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*Nonlinear Education*

A Rhizomatic Look at the Experience of Teachers Engaged with the  
Education of Refugee Children at Transit and Reception Centres  
in North Macedonia, between 2016 and 2017

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## Abstract

The inability to provide adequate education for refugee children in *Transit and Reception Centres* in the Republic of North Macedonia during the refugee crisis (2016-2017), defines the context-specific precarious conditions that stimulated teachers on-the-ground to seek new educational methods. The research questions inquire about the teachers' methods outside the scope of *formal/non-formal* education and the ways in which their experiences and perspectives contributed towards their individual and professional development.

Through inductive phenomenological inquiry, the experiences of teachers engaged in refugee education were observed through seven hermeneutic interviews and analysed through the lens of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of *rhizomes* (1987) and the process of *becoming*, both as a theoretical framework and as an analytical tool.

The research finds that the teachers intuitively *deviated* from established models of education by creatively inventing made-to-measure educational methods (*nonlinear* education), suitable for the provision of education within the refugee centres' conditions of temporality. The thesis' macro level findings stipulate that modes of learning that are *in flux*, *morphing* and continuously developing, are suitable educational methods providing positive results in the given context. The micro level findings evidenced that the teachers' practices escaped the authoritarian separation between teacher and pupil, advocating for *relationalism*, while embracing emotions, compassion and *agency*.

The 'silence' in existing literature, related to the conjunction between the experiences of teachers and the theoretical notions of the *rhizome* and *becoming*, is given a voice through this thesis, by extending the understanding of multicultural education as a form of social justice teaching.

**Keywords:** Refugee education, teachers' experiences, Deleuze, *rhizomes* and *becoming*, nonlinear education, social justice, North Macedonia.

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## **Abbreviations**

CoRNM	Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia
EM route	Eastern Mediterranean route
EU	European Union
ITIRE	Improving Teaching to Improve Refugee Children's Education
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
RNM	Republic of North Macedonia
TRCs	Transit and Reception Centres

# 1. Introduction

Conflicts in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Central Asia, and elsewhere have for decades caused the continued displacement of large numbers of people. The Syrian war caused the arrival of 2.68 million refugees to Europe from 2015 to 2016 (Euro-stat, 2017). On the 8th of March 2016, the closure of the borders of the Republic of North Macedonia, Croatia and Slovenia on the Eastern Mediterranean (EM) Route was imposed as a political decree (Stojanovski, 2018, p. 7). On the 18th of the same month, the *EU-Turkey Agreement* was signed, a ‘controversial deal intended to stop the flow of refugees and other mixed migrants into Europe’ (Reliefweb, 2016, p. 5). By the end of March 2016, 54.000 refugees, were stranded in Transition and Reception Centers (TRCs) in transit countries<sup>1</sup> (Ibid.). In April 2016, approximately 1.500 refugees, of whom 95 were children of elementary school age, remained in the Republic of North Macedonia (RNM), one of the transit countries on the EM Route. The provision of education and the experience of teachers engaged in refugee children’s<sup>2</sup> education within TRCs in RNM, between 2016 and 2017, provides the basis for this thesis.

This thesis accepts the premise defined by Allsopp, Chase and Mitchell that refugees, as a ‘young people /are/ building their ‘future’ in a process of contested temporalities’ (2014, p. 126). This research dwells on the experiences of teachers engaged in the education of refugee children stranded in the TRCs in RNM, where teachers’ educational methods responded to the particular ‘situations of contested temporality.’ Due to the complex and multifaceted issues related to the refugee crisis in 2016, the education of refugee children in RNM could not be conducted within local educational institutions (as prescribed by the governmental policies of RNM) and teaching programmes were therefore provided at two TRCs, where *non-formal* education was introduced to replace quantifiable *formal* education (Orovcanec-Arangelovic & Martinoska, 2018, p. 15).

## 1.1 Research Aim and Significance

Even though a more flexible approach to education, in the given situation was proposed by the government, the form of teaching practised in the TRCs cannot be classified as *non-formal* education. The research problem is found within the context-specific difficulties and complexities

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<sup>1</sup> Transit countries - in this context - are all of the countries that are on the route to refugee desired/destination countries in the EU. In this particular case, the Republic of North Macedonia is one of them.

<sup>2</sup> Going forward, only the term *refugee children* will be applied in the thesis, instead of *refugee and migrant children*, as in the relevant TRCs in RNM, only refugee children (7-14 years of age) were present during 2016-17.

inherent in the limited potential to provide adequate education for refugee children during the refugee crisis 2016 to 2017, within the RNM. The findings stipulate that the teachers employed in TRCs (2016-17), positioned their teaching practice outside the scope of both *formal* and *non-formal* education, by intuitively inventing ‘made-to-measure’ educational methods, in order to provide a pedagogical approach aimed at achieving appropriate educational merits for the refugee children. This research proposes the term *nonlinear* education, to distinguish between *formal* and *non-formal* education and the ‘made-to-measure’ (*nonlinear*) educational methods, invented by the teachers in question.

Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of the *rhizome* (1987) and the process of *becoming* <sup>(3)</sup> are used as a theoretical lens through which to theorise and analyse the *nonlinear* teaching methods used by the teachers (the interviewees of this research), through a series of hermeneutic interviews. The *rhizome* is a philosophical notion describing the relations and connections between things; it is a concept in poststructuralism describing a non-linear network by ‘connecting any one point to any other point’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 21), at any given time. Deleuze and Guattari describe the *rhizome* through a botanical metaphor as continuously growing underground stems, whose shoots are in constant multiplication that at ‘any point can form a beginning or a point of connection from any other’ (Colebrook 2002, p. 29). The connections made between dispersed elements and processes generate, through time, a radically different ontology reflecting the dynamic and constantly changing reality that embodies the process of *becoming*.

This research aims to contribute towards multicultural education within the context of contested and temporal circumstances within the refugees’ countries of transit. The purpose of this qualitative research is to identify, describe and interpret educational methods positioned outside the scope of *formal* and *non-formal* education that was practised by the teachers engaged in educating refugee children within the TRCs in RNM. In addition, this research documents the interviewed teachers’ individual and professional development within the realm of *nonlinear* and multicultural education. The specific research questions of this thesis are:

RQ1: What methods have teachers employed while educating refugee children at TRCs, which were positioned outside the scope of *formal* and *non-formal* education?

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<sup>3</sup> Deleuze never provided an exact reading of the theory of *becoming*, yet its meaning could be understood through reading specific chapters in his books [*A Thousand Plateaus* (1987), *Nietzsche and Philosophy* and *The Logic of Sense* (1983)] and collecting appropriate information that may provide relevant explanations.



RQ2: In which ways did the teachers' experiences of educating at TRCs contribute towards their own individual and professional development within the realm of *nonlinear* and multicultural education?

### 1.2 Rationale

During the researcher's internship in Copenhagen (2021) with the project *Improving Teaching to Improve Refugee Children's Education* (ITIRE),<sup>4</sup> the researcher became increasingly interested in the topic of refugee education. The researcher had previously become aware of the vulnerable situation of refugee children on the EM Route, and the significant engagement being undertaken by teachers working in the local TRCs, due to the researcher being based (as a high school pupil) in RNM in the years of interest for this research. These particularities provided the personal motivation for this research thesis.

The desire to understand and interpret the rhizomatic *what* and *how* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 3), (*what* the teachers have done and *how* the teachers have done it) within the contested educational circumstances of the TRCs, provides the rationale for this research, which aims to contribute towards the improvement of multicultural education.

### 1.3. Methods and Delimitations

The study uses the following methods - a single case study, comprising hermeneutic interviews with seven teachers, providing subjective perspectives about their experience of teaching in TRCs. The theoretical approach of the research focuses on exploring the analytical potentials of the chosen conceptualisations of notion of *rhizomes* and *becoming*. The interrelations between all agencies became the focus of the analysis, where the theories informed both the interview schedule and the research design.

While this research gathers knowledge through interviews, it does not intend to offer evaluations of the specific teaching methods, nor of teachers' and pupils' experiences, and the identified topics of interest therefore coexist in parallel, without a particular hierarchy of significance. The delimitation of this thesis is not to compare *formal*, *non-formal* and *nonlinear* education; rather, its scope pertains to the construction of *nonlinear* education. The theoretical

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<sup>4</sup> ITIRE, a European initiative between the Danish School of Education, Aarhus University (DK), the Arctic University (NO), the University of Akureyri (IC), the University of Vienna (AT), and the University of Winchester (UK) aiming to design, implement, and disseminate an effective transnational training programme on refugee education, addressed to in-service teachers.

framework is delimited to Deleuze and Guattari's notion of *rhizomes* and the process of *becoming*, while the related notion of *assemblage* has not been analysed, since the thesis focuses on human-to-human interaction, rather than expanding its scope for interaction with/between humans and non-human elements (a characteristic of the the notion of the *assemblage*).

#### 1.4. Disposition

In terms of disposition, the thesis first introduces the background and previous literature, outlining the relevant contexts. Next, the key tenets of the theoretical framework are discussed, followed by an explanation of the methodologies used. The core of this thesis lies in the analysis section which, on the one hand, describes and interprets the interviewees' experience of teaching practices, and on the other hand, interprets Deleuze and Guattari's theories, suggesting that the interaction between the former and the latter potentiate the possibility of rethinking multicultural education. Finally, the conclusion integrates and conceptualises the key findings and arguments of the thesis, while also considering scalability, transferability and the potential impact of this research.

## 2. Background

Elementary school education in RNM, in essence, is similar to *formal* education practised in other countries, where education typically takes place in controlled environments of established and regulated schooling systems. In the *Constitution of RNM*, some of the words that describe education within the country, from pre-elementary school through to high school, include: 'mandatory', 'inclusive', 'provided to everybody', 'free on all levels' and 'accessible to everyone under equal rights' (CoRNM, Article 44). Thus there should be no discrimination in terms of the provision of education, along the lines of ethnicity, gender, disabilities, as well as in relation to refugee and migrant children:<sup>5</sup>

During his/her accommodation in the Reception Centre, the minor shall be provided with legal aid, social support and medical and psychological care and shall have a right to education in the educational institutions of the Republic of Macedonia (The Republic of North Macedonian, Legislations, Law for Foreigners, 2006, p. 39).

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<sup>5</sup> For example, in response to different refugee crises, such as during and after the Bosnian wars and the conflicts in Kosovo (both in the 90s), refugee and migrant children were offered the same educational rights as those enjoyed by the children citizens of RNM (Orovcanec-Arangelovic & Martinoska, 2018, p. 5).

Nation state regulations that make education compulsory for citizens, are not always binding for refugees and migrant children in transit (Richardson et al., 2018, p. 9), an issue that potentially causes ‘generations of refugee children throughout the world /to/ miss out on education altogether’ (Ibid.). During 2016-17, more than half of the children arriving from Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan to RNM, had been out of school for 1-2 years, while for Syrian children this gap was reaching 2.5 years (Anon, 2019, p. 3). Following the closure of the borders in 2016, the educational system of RNM could not easily be adapted to accept refugee children into *formal* education. Lack of personnel, learning materials in the native languages of the refugees, as well as safety issues, were some of the issues that impaired the inclusion of refugees within the national education system. (interviewee 1)

In order to avoid a collapse of the system for educational provision, a collaboration was established between the *Ministry of Education and Knowledge*, the *Ministry of Labour and Social Policies* of RNM and the international aid organisations UNICEF and UNHCR, to prepare refugee education in the TRCs<sup>6</sup> (Orovcanec-Arangelovic & Martinoska, 2018, p. 15). The Ministries adopted elements of the national curriculum for the following subjects: mathematics, sciences, civil society, informatics and languages, while the international aid organisations prepared the guidance, didactical framework and technical assistance for the refugee childrens’ education (Ibid.). Two local Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs): the NGO *SOS Detsko Selo* and the NGO *Otvorena Porta-La Strada* were engaged to provide education in the TRC *Tabanovce* in Kumanovo and the TRC *Vinojug* in Gostivar (Orovcanec-Arangelovic & Martinoska, 2018, p.10). Ninety-five children (up to 14 years of age) participated in *non-formal* education in the two TRCs, between April 2016 and March 2017 (Ibid.).

