various orchestras within their group, most notably the Afghanistan Youth Orchestra, which has performed worldwide, and the Zohra Orchestra, the first all-female Afghan orchestra. Some students housed in Guimarães also participate in these orchestras. Tiago Moreira da Silva and Constança Simas are the orchestras' Portuguese conductors. Tiago explains, "Now we are doing our practice and the way we organize ourselves for the concerts and for the tours that we have [is that] we do rehearsals twice a week with the Afghan Youth Orchestra and with the Zohra Orchestra." He adds that their repertoire consists mainly of traditional Afghan songs, constituting about 70-80% of their performances, with occasional inclusion of Indian and Pakistani songs and Western classical music such as Brahms or Kodály (Appendix V).

As the Taliban swiftly reverted to banning music and persecuting musicians in Afghanistan, the international attention and fame of the Afghanistan Youth Orchestra grew. They have been invited to perform in various countries and most recently played a mix of Western and Afghan folk arrangements at the opening ceremony of the 2023 UN Human Rights Conference in Switzerland. Their UK debut faced obstacles when the Rishi Sunak government initially denied them visas, disrupting their planned tour days before it was set to begin. However, following backlash, the Home Office reversed this decision, allowing the orchestra to perform at the Southbank Centre, featuring a repertoire that included Western symphonic works, original compositions, and Afghan folk music (Booth & Badshah, 2024). The orchestra is also visited the US for a second time, the first being in the pre-Taliban era. The tour, called "Breaking the Silence," took place at Carnegie Hall, with some Portuguese students from the Braga Conservatory accompanying the Afghan Youth Orchestra (Kassam, 2024). Tiago noted, "...we had requests from the Portuguese students. They heard about our concerts, and they heard the music in the corridors of the conservatory, and they also wanted to join the orchestra. So, we invited them, and we currently have four or five Portuguese students who will perform in the next concert with us." (Appendix V).

The Zohra Orchestra, Afghanistan's first all-female orchestra, symbolizes young Afghan women's struggle against patriarchy and extremism, even before the Taliban's resurgence. They faced constant threats and could rarely perform publicly in Afghanistan. In Portugal,

they are free to pursue their dreams but face logistical challenges, as their group is divided between Braga and Guimarães. Despite these difficulties, the orchestra prevails with the help of the conservatory and ANIM, which arranges transportation for the students living in Guimarães to Braga for rehearsals. This collaboration requires patience and faith from both the students and their Portuguese conductors.

“The Zohra orchestra is more than an orchestra. It is a living thing. Among all the orchestras and all the groups that I’ve worked with, this is unique.” Constança Simas says in the RTP documentary (RTP Play, 2023).

6.4 Cultural Clashes and Connections Formed

During the course of this study, the author conducted interviews to explore various cultural frictions between ANIM Afghan students and their Portuguese hosts, including guardians at Casa da Criança, conservatory tutors, and peers. It should be noted that the Afghan students exhibited considerable caution when discussing their experiences, particularly avoiding any overt criticism of their hosts. When negative aspects were mentioned, they quickly followed with expressions of gratitude towards their Portuguese benefactors. This cautious approach likely stems from their reliance on the Portuguese government for protection, and financial support and their hope that their families will join them in Portugal, making it critical for them to maintain positive relationships with their mentors, guardians, and officials.

Similarly, members of the Portuguese host community interviewed were somewhat more open to discussing cultural differences and adaptation challenges but were also careful to assert that any initial problems they had faced with the Afghan students had been resolved.

6.4.1 Different Aspects of Cultural Challenges

Despite an increase in migrants from the Middle East after 2016, citizens from this region still constitute a small percentage of the overall migrant population in Portugal (UNHCR, 2022b). Afghans remain a minority within the migrant population in Portugal, posing additional integration challenges. In 2021, Portugal received over two hundred Afghan asylum seekers, most of whom were unaccompanied minors and women fleeing the Taliban

occupation of Kabul. Despite this commitment, the Portuguese government, local authorities, and NGOs face challenges in the complex integration process (European Commission, 2021). Prioritizing the inclusion of children and adolescents is crucial, as minors often migrate alone, believing they have better chances of success than older family members (UNICEF, 2017).

On the other hand, unaccompanied refugee minors are significantly impacted by conflicts, natural disasters, poverty, and human rights threats, often experiencing continued violence and cumulative stress in their home countries (Keles et al., 2016; Lustig et al., 2004). This stress during a critical period of their mental and physical development (Huemer et al., 2009) can lead to mental health issues such as anxiety disorders, PTSD, depression (Mitra & Hodes, 2019; Mohwinkel et al., 2018), substance abuse, conduct, and eating disorders (Pumariega et al., 2016). They may also become victims of human trafficking and other forms of violence during their journey (UNICEF, 2017). In the host country, these minors face additional stressors such as frequent relocations, limited access to education, social isolation, discrimination, and feelings of insecurity, contributing to poor health and well-being (WHO, 2018).

Portugal is an EU member state with strong political and social inclusive measures. However, the implementation of various intervention programs across Europe has revealed inefficiencies, often stemming from the incomplete application of the fundamental principle of inclusion (Carolo et al., 2023).

Through the interviews various obstacles and sides of integration in the case of ANIM students revealed themselves. These aspects have been categorized and explained in the following sections. For better understanding, some instances of cultural clashes narrated by the individuals involved have been included.

6.4.1.1 Language and General Educational

The acquisition of the host country's language is the foremost necessity for any migrant, whether adult or child, as it serves as the primary and essential tool for communication and

the expression of one's needs. Mastery of the host society's language is widely recognized as a fundamental component of successful refugee integration (Oliveira, 2021).

As anticipated, upon their arrival in Portugal, the ANIM students were immediately confronted with the challenge of navigating their lives in an entirely unfamiliar language. While some of the students had a basic command of English, others lacked even this rudimentary tool for communication. After spending eight months in a camp in Lisbon, the language barrier remained a significant obstacle as the students resettled and began their education in Braga. This issue persisted, as highlighted by Tiago Silva Monteiro in the RTP documentary, which was filmed a year after their resettlement in Braga. He noted, "They feel some difficulty. I understand because the language is completely different. Some of them don't even speak good English" (Appendix V). This indicates that despite the time spent in Lisbon, the ANIM students had not been adequately prepared, linguistically, for their new lives in Portugal.

A study done by the Red Cross about the work of this organization in the integration of Afghan asylum seekers claims a lot of positive results in this regard. This report claims that integration into the school system was "promoted" by the Portuguese governmental bodies and the Portuguese Red Cross (PRC), yet it does not elaborate on the number of minor Afghan immigrants in that camp in Lisbon who benefited from these schooling schemes and it does not elaborate on what the subjects were. The only negative aspect of the program that the report observes is the lack of Physical Education (PE) and/or the Arts (Drama, Drawing, Music) in the education provided during those 8 months regardless of the educational level which the report cautiously suggest "may reveal the presence of a reductionist view regarding the educational necessities of this group." (Carolo et al., 2023).

On the other hand, the information gained from interviews with two of the ANIM students and the staff of the Braga Conservatory indicated that the education received was not only inadequate but also scarce. Sofia Sousa Rocha pointed out that once the children arrived in Braga, they had lost the practice needed for concentration and focus on studies that every student needs and she indicated it as an obstacle to integration (Appendix IV).

When asked, Sevinch and Ramiz both confirmed that for the first four months of their stay in Lisbon, they had received no form of education (Appendix II & III). Education began to be received as the children were permitted to go to the Lisbon Conservatory after four months. There some of them received musical education and all of them began to receive general education in English, history and Portuguese.

However, the language education provided has proven to be inadequate. In interviews conducted for this study, two years after their resettlement in Portugal, both Ramiz and Sevinch expressed ongoing concerns about their language acquisition. Ramiz emphasized, “The most difficult thing for us right now is the language. We must learn the language as the first step for any job, such as entering the labour market. Language is essential everywhere.” He further noted that due to the language barrier, their classes were segregated from their Portuguese peers for an entire year, which posed a significant obstacle to forming friendships, building a sense of community, and integrating fully. This separation also contributed to feelings of inferiority, as adolescents struggled to communicate effectively with their peers.

Laleh Esteki was very clear about what she had witnessed regarding education. “They were in this hospital for seven months. The conditions were very bad and none of them had learned Portuguese or received proper education, and even their musical education had been limited to two sessions with someone who spoke in Farsi and not English. Those seven months had a very destructive effect on the children, both culturally and linguistically.” (Appendix I).

Sofia Sousa Rocha also commented on this matter in the RTP documentary. She noted that the time spent away from a proper schooling system had a huge effect on the quality of education they were ready to receive when they arrived in Braga. “The rhythm of their work is not exactly what we are used to. I think that many of those difficulties are motivated from a long period that they were outside of the school system. Between Covid, the evacuation [from Afghanistan], and the time they were in Lisbon, it was realistically a very extended time which caused this lack of working routine and essentially knowing what it is like to be inside a school.” (RTP Play, 2023).

Despite differences in tone and perspective between the accounts and the PRC report, the observations, interviews, and document reviews all indicate that a significant amount of educational time was lost from the moment the children arrived in Lisbon until they relocated to their permanent residence in Braga. Seven to eight months is typically sufficient for children to begin acquiring a new language and to make up for the educational disruptions caused by the turmoil in their home country. However, the evidence suggests that much of this time was squandered due to inadequate preparation and oversight on the part of the Portuguese officials and those responsible for their care.

This loss of time resulted in the children entering their new life in Braga without adequate language preparation, educational background, or a structured school routine. Testimonies from students, staff, and tutors consistently highlight that these deficiencies were significant barriers to integration. The children struggled to communicate with their guardians and supervisors at Casa da Criança and encountered considerable obstacles in forming friendships. Specifically, the lack of proper language education emerged as a major source of stress, compounding the psychological pressures already faced by these children. Sevinch, when asked about her concerns, expressed, “I'm afraid I won't be able to finish school well. And I can't progress in society. The main problem is the language. Sometimes people give us a hard time because we don't know the language.” (Appendix III).

6.4.1.2 Musical Education

In the context of ANIM students, musical education holds particular importance. It is crucial to recognize that the primary factor enabling these children to escape Afghanistan and resettle in Portugal as refugees is their identity as musicians affiliated with a music institution targeted by persecution following the Taliban's ascension to power. A discontinuation in their musical practice could have severe repercussions, not only disrupting the progression of their musical journey but also potentially jeopardizing their migrant status and future career prospects.

Upon their arrival in Lisbon, the ANIM students had already experienced a significant disruption in their routine of musical practice. Ramiz, for instance, recounts that four months prior to leaving Afghanistan, he concealed his instrument and refrained from leaving

his home due to the escalating dangers (Appendix II). Similarly, in the RTP documentary *Longe de Cabul* (2023), Al Sina Hotak, then 16 years old, describes his decision to leave his violin behind in a locked room within the ANIM building in Kabul, driven by fear of persecution (RTP Play, 2023).

However, it is particularly disheartening that, even after reaching Lisbon, four months elapsed before they could enroll in the conservatory for music education and resume their practice. This delay occurred despite the Portuguese authorities and the PRC, responsible for managing their resettlement, being aware of their impending arrival well in advance (Appendix I).

Attending the Lisbon Conservatory provided musical education primarily for those students who played Western instruments, such as Sevinch Majidi, whose instrument is the violin. However, students like Ramiz, who played traditional Afghan instruments such as the Rubab or Santur, were unable to benefit from the musical education provided. Despite this, Ramiz maintained a positive outlook on the situation, suggesting that it offered them an opportunity to enhance their improvisational skills (Appendix II).

It is also noteworthy that the PRC report fails to address the four-month delay in providing musical education to the ANIM students, nor does it acknowledge that certain students were unable to benefit from the instruction once it was offered.

However, based on the interviews conducted and the documents reviewed, it is evident that upon their arrival in Braga, where they began attending the Gulbenkian Conservatory, their needs in terms of musical education were met with great attentiveness. The conservatory provided them with tutors and a high standard of musical education, including ensemble and orchestra practices, with conductors who organized and composed new arrangements for them. Nonetheless, it is understandable that some challenges persist, and new issues continue to emerge:

Musical Level: The musical level of the ANIM students at least as far as Western Musical knowledge goes, suffers from a gap in comparison to the Portuguese peers in the same year. Moreover, because of their status, they were admitted to the school without tests.

Therefore, they were put in separate classes from their Portuguese peers to be able to receive the needed preparations. This although necessary caused anxiety and low self-esteem in the ANIM students (Appendix II). In her interview for this study, Sofia Sousa Rocha explained that they realized that being together with the Portuguese students was very important for the Afghan students and that they tried to mix the classes as much as possible (Appendix IV). "In comparison, we considered ourselves inferior to our Portuguese classmates and we felt that they were advancing, and we couldn't. These had a great impact on us, but now it has slowly become normal for us." Ramiz Safar explained (Appendix II). He was appreciative of the high educational level they were receiving "Here, the level of everything is different. Level of lessons and education. And when we came here, the musical level of our friends has increased, and they can work at the level of an orchestra player." (Appendix II).

The gap in musical education experienced by the ANIM students is considerable, raising concerns among the tutors at the conservatory regarding the future of some students in the field of music. Both Sofia Sousa Rocha and Tiago Silva expressed apprehension that certain students might struggle to pursue a career as musicians due to insufficient preparation during their formative years. However, Sousa Rocha remains hopeful that, despite these challenges, they can guide these students towards alternative career paths within the music industry (Appendix IV).

Different Systems of Musical Education: Tiago Silva and Sofia Rocha both highlighted the significant challenges they faced in adapting the ANIM students to the conservatory's educational system, largely due to differences in musical learning methods. "The way of singing is very different from the Western way. When we study [Western] music, we have to try to be more precise in the tuning, and we have some problems," explained Sofia Rocha. She acknowledged that while the students' singing style, rooted in traditional practices, is culturally distinct and appealing – similar in some ways to the Portuguese tradition of fado – it presents difficulties within the framework of Western musical education (Appendix IV).

Sofia Sousa Rocha's comments refer to the traditional singing method known as Avaz, practiced across the region historically referred to as Greater Iran or the Persosphere, which

includes present-day Iran, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, and Afghanistan. A key characteristic of this style is Tahrir, a melismatic vocal technique involving rapid sequences of glottal stops across various notes. Although several studies from 1974, 2016, and 2019 have analyzed Tahrir's acoustic properties, the most comprehensive research was conducted in 2020 at a French laboratory using an electro-glottographic device and involved the renowned singer Mohammad-Rezâ Shajarian (During, n.d.).

Despite the extensive academic research available on Avaz, interviews with the conservatory tutors reveal a concerning gap in both knowledge and interest regarding this musical tradition. The interviews suggest that not only is there a lack of understanding about the different musical cultures among the tutors, but there is also a reductionist view to acquiring the necessary expertise enough to comprehend and support the students' unique musical backgrounds as the supervisors and tutors are not only dedicated to this task and have many other duties. This indicates a broader issue of cultural and educational disconnect.

The challenges faced by ANIM students extended beyond vocal techniques to include their use of non-Western instruments. As previously mentioned, many students who played traditional Afghan instruments found themselves unable to continue their studies within the official Portuguese educational system. This situation forced them to either switch instruments or change their majors. The support they received came primarily from ANIM, which provided tutors outside the Portuguese educational framework, allowing some students to continue practicing their traditional instruments. Additionally, they could pursue their musical traditions in orchestras outside their conservatory studies.

It is also critical to highlight that both the conservatory tutors and the orchestra conductors were Portuguese, and all of them acknowledged having no prior exposure to this type of music. Tiago Silva described his initial encounter with these instruments and sonorities as "the first shock," noting that he was unaccustomed to them. He admitted that, before this experience, he was only vaguely familiar with the names of some Afghan instruments and lacked knowledge about their operation, range, and the notes they could produce. Silva

further explained that, in the beginning, working on Afghan music and arrangements posed significant challenges due to this lack of familiarity (Appendix V).

This situation highlights a broader issue: the cultural and educational gap inherent in integrating non-Western musical traditions into a Eurocentric educational system. The experiences of the ANIM students expose both the limitations of the existing curriculum in accommodating diverse musical practices and the challenges faced by educators who are unprepared to engage with unfamiliar musical traditions.

These challenges manifest in different ways. In the context of the orchestras and ensembles, it is evident that conductors Tiago Moreira da Silva and Constança Simas—despite their initial lack of preparation—have made sincere efforts to learn and adapt to the unique needs of the Afghanistan Youth Orchestra and the Zohra Orchestra. Their commitment to understanding and incorporating Afghan musical traditions reflects a genuine attempt to bridge the cultural divide.

However, in the case of the students' formal musical education at the Braga Gulbenkian Conservatory, observations suggest a different approach. Since the conservatory is bound by the state curriculum, which exclusively focuses on Western music, there appears to be a more passive acceptance of the situation. This response highlights the rigidity of the Eurocentric educational system and its inability to accommodate non-Western musical traditions, ultimately limiting the students' opportunities to continue developing their cultural and musical heritage within the formal educational framework.

This issue is significant because, in any situation where the integration of a migrant group into the host community is required, merely immersing the migrant group in the host culture is insufficient. It is equally crucial that the host community engages with and gains knowledge of the migrant culture (Berry, 1992). This reciprocal cultural understanding becomes even more essential when those in positions of influence –such as tutors and supervisors – are responsible for the well-being and development of minor refugees, as will be analyzed further in this chapter.

The approach taken by the conservatory regarding the musical education of ANIM students underscores this challenge. The conservatory's solution was to direct the students towards Western musical education, a strategy that stands in stark contrast to the goals of ANIM, which is committed to preserving and promoting Afghan musical traditions. This divergence highlights a fundamental tension: while ANIM seeks to keep Afghan music traditions alive, the conservatory, as part of the public school system in Portugal, is required to adhere to the state curriculum, which exclusively focuses on Western music.

Given this context, it remains unclear to what extent the conservatory could have deviated from the state-mandated programs to accommodate non-Western music. However, there is a positive development: the author has been informed that Ramiz, one of the ANIM students, has been invited to teach the Rubab at the school. This opportunity reflects a growing interest among non-Afghan students in learning this age-old instrument, suggesting a potential pathway for greater cultural exchange and understanding within the educational system.

6.4.1.3 Physical needs

The alteration in the means by which physical needs are met represents one of the initial challenges encountered by migrants. This encompasses adjustments in dietary practices, variations in climate, and other environmental factors in the host country. Adult migrants, once acclimatized to their new surroundings, often find solace in the autonomy they possess within the privacy of their homes. This autonomy enables them to engage in familiar cuisine, such as preparing traditional meals and organizing their personal lives according to their preferences. These seemingly modest freedoms play a crucial role in preserving their cultural heritage and identity, providing a sense of familiarity amidst an otherwise unfamiliar environment.

