

Syracuse University

SURFACE

Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects

Spring 5-1-2012

Providing Protection, Discouraging Applications: The Influence of Policy on Asylum Seekers' Destination Choice

Elin Wiklund

Follow this and additional works at: https://surface.syr.edu/honors_capstone



Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Wiklund, Elin, "Providing Protection, Discouraging Applications: The Influence of Policy on Asylum Seekers' Destination Choice" (2012). *Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects*. 189. https://surface.syr.edu/honors_capstone/189

This Honors Capstone Project is brought to you for free and open access by the Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects at SURFACE. It has been accepted for inclusion in Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of SURFACE. For more information, please contact surface@syr.edu.

**Providing Protection, Discouraging Applications:
The Influence of Policy on Asylum Seekers' Destination Choice**

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at
Syracuse University

Elin Wiklund
Candidate for B.A. Degree
and Renée Crown University Honors
May 2012

Honors Capstone Project in International Relations

Capstone Project Advisor: _____
Assistant Professor Seth Jolly

Capstone Project Reader: _____
Assistant Professor Jonathan Hanson

Honors Director: _____
Stephen Kuusisto, Director

Date: April 25, 2012

Abstract

Each year, hundreds of thousands of individuals become asylum applicants as they request protection from persecution in a state other than their own. While many of these persons requesting to be recognized as refugees lodge their claims in neighbouring states, since the 1980s, Europe has seen an increasing number of asylum seekers arriving from developing nations in Africa and Asia. This has contributed to concerns among populations in Western Europe regarding immigrants and the emergence of political parties with anti-immigration discourses. As a result, immigration and asylum policies today are issues high on the political agenda as governments attempt to control the number of asylum applications they receive.

This thesis addresses the question of to what extent governments can influence the number of asylum applications they receive. Building on previous studies examining which factors influence asylum seekers' destination choice I argue that strict asylum policies can act as a deterrent for asylum applicants. Using time series cross sectional data for 16 OECD states 1997 through 2006, taking into account variables of economic attractiveness, colonial ties, network effects, hostility toward foreigners and asylum policy changes I found colonial ties and asylum policy changes to be the most important determinants for where asylum seekers lodge their claim. Two case studies examining the effect of asylum policy changes on the number of asylum applications lodged in Denmark and Sweden also support these findings. However, they also demonstrate the limits on asylum policy as an instrument for controlling the number of applications received as external events generating refugee flows can increase the number of asylum seekers despite stricter policies.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	II
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. DEFINING REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS	6
a) Legal definitions	6
b) Evolution in movements of refugees	9
III. DETERMINANTS OF REFUGEE DESTINATION CHOICE	14
a) Literature review	15
b) Formulation of hypotheses	18
c) Research design	22
d) Analysis and assessment	27
IV. SEEKING ASYLUM IN SCANDINAVIA	33
a) Overview of post-World War II immigration to scandinavia	36
b) Sweden	41
c) Denmark	50
V. CONCLUSION	61
WORKS CITED:	64
DATA SOURCES:	68
SUMMARY	69

I. Introduction

In 2010, the UNHCR reported that 10.55 million individuals were refugees, a number that roughly equals the size of Portugal's entire population. An additional 845,800 people during the same year applied for asylum throughout the world in order to seek protection from threats of persecution and violence in their home states. Nationals from Zimbabwe, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo topped the list of new asylum seekers and collectively represented more than a quarter of the total number of applicants (UNHCR 2011). Defined by the factors that compel them to leave their home country, these forced migrants constitute a category apart from so called voluntary, or economic migrants, who choose to relocate in order to find better prospects elsewhere. In reality, however, economic and political reasons for migrating are often compounded and tightly linked (Haddad, 2008). The recent flow of individuals from Northern Africa to the borders of Europe in conjunction with the events of the Arab Spring represents one such example as many young men and women left their homes due to the violence there, but also in search of a better future in Europe.

The steady increase of both types of migrants to the European states since the 1990s has brought the issues of immigration and refugee policies to the forefront of the political arena of many states as well as the European Union (Zetter, 2007). In European states such as Italy, France and Denmark, the rising popularity of parties with anti-immigration political agendas and the appearance of terms such as 'bogus asylum seekers' and 'economic migrants in disguise' in

national media and the discourse of these parties, have further served to blur the lines between voluntary and involuntary migrants (Levy, 2005). The increased political salience of asylum and refugee policy combined with the increased complexity of causes for refugee migration have also increased scholars' attention and interest to the field of refugee studies. It has also led to augmented government scrutiny of refugees' motivations for fleeing their home, as well as arriving in a particular country. This essay therefore focuses on asylum seekers migratory paths and their reasons for seeking asylum in 16 OECD countries, with a more focused look at the two Scandinavian states Sweden and Denmark.

International migration is often seen as a result of so called 'push' and 'pull' factors. Although it is debated how well this model applies to refugee flows (Thielemann 2003), it is a useful framework for conceptualizing forced migration since it allows to distinguish between origin and destination country effects (Moore and Shellman 2007; Thielemann 2003). As the name indicates, 'push' factors are reasons would-be refugees leave their home state. These factors include violence, political repression or wars. 'Pull' factors on the other hand determine where refugees seek asylum (Hatton 2009; Moore and Shellman 2007). Due to the nature of refugee migration, 'push' factors are seen as more important than 'pull' factors in determining the migratory path of asylum seekers. Consequently many governments consider asylum seekers 'legitimate refugees' only in their first country of arrival after leaving their home (Hayden, 2006). Although most refugee flows originate in the poorer states of the world, and 75% of refugees reside in a neighbouring state (UNHCR, 2011), the great variation in

the number of claims lodged in the developed nations of the world has led researchers to question what impact ‘pull’ factors have on the migratory movements of refugees (Böcker and Havinga 1997; Thielemann 2003; Neumayer 2004, Hatton 2009).