The everyday practicalities related to the education at the TRCs were as follows: during the morning lessons, all types of subjects were taught<sup>7</sup>, while during the afternoon lessons, social workers engaged with the pupils in more creative activities.<sup>8</sup> On average, there were 6 members of the teaching team engaged in education at all times, while sometimes the number increased to 14 team members. Pedagogists, psychologists, social workers and translators were all engaged simultaneously in the teaching.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The educational materials provided, were in accordance with the *1951 Refugee Convention* and the *EU Regulations for the Education of Refugee Children* (Anon, 2019, p. 4)

<sup>7</sup> Mathematics, English, Macedonian, ICT, Sciences, Art, Drama, Music and Dancing.

<sup>8</sup> Drawing, singing, watching films, encouraging discussions and debates, etc.

<sup>9</sup> Information extracted from interviews with teachers, if not stated otherwise.

During the year in question, the children attending the classrooms of the TRCs in RNM, were of different ages and backgrounds and spoke different languages. The children had varying levels of academic preparation and differing attitudes toward both education and their current ‘temporal’ situation (Orovcanec - Arandjelovic & Martinoska, 2018, p. 14). The teaching in the TRCs was officially organised as *non-formal* learning (Ibid.). The findings of this research, however, concluded that it was not entirely possible to provide *non-formal* education, given the complexities of the circumstances.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

#### 3.1. Deleuze and Guattari’s Notions

Deleuze and Guattari’s 1987 book, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* does not form a single argument, but generally promotes *molecular* relations, where the ‘molecules jump’ from one line to another line, spurring creativity and causality, rather than hierarchical or vertical arrangements of things (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 5). An initial way to understand *rhizomes* is through a biological analogy: *rhizomatic* notions can be seen as ginger plant roots, which grow closely beneath the ground, continuously forming, branching out and connecting multiple irregularly shaped nodes. Deleuze and Guattari claim that ‘the tree imposes the verb “to be”’ (1987, p. 27) or *being*, while the notion of the *rhizome* is never ending, thus representing the configuration of ‘*and...and...and*’ (Ibid.), and constituting the process of *becoming*. For Deleuze and Guattari, the state of *becoming* is the only form of existence (there is no static *being*, only constant *becoming*), which is characterised by the notion of constant *flux*, encompassing all the cracks, fractures and gaps in between (Kendall, A et al., 2021, p. 515). St. Pierre claims that *rhizomes* are particularly significant in relation to refugees’ education, opening up potential for thinking differently about pedagogical theory (Guttorm et al., 2015, p. 20). More generally, the notion of *rhizomes* and *the process of becoming* and their theoretical positioning lies within wider social theory, with a view to potentiate alternative types of sociological investigations, offering creative and different correlations between philosophy, educational theories and multicultural theories (Strom and Martin, 2017; Sidebottom, 2021; Nielsen et al., 2022, etc.).

### 3.2 Molar Lines, Molecular Lines, Lines of Flight and Becoming

In their discussion of *rhizomes*, Deleuze and Guattari outline different kinds of ‘lines’, the two main types being *molecular* and *molar*, while the smallest and most unpredictable ‘lines’ are called *lines of flight*. The ‘lines’ arrange themselves on a set of different *plateaus* where each platform/environment represents a different and unique configuration of interactions between the lines (Fig.1). The three types of ‘lines’ which are in constant conjunction and disjunction, are always in the process of *becoming* and never in *a state* (Høstaker, 2014 , p. 154).

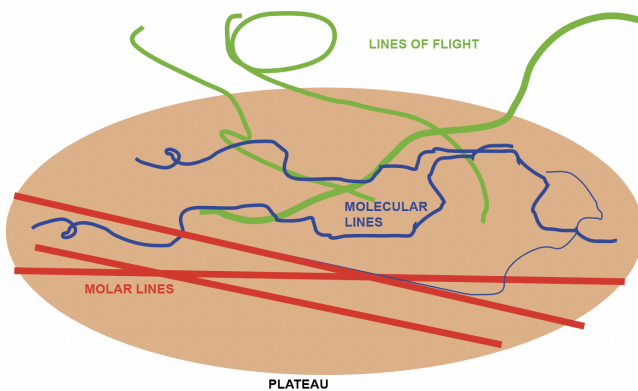


Figure 1. Illustration of molar lines, molecular lines and lines of flight on a ‘plateau’

*Molar lines* are straight and rigid; they are not malleable, and enforce standardised and uniform norms and rules (Fig. 1., red lines). Within the realm of education, *molar lines* can be exemplified through examinations, classroom settings, mandatory curriculum, established codes of conduct, etc. (Strom & Martin, 2017, p. 9). *Molecular lines* appear when macro level forces (*molar lines*) work on a micro level (Albrecht-Crane & Slack, 2003, p. 200; Strom, 2016, p. 254). *Molecular lines* disturb, decode, flex and subvert the rigidity of molar lines (Ibid.). *Molecular lines* are seen as ‘middle lines’ and occur at the same time as *molar lines* (Fig. 1., blue lines). Within the realm of education, *molecular lines* could be exemplified through *free-flow curriculum* and *non-formal* education. *Molecular lines* have two directions: the first one is the return to the *molar lines*, while the second direction is when they subvert their own actions into tiny lines that, like a springboard, connect the diminishing dots in the horizon and acting like spurs of creativity, defined as *lines of flight* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 326) (Fig. 1., green lines).

Within the realm of education, Flores and Day claim that many teachers, after experimenting with *non-formal* education, often return to traditional pedagogical methods (*molar lines*), in order to maintain control of classroom dynamics (Strom and Martin, 2017, p. 98). This represents the direction: *molecular lines* → *molar lines*.

*Lines of flight* represent a series of journeys through metaphorical and physical space. The term *flight* (the French equivalent being ‘fuite’), refers to a leak or an overflow, suggesting movement, a trajectory and (most importantly), an escape (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 6). The *lines of flight*, in essence, can be related to any creative action or activity that ‘*escape/s/ the binary organisation*’ (Ibid.) by creating specific circumstances far removed from the norms of *molar lines*. Therefore, their direction is: *lines of flight* → *molecular lines* or *lines of flight* → *disappearance*.

The overall concept of lines of flight can be understood as a form of unconstrained energy that leaps out of a given situation, transgressing or transcending borders. Within the realm of education, inquiry-based teaching and student advocacy could be seen as *lines of flight* (Strom & Martin, 2017, p. 80), these modes demonstrate resilience and adaptation by opening up new dimensions of thought, action and creation. Both *lines of flight* and *molecular lines* constitute the process of *becoming*. The key element of *becoming* is the passing of time, or the connections made between dispersed elements and processes through time that generate experience and knowledge, creating conclusions and shifts of opinions. *Becoming* never ends, one form of *becoming* is immersed within another process of *becoming* (Bankston, 2019, p. 5). It should however, be noted that Deleuze and Guattari alert to the fact that *molecular lines* and *lines of flight* could deviate in a negative direction and thereby create a ‘deterritorialization’ (1987, p. 108). This thesis will however, primarily deal with affirmative ‘lines’, without entirely omitting consideration of ‘lines’ that have *morphed* negatively, whether by intentional or unintentional actions.

### 3.3. Deleuze and Guattari’s Notions as an Analytical Tool

In this research, Deleuze and Guattari’s notions are used primarily as a theoretical framework. However, this research also relies on *rhizomes* as an analytical tool, used to potentiate Deleuze and Guattari’s *what* and *how*, in relation to the demanding teaching practices in TRCs. How does something work? How do things interact? How are they relational? What kind of progression does the interaction provide? Questions such as these are derivatives of *rhizomatic* thinking and were used

to develop the interview schedule (Appx. 1), as well as command terms for the analysis of the gathered data.

The concept of shifting the theoretical framework into an analytical tool, was inspired by the Deleuzian approach of viewing philosophy as a *toolbox* for new ideas, aimed at challenging the hegemony of exclusionary ‘high theory’ (Strom, 2016, p. 31). By considering theory as a toolbox, it becomes more ‘open’, enabling a more direct access into philosophical thought, both for educators and others involved. This process thus aims to render the theory active and process-based, using concepts as levers for new imaginings, as explained by Parr (2010, p. 54). In response to such ways of thinking, this thesis supports the view that philosophical concepts should be creative and applicable, rather than representational and descriptive, in order for them to act as an agency.

## 4. Existing Research

Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy entails that education should undergo ‘radical reconfiguration’ (Savat & Thompson, 2015, p. 247). *A Thousand Plateaus* talks about *intermezzos*, emphasising *in-betweenness*, *flux*, *differentiation* and *fluidity*, and as such the literature consulted by this research was primarily in response to these modes of enquiry. Deleuze and Guattari’s notions of *rhizomes*, *flux* and *morphing* have, since the beginning of the century, been fully recognised by current pedagogical theories and discourses (St Pierre, 2013; Willin, 2010).<sup>10</sup> According to St. Pierre (2013), these philosophical notions are ontological turns in educational research. A better understanding of *rhizomes* and educational complexities should therefore be formed through the notion of *kinship*, as propagated by Cormier (2008) and will here be analysed as such. In relation to the consulted literature, two main topics have been examined, one on a *macro level* (education and the curriculum) and the other, on the *micro level* (teachers’ experience).

### 4.1. Macro Level Enquiries

#### 4.1.1. Education as Social Justice

Sidebottom’s concept of the *rhizomatic* educator, takes a philosophical turn. She dwells on the notion of *what it means to be human* (Braidotti in Sidebottom, 2021), stipulating that being human

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<sup>10</sup> This section will not quote exact page numbers in in-text-citations. Selected terms used in the literature are treated as notions (marked here by italic letters), rather than as directly quoted sections from the referenced books; consequently, only the names of the authors and the year of the publications, will be included here.

means questioning the status quo. In educational theory, this would translate as the search for a more elevated purpose, that of *being a humane teacher*. Jokikokko and Uitto's (2016) research claims that social justice is normally understood as resulting from a positive multicultural learning process. For them, the concept of social justice is seen as 'mirroring' connectivity between the participants (teachers, pupils, etc.), leading Zembylas (2017) to theorise about the expression of 'love', relying also on similar, well known concepts developed by Freire (1997). Referring to a concept by Braidotti, Sidebottom claims that the acquisition of knowledge equates to a process of overcoming *the pain* in two ways; *overcoming the pain* of the teacher (in relation to engaging with the new and unfamiliar circumstances of the TRCs, teaching multiculturally for the first time, etc.) and the teacher as a mitigator of the *pain* of the pupils (refugee children), thereby seeing the teacher as the 'giver as well as the receiver' (2021; Chabot, 2008).

The emotional aspect of teaching plays an important role in the multicultural environment of TRCs, especially when teachers need to expand their own cultural awareness, thereby opening up for global perspectives on teaching, as a form of *social justice* [Jokikokko & Uitto, 2016; based on Freire's ideas (1998)].

#### 4.1.2. *Re-thinking the Curriculum*

By examining the complex net of relations between *rhizomatic* theories and their application to pedagogy, both Sidebottom (2021) and Strom and Martin (2017) partially 'close' the gaps in the literature. They emphasise the significance of relational, unconstrained, cross-generational and inquiry-based learning, as key elements of re-thinking the *formal* curriculum. Ball (2016) draws a distinction between *formal* education and *non-formal* education, the latter focusing on more flexible approaches and encompassing the emotional impact of teaching, which is more appropriate for education at TRCs. In that respect, Zembylas suggests that while it is not unachievable to entirely erase refugees' lived traumas, attempts for their reparation through a 'humane' education (whose aim is *social justice*), should be offered in the TRCs, by crafting a 'reparative curriculum' (Zembylas, 2017; based on Tarc, 2011).