In contrast, unaccompanied minor migrants, such as the ANIM students, are deprived of such autonomy due to the institutional supervision they receive. This institutional oversight extends into their domestic lives, compelling them to adapt to unfamiliar practices not only in public spheres like schools but also within the confines of their private space. The lack of

agency in fulfilling their basic needs in ways familiar to them in the absence of their families, exacerbates the challenges they face, leading to heightened tensions.

Research and interview analyses reveal that these unresolved issues have fostered persistent friction and chronic tension between Afghan minor migrants and their host communities, particularly within educational settings and care institutions. To elucidate these dynamics, the primary issues identified during the interviews have been systematically categorized and analyzed.

b. Food and Cuisine

Cuisine and food culture, fundamental to human existence, have been intricately woven into the fabric of societies since the earliest civilizations. Food possesses a unique sensory capacity to evoke comfort and a sense of belonging through taste and aroma. Communities have long used food as a means of nurturing connections and expressing care. Conversely, unfamiliar food, when encountered outside the voluntary context of cultural exploration, can feel alienating, particularly when presented without alternatives.

For the Afghan minor refugees examined in this case study, encountering Portuguese cuisine emerged as one of their most significant challenges. This difficulty was so pronounced that nearly all interviewees cited it as one of the primary obstacles faced in their foster homes and schools.

Afghan cuisine is deeply rooted in the cultural exchanges and historical interactions with neighboring regions such as Persia, India, and Central Asia. These influences are evident in the diverse use of spices and cooking techniques. Afghan dishes are typically flavored with spices like cumin, coriander, saffron, and cardamom, creating a mild yet rich taste profile. Herbs like mint and cilantro are also commonly used. Moreover, cultural and religious practices play a significant role in shaping Afghan food traditions. For instance, due to Islamic dietary laws, Afghans do not consume pork. Additionally, fish is rarely eaten, as it is less common in the predominantly landlocked country's cuisine. These elements combine to form a distinctive culinary tradition that reflects Afghanistan's geographical and cultural landscape (Saber, 1986).

Afghan and Portuguese cuisines, while both rich in tradition, differ significantly in their ingredients, flavors, and cultural influences. Portuguese food is heavily influenced by its coastal geography, with a strong emphasis on seafood, including codfish, sardines, and shellfish. Loaf bread – different in taste profile than the flat bread used in West Asia – and potatoes are also often served alongside meat and fish. Portuguese dishes tend to use fewer spices. While spices like paprika and piri-iri are used, the overall spice level is generally milder than Afghan cuisine. The flavor profile is more straightforward, focusing on the quality and freshness of ingredients. Heavily influenced by its Christian traditions, Portuguese cuisine includes pork in many traditional dishes. Wine is also a key part of the dining experience, both as a beverage and as an ingredient in cooking (Anderson, 1986).

For Afghan refugees in Portugal, these differences can pose significant challenges. The prominence of pork and seafood in Portuguese cuisine can be particularly alienating, as these are either forbidden or unfamiliar in Afghan culture. The use of fewer spices and the reliance on ingredients like garlic and onions in Portuguese cooking also differ from the flavor profiles they are accustomed to, making the food less appealing or even uncomfortable. Additionally, limited familiarity with local ingredients can make it difficult for Afghan refugees to adapt to Portuguese food, potentially leading to feelings of alienation.

Such difficulties are enhanced since the ANIM students are minors or young adults taken away from their families and have lost all sense of belonging and familiarity. In such circumstances, in their foster institutional homes, the Afghans were faced with strict dietary limitations. Laleh Esteki explained in the interview for this study that a challenging dispute had irrupted over food. “The Portuguese are very strict in terms of food discipline in their schools. The food is not salted, and the food is fat-free and healthy. It's healthy but it's nauseating.” (Appendix I). Sofia Sousa Rocha also mentioned that one of the challenges they had in school with the Afghans was the food that they struggled to adapt to (Appendix IV). This subject also comes up in the RTP documentary where their psychologist Ana Rita Fernandes explains that “They wouldn’t eat certain things and couldn’t form a liking for our food.” (RTP Play, 2023).

Laleh Esteki further elaborated on the issue, offering her perspective that the friction was partly attributable to the Afghan migrants' resistance to change and their reluctance to embrace unfamiliar foods. She also highlighted the role of the Portuguese supervisors, whose strict adherence to regulations and lack of cultural awareness exacerbated the tension. Esteki recounted a significant dispute that arose over the Portuguese practice of serving soup as a starter, in accordance with their cultural norms and institutional guidelines. In Afghan culture, however, soup is traditionally associated with illness and is not typically consumed as part of a standard meal.

Furthermore, Esteki accurately pointed out that in many Asian cultures, the concept of distinct courses within a meal – such as appetizers, main courses, and desserts – is not a common practice. While Western influences have introduced such customs in countries like Iran and Turkey, they remain largely unfamiliar in less exposed cultures. Consequently, the Afghan students often refused to eat the soup, leading to a standoff with the Portuguese supervisors, who insisted that the children could not proceed with their meal unless they first consumed the soup. This inflexibility on both sides resulted in the Afghan students going hungry, thereby initiating a detrimental cycle of mistrust and resentment towards their Portuguese caretakers, who were equally unwilling to accommodate cultural differences (Appendix I).

Esteki explained this and many other instances as examples of unnecessary friction between the two cultures due to a lack of knowledge of one another, a feeling of superiority on the Portuguese side, and a lack of cultural flexibility on both sides. “I want to say that raising awareness also helps,” she explained. “I explained to them [Afghan students] that when they enter a new culture, they must get to know [the new culture] and integrate. I am not saying that they should abandon their values and what is important to them. But these were still not enough. And the Portuguese kept insisting on their own values... This goes back to the principle of culture” (Appendix I).

c. Weather

While the Afghan students themselves, along with their tutors and supervisors, did not mention it in their interviews with the author, Laleh Esteki highlighted that the winter weather

in Braga and Guimarães posed significant difficulties for the ANIM students. She identified another cultural difference contributing to this challenge: the absence of adequate heating systems in the buildings and the Portuguese supervisors' belief that warming the living spaces during the cold months was unnecessary.

Esteki emphasized this lifestyle discrepancy, noting, "We [Iranians] begin heating our houses from the beginning of autumn. Afghans are the same." She further elaborated, "The biggest culture shock was the cold they experienced. They are musicians. Their hands should be warm. If their hands are cold, they cannot play...They [Afghan children] used to tell the Portuguese [supervisors] that they are cold and they cannot play their instruments. But that problem was not solved." This lack of responsiveness to the students' needs highlighted yet another layer of cultural misunderstanding and oversight (Appendix I).

The experience of weather can profoundly influence one's perception of a new place, particularly when it contrasts sharply with what one is accustomed to. For the Afghan students in Braga and Guimarães, the unfamiliar cold and the lack of adequate heating in their living spaces created not only physical discomfort but also a sense of alienation. When basic needs like warmth are unmet, it can exacerbate feelings of homesickness and deepen the cultural divide, making it harder to adapt and feel at ease in the new environment. Over time, this persistent discomfort can lead to a negative association with the place, potentially resulting in depression or a strong dislike for what might otherwise have been a welcoming new home. The physical environment, therefore, plays a critical role in shaping one's emotional and psychological response to relocation, especially in the context of such significant cultural and climatic differences.

6.4.1.4 Psychological Needs

It is crucial to recognize that the ANIM students have endured profoundly traumatic experiences. These include threats to their lives and the lives of their families by the Taliban, the loss of their instruments, a perilous and chaotic departure from Afghanistan, the heart-wrenching separation from family and friends, and prolonged periods of uncertainty in Qatar and Lisbon. These events have left an indelible mark on their psychological well-being.

In Braga and Guimarães, the children are provided with professional psychological care by Ana Rita Fernandes, their assigned Portuguese psychologist. Although Fernandes did not respond to the author's request for an interview, she did share some insights in the RTP documentary about ANIM. She discussed the significant impact these past events had on the Afghan children, stating, "Their physical posture or nonverbal body language, with their face down, was very sad. They wouldn't maintain eye contact, they wouldn't smile, and some were in emotional despair. It was necessary to do this work on their adaptation and confidence" (RTP Play, 2023). This statement underscores the profound psychological challenges the children face as they navigate their new environment and attempt to rebuild their lives.

Laleh Esteki also emphasized on multiple occasions that the psychological state of the Afghan refugees was far from ideal. She observed various psychological challenges among the Afghans she encountered, including extreme loneliness, episodes of hysteria, financial stress, and feelings of inferiority. Esteki was adamant that the Portuguese supervisors' lack of understanding regarding the refugees' circumstances significantly contributed to these issues.

Upon reviewing the interviews and observations, the psychological challenges related to integration can be categorized as follows:

a. Religious and Ethnic Issues

The Afghan children involved in this study encounter significant challenges related to religious and ethnic complexities. These challenges manifest in two distinct ways.

The first, more immediately apparent, is the contrast in racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds between the Afghan students and their host community in Portugal. Afghan society, predominantly Muslim and ethnically diverse, differs markedly from the predominantly Catholic context in which these children now find themselves. While the degree of religious observance varies among individuals within Afghan society, this difference is stark when juxtaposed with the religious practices of their Portuguese hosts.

Laleh Esteki recounted numerous instances where religious expressions, such as fasting during Ramadan, created tension between the Afghan students and their Portuguese guardians. However, she emphasized that the Portuguese should not be entirely blamed for these conflicts, noting the complexity of the situation. The young Afghans, being impressionable at their age, were influenced by their families from afar to adhere to their religious obligations. Simultaneously, they were exposed to an environment that did not align with their religious beliefs. This duality led them to selectively practice their religion, further confusing their Portuguese hosts. For instance, while they would not fast during Ramadan, they would stay up late, mimicking the customs they followed during Ramadan at home, and subsequently skip morning classes. According to Laleh, this situation escalated to the point where the Portuguese supervisors eventually prohibited the observance of Ramadan altogether (Appendix I).

In addition to the challenges posed by adolescent confusion among the Afghan students, both Laleh Esteki and Sophia Sousa Rocha pointed to the lack of prior knowledge on the part of the Portuguese supervisors and tutors as a contributing factor. Sofia Sousa Rocha explained that while the students' Muslim faith was not inherently shocking or a barrier to integration—despite Braga being "a very Catholic city"—the practices associated with Ramadan, such as complete fasting, were unfamiliar and surprising to the local community. She noted that music tutors were particularly concerned about students who played wind instruments, and canteen staff were puzzled when a group of students failed to appear for meals. Despite these initial challenges, Sofia believed that these unfamiliarities have since been resolved, and a form of mutual understanding has developed.

Laleh Esteki further elaborated on her observations, reiterating that the Portuguese tutors and supervisors "were not ready to receive the Afghans." Another incident, recounted by both Esteki and Sofia Sousa Rocha, involved a musical training session during Christmas, which included Christian religious hymns. When the Afghan students translated the lyrics and understood their meanings, some refused to participate as the Christian expressions did not align with their faith. The teachers and Laleh, serving as their translator, urged them to view the hymns merely as songs rather than religious expressions. Nevertheless, this led

to a dispute, and the Afghan children were ultimately compelled to participate in the repertoire if they wished to remain in the music school (Appendix I).

Laleh Esteki repeatedly emphasized that the Portuguese individuals responsible for the ANIM students had a limited understanding of the children's religious and ethnic backgrounds, as well as the implications of these differences. When asked directly, she elaborated that the Portuguese supervisors were unaware of the diverse practices within Islam, the tensions between its two main sects, and the conflicts among various Afghan ethnic groups. "The Portuguese know nothing. They don't know anything about our [Middle Eastern] cultures," she stated, explaining that the layers of social complexities and cultural sophistication of Middle Eastern cultures are not acknowledged or appreciated by Portuguese society to the level that it should be. "Muslims are considered violent and uncivilized" (Appendix I).

The simplistic assumption by the Portuguese that all Afghan children, despite coming from various social classes, religious sects, and conflicting ethnic backgrounds, would naturally get along was deeply misguided and likely created significant barriers to their integration. Explaining this further Esteki recounted specific instances where tensions arose between two Sunni students and another boy who was Shia, conflicts that the Portuguese staff were unable to comprehend. She noted that the two Sunni boys eventually ran away and made their way to Germany.

The Afghan children in this study encountered significant challenges in adapting to the religious and ethnic complexities of their new environment in Portugal. The stark differences between their Muslim-majority background and the predominantly Catholic host community, coupled with the Portuguese supervisors' limited understanding of Afghan society's intricacies, intensified these challenges. Misunderstandings arose from both cultural contrasts and the misguided assumption that the children, despite their diverse and sometimes conflicting backgrounds, would easily integrate. These experiences underscore the need for a more informed and nuanced approach to supporting the integration of refugee children.

b. Friends and Community Creation

In the RTP documentary *Longe de Cabul*, Sabera Nazeri, a 20-year-old female student at ANIM, remarks with a giggle about the social dynamics at the Gulbenkian School, stating that “the students in the Gulbenkian School are not social at all.” suggesting that their Portuguese peers do not easily form friendships with the Afghan students. Another Afghan student, Tariq Hashemi, similarly notes the difficulty in establishing friendships with the predominantly Portuguese students, expressing uncertainty about the reasons for this challenge. In the same context, Sevinch Majidi expresses their lack of fluency in Portuguese as a barrier to making closer relationships with their peers.

As a representative of the school Sofia Sousa Rocha, maintains that the Conservatory is accustomed to hosting foreign students (Appendix IV). However, the author suggests that by “foreign students,” Rocha primarily refers to Brazilian students, who share the Portuguese language and have extensive cultural connections with Portugal. In contrast, Tiago Silva acknowledges in the documentary that teaching students from Afghanistan was an entirely new experience for him. He admits, “Culturally we are not even used to this. I never had a foreigner in my class from year one until high school” (RTP Play, 2023).

Rocha describes how the Afghan students exhibited a positive attitude towards their peers and staff, and how they adjusted their initial behavior to better align with school rules and integrate into the community. “They conquered the staff, the teachers, and also the students”, she notes. Rocha emphasizes the significance of integrating ANIM students with Portuguese peers during classes, which facilitates conversations during breaks and promotes mingling, an essential aspect of social integration (Appendix IV). Additionally, Ramiz Safar expresses regret that differences in academic musical education and language barriers delayed joint classes with Portuguese students, which could have fostered friendships faster (Appendix II).

Psychologist Ana Rita Fernandes observed that, in the initial phase, the ANIM students experienced considerable anxiety, which hindered their integration. She compares the experiences of Afghan students with those of Ukrainian students who arrived in Portugal around the same time. Fernandes notes, “What we noticed is that the families [Portuguese families] would get together to support the Ukrainian families, but with the Afghan students,

didn't receive the same level of care. I think this is a cultural situation, a problem that is ours." She attributes this disparity in treatment to the differing perceptions of the wars from which these groups fled.

As an Iranian scholar fluent in Portuguese who has lived in Portugal for several years with her family, Laleh Esteki offers a different perspective. She contends that the Portuguese tend to avoid mingling "with anyone they deem lesser than them," including Iranians and Afghans (Appendix I). She views this as a reflection of the Western attitude towards other cultures, reinforced by Eurocentrism in media and education. "This goes beyond culture," she asserts (Appendix I).

The challenges faced by Afghan students in forming friendships at the Gulbenkian School reveal the deeper social and cultural barriers that influence interpersonal connections. Despite their efforts and positive attitudes, these students struggle to build relationships with their Portuguese peers, a difficulty exacerbated by language differences, cultural unfamiliarity, and social perceptions. The contrasting experiences with other refugee groups, such as Ukrainians, further highlight the selective nature of social support in Portugal. This underscores the need for greater awareness and proactive measures to foster genuine inclusivity and friendship across cultural divides.

c. Continuing Outside Stressors

The journey of ANIM students, from being separated from their homes and families as minors or young adults to settling in a completely new environment in Portugal, has been marked by significant social and cultural challenges. These students, like many refugees and migrants who have fled crisis, persecution, and political turbulence, continue to grapple not only with the trauma of their past but also with the external stressors associated with their national identity.

The ongoing turmoil in Afghanistan deeply affects the students, who remain closely connected to their homeland, where many of their friends and family members still reside. Their attachment to Afghanistan is profound, and they are constantly confronted with distressing news of the Taliban's extremist rule, which has made life exceedingly difficult,

particularly for women. They are deeply concerned about the financial well-being of their families, many of whom have lost their jobs and are struggling to survive. Reports of bombings, terrorist attacks, the ban on education for women, harsh prosecutions, and widespread desperation evoke feelings of helplessness and guilt among ANIM students (RTP Play, 2023). As this dissertation was being written on August 20, 2024, BBC Persian and Afghanistan International reported that, according to a Taliban spokesperson, more than 21,000 musical instruments were destroyed by the authorities in the past year (Destroyed Over 21,000 Musical Instruments Last Year, Claims Taliban, n.d.).

Ramiz Safar, expresses that these factors profoundly affect their quality of life and ability to engage with music. Such stressors can be overwhelming for anyone, but they are especially challenging for young adults and children. The presence of a supportive community could mitigate some of this anxiety. Fortunately, ANIM students have access to a dedicated psychologist and counselling sessions. However, as noted by Laleh Esteki, the absence of a community that understands their cultural background exacerbates their anxiety. Esteki explained that the lack of prior knowledge and the absence of any desire to learn about the specific issues faced by these students among their Portuguese guardians often leads to unnecessary distress and avoidable conflict (Appendix I).

In this context, Esteki recounted an incident in which she was called upon by Portuguese police and social security to assist with an ongoing situation at the Braga Casa da Criança, where some ANIM students were living. Following international news the night before, Esteki had learned of a suicide bombing that claimed the lives of over 70 students at a girls' school in Kabul. Coincidentally, two ANIM girls had stayed out later than permitted that same night, resulting in their guardians confiscating their phones as punishment. The following morning, the girls received news of the attack at their former school and, distraught, urgently requested their phones to contact home and ascertain the fate of their friends. However, their Portuguese guardians were unaware of the events in Afghanistan and, due to the language barrier, the girls were unable to effectively explain their distress. The situation escalated until one of the girls became hysterical and threatened her guardians with a sharp object to retrieve her phone. In their confusion and fear, the staff called the police and social

security for help. Upon her arrival, Esteki managed to defuse the situation by translating and explaining the circumstances to both parties. She scolded the children for their behavior, emphasizing the importance of resolving issues through communication. However, she also believed that the Portuguese staff's lack of awareness regarding the stressors related to the tragic events in Afghanistan contributed significantly to the misunderstandings and frustrations and thus, hindered the integration process.