However, opposing voices and points of view must also be taken into account. Wallin states that *non-formal (rhizomatic)* education only creates a *picture* of a free-flowing, liberal, alternative and avant-garde education, deployed merely as 'an image of liberation and freedom' (2010, p. 83) and should not, therefore, be considered as a viable alternative educational method. Furthermore, Deleuze



and Guattari themselves raise the possibility, in their essay-like theoretical writing, that *rhizomes* can easily be misunderstood, or inappropriately applied. If *rhizomes* are to be ‘dissected’ in order to become a tool for interaction, ‘You don’t do it with a sledgehammer /.../ you use a very fine file’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 160).

#### 4.2. *Micro Level Enquiries - Teachers’ Experience*

Strom and Martin’s (2017) discussion about teachers’ identity in conjunction with the process of *becoming*, enables this research to view the teachers’ identity within a constant *process of development*, where the teacher occupies an ever-changing position. If the standard division of pupils according to age groups, the articulation of the curriculum into distinct subjects and the usual divide between the student and teacher, were all to be re-examined and viewed as potential connections rather than separations, this could have a *relational* impact, thereby improving the teachers’ practice (Ball, 2016; Strom & Martin, 2017). In *formal* education, teacher development is most commonly evaluated through quantifiable evaluations. From a *rhizomatic* point of view, however, the teacher’s identity is part of a larger scheme, a latent manifestation propagating the individual work of teachers that should therefore not be evaluated (Strom & Martin, 2017). The literature sought to guide this research sees teachers’ development through the process of *becoming*. In other words, teacher’s confidence is developed through: [1] overcoming the ‘confusion’ and ‘reality shock’ (Korthagen et al., 2006; Pault, 2006; Strom & Martin, 2017); [2] through collaborating with refugee children and constructing shared and mutual identities (Harris, 2010; Sidebottom, 2021; Cormier, 2008); and [3] through an expression of ‘love’ and emotions (Zimbylas, 2017; Jokikokko & Uitto, 2016), all of which encourage the professional and personal growth of the teachers.

#### 4.3. *Defining the Literature Gap*

Various studies of pedagogical approaches have identified novel teaching methods that operate *rhizomatically*, including *inquiry-based teaching* centred around the process of teachers’ *becoming* (Sidebottom, 2021; Strom & Martin, 2017). Deleuze and Guattari’s *rhizomatic* notions have, for some time, been entangled within educational theory and has, since 2010 onwards, been increasingly referred to in refugees and migrants’ educational theory.

The literature intersecting [1] the theories of *rhizomes* and [2] the experience of teachers engaging with refugee’ education is very limited, thus representing a gap in the literature. Due to the

literature gap, literature from parallel disciplines has been consulted for this thesis: [1] general educational theories in relation to *rhizomes* and [2] refugee' education in relation to teachers' experience. A further gap in the existing literature is in relation to the use of *rhizomatic* notions in terms of the interlinking theories that lie between sociology and education. According to Høstaker, sociological theory virtually omits Deleuze and Guattari's concept of *rhizomes* (2018, p. 34), rendering the links between the disciplines difficult, but nevertheless worthy of being addressed.

Another significant obstacle in the research was the lack of academic literature related to the concrete situation in the TRCs in RNM. The research has drawn information from the reports made by NGOs involved in the provision of education (Kiprovaska & Samojlovska, 2017) or other NGOs which, through different grants, gained the right to write about the situation in the TRCs (Stojanovski et al., 2017; Brbeska, 2018; Cvetanovska, 2020; Golubovska & Smailovik, 2017). These reports, however, are primarily focused on facts and legislative issues, rather than on theoretical investigations.

Other academic papers, written in other transit countries on the *EM Route*, have been consulted. Research studies similar to this thesis (in terms of teachers' experiences with teaching in TRCs), have been found in various academic papers in Serbia (Milojevic, 2019), Greece (Fyssa et al., 2013; Fouskas, 2019, etc) and Turkey (Karakus, 2019; Serin and Bozdog, 2020; etc.), whose investigations are primarily based on semi structured interviews, providing valuable insight into teachers' experiences with work-on-the-ground. In some instances, however, these represent somewhat biased views on the topic of teachers' positions within education in TRCs, rendering them unworthy of consultation. The absence of any other theoretical study on teachers' experience at TRCs in RNM, means that this is the first paper written on the topic, suggesting that its findings and conclusion should instigate further theoretical engagement by other researchers. Due to the lack of relevant secondary sources, the findings of this thesis should be viewed with precaution.

## **5. Methodology**

### *5.1 Research Design*

This thesis uses a qualitative strategy of inquiry, conceived through the employment of hermeneutic interviews as the main method of data generation. Through consultation of De Vaus's description of research designs (2001, p.16), the phenomenological research design has been selected

as the most appropriate for this study, as it provides the best possibility for exploring the phenomena of refugee education. Through the views, experiences and perspectives of the interviewees, who have lived and experienced the phenomena (*nonlinear* refugee education), the researcher used the phenomena to reinforce the constructivist viewpoint, and the knowledge attained in this thesis is thus understood to be in the process of constant creation and adaptation (Cresswell et al., 2014, p. 37).

Since the research design prioritises in-depth reflections of a relatively small group of participants, the mode of hermeneutic enquiry has been employed, which stipulates that understanding a particular *event* can only be achieved if it is analysed as a whole (Zimmermann, 2013). In this thesis, the notion of *rhizomes* simultaneously offers various possibilities for data generation and acts as a theoretical framework. The overall target of the data generation was to gain knowledge and develop a wider understanding of the experiences and perspectives of the teachers working within the TRCs, representing the possibility of adding to existing knowledge about this phenomena, in conjunction with Deleuze and Guattari's theoretical framework.

Due to the lack of theory and literature related to *nonlinear* education, the thesis employs the inductive research design; drawing conclusions by going from the specific to the general, thereby extending existing knowledge by connecting dispersed elements from both theory and practice (Streefkerk, 2022). All segments of the inquiry have therefore been defined by different sections within the analysis, which have been developed in parallel and without an implicit hierarchy, thus enabling an interweaving between events 'on the ground' and their theoretical framing. This intersection occurs in an inductive manner, while creatively explaining the correlation between educational approaches, the notions of *rhizomes* and the process of *becoming*.

## 5.2 Sampling

Phenomenological research design (as previously explained) emphasises rich individual accounts and experiences, for which Creswell recommends three to fifteen interviews (2013, p. 79). This study was conducted with seven participants, serving as a 'cross-section' of all teachers engaged with refugee education in the TRCs in RNM. Purposive, criterion-based sampling was deemed necessary, as it was more likely to ensure a strong rapport between the researcher and the

interviewees, thereby giving the researcher a close insight into the interviewees' first-hand recollections and thereby contributing to the collection of rich data (Desai and Potter, 2006, p. 146), otherwise unavailable in existing literature. Complete data saturation was not sought (Van Manen et al., 2016, p. 55), as in-depth interviews have been recognised as assuring quality over quantity of the data (Patton, 1990, p. 9).

The criteria for sampling of suitable interviewees was as follows. Participants needed to have had experience with teaching refugee children: [1] in TRCs in RNM; [2] between 2016 and 2017; and [3] across-the-board.<sup>11</sup> The sampling of the interviewees was based primarily on recommendations from the program director of the NGO *Open Gate: La Strada*. This effectively mitigated 'gatekeeper bias' in which particular individuals or groups might be 'left out', as the use of multiple interviewees signifies greater validity. The interviewees were themselves also able to suggest further participants, representing a form of snowball sampling (Desai & Potter, 2006, p. 147).

The course of everyday practicalities in relation to the education provided at the TRCs, influenced the sampling. In general, pedagogists, psychologists, social workers and translators were all engaged simultaneously in the teaching.<sup>12</sup> The sampling consisted of elementary school teachers and social workers. The importance of including social workers was based on the fact that they had also been acting as teachers (Tab. 1, Interviewee 1). The need to sample both groups was due to the fact that pedagogists from the small communities where the refugee camps were based, were oftentimes reluctant to accept working in the TRCs, necessitating social workers to take on the additional role of teachers. Social workers were also relevant, as they provided more holistic care (*humane/aid education*) ensuring the childrens' wellbeing through additional, parallel social and cultural activities.

The ratio of sampling of pedagogy graduates to social workers was 60:40. In this study, both groups are simply referred to as the 'interviewees'. The profiles of only two interviewees are presented herein, since all of the interviewees' experiences were relatively similar (Tab. 1).

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<sup>11</sup> 'Across-the-board' teaching experience means that the teachers were involved in teaching several subjects simultaneously, with different age groups, etc., rather than engaging with specialised teaching (eg. specific groups according to the childrens' age or language, specific level of academic abilities, etc.)

<sup>12</sup> General information about education in TRCs extracted from the interviews with the teachers.

Interviewee 1	Interviewee 2
MA graduate in Social Sciences, in the position of social worker.	BA graduate in Pedagogy, in the position of early years teacher and lead pedagogue.
Was employed by various local NGOs for 4 years, prior to working in the TRC.	Worked for 3 years in state elementary schools, prior to working in the TRC.
Initially involved in receiving the refugees arriving to the TRCs, since the closure of the borders in 2016, his role was that of a teacher.	In the TRC, her role was that of lead pedagogue and as a teacher.
At the TRC, he was involved primarily in providing afternoon and evening workshops. During the afternoon lessons, only social workers engaged with the pupils through creative activities, including drawing, singing, film screenings, etc. encouraging subsequent discussions and debates.	At the TRC, she was teaching English, Macedonian, Natural Sciences, as well as Dancing (due to her additional education as a ballet dancer).
He worked with children of all age groups.	She worked with children up to the age of 14 years.
Prior to his work as an educator, he had taken preparatory pedagogical classes, as well as classes in English and German in the local elementary school. He had experience of multicultural and <i>non-formal</i> teaching, but had not received pedagogical education specifically for this.	She had no prior preparation or working experience for multicultural and <i>non-formal</i> teaching, before commencing work in the TRC.
His employment at the TRC ended in 2017, due to lack of school age children in the Centre.	Her employment at the TRC ended in 2017, due to lack of school age children in the Center.

Table 1. Short description of the educational backgrounds and working responsibilities of two educators, employed in two different TRCs in RNM, in 2016-2017

### 5.3. Hermeneutic Interviews

The data generation was in the form of online hermeneutic interviews. Hermeneutic phenomenology has been described by Vandermause and Fleming (2011, p.1) as an intellectual tradition ‘applied to research processes as a guide for the generation of meaning and the understanding of experience, adding to extant knowledge and raising new questions about phenomena, both complex and familiar’. The rationale for using hermeneutic inquiry emerges from the researcher’s intention to represent the personal experiences and the individualised previous knowledge of the interviewees, affirming the postulate of hermeneutic inquiry that all knowledge is shaped by personalised contexts (Zimmermann, 2013). The researcher, using his knowledge of

hermeneutic inquiry, conceived broad and open-ended questions for the interview schedule, allowing participants to explain particular events in the classrooms at the TRC, and to describe the relevant contexts influencing their experience. This enabled the researcher to create an all encompassing *hermeneutic circle* (Zimmermann, 2013) in relation to specific situations experienced by the interviewees. At the same time, while this method offered a direct and reliable progression for conducting the interview schedule (Appx. 3), it is generally also more time-consuming, as argued by Scheyvens (2014, p. 201) and as confirmed by the experience of this thesis' research process. This method also offered a certain flexibility to the researcher to shift analytical directions during the hermeneutic analysis of the data, more specifically during the 3rd step of *Analysing* (described in 5.4. *Data Analysis* section), giving rise to a complexity of argumentation within the Analysis section.

A chronological description of the process of conducting the interview schedule is presented in Appendix 3., while the interview schedule is itself presented in full in Appendix 1. The interviews were conducted using a single interview schedule (Appx. 1), each time applied with slight modifications in response to the unfolding interviews (eg: changing the order of questions, elimination of less relevant questions, etc.). The duration of each online interview was between 60 to 90 minutes. The interviewees showed eagerness to discuss their engagement at the TRCs, listening attentively to the questions and responding in a rich and descriptive manner. The interviewees were generally keen for the researcher to comprehend their subjective perspectives and for the researcher to 'relive' their experience, through their vivid descriptions. The rapport created between the researcher and the interviewees, enabled the researcher to comprehend things with which only the interviewees were familiar, demonstrating Zimmerman's notion of hermeneutic inquiry as a process through which something unfamiliar is made familiar to the research (2013). Koch refers to this as a 'fusion of horizons' (1995, p. 835), whereby the interests of the researcher and the interviewees come closer together or even *become one* and the same, made possible due to the selected method of data generation. In conclusion, it could be stated that hermeneutic interviews enabled the researcher to understand and fully comprehend the particular situations on-the-ground and that the researcher was able to create conclusive data generation.

#### 5.4. Data Analysis

Instead of making use of analytical methods as a restrictive protocol, the analytical procedures were used in a heuristic manner, as influenced by Clarke (2005), eliciting connections between the collected data, the theoretical framework and the existing literature. The data analysis in this research followed Eakle's (2007) strategy of 'data-walking' and Greening's 4 hermeneutical steps of phenomenological research (2019).

In relation to Greening's four hermeneutical research steps, the data analysis unfolded as follows:

[1] *Bracketing* - The researcher reviewed the collected data, highlighting the notions that first caught the researcher's interest. The selected data was subsequently clustered around key ideas, by use of 'phenomenological reduction' (Greening, 2019, p. 90), selecting the most important topics of inquiry (the teachers' background, curriculum, emotions, interactions, etc.).

[2] *Intuiting* - Analytical memos were consulted, entailing lengthier analyses of significant *events* connected across the empirical data (Charmaz, 2006, p. 32), which led to the formation of data stories and narratives. This stage reaches a 'common understanding' (Greening, 2019, p. 90), creating the possibility for the reader to comprehend the events in the TRCs. Nevertheless, through the hermeneutic steps of phenomenological enquiry, the researcher identified that the selected data needed to be further reorganised, in order for it to be 'filtered' through the theoretical framework - and thereby be able to create new and unique observations of the educational circumstances.

[3] *Analysing* - Key ideas were further developed through contemporary means of grounded theory 'theming', focusing on the observation of concrete topics and *events* through the theoretical lens. The strength of Deleuze and Guattari's structure of writing can be shown in their emphasis on flows and the instability of well-established relations, and through the themes and patterns used in their writing, the reader becomes able to comprehend the complex phenomena which are essential for the authors (Ellingsen, 2009, p. 65). This approach has been assimilated in this thesis by the researcher, where the identification of themes, trends and key ideas has been used so that the notions of *rhizomes* and *becoming* serve as the lens through which to observe selected *events* from the education at the TRCs, thereby creating 'universal themes' (Greening, 2019, p. 90).

[4] *Describing* - The final of the four hermeneutic steps, provided a written outlook of the theoretical processes. This step took considerable time (2021-22), as the researcher revisited the previous three steps, shifting his own understanding and perspectives, until clarity of description was achieved.

### 5.5. *Ethical Considerations*

The most important ethical concern of this thesis was how it would reflect the voices of the interviewees in the most authentic and respectful manner possible. Scheyvens' methods of dealing with consent and the privacy of the participants, were consulted. Prior to the interviews, consent was obtained from the participants (2014, p.164), the interviewees being informed of the principles of confidentiality, alongside their right to interrupt or end the interview at any given time, thereby also ensuring the participants' dignity (Scheyvens, 2014, p. 168). It was also agreed that personal names would be omitted, and the interviewees are therefore referred to according to the chronological order of the interview schedule (eg. interviewee 2).

A major limitation of this thesis was related to the restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which excluded the option of face-to-face interviews and the researcher visiting the TRCs. Qualitative research is usually an investigation of the phenomena within their regular and natural setting (Hammarberg et al., 2015, p. 500), however the effects of the pandemic required the researcher to search for alternative methods. To some extent, these limitations were mitigated by the *Zoom* platform, however one must consider that face-to-face conversations would perhaps have provided additional layers of information and the possibility to engage with the interpretation of the data somewhat differently.

Since the purpose of this study was to produce 'new thinking,' instead of simply generating knowledge, it was pivotal to reinforce the researcher's trustworthiness, and to demonstrate the authenticity of the research, in accordance with Lincoln and Guba's claim (1985, p. 290). Trustworthiness between the researcher and the interviewees was enabled by conducting the interviews in the participants' native language, fostering a strong rapport between the two parties, while avoiding potential 'lost-in-translation' interpretations of the interviewees' responses. Speaking the native language also enabled the researcher to read local literature related to the topic, further reinforcing the authenticity of the findings. Furthermore, in order to increase transparency,



response-validation was used.<sup>13</sup> The participants were provided with the researcher's analysis of their responses to the interview questions, thereby providing the interviewees the opportunity to respond with feedback regarding the researcher's interpretation.

Finally, the researcher followed McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead's recommendations and shared the thesis with two *critical friends* in an iterative manner (1996, p. 35); both asked proactive questions through a different lens, 'offering critique of the work as a friend' (Costa and Kallick, 1993, p. 50). One of the trusted individuals was a professor from Aarhus University's School of Education, whose viewpoint was relevant due to her extensive academic research in relation to educational psychology, as well as her experience with *non-formal* education, having herself previously worked with an NGO dealing with the psychological well-being of refugee children in RNM. The other trusted individual is also a Professor from Aarhus University's School of Education and the leader of ITIRE, the academic research project engaged with improving the provision of education of refugee children, and where the researcher had previously completed an internship.

### 5.6. Reflexivity

Deleuze interpreted Baruch de Spinoza's famous query 'What can a body do?' as 'We do not even know of what affections we are capable, nor the extent of our power' (1990, p. 226). Similarly, this thesis finds itself posing the questions: What can a researcher do? Does the researcher know what affected him to engage with the particular subjects? What is the extent of the power of the researcher's voice, when discussing and analysing the participants' circumstances? Key considerations regarding the ethics and accountability of this research are related to identifying the reasons and the significance of pursuing research related to Deleuze and Guattari's theoretical framework, in relation to the particular educational practices in question.

According to hermeneutic enquiry, only through personal commitment, creativity and engagement with the selected topic of enquiry, can a study result in valuable research (Zimmermann, 2013). The researcher followed this postulate of hermeneutic enquiry, in choosing the area of study: being of Macedonian descent, the researcher's connection with the country influenced the selection of the location for the research. The researcher had also been a high school pupil in Skopje (RNM)

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<sup>13</sup> Also known as 'member checking'.

during the time of the refugee crisis in question, which triggered the researcher's sense of compassion and self-reflectiveness (Hein & Austin, 2001, p. 3). Therefore, the researcher satisfies Scheyvens' criteria of integrity and sensitivity to the local cultural context (Scheyvens, 2014, p. 185).

As discussed by Ellingsen, 'building a rich /.../ account of a phenomenon that problematizes its own construction, highlights the researchers' vulnerabilities and positionality, making claims about socially constructed meanings' (Ellingsen, 2009, p.6). Therefore, the questions the researcher asked himself were: Did the researcher's positionality and cultural baggage influence the construction of the research thesis, and if so, to what extent? Does the researcher register only what he wants to hear, while listening to the interviewees? (Scheyvens, 2014, p. 62).

The researcher acknowledges the potential risk that pre-existing expectations and hypotheses may have affected the data analysis and interpretations, a limitation typical of most qualitative methods (Desai & Potter, 2006, p. 65). In order to avoid the possibility of the researcher's own bias affecting data generation, the researcher engaged in critical self-reflection through ongoing entries in a research journal during the data collection process; these entries were later consulted while engaging with the analysis of the data and drawing subsequent findings.

The postulates of the constructivist worldview and of hermeneutic enquiry, are thereby reflected, seeing that all understanding is based on interpretation (Cresswell et al., 2014, p. 37) and assumes that the thesis' analysis is primarily shaped in accordance with the researcher's personal involvement (Zimmermann, 2013). For example, interpreting classroom lessons as unique *events* or *lines of flight* that could not easily be re-enacted, is related to the researcher's unique way of generating both primary and secondary data. This research design thus demonstrates a 'critical realism' (Ibid.), an interpretation of reality seen through the researcher's eyes, in accordance with his own ethical and moral guidance.

## 6. Analysis

Høstaker claims that in order to construct sociological theory (or a *sociological 'setting'*), relations are created by the *distribution of properties* between *entities* (2018, p. 55). The *sociological setting* of this research consists of the *distribution* between the following *entities* (Fig. 2): [1] the

interviewees (their previous education and practice, general experience and their world views related to diversity in the classrooms); [2] refugee children as pupils (their varying educational levels, general attitude and world views) and [3] the circumstances (the context of RNM as a transit country, other EU states as desired refugee destinations, the role of the government and aid institutions, the limited facilities and improvised classrooms and the temporality of the refugees' stay in the TRCs). This triangular relation between elements represents the actual gap in knowledge that this research attempts to fill.

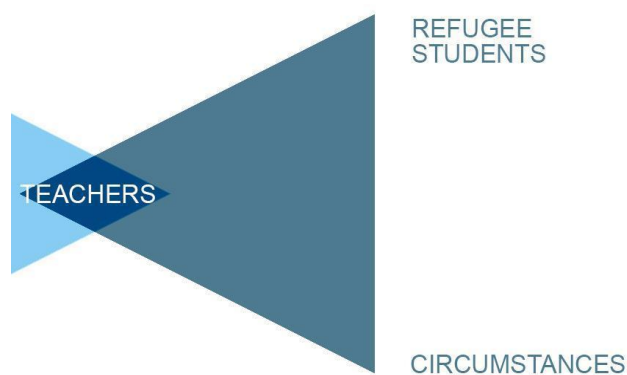


Figure 2. Triangular Relation between the Three Elements

Different *entities* within the process of *distribution* (or *flux*) have been observed through the theoretical lens of Deleuze and Guattari's notions of the *rhizome* and process of *becoming*. This analysis attempts to give an account of the interviewees' first hand experiences, as well as their inventiveness and adaptability, while faced with the anomalies of the educational system provided for refugees in the TRCs, between 2016 and 2017 in RNM. Macro and micro level investigations overlap and intersect each other in all parts of the analysis section. Macro level investigations inform the sociological aspect of this research, which dwells on education for social justice (Sidebottom, 2021, p. 25) and the possibility to modify the curriculum of refugee education in transit countries (Jokikokko & Uitto, 2016, p. 3; Zembylas, 2017, p. 4). The research's study of micro level relations provides in-depth elaborations on the interviewees' identity and the shifts in their practice in relation to *nonlinear* teaching.

### 6.1. Multicultural and Nonlinear Teaching

In the very complex interaction between *entities* that comprises the particular *sociological setting* of this thesis, the first task of the researcher was to understand the interviewees' previous preparation for work in a multicultural setting and within *non-formal* education. In general, the findings were inconclusive, as the interviewees tended to avoid answering questions related to *non-formal* or multicultural education, moving swiftly onto the next interview topic. The findings in relation to these particular questions, were based on the researcher's general impression that the interviewees did not have previous experience with *non-formal* learning, during their own pedagogical training, nor that they had experience of working in a multicultural environment. Due to the lack of concrete answers to these interview questions, further investigations needed to be made in order for the positioning of the interviewees to be clarified.