In addition to the challenges stemming from their home country, the ANIM students are beset by political obstacles. In March 2024, the Afghanistan Youth Orchestra was scheduled to tour the UK, with performances planned at prominent venues in London, Liverpool, Manchester, and Birmingham. However, just weeks before their performance at Queen Elizabeth Hall in London, their visas were rejected by the UK Home Office. During the author's interaction with the ANIM students for this dissertation, it was evident that the news of the visa rejection deeply affected them, leaving them anguished and despairing after months of training and rehearsals. The incident left a lasting psychological impact. The situation garnered significant media attention after ANIM's PR platforms publicized the issue, leading to mounting public criticism that eventually pressured the UK Home Office to reverse its decision and grant visas for the tour (Booth & Badshah, 2024b). Although this particular story had a happy ending, with the Afghanistan Youth Orchestra successfully touring the UK and later the US, it underscores the persistent external stressors linked to one's identity, which can evoke feelings of despair and helplessness.

These examples highlight the critical need for Portuguese guardians, staff, and tutors working with Afghan youth daily to gain a deeper understanding of the students' backgrounds, culture, and struggles. Such knowledge would help prevent harm caused by ignorance and make the careful care provided by Portuguese supervisors more effective.

Encouragingly, this issue appears to be improving. The documentary "Longe de Cabul" suggests that tutors who interact with ANIM students are becoming increasingly aware of their circumstances (RTP Play, 2023). In the interview, Sofia Sousa Rocha emphasized the importance of informing those working with Afghan students about the difficulties they faced before arriving in Portugal. "Both parts are trying to understand, and it was necessary

to tell the Portuguese students and the teachers, what situation they faced before. It's very important to that big group of people to know that they are in trouble in Afghanistan, they are in danger, they have no families here, they have problems with war. That kind of thing was very important to explain to the teachers" (Appendix IV).

The documentary also features Constança Simas, conductor of the all-girls Zohra Orchestra, who reflects on the incomprehensibility of music bans within the European context, noting, "It is very difficult for me to imagine the banning of music. Because we in our bubble in the European Union, have difficulty understanding the reality of it." Similarly, Sofia Sosa Rocha expressed her anger and frustration over the treatment of women in Afghanistan, who have been systematically erased from public life: "I think at least the Portuguese society is seeing these countries and seeing this culture from a different perspective." (RTP Play, 2023). Tiago Moreira Silva also remarked that getting to know the ANIM students on a deeper level has increased their knowledge and understanding of the student's experiences (Appendix V).

6.5 Key Points Cultural Clash

Through a comprehensive analysis of documents, previous studies, and narratives derived from interviews and the RTP-produced documentary film, several factors contributing to the obstacles and challenges faced by ANIM students in their integration process have been identified.

a. General Cultural Differences

As with any migrant group within a host community, significant cultural differences exist between the Afghans and the Portuguese. These differences manifest in various forms, including ethnicity, language, cuisine, belief systems, behavioral norms, and, most notably, life experiences and struggles. This cultural gap is particularly pronounced with Afghans, more so than with other refugees such as Ukrainians, who are perceived to be closer in culture and ethnicity to the Portuguese. This stark disparity creates a void in mutual understanding and poses a barrier to forming connections between ANIM students and their peers.

b. Lost Time

The seven months that the ANIM students spent in Lisbon, housed in a repurposed military hospital turned camp, represent a significant missed opportunity. This prolonged period of uncertainty starkly highlights the lack of preparedness on the part of Portuguese officials to receive and support these young refugees adequately. Instead of being actively engaged in integration programs – such as intensive language and cultural orientation, or training in new skills and adaptive education to prepare them for the Portuguese schooling system – the students were largely left to navigate this period on their own.

This extended limbo not only deprived the students of critical learning opportunities but also contributed to a deepening sense of despair and anxiety. The absence of structured support during this crucial phase eroded their motivation and undermined their skills, further complicating their eventual integration into Portuguese society.

c. Misconceptions and Lack of Awareness

The scarcity of knowledge about Afghanistan, Afghan culture, and the struggles faced by its people within the Portuguese host community, compounded by misconceptions fueled by negative media portrayals, created substantial barriers to mutual understanding between the ANIM students and their hosts. Despite the good intentions of the Portuguese community, it has become clear that the care provided – in terms of education, upbringing, and support – was frequently ineffective and, in some instances, even detrimental. This ineffectiveness stemmed largely from a lack of sufficient background knowledge about the children receiving this care, resulting in a disconnect that hindered the students' ability to adapt and thrive in their new environment.

d. Lack of Preparation

The experience of hosting Afghan ANIM students and facilitating their integration reveals that many of the challenges encountered stemmed from a profound lack of readiness and preparation on both sides. The Afghan students arrived with little understanding of what life in a vastly different society would demand, while the Portuguese host community – including the officials overseeing the integration process, NGOs like the Red Cross, staff at Casa de

Crianças, and tutors at the conservatory – began this endeavor without sufficient preparation or clear expectations of the challenges ahead.

In retrospect, a review of the past three years underscores that proper preparation on both sides, especially among those responsible for the students' welfare, could have conserved significant time, energy, and resources. This lack of foresight contributed to many of the difficulties experienced during the integration process, emphasizing the critical importance of thorough planning and mutual understanding in managing such complex undertakings.

e. Strictness and lack of Flexibility

In the context of guardianship and upbringing, it is evident in many instances that the Portuguese staff responsible for the Afghan children could have benefited from a less rigid approach. It is important to recognize that the ANIM students are not typical children in their care; they are minors and young adults who have endured unimaginable hardship, trauma, fear, and pain. These young people have also been abruptly separated from their families and all sense of home. As such, their care should have been approached with greater sensitivity and flexibility, taking into account the profound impact of their trauma. Treating them with this heightened level of care would have better addressed their unique needs and facilitated a more compassionate integration process

f. Resistance to Change

As an impartial observer with no affiliations to either group, Laleh Esteki repeatedly emphasized that a significant obstacle to integration was the lack of flexibility on both sides. She perceived both Afghan and Portuguese cultures as equally stubborn in their ways and equally resistant to adaptation, which led to considerable difficulties for both the refugees and the host community.

For the Afghans, this resistance to change was rooted in the hardships and humiliation they had endured, which fostered a deep-seated aversion to altering their ways. On the Portuguese side, the reluctance to embrace change stemmed from a lack of awareness, misconceptions about the integration process, and a deep-rooted feeling of cultural

superiority. This mutual inflexibility created a substantial barrier to successful integration, causing unnecessary pain and frustration for all involved.

g. Lack of Support Community

Many newly arrived immigrants rely on the support of compatriots who settled in the host community before them. Historical examples include the Turks in Germany during the mid-20th century, the Polish in the UK after World War II, and the Iranians in Los Angeles following the 1979 revolution. In recent decades, Afghans have become a significant portion of global migrants, with substantial communities established in various European countries. However, Portugal, having only recently become a destination for immigrants and refugees, lacks an Afghan community as large as those found in countries like Germany and the UK.

For the ANIM students, this absence means that aside from their Portuguese hosts –who have a different culture, language, and belief system – they have no established community of their own to lean on for support. As a result, they are entirely reliant on their Portuguese hosts, leaving them in a vulnerable position without the familiar cultural and communal networks that other immigrant groups have often depended upon.

h. Orientalist View

One of the most significant barriers to integration, as highlighted in the case study of ANIM students in Portugal, is the entrenched misconceptions held by the Portuguese host community – misconceptions rooted in what Laleh Esteki terms the "Orientalist view." Esteki, an expert in intercultural integration, argues that Orientalism and Eurocentrism, perpetuated through education and media, have fostered a perspective wherein Europeans, and in this specific context the Portuguese, perceive themselves as inherently superior to individuals from the East, in this case Afghans. She posits that only a fundamental shift in the educational discourse within schools and media can dismantle these biases and create a genuine pathway for integration (Appendix I).

6.6 Music as A Tool to Connect or Divide

Despite the cultural clashes, assimilation challenges, and instances of friction between the Afghan refugees and the host community, a prevailing consensus among all parties involved

is that music has played a pivotal role in easing the difficult journey of integration. In this context, integration refers both to the incorporation of Afghan refugees into the host society and the reciprocal acceptance of these newcomers by the host community. As discussed earlier, a significant cultural divide exists between the ANIM students and their Portuguese hosts – a divide that would be almost impossible to bridge without shared experiences or a supportive community of similar Afghan migrants. The language barrier further exacerbates this gap, making communication even more challenging. However, under these circumstances, both groups have turned to music as a means of bridging the divide and fostering mutual understanding.

Music has served not only as a psychological support for the ANIM students during their darkest moments but also as a medium for communication with their Portuguese classmates, tutors, and conductors – many of whom had previously had little or no exposure to people from Afghanistan and held limited or biased views. Sevinch Majidi noted that music played a crucial role in dispelling misconceptions surrounding Afghan identity. “At first, because they had heard a lot of negative things from the media, some of them had their guards up and didn’t want to talk to us, but when they got to know us and got to know our music, they changed their minds” (Appendix III). Sophia Sousa Rocha added that when the ANIM students performed for their Portuguese peers, it sparked curiosity and created opportunities for the Portuguese students to learn about different cultures and music. She emphasized that at times when language posed a barrier, music became the common language, enabling the Afghans to become part of the community (Appendix IV).

Ramiz expressed a similar view, emphasizing that music transcends language barriers and facilitates connection. “Music is a language that can connect all languages. When someone is working in music, the rest of the problems are solved slowly.” He also supported Sophia’s observation that Portuguese tutors and classmates often requested performances of traditional Afghan music because they were eager to learn about this foreign culture. Through these interactions, Ramiz believes that music helped them become part of the community and forge friendships. “It was because of music that we met and worked together. Through music, we were able to understand and know each other” (Appendix II).

While the educational curriculum restricts ANIM students from studying Western music, the orchestras and ensembles offer both Afghan and Portuguese students the freedom to explore. It is within these settings that true exchange and integration occur. Tiago Moreira da Silva and Constança Simas, conductors of the Afghan Youth Orchestra and the Zohra Orchestra, respectively, also underwent their own integration journeys, learning to navigate unfamiliar instruments, rhythms, and the cultural context of Afghan music. Simas described this as “a diverse sharing experience of many themes” in the RTP documentary, expressing the fulfilment she derives from working with something new and complex (RTP Play, 2023). In an interview for this research, Tiago discussed the hard work required to understand the new kind of music he was dealing with and how working together has been a learning experience for both parties. He noted that the Afghan orchestras, previously based on organic, informal collaboration, became more organized and professional as they progressed. He also appreciated the respect he received as a tutor, believing this kind of regard for teachers was waning in Portuguese culture (Appendix V). “This is the most challenging experience I’ve ever had, from a personal and musical perspective. I now value much more what I do, and I’ve grown a lot with them” (RTP Play, 2023).

Tiago believes that the presence of ANIM students in Portugal has helped dispel misconceptions about Afghanistan and raised awareness in the local community (Appendix V). Simas added that working with ANIM students and learning about the ban on music in Afghanistan deepened her empathy for their situation, noting that living in Europe’s “bubble” can make it difficult to grasp the realities faced by Afghans.

Sophia Sousa Rocha emphasized the school’s efforts to integrate Afghan students with their Portuguese peers, observing that music provided a common subject for conversation, helping bridge the gap (Appendix IV). As a result, many Portuguese students have joined Afghan orchestras and now travel with them to perform in various countries, including prestigious venues like New York City’s Carnegie Hall—a dream that once seemed unattainable for students of their age.

Most importantly, based on insights from those involved, music has been instrumental in helping the refugee group reclaim and present their lost identity to the host culture.

Unaccompanied minor refugees often lose all markers of identity in a new country, where they are reduced to the label of "refugee." Amid Europe's migrant crisis, the diversity and individuality of refugees – each with unique backgrounds, ethnicities, languages, arts, and cultures – have been overlooked. For the ANIM students, music and their instruments are remnants of the home, culture, and art they were forced to leave behind, now being threatened by the Taliban. Music has become a powerful tool for them to assert their identity as Afghan musicians in exile – courageous young individuals preserving their culture. It has facilitated their integration into Braga, far from home, among people who initially harbored misconceptions about Afghanistan. As Sophia Sousa Rocha aptly stated, music allowed the Portuguese students to look at their new Afghan classmates and “recognize a group of musicians” rather than simply foreign migrants (Appendix IV).

7. Insights and Strategies for ANIM

This chapter offers a reflective overview of the Afghanistan National Institute of Music (ANIM) students' journey since their arrival in Portugal, providing insights gathered through document analysis and interviews. While the progress made by ANIM, its students, and the Portuguese individuals and institutions supporting them has been impressive, there remain critical areas for improvement. The observations highlight key challenges, such as lost time during the early stages of resettlement and the need for more strategic integration measures. The recommendations aim to strengthen the role of cultural and creative activities in ANIM's future, addressing both the immediate needs of Afghan migrants and their long-term integration into Portuguese society. Through targeted interventions, this chapter proposes practical steps to ensure ANIM's continued success and relevance, both in Portugal and beyond.

7.1 Education Path and Financial Matters

Beyond orchestrating the extraordinary feat of mobilizing various states to evacuate and accommodate the staff and students of the Afghanistan National Institute of Music (ANIM), its director, Ahmad Sarmast, has successfully established a network of “Friends of ANIM”—a coalition of states, institutions, and individuals who provide crucial financial support. This funding assists with many aspects of the students’ musical education, such as the purchase of instruments and parts, as well as the hiring of specialized tutors for traditional Afghan instruments.

As previously noted, ANIM students, as minor refugees, receive housing, food, and stipends to cover daily expenses. However, as they grow older, these benefits are gradually reduced, with the expectation that they will achieve financial self-sufficiency by the age of twenty-five. This is an enormous expectation for young Afghans, many of whom have escaped persecution and war, to meet in just a few years in a new country with an unfamiliar language. Additionally, many students are supporting families back in Afghanistan, adding an extra layer of financial pressure.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that these students are pursuing music, a field traditionally difficult to monetize. Unlike more conventional career paths, the arts are more difficult to yield guaranteed financial security, and with no family or community support, the stakes for these students are especially high. In short, they cannot afford to fail in their pursuit of a musical career, as the consequences could be devastating.

It is therefore imperative that their education leads to professionalization within the music industry. Frequent meetings between tutors, supervisors, and students should be held to assess each student's skills and guide them toward a career path suited to their individual strengths. As Sofia Sousa Rocha highlighted in her interview for this dissertation, not all students will have a future as performers, but they may excel in other areas within the music industry. Others may find greater success studying composition, while some might explore opportunities in other sectors of the creative industries such as production.

Conservatories hosting the Afghan students must prioritize helping them network with industry leaders as a cornerstone of their efforts to prepare students for successful careers in the music industry. By inviting renowned musicians, composers, and industry professionals for guest lectures, masterclasses, and mentorship programs, Afghan students can gain invaluable insights and connections. Partnerships with orchestras, opera houses, and recording studios should be utilized to provide students with opportunities to collaborate with experts in their fields. Additionally, conservatories should actively facilitate student participation in competitions, festivals, and international tours, ensuring they meet key figures who can influence their careers. Alumni networks can also be leveraged to create mentorship programs and networking events, bridging the gap between students and established professionals.

Beyond networking, conservatories must also offer practical tools to help the Afghan students navigate the music industry. Courses in music marketing, entrepreneurship, and the business side of the arts are essential to prepare graduates for the realities of the field. These institutions can also create opportunities for students to collaborate across disciplines with filmmakers, visual artists, and other creatives, as well as provide internships and residencies that connect students with industry leaders in a hands-on

setting. Training in emerging technologies, like AI composition or digital sound design, can further position students as forward-thinking and adaptable professionals. By prioritizing these strategies, the conservatory can ensure ANIM students gain a foothold in the competitive music industry of Portugal.

7.2 Strengthening Local Marketing and Outreach

As an institution, the Afghanistan National Institute of Music (ANIM) maintains a significant and well-established online presence. Their website, supported by efficient SEO practices, is professional and relatively up-to-date, effectively conveying key information about their mission, history, and objectives. The content is thoughtfully organized to highlight essential aspects of their journey and goals. ANIM also leverages social media platforms such as Instagram, though there is room for improvement. Greater optimization could be achieved through the creation of separate pages for their orchestras and by implementing a more structured, frequent approach to content creation.

In the offline realm, ANIM and its orchestras, including the Afghanistan Youth Orchestra (AYO) and the Zohra Orchestra, lead two distinct lives: one international and one local. Internationally, they embark on tours and perform at prestigious venues, such as Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center, offering an exuberant and uplifting experience for the musicians. These performances, attended by global audiences, deliver a powerful message—highlighting a new generation of Afghan artists who are preserving their nation’s cultural heritage in exile, amidst the turmoil in their homeland.

Ahmad Sarmast, ANIM's director, plays a crucial role in shaping the institute's public image. A highly educated and eloquent individual, Sarmast’s fluency in English and his Western style of presentation enable him to resonate with international audiences, projecting a progressive image of the institution. His strategic use of public relations and media has been instrumental in garnering support for ANIM’s mission. A notable example is the case of the AYO's visa rejections by the UK Home Office, which gained extensive media coverage. This negative publicity compelled the Home Office to reverse its decision, underscoring the power of ANIM’s media outreach.

ANIM has garnered extensive media attention for both its story and its international concerts, with coverage ranging across diverse news outlets. Their international activities are also supported by robust marketing campaigns, which often begin months in advance of their concerts. These campaigns include engaging social media content—such as Instagram reels and email marketing—alongside high-quality, long-form videos that document the students’ journeys. Offline, ANIM has been featured in numerous prominent publications, including traditional media outlets like **The Guardian**, amplifying their visibility and aiding their fundraising efforts.

However, while ANIM’s international marketing campaigns are notably successful, their efforts within Portugal appear to be less focused. Despite regular contact with ANIM’s leadership and being subscribed to their mailing list, the author did not receive any notifications about AYO’s recent concert in Porto. Media coverage in Portugal tends to portray them more as Afghan refugees rather than as Afghan musicians preserving their culture through exile. Moreover, the Portuguese media’s portrayal often focuses on the country’s generosity in granting asylum, rather than highlighting ANIM’s artistic achievements or local activities. This sentiment is echoed by ANIM’s conductor, Tiago Moreira da Silva, who also agrees that their marketing efforts within Portugal are insufficient and could benefit from greater attention.