Two parameters were considered in order for findings to be drawn. Firstly, Strom and Martins' case study was used as a comparative evaluator of *non-formal* educational preparation; secondly, Jokikokko and Uitto's research was used as the evaluator for the opportunities that interviewees were offered in the relation to multicultural practice. Strom and Martins' case studies confirmed that the teachers had at least received some measure of preparation for *non-formal* education and that they had been introduced to the 'ideal' version of teaching (*non-formal* education, free-flow curriculum, etc.), which they were able to successfully implement in their own teaching practice (2017, p. 57). Jokikokko and Uitto's research stipulates that teachers could be considered as being prepared for multicultural practice if they had [1] ongoing multicultural practices, and [2] 'various opportunities to learn in new and changing contexts' (eg. working in foreign countries, etc.) (2016, p. 15). Comparison between the two examples from the literature (Strom & Martin, Jokikokko & Uitto), and the interviewees previous education and working experience, indicated that the interviewees did not have any previous experience with multicultural teaching. They had not taught students from foreign countries, nor did they have any experience with teaching children in precarious conditions, such as refugee children; furthermore, they had not had the opportunity to learn the skills required to be able to competently engage with *non formal* education. The interviewees were effectively working in a state of 'limbo.' The term *non-formal learning* is therefore omitted from this analysis, and a new term is being introduced by this research thesis: that of *nonlinear education*, which more adequately describes the inventive and self-initiated and practices introduced by the interviewees.

## 6.2. Macro Level

### 6.2.1. Rhizome - Free-Flow Curriculum

The interviewees' provision of education and their methodological response to the circumstances created during the lessons, are the main aspects interwoven throughout the analysis section, and will be analysed through the lens of Deleuze and Guattari's *rhizomes - molar and molecular lines, lines of flight* and the notion of *becoming*. Here, Deleuze and Guattari's notions provide a dual lens: theoretical observations and the feasibility of improvement of theories and practices already in place.

### 6.2.2. Molecular Lines

Interviewee 7 pointed out that "every lesson started with the introduction of a certain topic from the curriculum, but never finished with the same topic," illustrating that in the process, either she or the pupils (or both) introduced *deviations* within the individual lesson. Changing the curriculum so frequently was found to be challenging by the teacher.

At the beginning, I would use a textbook for the appropriate age group, but over time I learned that I needed to prepare material on different levels - from basic, even preschool material to more advanced levels of learning. I initially found this to be very difficult, but after some time I realised that this could also be fun. Having a chance to test certain topics and approaches that I couldn't otherwise try out in my previous school, provided an unexpected opportunity.  
(interviewee 7)

After a few months, all of the interviewees understood that, due to the specific circumstances, certain changes within the curriculum were needed. In order to correspond to the curriculum in *flux*, all interviewees engaged in the process of *self* and *reflective learning*. Of their own accord, the interviewees started interweaving the subject matter of their lessons with other topics. The following instances are representative examples of this kind of *deviation* from the established curriculum: Interviewee 1 and 6 found it suitable to use humour in their communication with the children, or to introduce certain games, as a way of keeping the children's attention during the lessons. Interviewee 5 supplemented his teaching with self initiated inquiry-based teaching in the form of prolonged conversations with the pupils, allowing longer time to discuss parts of the curriculum that may have been more challenging.

We talked and talked and used up two lessons discussing a single topic... I would never have done that before, but adapted my teaching methods as I became aware that children do not have the same life circumstances here, and the same opportunities to continue learning or preparing for lessons after the end of the school day, as other children have /referring to children in formal state education/. (interviewee 5)

Interviewee 3 would occasionally bring his toiletry bag with him, and start the morning lessons by engaging in simple acts of facial hygiene, thereby helping pupils to relax, play and laugh. For some interviewees the purpose of *deviation* was “coming closer together as people, by doing simple, everyday things together” (interviewees 1, 3 and 7) while for others, it was used as a tool to bring the curriculum closer to the learners. (interviewee 5)

This section (6.2.2.) examines shifts from the norms of the established curriculum (*molar lines*) into the *deviated* curriculum (*molecular lines*) within the *nonlinear* teaching practices at the TRCs. The teaching experience within that setting had, for the seven interviewed interviewees, generated a specific learning process, which emerged from the countless interactions between the interviewees, pupils, and the specific circumstances, by enabling them to engage *relationally* with one another. These *moments-in-time* are comparable to the concept of Deleuze and Guattari’s *events* that, as the philosophers teach us, cannot be *coded* or *reproduced*. Those *events* could be visualised represented as *molecular lines* that spread in different directions with the intention of accommodating and enabling *nonlinear* learning.

In this section, the researcher has considered *what* the interviewees had done in order to make knowledge more readily available to the group of pupils. Without any previous knowledge or experience with *non-formal* education, they had imaginatively created their own *free-flow curriculum* to serve the purpose of this particular circumstance. The researcher has identified *how* the *deviation* to the norms (*molecular lines*) were created within this context. The research indicates that the interviewees had, over time, learned that they needed to *divert* the curriculum, using humour (interviewees 1 & 6), prolonged conversations (interviewee 5), or by adding simple everyday activities (interviewees 1, 3 & 7), in order to connect ‘disparate elements together with ideas of learning as *relational*, cross-generational and unconstrained by *formal* educational systems’ (Sidebottom, 2021, p. 118).

### 6.2.3. *Intermezzos: Molar Lines ↔ Molecular Lines → Molar Lines ↗*

Interviewee 4 used playful measures to assist and improve childrens' reading abilities; he used various discarded objects as part of the teaching material - including plastic bottle tops, inscribing letters on their inner surface. Some of his other ad-hoc ideas and creative solutions included filling up plastic bottles with water to different levels to create 'musical bottles', or even using cooking as a way to introduce counting and simple arithmetic. Interviewees 1 and 7 *diverted* from the norms by asking open-ended questions, inviting pupils to hypothesise about different phenomena, to draw their own conclusions, or place themselves in the teacher's position, though reverse role-playing. For instance, as interviewees 1 and 7 explained:

Children taking the lead proved to be a very successful method through which they learned that they could have an opinion, they could share it and discuss it; and this meant a great deal for their self confidence. (interviewee 1)

and

You have to be flexible as a teacher, you have to bring play into the classroom, but also be familiar with the syllabus, as it is also important to give 'real knowledge' to the children. (interviewee 7)

In relation to this theme, interviewees 1, 5 and 7 used self initiated and invented *free-flow curriculum* activities (*molecular lines*) in order to be able, at some point, to return to *formal* education (*molar lines*), as represented in the activities initiated by interviewee 5 (Fig. 3). In other words, the *deviations* of these three interviewees' from the established curriculum (*molar lines*) were aimed primarily at improving the children's understanding of the *formal* curriculum material (numbers, letters, music, etc.), suggesting that those particular interviewees never fully *deviated* from *formal* education. While they went some way towards embracing *rhizomatic* notions, they were unable to commit fully to alternative ways of teaching. These unique *moments-in-time* created spaces of constant exchange between creative and *formal events*, as described by the actions of interviewees 1, 5 and 7, who used the *free-flow curriculum* as intersections of *formal* education, in order to create a rhythmic exchange of models of teaching (*molar* → *molecular* → *molar* ↗ ).

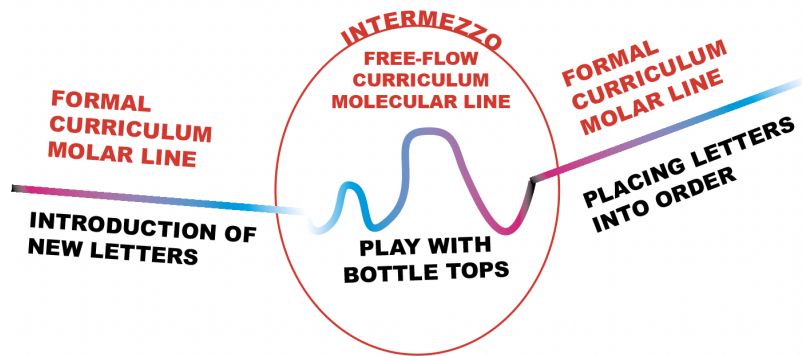


Figure 3. Molar - molecular - molar lines in the classroom activities introduced by interviewee 5

Mycroft and Weatherby characterise the playfulness of this pedagogical approach as enabling a ‘*space to dance*’ (2015, p. 23), a description that is an accurate representation of the methods used by the interviewees. The findings of this research show this method to be similar to Strom and Martin’s analysis that strengthens ‘emotional and inter-relational impact’ (2017, p. 26). Finally, the biological metaphor invented by Deleuze and Guattari for *rhizomes*, would be represented here as an exchange between straight and rigid roots (*molar lines*), that continue growing into curled ginger-like shoots (*molecular lines*), and then return back into straight and grounding roots (*molar lines*) (Fig. 3). Through the philosophers’ theoretical lens, this exchange is called an ‘*intermezzo*’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 25), where the *free-flow curriculum* is seen as pauses or intersections to the *formal* education or *molar lines*.

#### 6.2.4. Molecular Lines → Lines of Flight →

Other interviewees took a different approach, including, for instance, interviewee 6, who was in charge of the afternoon lessons, in the form of social gatherings, film screenings and discussions about films, music and art, including hands-on creative tasks. One of the most compelling examples of such an alternative approach was a discussion on the subject of domestic violence, a topic that was also mentioned by interviewee 2 due to the interviewee’s realisation that domestic violence was a part of reality for some of the children. With the intention of bringing this sensitive and painful topic into the learning environment of the afternoon sessions, interviewee 6 organised the lessons:

Firstly, I screened inserts from a film by Emir Kusturica that showed scenes of domestic violence. Secondly, I selected two pupils to engage performatively, asking one to act as a parent and the other as a child, then asking them to reflect on reasons as to why an act of violence might be expected to happen in the given circumstance. (interviewee 6)



Interviewee 6 then asked the pupils to write about conditions in which it should or should not be permitted for parents to use measures of domestic violence. These forms of interplay and dialogue led pupils to realise that violence is unnecessary and that there should be no circumstances in which physical or verbal abuse is permissible. Interviewee 6 described his experiences with considerable pride, confident that he had been able to shift the perspectives of children (and potentially even their parents) in relation to the issue of domestic violence.

Associative actions to watching films and adopting role-playing through acting, created an *integrated form of specific knowledge*. It could be said that interviewee 6 took the initiative to modify the curriculum, content and method of teaching, adopting interdisciplinary means. As a result, the method applied by this interviewee could be described as a progression from *free-flow curriculum (molecular lines)* into more advanced levels of didactic and emotional knowledge acquisition (investigative/critical writing, feedback and further discussions) (*lines of flight*) (Fig. 4).



Figure 4. Lines of flight in relation to the methodology introduced in the lesson by interviewee 6

These unique *events* and *moments-in-time* show that this teacher had created a system of education of a more experimental nature (*lines of flight*), bringing the teaching curriculum closer to the premise of *open-ended teaching inquiry*. Nevertheless, *lines of flight* should be used with caution, as indicated by the particular insight made by interviewee 6:

...such a great atmosphere was created that I do not know whether it would ever be possible to repeat or recreate it with a different group of children. The interaction was special.  
(interviewee 6)

This particular example leads to the realisation that those unique *events* or *moments-in-time* cannot easily be replicated within other circumstances. Any attempt of repetition and replication of such strategies may result in completely different events - thus clarifying that the *deviation*, in this

case, is not directed towards a return to *non-formal* or *formal* education. Those *moments-in-time* do not enable a return of the *lines of flight* into *formal education (molecular)* or *free-flow curriculum (molar lines)*. In the visual representation, these lines escape Deleuze and Guattari's *plateau*, denying the possibility of interaction with other lines; they can be considered as thin lines that connect dispersed dots in the horizon, like bolts of lightning, only to disappear after a short time (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 326) (Fig. 5) (*molecular lines* → *lines of flight* → disappearance).

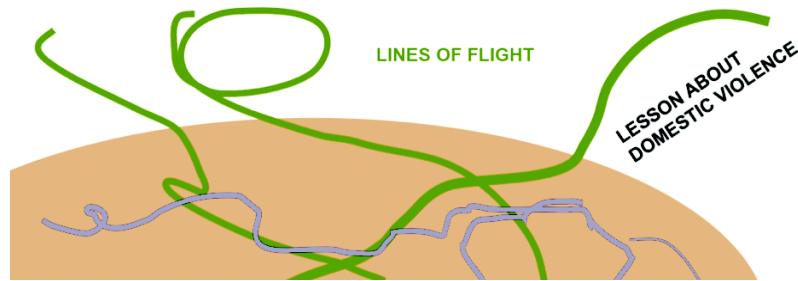


Figure 5. Lines of flight in relation to the methodology introduced in the lesson by interviewee 6.

In the conclusion of this section, conceptualising *rhizomatic* thinking within the context of pedagogy is not a superficial endeavour. Applying *rhizomatic* notions into operational actions, as for instance with interviewee 6's lesson on domestic violence, can be seen as a new form of collective creation of content, serving as a valuable effort within the realm of refugee children's education.

The interviewees (quoted in 6.2.4. section) recognised the need to *deconstruct* the curriculum and rules of *formal education* (as shown by citations from the interviews with teacher interviewees 1, 3, 5-7). With this *theme* (domestic violence), the discussion moves away from the premise of *individual learning*, towards the *collective creation of moments-in-time*, and could be seen as particularly relevant for the pedagogy of teaching within the circumstances of TRCs. Modes of teaching which are associated with *lines of flight*, are 'unstable' and 'disappearing' *events*. Due to the impossibility of being replicated, these modes of teaching cannot become embraced and integrated within structured University pedagogical courses. Nevertheless in the context of TRCs, such unique models of teaching are oftentimes the only option for creating a positive learning environment and their relevance should therefore not be underestimated.

All of the interviewees' actions, described in sections 6.2.1., 6.2.2. and 6.2.3 can be viewed as being characteristic of *rhizomatic agency* (Sidebottom, 2021, p. 118). This is because the *molecular lines* and *lines of flight* of those particular examples, are directed towards enabling teaching and

learning, intending to improve *children's capabilities* (Sen) within the specific circumstances of the TRCs.

#### 6.2.5. 'Dangerous' Lines of Flight

Interviewee 7 would often provide additional time for the pupils to complete given tasks. However, she remained concerned about the fact that the pupils, at times overwhelmed by the instability of their own situation, the traumatic experiences of their recent past, and the insecurity of an unknown future, would simply avoid coming to school.<sup>14</sup> Interviewee 7 took actions beyond the classroom, personally visiting the refugee tent of a particular pupil, in order to convince him (and to negotiate with his parents) regarding his reduced participation in lessons. This kind of action was not something she would normally have done, but the circumstances were, as she claimed, "atypical for classical schools, and these kinds of actions are sometimes necessary within the refugee centre." Her experience of this kind of action was positive, reflecting on its impact on the pupil:

He felt that he was being cared for; at the same time, the parents felt embarrassed about their mistrust in the school. When I left the tent, I felt that I had broken some rules here, but also that I had achieved something, that I had done something positive for someone's life. I felt respected and happy when I saw him the next day in the classroom. I had never done this kind of thing in my previous employment. Actions such as this would require consultations with my employer and many letters of approval, but in this way, in this situation, the problem was resolved more simply and directly. (interviewee 7)

On one hand, this act could be interpreted as humanitarian (giving and helping without limits), or as a process of turning negative experience into positive practice, an action also described in Jokikokko and Uitto's research, which examines the importance of emotional engagement in multicultural education. They claim that emotions help to create meaning and assist teachers and pupils to navigate changes. 'Positive emotions can enhance the learning process' (2016, p. 17), they conclude, returning to Freire (1998).

However, from another point of view, ad-hoc actions taken by teachers, without appropriate prior consultations, may not always be the most rational or legal approach, placing this kind of action and behaviour within the spectrum of *dangerous lines of flight*. In order to encourage this particular pupil to participate in the classroom education, the interviewee 7 needed to 'come into composition' (Strom & Martin, 2017, p.101) with the child and the parents, a practice that would (again) be

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<sup>14</sup> Class attendance was not compulsory in the TRCs. (Orovcanec-Arangelovic & Martinoska, 2018, p. 10)

difficult to find a place within classical pedagogical education. Deleuze and Guattari in their theory, point out that the *lines of flight* may '*deterritorialize*' (1987, p. 108) in a manner leading towards potentially questionable nonlinear practices, ultimately even entering a 'dangerous' realm.

Colebrook's theoretical research regarding the dynamics within TRCs, notes that the improvised actions of responsible personnel may occasionally be unpredictable, risky and even boundary-crossing (2002, p. 20). Whilst this might not be the intention, their 'affect' is a response to the immediacy of the given problematic situations. The specific action taken by interviewee 7, could be seen as being in line with Colebrook's theory. This theme could therefore be entitled '*the momentary self*' (Strom & Martin, 2017, p.106).

The *momentary self* is a positive construct, and is discussed as such in this analysis. However, in this particular case (where the teacher visited the pupil's tent), the teacher's response is an example of both a creative action, but also an ad-hoc and risky reaction. As already seen through this research, the interviewees in the TRCs are working in circumstances of the Deleuzian notion of '*and...and...and*' of constantly interchanging *events*. The interviewees are thereby continuously adapting to situations, changing their positions, their world views and the curriculum of the teaching agenda, in order to 'cater' to the specific needs of the refugee children and the specificities of the situations within the TRCs classrooms. As a result, teacher's *momentary selves* could potentially resort to improvised actions that could be described as being borderline, *deviating* towards creating *dangerous* outcomes - and potentially *deterritorializing* the initially positive *lines of flight*.

Another *dangerous line of flight* was noted in the interviews. Through the *momentary self* of the teacher, some of the pupils also became a '*momentary other*' (another phrase coined for the purposes of this research). The *momentary other*, intentionally or unintentionally, can create *dangerous lines of flight* in a given event, as noted by interviewee 5, who recalled that:

As much as I tried to bring the curriculum closer to their level of knowledge, translated the meanings to them, tried to be more strict with them, etc, some of them felt more and more frustrated by the general situation of instability. In anger, they remarked: Why are you so good to us? Are you faking it? Why pretend, when we are not wanted anywhere in this world!

The junction between positive intention (by interviewee 5) and negative response (by some of the older pupils), could be seen here as the *deterritorialisation* of the *lines of flight*. Even though most of the interviewees frequently mentioned that the children perceived the classroom at the TRCs as a "safe space" or as an "island of safety" (interviewees 1 & 6), it was nevertheless difficult to

create an ideal educational environment, under “conditions where the children felt ‘imprisoned’ under the condition of transit.” (interviewee 1) The visual representation of Deleuze and Guattari’s *negative lines of flight* resembles lines that connect dispersed dots in the horizon, that activate and disappear, but should be approached with caution as political movements could also be described as following the *lines of flight*. Totalitarianism could be seen as being derivative of *molar lines* and fascism of *molecular lines* (‘creative’ implementation of totalitarian systems), where the *lines of flight* are *deterritorialized* so that they are transformed into ‘lines of death’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p. 229-231).

### 6.3. Micro Level - Process of Becoming

#### 6.3.1. Teachers Overcoming Differentiation

One of the topics that interviewees repeatedly pointed out through the interview sessions, are the different habits and cultural differences and similarities between their own culture and that of the refugees. Therefore, the inclusion of the theme of multicultural understanding is warranted and would be understood through the interviewees’ adaptation to the multicultural environment over time.

I was surprised by the young boys’ behaviour. When they become 14 years of age, they become “difficult.” At that age, they are trying to be more responsible for their travelling family, by enacting the (role of the) ‘father of the family.’ They stop going to school, as education just doesn’t matter to them any more. This behaviour was a real shock to me. (interviewee 1)

or

It is hard to explain in just a few sentences, how difficult it was at times, when you are in a classroom and the translator is delayed, and you have to start using hands and simple gestures to explain things; you simply feel paralysed, and you cannot do much. The problem is not only the foreign language, but the fear that you do not know what kind of reaction you might provoke, with your own actions. The beginning [of the employment] was essentially a tormenting experience, as I never really knew whether or not I was doing things well, or whether I was doing the right thing, at all. (interviewee 5)

Most of the interviewees were unaccustomed to multicultural environments, since they originated from smaller cities in RNM, with typically more conservative communities. Their education and experience had not prepared them for working with children from different communities and countries. All of the interviewees stated that they found the beginnings of their professional engagement in TRCs to be difficult, in relation to this theme. Interviewees 2, 3, 5 and 6

confirmed that they initially felt anxious, before coming to the lessons as well as during the lessons; interviewee 7 described “almost a fear ” of attending her classes with the refugee children.

Nevertheless, all of the interviewees (except for a single interviewee)<sup>15</sup> approached the newcomers and their differences with openness, making a special effort to ‘come closer’ to the children. Through the interviews, it was confirmed that the interviewees were intrigued by the cultures and habits of peoples from distant regions in the world, wishing to learn more about them through engaging with the refugee children. Many of the interviewees confirmed having learnt various expressions in Arabic language or learned to cook some of the traditional dishes from various regions, during their work at the TRCs. With time, through their own experiences, they felt that the general perception of refugees, by members of their own local community, to be unjust and they subsequently made concrete efforts to alter people's perceptions.

Young Syrian children are very well educated and polite. It is such a shame that there is a distorted perception of them here /referring generally to RNM/. I keep saying this to everyone, in the hope that it might change peoples’ views. /.../ This was one of the most important lessons learnt from my experience in the TRC - that the local citizens need to become better informed about these people, that these misfortunate people should not be stigmatised. (interviewee 1)

Interviewee 1, with the aim of breaking the stigma about refugees, explained in detail about the theatre piece organised by employees of the TRC, in which they also performed, whose theme was the hardship of refugees arriving to RNM - all in order to bridge the gap of misconceptions.

Elbaz-Luwisch explains ‘that becoming a teacher is a lifelong process’ (2005, p. 86), claiming that teachers' attitudes toward diversity start to form already during their early childhood. The communities (of smaller towns) in which the interviewees were brought up, did not provide them with sufficient insights into various aspects of multicultural life. The example provided by interviewee 5 (wherein the translator’s presence seemed crucial for the lesson to start) illustrates that interviewees’ insecurities or fears of interaction with a multicultural environment was primarily due to “linguistic and ethnic differences” (Jokikokko & Uitto, 2016, p. 15). A particular child’s full identity (as expressed through their gender, educational level, age, cultural habits, world views, etc) should therefore be taken into account (Ibid.)

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<sup>15</sup> Selected answers by interviewee X, pointed out differences along the line of nationalities, prioritising and praising some while displaying mistrust toward others, and as such this interviewee’s views may be seen as prejudiced and even somewhat xenophobic.

The experience of interviewee 1, could be described as a *cultural shock*, and his experience aligns with various theoretical analyses that observe the beginning of teaching practices in the realm of multicultural education, often also referred to as a '*reality shock*' or 'confusion' (Pault, 2006, p. 400). Jokikokko and Uitto's research concludes that 'teachers are likely to experience a range of ambivalent emotions, such as fear, anxiety, courage and hope' (2016, p. 18), suggesting that the gap in teachers' world views, in relation to multiculturalism, is an experience shared by teachers around the globe. The confusion, cultural shock, and feeling of insecurity or fear (interviewee 5) are usually understood as negative emotions. However, some of these notions, such as *confusion*, could be interpreted as a 'disorienting dilemma in transformative learning' (Jokikokko and Uitto, 2006, p. 20), through which teachers become aware that revisiting established opinions and perceptions, require revalidation, as "there is no fixed or totally definitive knowledge, and because circumstances change. The interviewees thus *continued to grow* through their experience at the TRCs, in terms of their awareness of and openness towards multiculturalism, while learning, over time, to navigate through 'contested meanings.' Shifting their own perspective, and their initial feeling of 'fear' into one of curiosity, the interviewees experienced a sense of growth both in terms of professional experience as well as personal growth (Mezirow, 1991, p. 3). This development can be seen in terms of Deleuze and Guattari's process of *becoming*. The interviewees overcame the effects of cultural shock in the process of *becoming*.