This gap in internal marketing is critical to address, as the students and musicians of ANIM live and study in Portugal. For their integration into Portuguese society to be successful, it is essential for ANIM to showcase its cultural and artistic contributions within the local context. Their activities in Portugal—whether concerts, cultural programs, or educational initiatives—need to be marketed with the same dedication as their international campaigns. This would not only foster cultural exchange but also enhance the perception of the ANIM students as talented musicians rather than refugees. A more targeted and effective marketing strategy within Portugal would contribute significantly to their integration, encouraging local audiences to recognize their artistic achievements and cultural value, which in turn supports the students’ safety, comfort, and overall well-being in their host country. This can be done through many channels such as hiring professionals to manage

social media accounts in an efficient and timely manner as opposed to how it is handled now. Advertising campaigns on social media such as Instagram and Facebook and on websites of institutions is also an effective manner. Partnering with public relations institutions and companies who announce cultural events is crucial. On a later stage hiring a professional marketing agency would be a justified option for the orchestra, however at this stage a first but essential step is creating a mailing list of interested people and efficiently utilizing it to inform audiences of activities and performances.

7.3 Evaluation of Efforts

During my interview with Tiago Moreira da Silva, he shared that the 2023 documentary *Longe De Cabul* (2023) had a profound impact on him, his family, friends, and others who watched it. The film played a significant role in changing their perception of Afghans and raising awareness about their situation (RTP Play, 2023). However, despite the existence of mechanisms to facilitate this kind of awareness-building, there is no concrete evidence to evaluate how many people actually watched the documentary or to what extent it was successful in altering perceptions or increasing understanding.

A related topic that emerged during the interview was the lack of clear feedback mechanisms for ANIM's international performances. When the Afghanistan Youth Orchestra (AYO) tours and performs in venues around the world, the impact of those concerts remains largely unknown to the producers and the orchestra. Essentially, they perform, leave, and have no way of measuring whether their concert achieved the desired objectives.

The concerts and programs organized by ANIM aim to achieve a variety of goals. At a basic level, they promote Afghan music and offer high-quality entertainment, as any musical program would. However, AYO also pursues higher objectives, such as promoting gender equality, cultural diversity, and the survival of Afghan music. These performances provide Afghan refugees with a platform to challenge misconceptions about their culture, showcase the richness and diversity of Afghanistan's cultural heritage, and inspire fellow Afghan refugees to preserve their traditions during a time of great uncertainty.

In addition to these performances and programs, it is crucial to establish a structured system for monitoring and evaluating their impact. Such a system would allow ANIM to assess how successful they are in reaching their goals. This evaluation could use standard methods from the creative industries, such as emailing audience members for reviews or conducting surveys immediately after concerts. Furthermore, there are mechanisms available to analyze social media comments and feedback as another avenue for gauging the program's reception. Partnering professionals expert at impact evaluation who follow the methods of Creative Industries such as research centers and universities that work independently and are not part of any involved party can be help this matter.

Implementing such an evaluation system would offer ANIM decision-makers valuable insights into what works well, what needs improvement, and how they can better achieve their objectives in the future. This data-driven approach would allow them to refine their strategies, ensuring that their performances continue to make a meaningful impact both on audiences and the broader cultural landscape.

7.4 Suggestions for the Future

After conducting a thorough case study of the Afghanistan National Institute of Music (ANIM) through the analysis of documents and interviews, it is essential to recognize the impressive progress they have made. Despite the challenges stemming from their past and the numerous transitions they have navigated, ANIM has shown remarkable resilience and adaptability, and so have all the Portuguese individuals handling their affairs in any capacity who have changed, grown and adapted their ways to accommodate the new members of their society. With this acknowledgement in mind, several suggestions regarding the role of the cultural and creative activities in their continued success, as well as in the broader context of future Afghan migrants, are proposed:

a. Avoid Losing Time

The first and most significant observation in the case study of ANIM students is the substantial amount of time lost from the moment of their arrival in Lisbon, largely due to a lack of preparation. Spending seven to eight months in limbo at a camp in a military hospital

is a considerable challenge for anyone, However, for a group of teenagers and young adults who had just experienced the trauma of abandoning their families and fleeing persecution, it was particularly damaging. This prolonged period of inactivity and uncertainty inevitably led to anxiety, doubt, and depression, causing many of them to lose focus, concentration, and a sense of direction.

Despite the generally positive assessment of the Portuguese Red Cross (PRC) in the evaluation report, this lost time has severely impacted the integration process of the ANIM students. During this time, they lost their organization as students and their direction as aspiring musicians, while also missing the opportunity to learn basic Portuguese, a crucial skill for daily life and future educational opportunities.

This period could have been used effectively to teach the students the fundamentals of the Portuguese language and provide basic musical mentorship, thereby helping them prepare for their eventual placement in conservatories. Such efforts would have enabled them to maintain their focus and ensure their musical education progressed, even while bureaucratic processes were underway.

Furthermore, the PRC report highlights that sports and cultural and creative activities were not incorporated into the camp's programs for Afghan refugees. Given the well-documented positive impact of cultural and creative activities on the mental health and well-being of refugees, the lack of these activities represents a missed opportunity. Programs of art and music therapy, community improvisations, performance ensembles, access to conservatories and music studios, and access to concerts and performances with tickets and transport would have helped lift the pressure of staying in a refugee camp.

For future situations of this nature, if bureaucratic processes cannot be expedited, the time spent waiting must be used more constructively. The entities responsible should place a greater emphasis on CCI activities and other mental health-focused interventions, using them to mitigate the psychological pressure of the waiting period. This approach could offer refugees meaningful engagement, maintaining their skills and well-being while preparing them for successful integration into their new society.

b. Implementing Impact Evaluation Mechanisms

As discussed earlier, the impact of ANIM's programs and performances remains largely unmeasured. By implementing structured evaluation mechanisms—such as audience feedback surveys, social media analysis, and post-event reviews—ANIM can gain insight into the effectiveness of their cultural interventions. These evaluations can inform future strategies and help them optimize outreach, especially within the Portuguese context.

c. Use of CCI for integration and Psychological Relief of Refugees

The CCIs can play a pivotal role in fostering integration by providing Afghan migrants with platforms to engage with local communities. Establishing more collaborative cultural events that highlight the intersection of Afghan and Portuguese traditions can help bridge gaps, encourage mutual understanding, and challenge stereotypes.

Given the trauma many Afghan migrants have experienced, the arts can be a therapeutic tool. Creating programs that integrate art therapy, music, and other creative practices such as creative writing and theatre can help students and migrants process their experiences and improve their mental health, while also fostering emotional resilience.

d. An Aspect of Education Focuses on Improvisation

The mentors of ANIM students and the conductors of their orchestras have consistently highlighted one of their greatest strengths as musicians—their remarkable ability to improvise, both individually and within ensembles. This talent for improvisation, deeply rooted in Afghan and Middle Eastern musical traditions, sets them apart and provides a unique advantage in the Western musical sphere. It reflects an essential value of Afghan musical culture and offers a distinctive quality that resonates with their artistic expression.

While it is acknowledged that integrating non-Western instruments into formal Western music curricula may be a long and difficult process—something that, realistically, may take years or even decades to materialize—there is an immediate opportunity to emphasize and nurture improvisation as a core part of Afghan refugees' and even their Portuguese peers' musical education. Encouraging improvisation would not only serve as a vital means of preserving this ancient tradition, which has flourished in Persephone cultures for millennia,

but also empower these students with a rare and highly prized skill in the competitive world of music and orchestras.

Furthermore, improvisation fosters a unique bond between musicians, creating a shared experience that connects them on a deeper level. In this context, it can strengthen the sense of community among Afghan musicians, while simultaneously enhancing their relationships with Portuguese peers and their audience. By developing this musical connection, the process of cultural integration can be enriched, as music becomes a powerful tool for bridging gaps, building relationships, and fostering mutual understanding between Afghan refugees and their host society.

In essence, placing greater emphasis on improvisation in the musical education of Afghan refugees not only preserves a significant cultural heritage but also equips them with a distinctive edge in their musical careers. More importantly, it offers a path toward deeper cultural exchange and integration, as improvisation invites collaboration, innovation, and connection across cultural divides.

e. Expanding Professional Pathways in the Creative Industries

For ANIM students and other Afghan migrants, expanding opportunities within the creative sector beyond performance-based careers is crucial. Offering training programs in areas such as arts management, music education, sound engineering, and creative entrepreneurship can provide sustainable career paths and contribute to long-term financial independence.

Connecting ANIM students with established professionals in the creative sector—both in Portugal and internationally—through mentorship programs and networking events can offer invaluable guidance, open doors to new opportunities, and facilitate smoother transitions into the workforce.

f. Strengthening Local Marketing and Outreach

While ANIM has achieved great success internationally, their local presence in Portugal requires more focused marketing efforts. Increasing visibility within the Portuguese cultural landscape is crucial for fostering a deeper connection with the host society. Developing

targeted marketing campaigns for local concerts, engaging with Portuguese media, and strengthening partnerships with local cultural organizations can help achieve this goal.

g. ANIM Students as a Foundation for Something Bigger

Ultimately, it is proposed that ANIM students are not only guided to become a source of inspiration for other Afghan refugees and a symbol of successful integration into Portuguese society but also positioned to serve as a foundation for broader, more impactful initiatives. By equipping them with skills in art and cultural management, they could play a pivotal role in organizing festivals that celebrate Afghan music or facilitate collaborations between Afghan refugee musicians and their Portuguese counterparts. Such initiatives would not only highlight their cultural heritage but also foster cross-cultural dialogue and mutual understanding.

Additionally, ANIM students could become mentors and educators, imparting their unique musical traditions and perspectives in their new home in Portugal. With proper support, they could serve as tutors or even establish their own institutions dedicated to both supporting Afghan refugees and preserving Afghan musical heritage. These initiatives would have the added benefit of promoting gender equality and cultural diversity in the Afghan community and fostering meaningful exchanges between Afghan migrants and Portuguese society. By creating spaces for cultural interaction, these students could contribute significantly to the integration process while ensuring that Afghan music continues to thrive and evolve in exile.

Conclusion

This dissertation has critically explored the profound role of creative activities , with a particular emphasis on music, in facilitating the integration of Afghan refugees in Portugal. By anchoring its analysis in Berry's theory of acculturation, the study underscores integration as a dynamic and reciprocal process, wherein refugees retain their cultural identity while actively participating in the cultural and social fabric of the host society. The findings from the case study of the ANIM students validate this framework, illustrating how music not only preserves their Afghan heritage but also serves as a conduit for meaningful cultural exchange and social cohesion within Portuguese society.

The ANIM students' experiences reflect Berry's ideal of integration, achieved through the interplay of cultural maintenance and host society openness. Their participation in music education enabled the expression of their identities, the sharing of their narratives, and the creation of connections that transcended linguistic and cultural barriers. Music, thus, emerges as an emblematic example of how creative practices can mediate the integration process, cultivating mutual understanding, reducing social isolation, and enriching emotional resilience.

This research highlights that integration extends beyond immediate needs; it necessitates fostering sustainable pathways for active participation and contribution. Music and broader creative endeavors possess a unique potential to catalyze such integration, transforming the challenges of displacement into opportunities for cultural symbiosis. These insights advocate for integration strategies that place arts and culture at their core, underpinned by institutional support and inclusive policies that valorize cultural diversity.

Ultimately, this dissertation contributes to the broader discourse on forced migration by demonstrating the multidimensional impact of creative activities in advancing refugee integration. As Portugal navigates its evolving demographic landscape, embracing the transformative power of creativity will be pivotal in constructing inclusive societies that celebrate diversity, foster resilience, and address the pressing challenges posed by forced migration.

Bibliography and References

Afghanistan National Institute of Music. (n.d.). *About Us*. Afghanistan National Institute of Music | ANIM. Retrieved September 27, 2024, from <https://www.anim-music.org/about-us>

Ager, A., & Strang, A. (2008). Understanding integration: A conceptual framework. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 21(2), 166–191. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fen016>

Ames, P. (2016, March 22). Portugal to Syrians: Come West. *Politico*. <https://www.politico.eu/article/portugal-to-syrians-come-west-refugee-crisis-portuguese-prime-ministerantonio-costa/>

Amnesty International. (2024, July 22). *Refugees, asylum seekers and migrants*. Amnesty International. Retrieved September 27, 2024, from <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/refugees-asylum-seekers-and-migrants/>

Anderson, J. (1986). *The Food of Portugal*. Morrow.

APA Dictionary of Psychology. (2014, April 19). *Xenophobia*. Retrieved September 27, 2024, from <https://dictionary.apa.org/xenophobia>

Asylum Information Database, European Council on Refugees and Exiles. (2024a, July 5). *Access to the territory and push backs*. Asylum Information Database | European Council on Refugees and Exiles. Retrieved September 27, 2024, from <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/portugal/asylum-procedure/access-procedure-and-registration/access-territory-and-push-backs/>

Asylum Information Database, European Council on Refugees and Exiles. (2024d, July 5). *Legal representation of unaccompanied children*. Asylum Information Database | European Council on Refugees and Exiles. Retrieved September 27, 2024, from <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/portugal/asylum-procedure/guarantees-vulnerable-groups/legal-representation-unaccompanied-children/>

Bahar, D., & Dooley, M. (2020). *Refugees as assets not burdens: The role of policy*. Brookings Institute. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/refugees-as-assets-not-burdens-the-role-of-policy/>

Bain, A. (2016). Constructing an artistic identity. *Work, Employment and Society*, 19(1), 25-46. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017005051280>

Booth, R., & Badshah, N. (2024, March 4). Outcry forces Home Office to allow Afghan youth orchestra to go on England tour. *The Guardian*.
<https://www.theguardian.com/music/2024/mar/04/afghan-youth-orchestra-refused-visas-for-tour-of-england-days-before-first-gig>

Borrego, B. (2016, December 31). *Demographics of Immigration in Portugal*. European Commission. Retrieved September 28, 2024, from https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/library-document/demographics-immigration-portugal_en

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2016). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.

Burnett Tylor, E. (1920). The Science of Culture. In *Primitive Culture* (Vol. 1). John Murray, London.

C. Hernández, J. C. H. (2022, July 13). Far From Kabul, Building a New Life, With Music and Hope. *New York Times*. <https://nytimes.com/2022/07/13/arts/music/afghan-national-institute-of-music-lisbon.html>

Carolo, D., Carvalho, R., Batalha, C., Gouveia, S., & Lebre, P. (2023). A New Beginning in Portugal: Reflections on the Work Fulfilled by the Portuguese Red Cross Temporary Resettlement Centre on the Integration of Afghan Asylum Seekers. *Open Journal of Social Sciences*, 11, 133-155. <https://doi.org/10.4236/jss.2023.1111009>

Charmaz, K. (2006). Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis. *SAGE Publications*.

Council of Europe. (2022, December 2). *European Convention on Human Rights*. The European Convention on Human Rights. Retrieved September 28, 2024, from <https://www.coe.int/en/web/human-rights-convention>

Counterpoints Arts & Baring Foundation. (2023, September 6). *Art, refugees and mental health: a new report* - Counterpoints. Counterpoints. <https://counterpoints.org.uk/art-refugees-and-mental-health-a-new-report/>

Danish Refugee Council, United Nations University, Maastricht University, & Asia Displacement Solutions Platform. (2019). *Afghan diaspora in Europe*. <https://www.pro.drc.ngo/media/qrcgzbg1/drc-executive-summary-afghan-diaspora-in-europe.pdf>

Dimitrov, A., & Angelov, G. (2017). Refugee Integration in the EU: Challenges and Economic Impact. *Economic Alternatives*, 4, 584–600.

Diplomatic Portal. (2018, April 20). *Portuguese emigrants are living proof that a multicultural Europe is possible*. Retrieved September 28, 2024, from <https://portaldiplomatico.mne.gov.pt/en/communication-and-media/news/portuguese-emigrants-are-living-proof-that-a-multicultural-europe-is-possible>

Domènech, J. M., Llorens I Jimeno, E., & Belo, D. (2020, April 17). *Ageing in Spain and Portugal and its impact on economic growth: a regional approach*. CaixaBank Research. Retrieved September 28, 2024, from <https://www.caixabankresearch.com/en/economics-markets/labour-market-demographics/ageing-spain-and-portugal-and-its-impact-economic>

Escola Artística Conservatório de Música Calouste Gulbenkian. (n.d.). *Apresentação*. Retrieved September 28, 2024, from <https://conservatoriodebraga.pt/apresentacao/>

European Commission. (2024, June 12). *Portugal: Government presents new plan for migration*. European Website on Integration. Retrieved September 28, 2024, from https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/news/portugal-government-presents-new-plan-migration_en

European Commission. (n.d.-a). *Common European Asylum System*. Retrieved September 28, 2024, from https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/common-european-asylum-system_en

European Commission. (n.d.-b). *Cultural and Creative Industries*. Retrieved September 28, 2024, from https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/sectors/cultural-and-creative-industries_en

European Parliament. (2000). Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. *Official Journal of the European Communities*.
https://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf

European Union. (n.d.). *Action Plan on Unaccompanied Minors (2010-14)*. EUR-Lex. Retrieved September 28, 2024, from <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/action-plan-on-unaccompanied-minors-2010-14.html>

European Commission (2024, August 19). *Governance of migrant integration in Portugal*. European Website on Integration. Retrieved September 28, 2024, from https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/country-governance/governance-migrant-integration-portugal_en

Gee, J. (2014). *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis: Theory and Method*. Routledge.

Gheisareh-Dehi, P. (2017). *Factors contributing to successful integration of Afghan women refugees in the UK* [MA Dissertation Oxford Brookes University].<https://radar.brookes.ac.uk/radar/items/3a312858-ff55-4104-8e8a-b0a32244eac2/1/>

Global History Dialogues. (2024a, February 1). *The ban on music by the Taliban and how it affects the lives of young musicians*. Global History Dialogues. Retrieved August 28, 2024, from <https://globalhistorydialogues.org/projects/the-ban-on-music-by-the-taliban-and-how-it-affects-the-lives-of-young-musicians/>

Hoefel, M. d. G. L., Moura-Vieira, M. E., Alves-Hopf, S., Freire Filha, L. G., Guerra, P. (2023). Graffiti, Migrant Women, Intersectionality: Artistic Experiences in Portugal. In N. Callaos, S. Hashimoto, N. Lace, B. Sánchez, M. Savoie (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 14th International Multi-Conference on Complexity, Informatics and Cybernetics: IMCIC 2023*, pp. 201-208. International Institute of Informatics and Cybernetics.
<https://doi.org/10.54808/IMCIC2023.01.201>

Hudson, M. (2013). The Spiral Plait: Integration, Arts, and Migrant Women. *St Antony's International Review*, 9(1), 92–107. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26229103>

Instituto Nacional de Estatística (INE). (2021). *Demographic Statistics 2021*. Retrieved July 28, 2024, from https://www.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpid=INE&xpgid=ine_p_etarias&menuBOUI=13707095&contexto=pe&selTab=tab4

International Association for the Study of Forced Migration (IASFM). (2018). *Code of Ethics: Critical reflections on research ethics in situations of forced migration*. <https://www.fmreview.org/ethics/clarkkazak-2/>.

Instituto Nacional de Estatística (INE). (n.d.). *Statistics Portugal - web portal*. Retrieved July 20, 2024, from https://www.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpid=INE&xpgid=ine_indicadores&contecto=pi&indOcorrCod=0012094&selTab=tab0

Instituto Nacional Estatística (INE). (2020). *Fertility Survey 2019* [Press release]. Instituto Nacional Estatística.

Instituto Nacional Estatística (INE). (2023, June 12). *Synthetic Index of Regional Development*. Instituto Nacional Estatística. Retrieved September 28, 2024, from https://www.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpid=INE&xpgid=ine_destaques&DESTAQUESdest_boui=594882965&DESTAQUESmodo=2

Instituto Nacional Estatística (INE). (n.d.). *Statistics Portugal - web portal*. Retrieved July 20, 2024, from https://www.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpid=INE&xpgid=ine_indicadores&contecto=pi&indOcorrCod=0010704&selTab=tab0

International Longevity Centre UK. (2024, February 26). *More than one in three workers in Portugal are aged 50 and over, an increase from one in four in 2011*. ILCUK. <https://ilcuk.org.uk/older-workers-in-portugal/#:~:text=By%202040%2C%20half%20of%20Portugal's,be%20aged%2065%20and%20over.>

Jurriaans, K.J. (2017). Portugal Offers Refugees a Warm Welcome, but Can't Get Them to Stay. *The New Humanitarian*.

<https://deeply.thenewhumanitarian.org/refugees/articles/2017/09/01/portugal-offers-refugees-a-warm-welcome-but-cant-get-them-to-stay>

Kassam, A. (2024, July 22). 'The Taliban tried to silence us': the musicians who escaped to Portugal. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/jul/22/the-taliban-tried-to-silence-us-the-afghan-musicians-who-escaped-to-portugal>

Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (2nd ed.). *Sage Publications, Inc.*

RTP Play. (2023, December 20). *Longe de Cabul* [Video]. RTP Play. Retrieved September 28, 2024, from <https://www.rtp.pt/play/p12583/longe-de-cabul>

MacroTrends. (n.d.). *Portugal refugee statistics 1960-2024*. Retrieved September 28, 2024, from <https://www.macrotrends.net/global-metrics/countries/PRT/portugal/refugee-statistics>

Makan, A. (2022, June 22). Portugal is the EU's latest hotspot for undocumented migrants. *Foreign Policy*. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/05/21/portugal-europe-migration-undocumented-work-residency-citizenship-south-asia/>

Michael J. Urick, Elaine C. Hollensbe, Suzanne S. Masterson, Sean T. Lyons, Understanding and Managing Intergenerational Conflict: An Examination of Influences and Strategies. *Work, Aging and Retirement*, Volume 3, Issue 2, 1 April 2017, Pages 166–185

Mundia, O. & UNHCR India. (2023, October 16). *Refugees as assets to their new countries* [Press release]. UNHCR India. Retrieved September 28, 2024, from <https://www.unhcr.org/in/news/press-releases/refugees-assets-their-new-countries>

Observatório Da Emigração. (2024). *Mais de 12 mil portugueses emigraram para a Suíça em 2023*. Retrieved July 22, 2024, from <https://observatorioemigracao.pt/np4/home>

OECD. (2023). *OECD Economic Surveys: Portugal 2023*. Retrieved September 28, 2024, from https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/oecd-economic-surveys-portugal-2023_2b8ee40a-en.html

Pordata, Estatísticos Sobre Portugal e Europa. (2023). *Pordata divulga retrato da população estrangeira e dos fluxos migratórios em Portugal*. Pordata. https://www.pordata.pt/sites/default/files/2024-07/f_2023_12_12_pr_dia_internacional_dos_migrantes_vf.pdf

Reyes, A. (2014). Identity Construction in the Context of Migration. *Il Saggiatore Musicale*, 21(1), 105–121. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1715679637?sourcetype=Scholarly%20Journals>

Rezaei, O., Banham, V., & Adibi, H. (2024). Afghan immigrants in Western Australia: Divisions within the community and integration within the society. *Ethnicities*, 24(6), 967–984. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14687968231181421>

Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences*. Sage Publications.

RTP Notícias. (2024, September 17). Maioria dos portugueses quer menos imigrantes e menos emigrantes. *RTP Notícias*. Retrieved September 28, 2024, from https://www.rtp.pt/noticias/pais/maioria-dos-portugueses-quer-menos-imigrantes-e-menos-emigrantes_n1600407

Saberi, H. (1986). *Afghan food and cookery*. Hippocrene Books.

Sam, L., & Berry, W. (2016). Acculturation strategies. In *The Cambridge Handbook of Acculturation Psychology* (pp. 34–36).

Sell, F. L. (2022). The Portuguese dilemma of unstable pensions. *Intereconomics*, 57(6), 394–398. <https://www.intereconomics.eu/contents/year/2022/number/6/article/the-portuguese-dilemma-of-unstable-pensions.html>

Shaheed, A., & Sultani, L. A. (2024, March 29). *Women’s History Month: Afghan Girls Struggle for Education*. Princeton School of Public and International Affairs. Retrieved

September 28, 2024, from <https://spia.princeton.edu/news/womens-history-month-afghan-girls-struggle-education>

Smith, J. A., & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research*. Sage.

Statista. (2024, June 3). *Number of asylum-seekers in Portugal 2021-2022*, by main countries of nationality. Retrieved July 25, 2024, from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1421802/portugal-asylum-seekers-by-country-of-nationality/>

Tavares, J., Santinha, G., & Rocha, N. P. (2023). Unlocking the WHO's Age-Friendly Healthcare Principles: Portugal's quest and recommendations. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health/International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 20(22), 7039. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20227039>

The Economic Times. (2024, March 4). Portugal is Europe's last open door for immigrants. *The Economic Times*. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/nri/migrate/portugal-is-europes-last-open-door-for-immigrants/articleshow/108199003.cms?from=mdr>

UNHCR - The UN Refugee Agency. (n.d.-a). *Global Trends Report 2023* | UNHCR. UNHCR. <https://www.unhcr.org/global-trends-report-2023>

UNHCR - The UN Refugee Agency. (n.d.-b). *UNHCR master glossary of terms* | UNHCR. UNHCR. <https://www.unhcr.org/glossary#h>

UNHCR Portugal. (n.d.). *Relocation and humanitarian admission*. UNHCR Portugal. Retrieved September 28, 2024, from <https://help.unhcr.org/portugal/relocation/>

UNHCR. (2011). *States Parties to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol*. In United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. <https://www.unhcr.org/media/states-parties-1951-convention-and-its-1967-protocol>

UNHCR. (2024). *Afghanistan Refugee Crisis Explained*. UNHCR. Retrieved September 28, 2024, from <https://www.unrefugees.org/news/afghanistan-refugee-crisis-explained/>

UNHCR. (n.d.). *What is a refugee?*. UNHCR. Retrieved September 28, 2024, from <https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/what-is-a-refugee/>

Villaverde Cabral, M. (n.d.). The Ageing Challenge in Portugal and Europe. *Feed*. <https://feed.jeronimomartins.com/society/lifestyle/ageing-challenge-portugal-europe/>

White, L. A. (1999, July 26). Culture | Definition, Characteristics, Examples, Types, tradition, & Facts. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/culture>

Worthy, L. D., Lavigne, T., & Romero, F. (2020, July 27). *Berry's model of acculturation*. Pressbooks. <https://open.maricopa.edu/culturepsychology/chapter/berrys-model-of-acculturation/>

Appendix I

Transcript of the Interview 1. Laleh Esteki

Laleh Esteki is an Iranian researcher at CIIE-FPCEUP in intercultural integration in . Fluent in Persian and Portuguese, she has collaborated with UNHCR and ACM as a translator for Afghan immigrants in Portugal and as a cultural moderator for the ANIM students.

Note: This interview was initially conducted in Persian and was then translated into English.

Interviewer: Afra Safa

Date: 7 February 2024

L.E: I worked as a translator with the United Nations High Commissioner for Migration, first in the form of translating official documents or laws that they wanted to convey to the refugees and that they needed them to understand. Then I started to work for ACM, which also offers services, they had telephone services and I was talking to migrants in Lisbon. People [refugees and immigrants] would call from there and I would translate and guide them. Most of the problems they had were with social security and administration. Then I was asked if I would go to other cities and help and I said yes, I would go to the courts in Braga and Porto.

There are two types of Afghan immigrants here. Afghan families who came from Turkey and Greece, and Portugal accepted them according to their quota from the European Union. For example, I was working with the prisons here on the phone and some children wanted to enter England illegally and they are now in prison here. But if they want to stay here, they need to be told the conditions. Most of them want to go to England and they are given 40 days to leave Portugal and they are not allowed to return for 7 years, but if they stay and request [asylum], they [Portugal government] will do things for them. The next part was in Braga and Guimarães. These were the children of students under the age of 18 who came here with Mr. Sarmast after the [resurgence of] Taliban. They help these children with the

funds they get from the European Union to promote Afghan culture. They decided to send all of them to Guimarães and Braga because of the Gulbenkian Music School and the Conservatory. I was in the project that Braga Art School [conservatory] did for these children, this project was done by a teacher named Sofia and a psychologist named Rita, and was broadcasted by RTP channel. They needed help and the person in charge of Casa da Crinsas called me and said that they want to solve their problems with the [Afghan] children, and they wanted help apart from ACM. I went there and also gave them Portuguese lessons.

A.S: *What is your opinion about the general situation psychologically and culturally?*

L.E: What happened to the Afghan immigrants in Portugal was that when they accepted them, all of them who had fled after America's withdrawal or were brought out by Sarmast, in any way, all were taken to a military hospital in Lisbon. The ones that had legal paperwork and fled after the withdrawal of the United States. They were in this hospital for 7 months. The conditions were very bad and none of them had learned Portuguese or received proper education, and even their musical education had been limited to two sessions with someone who spoke in Farsi and not English. They were actually in Qatar for two months and then they were in Lisbon for 7 months without training.

Children under the age of 18 are under the care of the Portuguese government and they sign a contract with the Portuguese government and go to court every 6 months or a year in the presence of their guardian or those who take care of them and a person from social security to see a judge who represents the government. The Portuguese government has a series of duties, such as money to pay for home, clothes and education. They must attend the school. If they drop out of school, they become illegal immigrants. Additionally, those who live with them should be happy with them. As long as they study until the age of 25, the Portuguese government is committed to doing everything for them. They receive a stipend and live in buildings supported by an organization that takes care of homeless children. In their international section, they have agreed to accept Afghan children as well. which are nine children.

Those seven months had a very destructive effect on the children, both culturally and linguistically. The first obstacle that must be removed is the language that one must learn

and be able to meet basic needs. Their English was very poor. They could talk and communicate, but if someone spoke for a long time or with an accent, they would not understand. But from where I entered the story, I saw that they (the Conservatory in Braga) also pay attention to the mental and cultural aspects of their studies, but they were not successful in any of them.

A.S: *Why?*

L.E: I was acting as a cultural mediator. I am very interested in Afghan writers and Afghan music, and we feel close to them because of the Persian language. We [Iranians] also have a big cultural difference with the Portuguese. One of the problems they [Portuguese supervisors] had with these children was food. One of the important parts of culture is food. It is their culture here that the child should eat breakfast and secondly, they should eat soup first. After the soup, eat something like the main course and then something like dessert. In the Afghan culture, the understanding is that soup is for one who is sick. It is in our culture [Iranian culture] too but we [Iranians] are more connected to the West and we have accepted these cultures. But for us, this is not the rule in our house. This is Western culture. It is not our culture. And in the East, which includes the Middle East and the Far East, we don't really have a course separation. I explained to the Portuguese that in their culture, only someone who is sick has soup. The Portuguese are very strict in terms of food discipline in their schools. The food is not salted, and the food is fat-free and healthy. It's healthy but it's nauseating. They even have three types of food, vegetarian food, meat and fish meals. They had a dispute over soup. The Portuguese said that if you do not eat soup, we will not give you food. They had gone to school without eating. A dispute had been made from such a small thing.

A.S: *Who should have stepped back?*

L.E: I don't think school should have taken a step back. They asked me to make the children understand. And explain to them. I want to say that raising awareness also helps. I gathered them and explained that your food is approved by nutrition specialists, and they do this for your health. They said we don't want it and we don't like their food at all. I was explaining that when you enter a new culture, you must get to know [their culture] and integrate. I am not

saying that you should abandon your values and what is important to you. But these were still not enough. And the Portuguese kept insisting that they should eat soup. I cannot say who is right. I told the Portuguese that we can't force our own children even in our own homes. But they claimed that they would not feed their own children if they did not obey them. This goes back to the principle of culture.

I was talking to a family whose daughter was there. Their family had 17 children in Afghanistan. In Guimarães, their supervisor was a person who studied psychology and told me that they wanted to talk to the families of these children. They wanted to know about them and update the families about their children. It is very great. The best thing you can do for the person is to communicate. We tried but it didn't work. The reason is that these children were under the age of 18, they were emotionally very sad, and they were socially humiliated after their bad departure from Afghanistan. For seven months in Lisbon, they were humiliated and harassed a lot, and I think that these events - of course, they are very similar in terms of personality - but these conditions had formed a kind of resistance in them to accept the Portuguese culture. They did not accept Portugal and wanted to go to Germany. They thought that the conditions of Germany, America and England were better, and this was their dream. I used to explain to them that wherever you go, you must know the language and you must study.

A.S: *The dream of America, England and Germany. Is it more of an economic or cultural issue?*

L.E: It is a financial matter only.

A.S: *What is the reason for this resistance?*

L.E: People who are in the East think that when they enter the West, free sexual relationships and money are thrown on the street. This is because of the two-faced Eastern culture. When we are abroad, we only talk about good things [to friends and family back home]. We do not say how hard we struggled to learn the language and to work. As a scholar here, I have to work double times of a Portuguese researcher and have perfect morals. We have to try, but they [the Afghans] don't want to try.

There is serious resistance in the Portuguese from the technical point of view, which is not flexible in any way, and the Afghans are the same.

A.S: *So, you think the resistance of Afghans is due to the wrong concept they have of the West?*

L.E: It is a bit of personality and mentality. As much as the Portuguese do not accept change, they also resist change.

If you look at Berry's theory, in the adaptation part, you accept your own culture and the culture of others and live together. And none of us will give up on our own culture. These things we are talking about are marginalization and assimilation. I think that Iranian people will quickly enter the assimilation phase. We do exactly what we have to do. We accept and immerse ourselves in the host culture. But Afghans, Indians and Pakistanis are quickly marginalized, which means they are quickly taken into colonies and their own communities. In no way do they respect their [the host culture] food, ceremonies, or clothes. Part of this is due to the culture of Afghanistan. and half of it is because of the Portuguese culture. The Portuguese also have very strong communities in other countries. That's why they struggle to assimilate in this case as well.

During my time at the University of Porto, I received many questionnaires from foreign students in Portugal about their expectations before and after, about their anxiety and social-cultural adaptation according to Berry. The resistance that exists among the Eastern students, as well as the Portuguese, does not allow us to reach a result. The psychologist and I used to go there from two different cities [to help the Afghans] and they wouldn't get up in the morning [to meet us].

A.S: *It sounds like spite and sulking.*

L.E: A lot of progress happens when one accepts a country's culture and adapts to it. They do not accept the Portuguese culture because of the bad economy. They ask me how much I make, and they don't have the culture not to ask this. During the month of Ramadan. They asked me if I fast. I said I will not talk about religion. They said you are a Muslim and you are

one of us, but are you Shia? I said that I do not believe in anything, but I know a lot about religion, and I can help you.

Their supervisor asked me what they wanted for Ramadan. I told them the story of the month of Ramadan. The girls said they wanted to wear a scarf [hijab]. Normally they wear tank tops and go to the gym. They [the Portuguese supervisors] coped with this so much. But they [Afghans] have difficult characters. I went and bought dates for them and the centre also participated to buy special food for them. They asked for explanations about how the celebration will be after Ramadan and they wanted to celebrate for them. We bought scarves for them and they said they didn't want those scarves and wanted to wear burqas. Before this, they used to go out half-naked. I told them off and told them to put their shawls on their heads and start fasting if they wanted to. I went the next week and the Portuguese said that they did not fast and did not wear headscarves. Two or three of them began fasting, but then they gave up and let it go.

The Portuguese were worried about them. I went on the third week and the Portuguese said that we will not allow them to observe Ramadan anymore. Because they are awake from night to morning on their phones and they are making noise and the neighbors have complained. They sleep during the day and do not go to school. They do not fast either. Then they wanted to go on a trip and I told them that you can't be fasting while travelling. If it is longer than a certain distance, you should not fast. They said it was profane. Two or three of them who were Sunnis and thus were more religious told the rest who were Shias that they were not Muslims. These two escaped and went to Germany. In the end, they [Portuguese supervisors] didn't let them go through Ramadan again.

A.S: *Do you think this is a childish expression or a serious cultural matter?*

L.E: One reason was that they were influenced by their families. And they told them that they have to fast. They called them every day and told them that they should not fall under the Western culture. That they should not get a boyfriend. But all the girls had boyfriends nonetheless. They also don't touch pork.

They [Portuguese supervisors] celebrated their birthdays. The Portuguese used to ask what they should get for the birthday boy or girl and who should they invite for them. They used to send them to hair salons, spending 30 euros for everyone whose birthday it was. They did not understand the budget. I showed them my finances, and how the centers are responsible for their expenses. For the person whose birthday it was, they would buy any food from any restaurant they liked. But for the Invited friends they would give home-cooked food. The Afghan kids wanted their friends to have restaurant food as well. But the center didn't have a budget to do that so they [the Afghans] wouldn't invite their friends. These are unsuccessful examples.