The project *Ethnocinema* Harris, a project in Australia which explored the experience of refugee education via films recorded by the refugees themselves, as a 'method of working together multiculturally which prioritises collaboration, mutual identity construction and the principles of critical theory' (2010, p. 3), shows that working together deletes boundaries between 'insiders' and 'outsiders', moving beyond subjectivity and identity (Ibid.). The interviewees, through their process of becoming, acted as catalysts of socially just teaching (Zembylas, 2017, p. 23), removing the borders between those who are perceived as insiders and those considered as being outsiders (of one particular culture), thereby moving beyond national, religious, gender-related and other identities.

In the 6.3.1. section, *becoming* is seen in conjunction with Deleuze and Guattari's *molecular lines* and *lines of flight*, where all of the actions taken by the interviewees in order to avoid the stigmatisation of refugees and to improve their own personal development within the realm of multicultural understanding, are related to actions characteristic of *molecular lines* and *lines of flight*. The interviewees employed these *lines* in order to divert teaching, in order to learn from it.

Those ‘lines’ are seen not as singular *events*, but rather as a *series of events* that have, over time, accommodated learning and development by the interviewees within a multicultural community.

### 6.3.2. Teachers Learning About Relational Connectedness

Interviewee 5 introduced prolonged conversations with the pupils, allowing a longer period of time for clarifying parts of the curriculum that may have been less clear and more challenging for some refugee children (for a full description refer to 6.2.1., the section related to interviewee 5). She was able to do so, by placing herself in the position of the refugee child, and in so doing, was altering her teaching practice. “After a few months, I noticed that if I offered emotional support and encouragement, the pupils progressed more quickly and were happier.” (interviewee 5)

She learned that she needed to transform her understanding of the role of the singular teacher identity into a *situated shared identity* (Sidebottom, 2021, p. 13), where the teacher perceives him/herself as a part of the classroom, not as someone in front of the class - the authority figure. This knowledge was acquired over time, during her professional engagement at the TRC, and thus represents a process of *becoming*.

The idea of *becoming* here, is linked primarily to the concept of the teacher’s identity *becoming*, which over time transforms due to the continuously unfolding set of *events* (the Deleuzian concept of ‘*and...and...and*’), where the teacher adopts the *co-constructed temporary form of identity*, which changes in response to concrete circumstances and conditions. Cormier claims that connectivist and constructivist pedagogies see the idea of collective learning as ‘social as well as a personal knowledge-creation process’ (2008, p.5). It is concluded, with the example of the experience of interviewee 5, that *becoming* in this example is twofold: firstly, the *momentary self* (Strom & Martin, 2017, p. 106), where the teacher learns/becomes flexible, and secondly, the circumstances where interviewees learned to accept the importance of *relationalism* (interaction with the pupils on the same level). This in theory correlates to the concept of *connections (connectivity)* rather than one of *separations* between the teacher, the refugee child and the particular circumstances (Strom & Martin, 2017, p. 105).

In this section, the finding is that a teacher diminishing their identity as figures of authority in the classroom (derivative of *formal* education) has enabled the following processes: the teacher’s identity shifts to the *momentary self* (receptive to changes) and towards a *situated shared identity* (as the classroom becomes a mutual knowledge-creation process), thereby creating a better ‘society’



through greater *connectivity* (as the ultimate mode for knowledge acquisition). The creation of *connectivity* and shared identity were processes achieved by the *rhizomatic* actions (*molecular lines* and *lines of flight*) enacted by the interviewees and pupils in TRCs, that occurred only with the affordance of a greater amount of time. This topic can be visualised through rhizomatic biologies, where the ginger rhizomes/nodes grow in accordance to changing weather conditions, therefore the learning community of interviewees and pupils should correlate in accordance to the complexities of their mutual connectedness, where authoritarian / individual positions should be reduced, as observed by Cormier (2008).

### 6.3.3. *Emotions within Multicultural Learning*

When the interviewees were asked to describe their emotional relation to the pupils in the TRC, interviewee 3 stated that “this was the most precious teaching experience I have ever had; [...] this experience made me much stronger over time.” Interviewee 3 explained this with a trembling voice. Similarly, interviewee 7 confessed:

They looked at us teachers as their saviours, some escaping with us for a few hours from abusive everyday situations, while others realised that we were offering them knowledge that they would be able to use in the future in their prospective destination countries, which was both encouraging and heartbreaking at the same time. (interviewee 7)

It is also worth noting that these close relations, were not established ‘naturally’, without the involvement of interviewees’ inventiveness and their creation of ‘*places to dance*’:

I managed to create a very close relationship with the children, over time. The Zumba classes that I organised were a great method of connecting pupils, parents and teachers. Some of the children were initially very shy about taking part in these classes, having never previously heard about Zumba, nor perhaps having ever danced to pop music. However, they enjoyed the movement, and after becoming more comfortable about participating, they even started bringing their older sisters or their mothers to the class. This brought us all closer together. (interviewee 2)

Interviewees offered encouragement, and negotiated the childrens’ participation in the lessons, while mitigating any negative factors or experiences that could hinder the children's participation in classroom activities, as demonstrated with the example of the Zumba lessons. Part of working with *rhizomatics* in education includes overcoming ‘*places of pain*’ and ‘*seeking agency*’ (Sidebottom, 2021, p.8). In the eyes of the refugees, the interviewees were in the position to help

them overcome '*places of pain*', with there being a 'critical importance in the role teachers can play in constructing and mediating the children's experiences' (Fyssa, 2014, p. 225). If the *becoming* is applied to the process of teachers' improvement, the teachers' *becoming* could be seen as two-fold: improvement based on the experience gathered [1] and improvement based on accumulation of emotional growth while teaching [2] (Ibid.).

At the same time, another process was developing - that of empathy. Empathy is a process that develops over time, and indeed, the interviewees' empathy towards their pupils grew over time (as seen with the Zumba lessons, for instance). Empathy evolves as we learn 'more about the other's emotional states and perspectives' (Zembylas, 2008, p. 28), as could be noted in the conversation with interviewee 7, who confirmed that her emotional engagement with the pupils changed once she learned that some pupils might have been living in an abusive environment in the TRC. The interviewees demonstrated that over time they had succeeded in helping the pupils to overcome their '*places of pain*', which created a positive impact on the interviewees' own sense of resilience, as described by interviewee 2: "this made me much stronger over time".

Jokikokko and Uitto show us that 'when the teachers described their multicultural learning processes, the meaningful and significant experiences that they chose for their stories were often emotionally loaded' (2016, p. 19). Learning or practising multicultural teaching is emotionally charged, and in some respects the emotional charge is stronger when compared to engaging with *formal* education in national schools, as confirmed by interviewees 2 and 7. Again, through the inventive use of *rhizomatic* notions within education, in the form of playfulness and *flux* (as exemplified by the Zumba classes), or through diversion from the norms of *formal* education (as exemplified with the strategy of 'prolonged lessons'), and through employing their own emotions, the interviewees experienced and learnt that deviations to the norms are necessary when teaching within TRCs. This was nevertheless learned through a process of *becoming*, with the interviewees overcoming their initial sense of 'shame' for having feelings for the pupils and having realised that the emotions are a constituent part of *nonlinear* learning.

The *rhizome* is never one (Wallin, 2010, p. 87), instead it offers a platform for a 'pedagogy of love' (2017, p. 30). It would appear that this process of mirroring or engaging in 'moral reflections', is the only possible way of working within the precarious and multicultural environment of TRCs. Deleuze and Guattari's concept is again put to play here, where the subjects, both the pupil and the teacher, create a connectedness between *dispersed elements (lines of flight)*. This could be recognised

as a form of *self-advocacy*, or a concept of micropolitics, where individuals or groups ‘aim at establishing, safeguarding or restoring the desired working conditions’ (Kelchtermans and Ballet 2002, p. 108). The advocacy becomes ‘capable of affecting institutional, urban, and state organisations’ (Wallin, 2010, p. 87) by moving the actions from a micro level to the macro level.

## 7. Conclusion

/Rhizomes are a/ critical leap in coping with the loss of a canon against which to compare, judge, and value knowledge /therefore the educational/ canon is fluid /as the/ knowledge is a moving target (Cormier, 2008, p.5)

The theory of *rhizomes* is a valuable mode of thinking and acting in situations where established educational canons cannot be activated and relied upon. This thesis claims it to be possible to confirm that *formal* education goes against the benefits of the teachers and the pupils in the precarious conditions of TRCs, since ‘knowledge is a moving target’ (Ibid.), as has been illustrated through this research.

*Formal* education, the type of education used most prevalently around the world, was shown to be virtually impossible to put into practice, when ninety-five refugee children were stranded in the *Republic of North Macedonia*, after the closure of the refugee and migrant *East Mediterranean route* to the EU in 2016. This research thesis is rooted in the context-specific problem which demonstrated the difficulty and limited ability of the system in place to organise appropriate education for refugee and migrant children in *Transit and Reception Centers*, which went against the country’s policies and previous practices with regards to educational provision.

The interviewed teachers used several invented, self-initiated methods of teaching (herein called *nonlinear* education), positioning themselves outside the scope of *formal* and *non-formal* education. This thesis thus aimed to identify ways in which *nonlinear* education was practised and to define the ways in which it affected the teachers’ professional and personal development. As a theoretical lens, Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of *rhizomes* and the process of *becoming* were referred to in order to describe, understand and interpret the interactions and events that occurred within the classrooms at the TRC, that gave rise to this alternative (and in the given circumstances, the only possible) mode of teaching. The overall purpose of this thesis is to shift the perception of pedagogical practices, in order to give potential for these to be observed as practices *in flux*.

Furthermore, the purpose of this research is to contribute theoretically towards further development within the realm of multicultural education and education within precarious conditions. The overarching conclusion of this research is that the education provided within the TRCs in the period 2016-17 in RNM, achieved positive outcomes.

### 7.1. Findings

This research found that all of the teachers interviewed, *deviated* away from the conventions of *formal* and *non-formal* education, by intuitively inventing made-to-measure educational methods, aiming to support refugee childrens' learning and to ensure the effectiveness of their teaching within the TRCs. As such, this research concludes that the interviewed teachers' methods of working are aligned with Deleuze and Guattari's notions of *rhizomes*, *lines of flight* and *process of becoming*, confirming the applicability of their theories in this particular educational setting.

The first research question, which inquired into *what* methods were used by the interviewed teachers while engaging in *nonlinear* education, was answered by several findings. The methods initiated by interviewed teachers were numerous: prolonged conversations with the pupils, engaging together in everyday activities, introducing humour, role playing and engagement with difficult topics (such as domestic violence), etc. The process of teaching was effectively diverted from *formal* (authoritarian or linear) and *non-formal* education into a *nonlinear* education. While creating the *nonlinear* education, simultaneously relational, unconstrained and interdisciplinary educational environments were created. During this process, the education has become an *agency*, the teachers have become integrated and contextualised within the particular circumstances of the TRCs, where through the negotiation between the teachers and the pupils, both parties learned to voice themselves in the process of overcoming the past '*places of pain*'.