These were minors. I was talking on the phone from all over Portugal. They have a lot of problems with themselves in their own culture. They also intrude on each other's religious and private matters. The Portuguese used to say, why don't the boys become friends with each other? We said, well, two of them are Sunni and two of them are Shia, and they don't like each other. The Portuguese know nothing

A.S: *What are the things that the Portuguese should have known?*

L.E: The Portuguese know nothing. They don't know anything about our [Middle East] cultures. They only think that those who are there [in Afghanistan] wear burqas, travel with donkeys and horses, and fight with each other. Of course, they are right about the war and fighting. Iranians fight in secret; the Afghans fight openly.

A.S: *Does this mean they don't know the ethnic or religious frictions of Afghan people?*

L.E: The Portuguese know nothing. I was explaining to all of them. There was a young man in Casa Pia, a lonely 16-year-old boy who was only willing to talk to me. He smoked a lot and had mental problems. They wanted to help him stop smoking, he would go to a psychologist, and I would translate. The psychologist asked me why he didn't eat anything and thought that he was trying to kill himself while it was the month of Ramadan, and he was just fasting.

They are very afraid of the word Allah Akbar [*Literary: God is Great*]. They think that if someone says this, they want to kill them. Muslims are considered violent and uncivilized.

A.S: *We [Iranians] also face these issues. Whenever someone asks me where am I from, I prefer not to answer.*

L.E: I encourage them to ask, and I explain and try to change their opinion. As much as I saw the Afghan culture as stubborn, inflexible and unfamiliar with other cultures, I saw the Portuguese as the same.

A.S: *Do you think if people were more informed about these things There would be less problems?*

L.E: They would understand that when a group of people from a certain place do not want to eat the soup, it is a cultural issue! What happens if they don't eat soup? They [Portuguese Supervisors] said no, they should be educated and coached. My own daughter stopped eating at school because of this.

They have fled the war. Most of them have two mothers. And they love their second mother more than their biological mother. The Portuguese do not understand that their fathers sometimes have two wives. For example, there was a family, the first wife was Urdu and Afghan and the second wife was Pashto from Pakistan. This boy was Pashto himself but loved the other mother and used to talk to her. He explained that his father was a drunk and a womanizer and he himself had anxiety and panic attacks. He said that his father had gone to Kazakhstan and brought back a young girl with him, and since then he had panic attacks. The Guimarães psychologist had taught him the breathing system and had been given medications by a doctor. But he did not take his medications. We explained to him that if you don't take your pill, you will feel worse. The supervisors were very worried about him. And they would fight over this.

If the understanding of the situation of the Afghan children who escaped from those horrible conditions were more Yes, their problems would be reduced.

They [the Afghan children] asked me "Why have they not brought our families?" "They were supposed to come." But, after the war in Ukraine, Qatar stopped cooperating. The Israeli-Palestinian war made the situation worse. The Afghans can't even come from Iran, they get themselves to Qatar first and come here from Qatar. Qatar helps a lot usually, but Afghans

were placed in a lower priority. From the time when these [kids] were in Lisbon, both their Afghan and Portuguese officials had promised that the families would be reunited in 3 months. Now 3 years have passed, and their families have not been reunited. They [ANIM students] say that they [the people in charge] are lying.

Another problem they have is with the bread. They cannot eat Portuguese bread. Our bread is different, but we adapt to it or cook it at home. I told them to learn and start a bakery business for Afghans. But they are not thinking about work.

A.S: *Tell me about the ones in Braga.*

L.E: They were very lonely. Another problem here is that there is no heating system. The biggest culture shock was the cold they experienced. They are musicians. Their hands should be warm. If their hands are cold, they cannot play. We [Iranians] begin heating our houses from the beginning of autumn. Afghans are the same. They used to say to the Portuguese [guardians] that we are cold and we cannot play our instruments. But they ignored them and that problem was not solved.

Once I got a call from the police department and social security and they had a situation. They said that two of the girls had gone out, they were told to return at 11 PM and they had come back at 12 and their supervisors had confiscated their mobile phones. The next morning was a day when a bomb was planted in a school in Afghanistan and 70 girls were killed. The news had reached them that the bomb was in their school and they wanted to know who died and what happened to their classmates. But the supervisors wouldn't give their phones back because they didn't understand what the girls were saying. They did not understand each other's language at all. One of the girls was under so much pressure and became hysterical, took a pair of scissors and threatened the staff. So they called the police and Social Security. I also went And I spoke to them. I asked the Portuguese supervisor if they knew what had happened in Afghanistan that day. They knew nothing. I said that 70 of their friends had died and that they were very anxious and upset. I also talked to the girls and told them that if they want to solve their problems, they need to talk. If they scream, the supervisors would call the police or give them an injection to calm down.

Portugal was not at all ready to accept Afghans, I don't know about other nationalities.

A.S: *What happened at the Ismaili center in Lisbon was the same.*

L.E: I had spoken many times with the woman who was killed. The man who attacked the Ismaili Center, had before that filmed some videos and posted them on YouTube. He said that he has three children. "I want a job, provide me with a job." He was angry that day because his Portuguese teacher was making fun of him. I talked to the children and this teacher who was killed was making fun of them. Well, some of the Afghans are illiterate. The Portuguese teachers had shouted at them and would not explain. I had a 70-year-old man call me and complain. The person who had been harassed was in the same house with his children and the landlord had told them that they should leave. The government of Portugal gives adult immigrants free accommodation, water, and electricity bills when they come here. But after 18 months, all help stops. Unless Social Security accepts that they cannot find work and gives a family of four 450 Euros for monthly expenses. This makes them stressed, they are all extremely stressed. They also told him that he should leave the flat with three children. He had gone mad and done this.

A.S: *Do the children who played music have programs with Portuguese musicians?*

L.E: Their classes are together and their teachers are Portuguese as well. But their problem is that their music level is very low. The Portuguese teachers used to tell me that we don't want to crush them, but they know music at the level of a 5-year-old. They cannot read the scores or notes. Most of them are trained by ear. But here they teach them notes. for example, another problem was when they went to the conservatory school in Braga, one of the lessons was religious hymns. They said that they do not believe in the Holly Mary and the Son of God and they will not sing these. But this was part of the curriculum, and they had to do it. I told them that you don't know what you are reading when you are singing in an opera for example. They said we refuse to do music anymore, the supervisors said OK, we will introduce you to go to other schools and study other fields. Then they realized they made a bad mistake and got back to it. Then they said that in our Quran it is said to respect other religions.

A.S: *You think playing together will make things better.*

L.E: No! Because the Portuguese don't communicate not only with Afghans and Iranians but with anyone they deem lesser than them. They like to play with Germans and the English, but not with Afghans. The Afghan children said that they really wanted to be friends with them, but the Portuguese did not make friends with them. Especially in school. I work on decolonization; it goes beyond culture. Foucault in Edward Said's book *Orientalism* says that cultural information is not enough. The creation of discourse is needed. The base must be changed. The same cycle first created the perspective of the Westerners towards us must be reversed. the book *Orientalism* explains how the West found this view towards us, and when and how it started. And the same problem is with Latin America and Africa. There is also Eurocentrism. Educational curriculum and media content production are Eurocentric. Change happens when this discourse is created. The dialogue of civilizations can be done when these things have a course dedicated to them in universities and these matters are considered in educational programs. And these should be coordinated to be effective. It has to be something bigger and stronger. I myself try very hard to introduce our culture. I will introduce the books of Khayyam [persian poet and philosopher] or Sadegh Hedayat [Persian author]. As a small particle. Our friends are Portuguese language teachers and whenever there is an inter-cultural discussion, I participate and talk, but it is very little. There must be something bigger and better.

A.S: *What can the private and public sectors do culturally?*

L.E: In schools, they asked me about their national holidays with religion. They asked about their food. The base of Afghan food is potatoes, they eat little meat, they do not touch pork and do not eat fish at all. I introduced their music, but the Portuguese don't like Afghan music very much. They don't like their dance at all. Of course, some want to communicate, but they are very few.

A.S: *Do they celebrate events for them?*

L.E: Of course, Nowruz [Persian New Year] was very important for them. They had taken a place for it at school and had a party.

A.S: *Portuguese friends had participated?*

L.E: Very little. The Portuguese are very reluctant to learn about our cultures. My daughter has been here for four years and is more Portuguese than Iranian, but she still has problems with the Portuguese culture. They are very resistant. As people, we try, but the Portuguese have a strong resistance.

Appendix II

Transcript of the Interview 2. Ramiz Safar

Ramiz Safar is a 20-year-old Afghan male student of ANIM who escaped Afghanistan along with other students and staff. At the time he exited Afghanistan, he was underage and unaccompanied, and he got his refugee status in Portugal as an unaccompanied minor. Ramiz is an instrumentalist of Rubab an ancient traditional Afghan-Iranian instrument and he is considered one of the talents among ANIM students.

Note: This interview was initially conducted in Persian and was then translated into English.

Interviewer: Afra Safa

Date: 10 July 2024

A.S: *Tell me an introduction about yourself.*

R.S: My name is Ramiz Safar. My last name is Safar. I am 20 years old and I was born in Kabul and my family is from Kabul. I was studying at the Afghanistan National Institute of Music, and I was studying as a player of Rubab there. After we came to Portugal, our structure changed, and it became an orchestra. My family lives in Afghanistan. My brother and my father also work in music, they do not work professionally, but they took up music as a hobby. I also work here as a Rubab player, and I am in the Afghanistan Youth Orchestra and I work in Rubab and Quawali ensembles.

A.S: *is your family going to join you in Portugal?*

R.S: For now, we are waiting because Dr. Sarmast and the Qatar government have said that they have reached an understanding with the Portuguese government to bring our families here, and we are also waiting and wish to join our families. And now their files in in process.

A.S: *Do you have any siblings?*

R.S: Yes, I have two sisters who are younger than me. They are very fond of music. My sister, who is one year younger than me, sings. My father also encourages her. But now she can't because of the Taliban. I wanted her to come and study in the same music school with me. But because the conditions are not suitable in Afghanistan, she could not continue. I wish that she can continue and achieve her dream.

A.S: *How did you get out of Afghanistan?*

R.S: Our journey began when the Taliban took over Afghanistan. We were in Afghanistan for 4 months, and then it was arranged for us to go and we were told that we should go to the airport, but we did not have passports or documents. Most of us did not have passports. We went there, but they [the Taliban] did not allow us to enter the airport. So, our process was delayed for about two to three months, after that another group that had passports were taken to Qatar and with Qatar's help they were able to get passports for us as well. In short, we were transferred to Qatar in three groups and then to Portugal after three months.

Then we were in Lisbon for a while. It was difficult for me because I was under the legal age and a minor. We were in a military hospital for nine months. And we lived there. We had to be there so that our administrative work and biometrics were done, and our cases were processed.

A.S: *How many of you were there?*

R.S: The day we arrived there, there were about 287 of us with all the professors of the Afghanistan Institute of Music and some of our professors with their families, and we all lived in one place. After a series of problems we had, many people who were with us could not bear it and left. They went to other countries. They went to Germany or France.

A.S: *How did they go?*

R.S: By human smugglers.

A.S: *Do you know how many people went?*

R.S: About 60 of the 287 people, according to my estimation, stayed. And after our work was done in Lisbon, we were taken to Braga and we went there. Some of our friends found it more

difficult because we went to Braga, and some of them separated from us at this stage. Now our students are studying in Gulbenkian and Maximinos schools. But those who were older and were studying music were put in the Gulbenkian Conservatory with the help of Dr. Sarmast.

A.S: *While you were in Qatar and Lisbon, were you able to play and train?*

R.S: The first group that went to Qatar could not take their belongings with them. The Taliban did not allow them to take their instruments. The second group, which I was among, was supposed to go to Qatar. With the help of Qatar, Dr. Sarmast reached an understanding with them that we would be allowed to take our musical instruments with us. We went to the airport with our stuff and musical instruments, they wanted to not allow us again, but finally we were able to take our musical instruments. Those who were in Qatar asked us, who were their friends, to take their musical instruments to them. We took their belongings with us. In Qatar itself, we were free and could play music. We were released after about four months. We were among the only immigrants in Qatar who were not in the camp and could play music outside the camp.

In Lisbon, our friends who worked in Western music went and trained at the Lisbon Conservatory, which was a very good place near our camp. The ones among us who played traditional instruments didn't have a tutor, so we went to Portuguese classes, but we played music amongst us. We improvised with our ensembles. We managed to form ensembles in Lisbon and after four months we were able to go to the Netherlands for a performance.

A.S: *What were the things that were new in terms of culture?*

R.S: Culturally, one should be open-minded. All cultures should be respected and accepted. In Afghanistan, girls are more restricted and separated from us and they wear hijab because of religion. When they came here, their minds were opened and realized that the rights of men and women are equal.

The Portuguese culture is very different from ours; their language is different from ours, and the most difficult thing for us right now is the language. We must learn the language as the first step for any job, to enter the labor market. Language is essential everywhere.

A.S: *Do you play only Rubab and not any other instrument? Did you get into problems in Portugal?*

R.S: Before I was able to continue playing the *Rubab* in Portugal, I had to first learn only notes for a year, because in our education system before, it was through ear and listening. It was also complicated to integrate my school grades, and they had to give me grades based on how I played the instrument. After I learned this, there was no *Rabab* teacher at school, but I refused to choose another musical instrument. I've been playing Rabab for 10 years and it would be very difficult for me to change my instrument. So, I chose to study composition.

A.S: *So, you had to change your instrument at Braga Conservatory?*

R.S: Some of us were forced to change and in the end, they chose to do so. In Kabul, most of my peers played the *Tabla* or played the *Rubab*. There was no professor here, and our grades had to be determined based on our playing and musical instruments, many of us had to change our musical instruments and majors. But for me, Dr. Sarmast has requested a professor from India to teach me at a professional level

A.S: *online?*

R.S: He has invited him to come here.

A.S: *Is Braga Conservatory doing this for you or Dr. Sarmast?*

R.S: Dr. Sarmast did this for me. The conservatory has lessons that are related to school, such as Portuguese and English and music history. We learn topics related to Western music and study music theory and vocal acoustics. The topics are related to school because they didn't have a course for my instrument that I could study.

A.S: *You have Portuguese orchestra conductors and Portuguese professors, and they admitted that they did not have much information about Afghan music and the instruments and steps of this music before this. Do you think they had the necessary preparation and what problems did this cause?*

R.S: At first, it was difficult for both because there was little familiarity between us. But music is a language that can connect all languages. When someone is working in music, the

rest of the problems are solved slowly. For example, in the beginning, I could not play the Western notes because my instrument did not have one and a half octaves. But then Tiago, the conductor of our orchestra, chatted with me and asked and learned about *Rubab*. And now it is slowly becoming normal.

Here, the level of everything is different. Level of lessons and education. And when we came here, the musical level of our friends improved, and they could work at the level of an orchestra player.

A.S: *Do you think that the interruption and problems you went through and the concerns you have for yourself, and your family made you be behind the other students?*

R.S: It affects the quality of our life and of our family. I was underage when I came out of Afghanistan, and we slowly got used to it and we are waiting for our family to join us. But these affected our music. When we came here, the culture was different for us and the students were different, and the first year when we came to Gulbenkian, our classes were separate because of the language, but now that we slowly learned the language, we started the second year with Portuguese students. And in comparison, we considered ourselves inferior to our Portuguese classmates and we felt that they were advancing, and we couldn't. These had a great impact on us, but now it has slowly become normal for us.

A.S: *And have your Portuguese classmates formed relationships with you?*

R.S: In the school when we came to in the first year, they didn't know us and we didn't know them properly, but now we have ensembles where we work together. For example, we have a trio and violin, and two Portuguese students have joined our orchestra and accompanied us in the piano section. They were good to us so that we could have a relationship with them and be with them. At first, we didn't understand each other, but when our classes became one and we got to know each other better, we can be friends with them.

A.S: *Did playing music together help your relationship?*

R.S: Yes, it was because of music that we met and worked together. Through music, we were able to understand and know each other.

A.S: *As someone who plays a non-Western instrument, do you think there is curiosity about your instrument in them?*

R.S: Yes, our professors and sometimes our Portuguese classmates ask us to play the *Rubab* or *Tabla* and perform so that they can get to know different music and cultures. And even some of our managers have talked to me because they want to make Rabab a subject in school in the future. Because those who want and find it interesting should be able to get training.

A.S: *Do you want to stay in music in the future?*

R.S: For now, my dream is to become a good *Rubab* player. I want to work at a high level where I can teach. I wish that Afghanistan will return to normal so that I can help the young generation who are away from music in the future and help anyone interested in music. I want to help Afghanistan in the field of music. And besides, I want to become a good and great composer. I see my future mostly in music.

A.S: *To what extent have you come to terms with Portuguese culture and does Portugal feel like home to you?*

R.S: From the first time I came here, I knew that our place was safe and I could reach my goal. Because when the Taliban came, no one could do anything else. Even I personally was threatened many times by the Taliban. I did not leave the house for three months. But when we came here, I knew that at least I could work on my goal in the future. Among all the countries that Dr. Sarmast suggested to accept us, Portugal was the only country that accepted us. That's why I see Portugal as my second home. And in our ensemble, we are working on a composition called *Saudade* and we sing in Portuguese that we have one home here and a home in Afghanistan.

A.S: *Do you have any plans to go to another country?*

R.S: For now, I want to finish my school here, and if there is a chance, I want to do my higher education in another country

Appendix III

Transcript of the Interview 3. Sevinch Majidi

Sevinch Majidi is a 20-year-old Afghan female student of ANIM who escaped Afghanistan along with other students and staff. At the time he exited Afghanistan, he was underage and unaccompanied, and he got his refugee status in Portugal as an unaccompanied minor. Sevinch is a violinist and is now studying violin at Gulbenkian Conservatory in Braga.

Note: This interview was initially conducted in Persian and was then translated into English.

Interviewer: Afra Safa

Date: 9 July 2024

A.S: *How old are you? Where are you from in Afghanistan? Is your family still there?*

S.M: I am 20 years old and from Faryab, Afghanistan. I lived in Mazar-e-Sharif and after a few years we went to Kabul. My family is in Afghanistan.

A.S: *Couldn't you bring them to Portugal?*

S.M: We are still waiting because they said that they are going to bring our families here with the help of the Qataris. We are still waiting for their answer.

A.S: *How long have you been waiting?*

S.M: It has been almost two years.

A.S: *Do you know the reason for the delay?*

S.M: Some said it's because of the war and some said it's because there is no room in the camps.

A.S: *What happened to you since the Taliban came to power and you left Afghanistan and what happened when you came to Portugal?*

S.M: The first time we tried to leave Afghanistan, we were in the airport for almost a night and a day, that is, we could not enter the airport and leave. After 20 days or one month, it was decided that those who have passports will go to Qatar from Afghanistan. When I went there, my passport had expired and I could not go out. I waited another month and then we left Qatar. And the second group was in Qatar for a month, then we came to Portugal. We were in Lisbon for almost eight months and were placed in a military hospital.

A.S: *When you were in Qatar and Lisbon, did you have the opportunity to practice and play your instruments? How did that period affect your music career?*

S.M: In the first four months, there was nothing. After four months we were helped to go to Lisbon Conservatory. But it was only as guest students.

A.S: *Were the children who had to go to school able to go in those eight months?*

S.M: There was normal school also in the conservatory. There, we studied normal subjects such as Portuguese, history, English, and two subjects of music.

A.S: *Did you have to change your instrument in Portugal?*

S.M: I played the violin from the beginning. I didn't have to change.

A.S: *What difference did you see between Afghanistan and Portugal in music education? How did you deal with these differences?*

S.M: It is very different. Because Afghanistan's schools are public and we used to proceed accordingly. The subjects we studied were different. For example, our music teachers came from Ardakan or other places. We have entered a new country that is familiar with instruments and their level is very high.

A.S: *Did the conservatory make any effort to improve your music level?*

S.M: It depends on us how much we practice and try. They gave us all the facilities and we had to try to reach the level we should be. Everything was sufficiently provided.

A.S: *Do you think that the Portuguese teachers and conductors who practice with you know enough about the situation in Afghanistan and the instruments and culture of Afghanistan? What are the pros and cons of working with them?*

S.M: They had never worked with such an orchestra. Our conductor did had not conducted an orchestra at all. But when he came to us, he tried very hard and did everything he could to get familiar with our music, and now I think he is familiar with our musical instruments and how to work with Afghan-style music.

A.S: *So now you are comfortable with the existing compositions and arrangements.*

S.M: Yes, we have very good arrangements and we are comfortable.

A.S: *How is your relationship with your Portuguese classmates?*

S.M: At the beginning, they were not familiar with our musical instruments, but gradually they got to know them. Now some of them are in our orchestra and play with us and they are going to come to America with us. Naturally, relationships are two-way. We have one problem, which is the language, which is slowly being solved. At first, because they had heard a lot of negative things from the media, some of them had their guard up and didn't want to talk to us, but when they got to know us and got to know our music, they changed their minds.

A.S: *Has playing music with Portuguese classmates increased the possibility of dialogue and mutual understanding?*

S.M: Yes, because music is something that, if you don't understand another person's language, you can talk through music. And it helped.

A.S: *Tell me about your concerns.*

S.M: I'm afraid I won't be able to finish school well. And I can't progress in society. The main problem is the language. Sometimes people give us a hard time because we don't know the language.

A.S: *Could your managers have done better? What shortcomings do you see?*

S.M: Maybe things could have been done faster or at another time or better, but I think it was the best thing for us under the circumstances and at that time.

A.S: *How comfortable are you with Portuguese culture (music, art, food, customs...)?*

S.M: In the beginning, I didn't like it at all. We had the problem of food, which we got used to cooking ourselves when they gave us an apartment. And we got used to everything. Our conflict was language, and we did not understand anything and some Portuguese did not understand English at all. But now we got to know their language and habits.

A.S: *Do you consider Portugal your home?*

S.M: It cannot be called a home, but it can be called a safe shelter.

A.S: *If you had a choice, would you still stay in Portugal?*

S.M: I would choose Afghanistan.

If there is a better place for my education, maybe I would go there. But now I am not thinking of changing my decision.

A.S: *How do you see your future in Portugal and in music?*

S.M: I don't want and I can't remove music from my life. It is something related to my life, but I want to study international relations.

A.S: *What is the reason?*

S.M: I think if I succeed in this field, I can go to Afghanistan again and do something.

Appendix IV

Transcript of the Interview 5. Sofia Sousa Rocha

Sofia Sousa Rocha is the head of programs and professor at the Calouste Gulbenkian Conservatory of Music in Braga. Rocha is a former student and graduate of Conservatório de Música Calouste Gulbenkian in Braga and is responsible for the educational programs of the ANIM students in this institute.

Note: This interview was conducted in English.

Interviewer: Afra Safa

Date: 19 April 2024

S.R: They expected to receive the families, one year ago, in 2023. But the situation has been difficult and they're still waiting, and we know nothing about that at the moment. But the ANIM, the main institution managing them, maybe know something about it, because it's very important.

In the last school year, they were always asking about the families and the security of the families, and it was an issue for us in psychological terms, and in terms of integration in the school. Some of them have members of families like uncles or aunts or cousins, and they are living with them, but still, they miss their mother and father and siblings, and some of them wants to bring to Portugal all their siblings and I think they are expecting three or more hundreds of people, of Afghan people, here.

So this is a political issue and Dr Sarmast, the head of the ANIM, knows very well about it, more than me, because I had a period of absence from school, as I explained to you before because I have a little six-month-old baby. So I worked with this group from 2022 until July of 2023. And now I'm back to school and they are my students again. I teach a small part of them, but I have 15 students of different ages.

You can check the school years; you see there is a lot of diversity. The older students, I think they are now 23 years old, but it's important to know that the passports have different ages from real life, so some of these students are 21 years old. But this is the difficult integration in our school system, because our 12 level of school is for 18 students normally and they have a limit. From 23 years old up they have to go to university or higher education or a professional course and for our system and our integration it is difficult because they are only in 10th grade, 10th grade for our students with 15 or 16 years old, and now they are mixed.

A.S: *Are you also involved in their daily life, or you just involved with them coming to the school?*

S.R: Only in the school life but I can put you in contact with the people who are managing the daily life.

The youngest among them is in an institution called Casa de San José, which is like a residence of adolescents, where they have a tutor and a social educator, so they have supervisors with them. The oldest students are almost on their own. They have an institution that cares about the students who are in apartments, with families or alone, because some of the 18 to 21-year-old students are in groups of 4, 3 or 5 in apartments, living almost alone. So as refugees, they lost some support after the 18 months of ACM.

But they still have security and social support. It's a small amount of money, but they have also the support for food and payments of bills and so on. They have this support and the school as a public school because we are a public school. We have the support for the meals in the lunch and cheaper products in our bar, so we can help in this way.

A.S: *Do they lose all the support of accommodation also?*

S.R: The oldest ones. I think that the group of 12 maybe 12 students lost this kind of support. The others have Social Security support and an allowance. So, some of them get, I don't say a good amount of money, but much better as a whole.

A.S: *Let's focus on the work they do in the conservatory. Can you tell me what is their general routine in music? How many hours do they practice? Are they with Portuguese peers and colleagues or are they just by themselves? And what is the level of training?*

S.R: In the previous school year, it was more difficult because their entry into our school was only in August. In August, we have the groups of students organized. So, part of them were integrated with the classes of Portuguese and Brazilians and other nationalities, but all the students there were 26 students were integrated into 10 grades and they constituted only a group. In these school years, we mixed the students with the Portuguese students also, so they are mixed, all of them are mixed with Portuguese students and we found out this is very important for them and they know it in July when we spoke about the past and the school year, the final of the school year, like a balance, we spoke about that and they know that that is a difficult integration because the older students can't speak Portuguese like the youngest. After all, the youngest students, that group of ninth grade now and down, speak more fluently. Now I was a part of school for six months and I found out that the group of older speak very well or much better than in the previous year. So, it was a bit different. The integration of them.

A.S: *Do you think them being mixed with Portuguese students helped?*

S.R: Yes, and they speak in the coffee breaks and so on. So it's very important for them and they know that it's easier to make friends also and have girlfriends and boyfriends and so on, and some of them have boyfriends and girlfriends. So it's an important way to integrate into our society.

From the beginning of 2022, we have orchestras working with Portuguese and Afghan musicians and choirs, so instead, they have only a class for them in 10th grade. They have also music practice with other students and now they have other subjects like physical education, gyms, and Portuguese. It's important to say that they have two different lines in music terms because they have the school practice and also the ANIM's practice.

In the ANIM's practice, they have an orchestra with Afghan instruments and Western instruments. So, they have mixed traditional instruments of Afghanistan with ours.

A.S: *And classical Western instruments...*

S.R: Yes, instruments. They have a Portuguese conductor now, Tiago Moreira da Silva, the person to talk with, and he's in Porto. Tiago is the conductor of the ANIM's Orchestra, and they have rehearsals, I think twice a week every week and on Saturdays too, and they work a lot and they have also small groups with only Afghan instruments where they practice Afghan music because they want to keep the music of Afghanistan alive, like guardians of the culture, musical culture. So, this is important for them but at the same time, they have the practice of our Western traditional music. Some of them have to start studying new instruments.

Actually, in the last school year, they played Rubab and Santur and so on, and we have none of these instruments in our school system. So some of them had to choose another one. Some of them choose percussion because it's similar to the percussionists of Western music and traditional music, guitar. Maybe some of them choose violin and even some orchestra instruments they don't have in the Afghan orchestra, like bassoon or French horn. They try to choose some instruments. You can join the big group of ANIM students. All students are integrated into our classes, normal classes. We have different levels and different orchestras and some of them are located in the main school, this conservatory, that building. But we have also two schools, normal schools with music, and the teachers go there to give lessons and in the Massiminos school.

It's near Conservatorio, 5 kilometres from the city and another school with the youngest students is Escolas de Mosteiro e Cávado. I'm working on that. So we have a group of 12, 14 students in Massiminos and a group of 8, 9, 10, 11 students in Mosteiro e Cávado, and the main group is in Conservatory. So in total, we have 46 students.

It is less two than the previous year because some older students made their choices to go to other courses.

A.S: *Before you move on, I have two questions. One is that the older students. Are they still doing music, or did they choose other subjects?*

S.R: I think only five students made their choice to go to another kind of course, like hairdressing. One student went for healthcare, I think, and so I don't know exactly where they are now. But only five of that group of 26 chose another subject.

But the rest of them still study music, only music, but we have other subjects in our school, like English, Portuguese and gymnastics, and philosophy also,

A.S: *When you said that some of their instruments were not in the school program, did they need to change it to be in the conservatory, but in ANIM they still continue to play those. Or did they give up those instruments?*

S.R: No, they continued practising that instrument in ANIM, and ANIM hired some specialized teachers of these instruments, and they had lessons with them. I think two or three different teachers of Rubab and so on.

A.S: *And what of their Portuguese peers? What is their impression? I want to know that side of the story as well, how do they feel? Was it comfortable or uncomfortable for them to have a very new and from another culture students?*

S.R: We have to make a difference between those schools. Because Agrupamento de Escolas de Maximinos is an international school. They have 30 languages and 25% of students are foreign students, from different nationalities, but mainly Brazilian students, because in Braga we have a big community of Brazilians, so that school is prepared to have foreign students, refugees, and immigrants. So for that school, it's normal.

We have a different group. For the music school and even for the teachers of my school Conservatorio and for students too it's a bit challenging and different to have [foreign students]. Because at first it's a big group of students entering our school and we have tests to enter the school every school year so every student is selected. This group of students didn't have this kind of selection because they had a special status. So it was very strange for the school and for the students to have a big group of Afghans. Our work in the last school year was very challenging in many terms. The first step was to integrate them into our curriculum because they don't have music preparation to be in 10th grade. Even in the 8th

grade. Most of them are almost beginning music learning and our students start at six years old.

There is a big gap between Portuguese and Afghan students and the level of training was lower in some of them. Some have no problems with a group of five or six, maybe ten, but the big group is very difficult, is like in different levels. So this was the first issue and we are facing this issue in this school here because it's not proselyte enough to our level. So we have to manage this.

So at first, we know also that they have been in Lisbon for eight months since the evacuation of Afghanistan, passing two or three months in Qatar and after in Lisbon eight months. They had lost practice, music practice and school practice. Like how to write, how to be focused, how to manage the books and the notebooks. Some very simple things like how to write the letters. It was very strange for us because we are used to having some kind of organization. So the first part of the last school year was trying to organize them and they have some special habits. I don't know if it's generalized for all Afghans, but it's different from us. Like punctuality, we faced problems with punctuality in a small group of students. At first, it was a big group of students. Only two or three were on time at the beginning of the class. At first we had some problems with rubbish in the classes, but they fixed everything in three, or four weeks.

It's very important for us because the employees of the school, the staff of the school at the first oh, teacher, they have rubbish and everything and trash and but I spoke with them and they learned very quickly how to be in school and how important was the behavior. Now we have the people said also, they are very kind in general, very positive. They are always saying Olá to everyone.

So it was very important because they conquered the staff, the teachers and also the students.

A.S: *You think there are some differences, but there is also the effort to overcome those challenges*

S.R: Both parts are trying to understand, and it was necessary to tell the students, and to the Portuguese students and the teachers, what situation they faced before. It's very important to that big group of people to know that they are in trouble in Afghanistan, they are in danger, they have no families here they have problems with war. That kind of thing was very important to explain to the teachers because at first, it was very strange for this group of students to enter the school with no tests. But they passed the school year without problems. It's very, very difficult for the big group to understand.

A.S: *Do you think that um explaining because you're practically working with a group that is exactly traumatized by war. do you think that explaining to the staff and their peers help them kind of be more open and lenient towards them?*

S.R: Yes, and we have [explained to teachers and staff]. We have special programs with the psychologists of the school in the last school year. We listen to all of them individually with the Iranian translator of the ACM Laleh.

Laleh was incredible with us because she came to Braga many times and worked with the group. So we listened individually to the group of students, trying to know them and their expectations for the future and their musical paths for each of them. We spoke again in the months of May, June, July, because we were trying to figure out the way, a better way, the best way for them to the future, because some of them are, I think they will not be musicians in the future. But now they are in a nest.

Our school is like a nest now for them. I think some of them are afraid to go to other schools to study other things because they don't know how to speak Portuguese very well. They don't know mathematics and part of the professions they said they want to be like economists or engineers or something needs math and they don't have this preparation.

So they are afraid to go to other schools and they decide to stay in the conservatory. But still, we have to work with them again because they are 20, or 21 years old and they have to figure out what to do in the future if they want to be musicians. We have many professions in music, not only instrumentalists and composers. We have many things they can do. So to

that group of students we have to say you can't be a violinist because you have a lack of preparation in your childhood, but you can be another thing in music. So, we're still facing this problem and we have to work with them in this part of the school year, probably that part of June and July again, that part of June and July again

A.S: *Going back to the challenges that we were saying, can I a bit focus on cultural challenges, because what I'm working on is how to overcome specifically the cultural challenges.*

Can you tell me what were those specific cultural differences that were hard for them to integrate? Also, on the Portuguese side, what were the cultural shocks of specifically cultural shocks that were different and how did you overcome them? Or the ones you didn't overcome?

S.R: The first one is the food because it was difficult to integrate the group of Afghans in the school canteen because the pork meat but also because [we use] less salt and spices. After all, our meals have to be some standards in this way. So it was difficult. Some of them, I think bring the salt and the spices to add to the rice, the Portuguese rice. It was the first challenge, a cultural one.

But Ramadan, the part of not eating at all, not drinking at all, is a shock for our community. Some of them practiced wind instruments and the teachers were worried about them because they didn't eat at all and they were not in good shape in the classes during the day. Some of the students are very strict in that part and the other part of the group is not so strict in religious terms. But them being Muslims it's not a shock. It didn't happen in the school before (having Muslim students), and Braga is a very catholic city in Portugal, but it's not a problem. I didn't face anything.

A.S: *Was it a problem in terms of practical terms, as you said, about their practicing the music or their school or their routine?*

yes, it was very strange even in the canteen. They prepared the meals and a group of 20 did not appear in the canteen. So the first week was very difficult.

Now I think people are more prepared than before, and some of the students have special way of dressing also, so they are distinguished by their dresses. The girls are not wearing hijab. They are very Western, I think. Some of them cut their hair short and some of them have great big hair. Only in Ramadan, some of them use the hijab.

A.S: *About musically, like in the music sense that they were practicing, was there a lot of I can't say cultural, but um artistic shocks or um things you needed to adapt other than their level of training?*

S.R: The way of singing is very different from the western way. But when we study music we have to try to be more precise in the tuning and we have some problems. It is cultural, of course, but we like a lot to listen to their singing, because some of them sing very well, but it's a special way to sing, so more linked to the traditional way of singing, like fado.

A.S: *Yes, it is a very Middle Eastern way of singing.*

Yes, if I ask a fadista to sing a melodic line of Beethoven. It will be very strange because we'll have some issues with the integration in the choir. It was difficult because of that. And at the beginning, in the first term of the school year, we had a problem with the texts. For Christmas we started to prepare a mass. Some of them started translating the text and we had to explain and Laleh helped a lot in that for us, for musicians, it's not a way to speak of God. For us, it's work and practice. It's practice. It's only that we are not singing like being in the church. It's very different. And I think they start understanding that.

Dr. Samast has helped a lot in that part as well, because one of the students started making a scene, because of that song. Now they have music, history and culture history this school year because now they can speak a little bit more than Portuguese. They have classes in English and in Portuguese at the same time [they study] history and it is very important. teacher of history is trying to link our Western music to the Muslims music, because we have that tradition in Portugal. We have many centuries of cohabitation with Muslims.

A.S: *So, basically, you're dealing with kids with very different levels of religion and historical understanding. Yes, yes, and it's hard to navigate that.*

S.R: Some of them are very strict, I feel, and the other group is not so strict, I think I don't know if it's the correct word to say it.

A.S: *Yes, I understand, because they also have different practices of being a Muslim.*

S.R: Yes, and some of them are Shias and some of them are Sunni, so it's different too. We also have a group of Hazaras between them, Bu they are like a group so they are kind of good with each other as well.

They don't have fights and problems between them we don't know anything about it. So some of them are finding out the other things of Western cultures, like alcohol and smoking. This is a problem for religious students, but some of them are trying that kind of normal thing in their lives and also in their age. I think it's very normal to discover new things. They are discovering that

A.S: *Are you aware, by any chance, if they are under pressure by their families to stick with their religion or stick with an instrument or stick to a way of life?*

S.R: They have not been part of their families for two years and a half and they will find a different person when they arrive. If they arrive in Portugal probably we will face problems with the families because probably they will be shocked that their daughter or their son is now more used to being free to go where they want. They go to shopping and they like a lot of buying new clothes and so on. So like a normal adolescent a young woman or man.