The interviewed teachers did not approach their pedagogical learning as being finite; instead their experimentation, inventiveness and adaptation to the situations enabled their teaching practices to develop and grow. This research thus finds that the development of the interviewees' teaching practices over time, became aligned with Deleuze and Guattari's process of *becoming*. The teacher interviewees' continuous learning process answers the second research question, by investigating *how* the interviewees' experiences in TRCs contributed towards their own professional development, in the context of *nonlinear* and multicultural education. While the first question deals with methods

of working, the second question deals with the interviewees' development within the educational and wider societal premises.

Through the Deleuzian process of *becoming*, the professional development of the teachers was found to be multifaceted. The interviewees expressed the opinion that teaching in a multicultural environment 'forced' them to swiftly overcome their initial *confusion*. Within a short amount of time, the interviewees had become more aware about multiculturalism, and had improved their responsiveness to the refugee children trapped in a 'temporality.' They were thus better able to respond to their pupils' different backgrounds, social and personal circumstances, general learning interests, abilities and future aspirations, as well as their social and emotional needs. The improvement of the interviewees' confidence informed the following finding: that the interviewees had '*morphed their identity*,' by ultimately becoming their '*momentary selves*' (receptive and responsive to changes and adaptability), while also accepting an increased level of responsibility, through advocating for improvement of the pedagogical practices and different aspects of the pupils' lives. The interviewees confirmed that they had become increasingly capable of seeing through the perspectives of others, and were even able to 'see themselves as others'. All of these findings based on the interviewees' teaching practice, seen through the lens of *rhizomatic* notions and the process of *becoming*, confirmed that pedagogical practices in *flux* (based on singular *events* and *morphing*) resulted in teachers who had become capable of working in a multicultural environment, teachers who gained emotional knowledge and empathy, and thereby improved their own *capabilities*.

## 7.2. Implications of Findings

The findings of this research lead to the conclusion that the theoretical lens of *rhizomes* and of *becoming*, add a new layer to the sociological and pedagogical literature of refugee children education in TRCs in countries of transit, alongside the teachers' position within it. The thesis is also a response to the 'conceptual silences' (Gale & Parker, 2014, p. 2) that exist within the field of refugees' education, where (to a certain extent) teachers' experience of educating children within the precarious circumstances of TRCs is disregarded. At the same time, the thesis proposes a new form of teaching method - *nonlinear* teaching, that critiques the established uniformity of educational parameters and the 'reductivist thinking' (Sidebottom, 2021, p. 4) that characterises current modes of *formal* education.

The methods of *nonlinear* education practised by the interviewees can be seen as having created a ‘new type of reality’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 326) within the classrooms at the TRCs, confirming that the teachers are ‘the ones with the ability to resolve issues of humanity through the provision of teaching and learning’ (Sidebottom, 2021, p.4). The findings stipulate that the actions taken by the interviewed teacher at a *micro level* (as observed in this research), dwell on concepts of *teaching for social justice*, with the potential to contribute towards positively influencing *macro level* processes.

Despite the meaningful interaction between theory and practice, as elaborated in this research, a critical eye is nevertheless needed in relation to aspects of the research where questions remain unanswered. Can *rhizomatic* notions act as a pertinent precedent for the provision of structured education for refugee and migrant children living in precarious conditions? Why is there a significant gap in the literature, with regards to the relation between *rhizomes* and the social sciences? How can the *what* and *how* be answered (as Deleuze and Guattari teach us) if the ‘*why*’ is omitted? ‘*Why*’ are refugee children in a situation that excludes the possibility for the provision of satisfactory education? And ‘*why*’, in the first place, did the refugees find themselves in front of closed borders in 2016? It is virtually impossible to answer the questions that start with *why* related to the refugee and migrant crisis, as they represent the grand scheme of failures. Failures that are outside the scope of this thesis, despite being the cause of the conditions which define the research problem of this study.

Deleuze, in a 1982 conference, explained that processes that encounter numerous findings, and that face organisational and various other issues, are at the same time creative processes. They are more like a film than a science, he pointed out, and these processes imply that ‘when one creates, one resists’ (Deleuze, 1982). In response to Deleuzian's claim, one might conclude that the process of creation, exercising and describing *nonlinear* teaching is nevertheless a creative process, and one might ask - could learning processes or education per se, be seen as a process of resistance? This remains to be answered.

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## 9. Appendices

### 9.1 Appendix 1: Interview schedule

Refugee Teacher's receptiveness to the surroundings and circumstances

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself.
2. What was your role/responsibility within the teaching at the transit centre?
3. Why did you decide to be involved with refugees?
4. How long did you work in the transit centre?
5. How large was the group of refugee children/youth you were working with?  
When was non-formal education organised?  
Describe the physical space where education was carried out?
6. What age(s) were the refugee children you were working with?

Lessons that develop an understanding of similarities and differences between people.

Dealing with diversity (Intention of the question)

- 7.) How did you deal with the differences in the children's knowledge and experience, such as their origins in different countries (with different geographical and cultural contexts), as well as their different family histories?  
Can you give me an example of this?

Possibility of foreign teacher to approach refugees in educational setting

- 8.) How did the children react when they worked with pedagogues who differed in origin or ethnicity? Was it possible to bridge this gap and can you give some concrete examples?

Do teachers need to focus more on the future or the past when teaching

- 9.) Are children and young refugees interested in learning about new countries (countries of interest Germany, etc.)? or to share past experiences in an educational environment?

Methods of making the children/youth more comfortable in the new situation

- 10.) Did the activities organised by you or other teachers evoke the children's memories of certain events from their past or their home countries?

- 11.) New cultural and social habits - was it important to teach about the new life standards (violence at home, abortion, gender rights)?

Importance of coming closer together

- 12.) Did you learn new things about the origins and habits of the refugee children through this and how did it affect your way of working with them?

- 13.) How did they represent their culture to you?

Dealing with influences from 'outside the centre's gate' (new subject added, as demonstrated as important during the Test interview with MD)

- 14.) What was the biggest problem from 'outside' the centre that influenced children's well-being within the educational environment?

- 15.) What was the media perception of the situation in Tabanovce? What did you think about this perception, did it affect your work or affected refugee children?

Dealing with situations of crisis

- 16.) Are certain refugee children separated and if so, on what line does this happen?

- 17.) How do you overcome the possible difficulty for refugee children to participate?

- 18.) In your experience, what has proven to be the most effective method of overcoming separation?

- 19.) Is it possible for teachers to teach against segregation among students or do you think these issues need to be addressed in their families?

- 20.) Which group of children was most disengaged from NFE?

21.) Have you managed to pay special attention to children who are anxious / non-communicative (because of their previous traumatic experiences, or otherwise)?

22.) What would be your suggestions and tips to make learning more tailored to the specific needs of such children?

23.) What, in your experience, can reduce barriers to learning and participation for children who have been particularly withdrawn?

Communicating ideas (topic added following Test interview)

24.) When students participate, do they feel comfortable with the verbal articulation of their ideas and thoughts?

Developing refugee camp custom made teaching methodologies

Children learn from each other + working on individual basis

26.) Did children enjoy opportunities to have group work?

27.) Were they also appreciative of the opportunity to work with teachers one-on-one?

28.) What were the advantages and disadvantages of both approaches and why?

The methods of instigating Interaction

29.) Was there an opportunity for children to learn from each other? How did it go?

30.) Can you give an example and which interaction was particularly successful?

31.) If you were given another chance, could such an interaction be repeated - in other words will you be able to use methods that stimulate interaction?

Planning programs in advance

32.) Were you able to plan activities in advance?

33.) Did you manage through planning to address children of different ages and developmental stages?

34.) Your thoughts on how preparation for working with refugee children could be improved?

Possibility to work on individual basis

35.) Is it possible and how do you provide additional help to individual students if needed?

36.) Do students feel comfortable with this help and how do they react to it?

37.) Was there a specific time dedicated to additional assistance for individual pupils?

Learning activities planned with all children in mind.

38.) Did you follow a specific curriculum, is that curriculum based on local (Macedonian) standards, western standards or those originating in their home countries?

39.) Was it possible to provide education for all refugee children equally?

40.) Was physical separation of certain individuals happening ever?

41.) Can you give examples of classes:

Staff plan, teach and review together.

Collaboration between teachers

42.) Do groups of teachers and different NGOs plan the work together and form learning plans together?

43.) Have staff developed shared resources to support learning?

44.) Do teachers plan activities so that they make use of each other's knowledge and skills?

45.) How was this played out in the situation of non-formal learning within transit centres?

46.) Do teachers welcome comments from colleagues - for example, about the quality of the participation of children in activities? Do they alert one another about the problem?

Refugee Teacher's receptiveness to the surroundings and specific circumstances

Maintaining quality of teachers work

47.) Do lessons build on the experience, knowledge and skills children have acquired in the workshop?

48.) Could you give examples of this and in which situations does this happen?

Advanced time spent on learners

49.) When children were unable to understand something, did you have a chance to provide them with additional support in order to improve their chances of understanding something?

Collaboration with parents

50.) Did children communicate with the parents about time spent in learning?

51.) Is communication with parents possible and if so, did you find parents accepting of remarks?

52.) Did parents help children in learning?

53.) Of what type of learning parents were supportive-not supportive?

The environment

54.) Was it possible to create interaction between locals and the refugees' children?

The End Questions

55.) Positive outcomes?

56.) What should I point out in the thesis, which is of great importance according to you experience? life lesson experience over just schooling

57.) Biggest obstacle in teaching organised in the transport centre

58.) What was the biggest problem or obstacle in general and what needs to be done?

59.) What are some of the overall impressions that work with refugees has made on you?

*Appendix 1. Interview schedule*

9.2. Appendix 2: List of the interviewees

Respondents	Previous Education	Years of previous work experience	Date of employment at the TRCs	Age	Gender
Interviewee 1	Sociology	7	Since the beginning of refugee crisis	29	M
Interviewee 2	Pedagogy	3	2015	26	F
Interviewee 3	Sociology	3	2015	28	M
Interviewee 4	Pedagogy	4	2015	27	M
Interviewee 5	Pedagogy	8	2016	33	F
Interviewee 6	Pedagogy	1	2016	26	F
Interviewee 7	Pedagogy	5	2016	30	F

*Appendix 2. List of the interviewees, with the specification of their previous education, years of teaching experience and years of working in the TRCs, specifying the time in the day when the interviewee worked at the TRCs and their gender*

9.3. Appendix 3: Chronological description of interview schedule preparation

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3
<p>Gaining an understanding of the potential role of <i>rhizomes</i> and <i>becoming</i> in an educational context, the researcher used this theoretical notion in order to create questions for the group of interviewees identified as relevant during sampling.</p>	<p>Sourcing existing literature enabled an advanced level of understanding of concrete situations in the TRCs. a. / b. describe main groupings of consulted literature:</p> <p>a. Readings referring to the legislations and the rights of the refugees in the country and the different NGOs reports that observed the situation on the ground.</p> <p>b. Reading related supporting theoretical literature (read existing literature section).</p>	<p>The literature-based preparation provided the opportunity to create a diverse range of questions to be directed toward the interviewees. a. / b. / c. describe main theoretical grouping:</p> <p>a. It opened an opportunity to inquire about interviewees' experience in working multiculturally, example question: <i>'How did you deal with differences in the children's knowledge and experience, such as their origins from countries of different geographical and cultural contexts? Can you give an example of this?'</i> (q. 37)</p> <p>b. Gaining knowledge about interviewee experience and methods used to overcome the precarious conditions of educational setting in TRCs, example question: <i>'In your experience, what can reduce barriers in learning processes and increase the participation of children who may be particularly withdrawn or traumatised?'</i> (q. 45).</p> <p>c. Even though the interviewees were unaware about the researchers' intentions, a set of specific questions were created with the intention of enabling the interviewees to respond to the query of this research, the <i>rhizomatic</i> education: <i>'Was there an opportunity for children to learn from each other? How did it go?'</i> (q. 29) <i>'Can you give an example and which interaction was particularly successful?'</i> (q. 30)</p>

Appendix 3. Chronological description of the process of conducting the interview schedule preparation.