A.S: *Then being involved with music did it help them integrate better? Do you think?*

S.R: Yes, with music it was very easy to speak about something in common because they know the basis, at least the basis of music language. So the classes start with that part and it was easy to speak about something in common. And in the beginning, I have to speak English, Portuguese and Dari at the same time in the classes because they have translations and so on. It's difficult, but even then I think this was a way to integrate. So it's very important for the community and they are a community. And for our school, they are part of our community, but they formed also a community and we know they have different traditions and teachers are here to help them in a special way to be musicians and we have to face that they're still playing Afghan music and trying to play Western music. But it was very

important in the way to integration and even in the first meetings of the year, the last school year, they played for the students of the same age their instruments and it was important to see the practice and they played very well Rubab and Santur, and it was nice to see the curiosity of the students. Portuguese students to learn, so it was also important

A.S: *Do you think it also helped the Portuguese students to accept them better?*

S.R: To look to them and to recognize the group of musicians

A.S: *If you look at it as a project, what were the basically the that? How can it be improved? What were the challenges? I will give you some the basics what, what, what I mean? Did you have financial or fundraising problems, cultural awareness problems, marketing organization, cultural mediation problems? What were the good points and what were the things that you think you could have been improved by cultural management?*

S.R: I think the financial matters and fundraising are not a problem for us because we have, we are a public school. But this is a problem for ANIM'S. they have to have fundraisings, lots of them, to support the students, even to buy instruments and strings and read everything that a musician needs, scores also and to do some tours in the different countries.

group of friends of ANIM's and they do the fundraising in America. I think most part of the fundraising is there. So marketing issues, we have no this problem. This problem probably is from ANIMS too, because they want to be known internationally. So they have to manage how to do it. I think in kinds of organization and cultural mediation we are facing this kind of problem yet and they have a manager, cultural manager. I don't know if she is a cultural manager, but she is managing the project.

A.S: *Lastly, how do you see the future for them in the Portuguese society, considering their music and what are they doing now, what they've been through and the journey they've come?*

S.R: They believe they will return one day to Afghanistan. They believe that, but probably it will be difficult to have a normal country again or a country without Taliban. So, I believe they will have to integrate into our society, or even in German society, because some of have families in Germany. They have to manage their lives here. I believe they are creating a nest

here. So probably the cultural difference will be so big that they can't go to Afghanistan. They want a free country

A.S: *Do you think their integration in Portuguese society is being done well enough for them to be to eventually be integrated members of this society?*

S.R: Yes, I believe, because they are young, so they are creating their personality, the way of the lifestyle. Even so, if they have a job in the future, in music or not, they will manage to have their own families here, even in the community.

I don't know, but they probably have other relationships with Portuguese and foreign people we have in Portugal.

A.S: **Do you have any of them who want to do another migration, like, for example, to Germany?**

S.R: Some of them, I believe, think about it. They are trying to have probably a great opportunity to go, but they know it's not easy to go there and to have the kind of support they have here, not only by ANIM but the Portuguese government, because our school is free for them and they are studying music and otherwise they will lose in all the support that that kind of support and the opportunity to learn music and this desire to go is because they have family there, or do you think they?

you know that is an issue because someone said to me that every Afghan person has relatives in Germany so they expect to earn more money than the Portuguese we have like a poor country compared to Germany.

A.S: *Yes, they have that misconception that it's easy to make money.*

S.R: Yes, it is the question, I think the money. And how to live in our societies, because we have to have a great amount of money to live now. Yes, it's difficult to have a home and to pay the bills and so on.

Even for the Portuguese people, it's very difficult. Yes, and we try to say it. It's not easy to survive in Portugal for some people, but still, we have the support of the government. The healthcare system is good for us because we don't pay anything to go to hospitals and so

on. It's not possible in some countries. There is a general basic support that in some places doesn't exist even working badly but still they have. if you have an accident or if you are sick and you knock on the door of the hospital, of course, the people will speak to you In an emergency problem.

Appendix V

Transcript of the Interview 5. Tiago Moreira da Silva

Tiago Silva is the conductor of the Afghanistan Youth Orchestra (AYO) in Braga and has accompanied the orchestra on many international performances.

Note: This interview was conducted in English.

Interviewer: Afra Safa

Date: 29 May 2024

A.S: *I wanted to ask if can you tell me a little bit about their general routine of practice? How many hours do you work with them and what's their repertoire? Are there also Portuguese musicians with them or are they just the Afghans themselves? Just a general understanding of what you're doing with them.*

T.S: Now we are doing our practice and the way we organize ourselves for the concerts and the tours is that we have rehearsals twice a week with the Afghan Youth Orchestra. And with the Zohra Orchestra, we do just once a week and it is like one of the days, two hours and a half. On Tuesdays and Saturdays, we do a bigger rehearsal, three hours, and the repertoire that we mainly do is based on traditional songs from Afghanistan. I would say around 70-80% of the repertoire is like that. I take some of the arrangements that they have, or I do my own arrangements for the orchestra based on the songs that I select. Dr. Sarmast also showed me [some songs], because he's the right person to introduce me to this kind of music. We also currently have an Indian song as well as a Pakistani song, but we rarely perform these kinds of things and we have also in the concerts the Western classical music like Brahms or Kodály, and some other composers that we also perform.

About the musicians, we have now some Portuguese students who joined the orchestra about one month ago or two months ago, because the orchestra didn't have a lot of string players. We have a lot of wind instruments, traditional instruments, and percussion, but the

string section is quite small. So, what we did was not [initiated] from our side, but we had requests from the Portuguese students. They heard about our concerts, and they heard the music in the corridors of the conservatory and they also wanted to join the orchestra. So, we invited them, and we currently have four or five Portuguese students who will perform in the next concert with us.

A.S: *That's very interesting because one of the questions I wanted to ask you is that has the presence of this orchestra, made any interest in Portuguese students to want to join or want to know more about their culture, the Afghan culture or that kind of music. Has it helped these two groups to integrate with each other?*

T.S: Yeah, I think so. I think so. You never know because they can be interesting for many reasons, but I guess the first one might be because they are colleagues and the cultures are so different that in a way, they try to approach each other through music, just to be in an environment that is common to everyone.

In the beginning there was still this gap between them, but in the beginning, it was bigger. Because of this project, without the Youth Orchestra, the Portuguese musicians wanted to join us and I think this gap is getting smaller and smaller and they are understanding more the way they behave, the way they think, the way they perform music, the way they see music, because it's very different, it's completely different compared to the Portuguese culture. So, I think they are better and better integrated into the Portuguese society, and in the Portuguese educational system as well. Because of that, and also the Portuguese students, through the Afghan Youth Orchestra, they can perform in a lot of countries in very important venues. So, it's like we try to help each other. They help us with more instruments, with more musicians, and we also can help them because they are at the beginning of their career and their studies, they don't have the opportunity to go abroad and to perform in such big and important venues. So, we try to help each other.

A.S: *As you see it, what is the goal of this orchestra in a broader sense? Educational, financial scaling? What do you see as the goal of this orchestra?*

T.S: I think we don't have one goal with this orchestra. We have many goals. The first is to keep the music of Afghans and their culture alive because it's not possible to do it in their country. So, in a way, we are keeping alive this flame of Afghan music and Afghan culture. And also, one of the main goals is to increase and to give opportunities to these children and these kids and these adults, some of them, to live through music, because if they were in Afghanistan it would be completely impossible and their dreams would be completely cut. And then, with this orchestra, with this project, with this school now in Portugal, they are able to continue their dreams and to continue living the way they would love to live in Afghanistan, with music, all the time, with friends playing music and, as I understand it, was before coming to being settled in Braga.

A.S: *They were like seven, eight months away. They were in Lisbon in a camp and away from practising and away from the things that they needed to do, as musical education. Do you think it had a really big impact on their performance and, if yes, how did you try to solve it?*

T.S: I don't know. I just joined the orchestra one year ago. I was not with them, so when I started working with them it was already past. I don't know. They were already in Braga for half a year. I guess, so I don't have any idea about it.

A.S: *Did you feel a big gap in performance or musical education between them and the usual orchestras that you conduct?*

T.S: Yes, of course, in the beginning, it was very, very tricky because of the way they were used to dealing and acting with the previous conductor it was more like a friend, like a colleague, and in the beginning, I had to be very tough with them because we are not colleagues.

I might be their leader within the orchestra, of course, outside of the orchestra we are friends and we enjoy each other's company in the tours and we play together. It's okay. But during the orchestra rehearsals and concerts, they need to see me as a leader and they need to respect me all the time. And so in the beginning I needed to put a lot of rules, like with scores, to bring all the time to score, to bring a pen still, to put the cell phones on the ground, to be on time for the rehearsals, to respect the timings between the first half of the rehearsal and

the second because of the break. We do so and it's not completed this mission with them because we need to work on these rules all the time. But we are much better and everyone is progressing very well and the environment in the orchestra is amazing, compared to the first rehearsal when it was like a big chaos. But yeah, it was very different and very demanding for me. I was not expecting this and it was a shock in the beginning. Then I try to find solutions to help them as well.

A.S: And are you, I wouldn't say satisfied, but do you think the progress there has been, progress in ways of adapting to the Portuguese ways of dealing with music?

T.S: Yes, I think so. Not only because of me but because of the schools, that they are integrated. So now they behave in a more professional way, for sure. They prepare themselves better, they go before the rehearsal, they tune the instruments, they warm up and not all of them but it's not every single student is very focused on music. Some of them are just playing music because it's a hobby. The others are doing it very seriously. So it's a very heterogeneous orchestra, so their progress is also different from one to the other, but I think the orchestra is much better

A.S: Have you, before this, conducted any orchestra or group that played non-western music? Can you tell me a little bit about your experience and how different it was, what things you needed to adapt?

T.S: The first thing was the instruments because I didn't know anything. I just knew the names of some of the instruments they use, the traditional instruments. Then I needed to know how they work, the range of the instruments, how many notes they can play, and how can they play. This was the first shock because I was not used to this kind of instrument and sonorities. How can I manage the orchestra to bring out the traditional instrument sound, because some of the times the orchestra is so big that the sound covers the traditional instrument? So it was this difficulty in the beginning. And then I with my because I was playing arrangements from other people, but then, with my own arrangements, I started to organize and plan this in a better way, to organize and to plan this in a better way. So that was the first thing that I needed to deal with.

Then it was the music itself, because doing arrangements of music, the very important thing or the main thing is rhythm and words. The melodies are not very elaborated like we do in the western part of the world. We take care a lot about the melodies. They should sound very easy to your ear and very interesting, and I find that Afghan music is very based on rhythm, especially on the seven-eight, this kind of different rhythm that we are used to and, to the poems, to the words. It was tricky in the beginning because I needed to find solutions to do very interesting arrangements when we have just one, or two melodies in one song. So this was difficult.

And also, the rhythm itself, because for them it was so easy to play in 7-8, for example, and the first time I was conducting one piece in 7-8, I was shocked at how they started playing by themselves. They were so used to playing this kind of music alone and in small groups. Then suddenly I was like breathing and giving the cue for the orchestra and suddenly they started playing alone and I was, whoa, okay, I was not expecting, because if you do this, you know, in a European orchestra or from this part of the world, every musician will be in difficulty with this kind of music. I was preparing myself at home. I was like, oh my god, this orchestra will play this rhythm terribly, but then in the first rehearsal they played amazingly.

A.S: *They have this way of organically playing with each other because of the way they've practiced.*

T.S: Yes, they play a lot by the ear. [for them] Their ear is more important than the score, so it's also very tricky for me because we are used to respecting the score and what is written there. For them, it's very important what they hear and how they react to it, especially when they are improvising, which is also a very important part of their musical culture.

A.S: So how did you resolve this? Are they now paying more attention to the score, or have you kind of built a new way to adapt to them?

T.S: Of course, sometimes I need to adapt to them, but mainly I think they are respecting more what is written. Okay, because I also demand this from them, because I put every single thing I want and need in the score, like articulation, dynamics, phrasing, so they see all of this information in the score and they also try their best to respect it. Also, their

education is developing, so it is different, so most of them are more able and focus on these small details. That makes a huge difference when you perform.

A.S: *While I was speaking to their supervisor in the conservatory, I realized that in their education, they have to continue with a Western instrument, and some of them have to choose other instruments or play both. What do you think this is like? This puts more pressure on them, or is it a bit forced? Or do you think they should have been able to continue with their music?*

T.S: The perfect scenario would be that they keep their instrument and their studies in these instruments for the rest of their studying period. But in Portugal, it's very difficult because you can have teachers from that instrument but they are not able to be in an official Portuguese educational system. So even if we want them to keep their studies in the traditional instruments, it's completely impossible. So, the solution they found is also good. For them, it's tricky because they need to balance the two instruments and practice the two instruments, but in the end, they will for sure earn more tools and develop more skills with two different instruments. For example, our *Tabla* player, who is very, very talented, is learning bassoon, which is a completely different instrument, and for sure he could study percussion because it's very similar to the *Tabla*. But, he chose to study a completely different instrument to give him some new tools and new ideas. So, I think they will benefit for sure to learn a different instrument. Some of them, I don't know if they are playing more than two, I don't know because of the piano. Sometimes you need to play the piano. You need to learn the piano as well, even if you play another instrument. But for sure, if they play a traditional instrument, that is a string instrument, if they learn a wind instrument, they will benefit a lot in the future.

A.S: *Do you see the future of most of them in music? Do you think They can have a good musical career in Portugal?*

T.S: I mean they can in Portugal or it doesn't depend on the country. I mean some of them If they keep their studies and focus on music, for sure they can have a good career or live through music in Portugal or another country in Europe or somewhere. Some of them started very late learning music. So what they are doing now is doing music like a second plan and

they go to professional schools just because they are kind of old just to go to a music university and they are a bit late on the developing of their musical skills. So, it's a good idea to give them an opportunity to earn some money and to have a life in good conditions. And in Portugal they will keep doing the music as a hobby. They can play concerts as well if they organize themselves in small groups, for example. But the ones that are like at the beginning of their studies we have kids like 13 years old, 14 that they are not starting very serious the musical education. For sure, when they are 18 or 19 they can go to universities, and they can do whatever they want. That's why I told you that the orchestra is very, is very diverse, because we have kids with 13 that they started already in Portugal learning music very seriously and with good teachers and good method, and we have students with 18, 19, 20 that the musical level is not that good so they are not able to keep their studies. So, I think the good ones, the talented ones and the ones that are very focused on musical education for sure they can live through music in Portugal or somewhere else.

A.S: *So the other question I have is not really about music, but I want to know your experience. As I understand, you're dealing with a group with different backgrounds, different historical understandings, a different ethnicity, different religions, and different cultures. Did it ever create difficulty or challenges and, if yes, how did you bridge it in that specific orchestra environment?*

T.S: I never deal with the like of that. I know that some of them are because it's a very small group and they are all the time with each other. So with girlfriends, there are always some problems and conflicts between them, but I think it's normal, it's not because of ethnicity or because of religion. It's because they are kids and they are still learning how to be in a country that allows you to gossip, to hang out with girls and have a social life in a way.

It was difficult, and maybe it's still difficult, for them to balance. But within the orchestra, the way they behave is amazing. So, I have nothing to say. There are no conflicts. Sometimes, when something starts to appear like a small laugh because someone made a mistake or is not playing in a very good way, I always get the problem from the root. Then I talk with them individually. But I mean, the way they behave in the orchestra is amazing. I never had this

experience with Portuguese students, because the Afghan students see the conductor, they see the teacher at a higher level.

They respect you a lot. In Portugal, we are starting to lose this kind of respect for the teachers, and so, for me, working with them is like being in heaven. I have no complaints. It's an amazing job that I have. I'm very privileged to work with such a good group.

A.S: *This is not directly about music, but I want to know, um, were there any culture management issues, like financial marketing, anything regarding not the group itself but like the management of it, that you thought it was a challenge or it can be improved in the future?*

T.S: I would say that the main challenge is to have some of the kids in Guimarães, for example, because when they came to the north of the country, some of them went to Guimarães and we allowed this gap between the two cities and to manage the rehearsals to bring them with taxis, because they don't have families to pick them up and to bring the instruments and to bring everything and to put them in the conservatory for the rehearsals. So every single week we need to manage problems like this. Someone is late in the taxi and because of this person, all the people in the same taxi will be late in the conservatory, in the rehearsal. I would say the fact that they are in different cities, the fact that they don't have a family with them, sometimes puts me, Dr. Sarmast, and Mariana in some trouble to keep the orchestra and to keep the rehearsal in good shape, I would say.

A.S: Do you think the orchestra when they want to have a concert or a program somewhere? Do you think they have enough visibility or they do enough marketing, or can it be better?

T.S: For sure in Portugal you always can do better, Because of the way we do marketing I mean we did a concert last week at Porto University and the way they did the marketing was very poorly done. But when you go abroad to good venues or festivals, I think the marketing is very good. Sometimes, maybe in small venues or small cities, it's a different story. But when you go to South Bank or to cities, it's a different story. But when you go to, I don't know, south Bank or to Geneva or something, those are most of the time full. So I would say they do a good job of marketing and putting our concerts in the spotlight.

So I think it works and I think it's important for your cause because you want to introduce it to the world and preserve it we need a lot of people at our concerts, not only to respect the work that we have been doing during the months of preparation but also to spread the word about the women rights, about the struggle of people in Afghanistan, about the only country in the world that is forbidding music and education musical education. So, it's very important that we have a lot of people there to listen to us and to listen to our voices as well.

A.S: Do you think the presence of this orchestra has had at least a little effect in informing the people around them about the situation, and also, do you think the music has helped them integrate better into Portuguese society?

T.S: I would say in Portugal, Yes. Because, at least me, I always heard about Afghanistan because of terrible news on TV about the Taliban, about Saddam Hussein, and Osama Bin Laden. Those were the only details and the only knowledge I had about Afghanistan, nothing else. And through documentaries, through the concerts that they have been doing in Portugal, I think at least the Portuguese society is seeing these countries and seeing this culture from a different perspective. At least I do, my family as well, and my friends and the people that I know that saw the documentary. They were completely astonished by this story and by this big problem, we face as a world that cares about people. So, I think at least in our country it's changing, but in the others, I have no idea, because you just go there and you perform and you come back to Portugal. So, I hope so, I hope so.