The study of the factors determining refugee ‘choice’ in destination country when they flee beyond neighbouring states has both social and political implications in individual states as well as on the EU level. Understanding which factors in a state ‘attracts’ more asylum seekers can dispel notions of ‘bogus asylum seekers’ and refugees viewed as economic migrants in disguise by indicating which characteristics of states attract asylum seekers (Moore and Shellman, 2007). Many studies of refugee destination choice also focus on determining the efficiency of asylum policy; or in other words, how much impact asylum policies have on the number of asylum applications lodged in a particular state (Thielemann, 2003; Hatton et al., 2004; Hatton 2009; Czaika & de Hass, 2011). The development of a common European asylum policy has been a goal of the EU since the early 2000s. One obstacle to formulating a common policy, however, is the unequal distribution of asylum seekers among the EU member states; understanding refugee destination choice can therefore help in the formulation of policies aimed at sharing the burden (Thielemann 2003).

In this essay I build on several previous quantitative studies attempting to explain the disparate number of asylum applications received by European states. By approaching the issue of asylum destination choice on two levels using a large scale statistical study and two case studies, I will demonstrate the impact of

asylum policy as a deterrent measure on asylum applications. The large N-study incorporates data from 16 OECD states, while the case studies compare the two Scandinavian states, Sweden and Denmark. With common historical pasts as states without colonies and common economic and political evolutions in recent history, the variations in asylum applications received make a comparison between the states illustrative of the influence of immigration policy on the number of asylum applications. The low numbers of asylum seekers coming to Denmark since the implementation of a new Aliens Act in 2002 is a clear example of how strict asylum policy can deter asylum applicants.

In the large-N study of 16 OECD countries, including Sweden and Denmark, I used time-series cross-sectional data for the time period 1997 through 2006 in order to determine which factors influence asylum seekers destination choice. The results reveal that former colonisers receive more asylum seekers, while economic conditions in destination states were not important factors determining asylum seeker destination choice. Changes in asylum policy, in particular with regards to access of would-be refugees to their country of asylum and the way applications are processed in destination states were also found to influence where individuals lodge their asylum claim. The two case studies, and in particular the example of Denmark, also show the impact asylum policy can have on the numbers of asylum applications. The 2002 reform to the Danish immigration law introduced what Ruud Lubbers, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, called the strictest asylum policy in the EU at the time (Hilson, 2008). These changes coincided with a 85 – 90% decrease in the number of asylum

applications received by the Danish state, while no such decrease was visible in the other Scandinavian states (Agerskov, 2009).

This essay is divided into two parts. First is the large N-study, followed by the case studies of the flow of asylum applicants to Denmark and Sweden in the 1990s and 2000s. Given the findings of the large-N study, I have chosen to pay particular attention to how changes in asylum and refugee policies during these years may have influenced the number of asylum claims lodged in each state. Before delving into these issues, however, I will start with a brief discussion of the definitions of asylum seekers and refugees and how refugee flows have changed over time since the end of the Second World War.

II. Defining refugees and asylum-seekers

Asylum and refugee policies attempt to manage and regulate migratory flows that are, by their nature unpredictable since refugees are generated mainly from countries in conflict situations or politically instable states (Gibney & Hansen, 2003). In order to understand these policies and how individual states determine who is granted asylum it is, however, important to understand who “refugees” and “asylum seekers” are, both in terms of the legal definition, and where refugees have come from historically.

a) Legal definitions

The term ‘refugee’ appeared in national legislation as early as the 17th century (Haddad, 2008). However, the definition of the term “refugee” most states and the international community rely on today emerged at the end of the Second World War. The persecution of individuals during the 1930s and 40s prompted the international community to create a framework that would provide individuals unable to rely on the protection of their state with the opportunity to seek refuge in another country (Goodhart, 2009). With the intent to draft and sign a “Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and a Protocol relating to the Status of Stateless Persons,” delegates from 26 states gathered in Geneva in July of 1951 (United Nations, 1951). The resulting document, entitled Convention Pertaining to the Status of Refugees, still forms the core of the international refugee regime together with a Protocol from 1967 that extended the reach of the Convention beyond acts committed before 1950 and the world beyond Europe

(Haddad, 2008). Although the start of the new century brought reflections within the UN and debates among scholars on the relevance of the Geneva Convention (Nyers, 2006), it still forms the core of the international refugee regime together with the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR), a temporary UN agency with the mandate to protect refugees and ensure their integration into their country of origin or of refuge (Goodhart, 2009). The definition of refugees contained in the Convention forms the basis of the criteria states use when they grant refugee status to individuals seeking asylum within their borders. It recognizes as refugees individuals who

“owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.” (United Nations, 1951)

Refugee is today an internationally recognized legal status granted to individuals by all states that are signatories of the Geneva Convention and its Protocol (Haddad, 2008). Asylum seekers are individuals who have lodged a claim to be granted refugee status, but are awaiting a decision over their status determination. Asylum applications are made either directly with a state or with one of UNHCR's agencies around the world. Since refugee is a legal status, it includes certain rights and obligations for the state granting asylum as well as for the individual recognized as a refugee. Asylum seekers are, however, not entitled to the same rights, and it is therefore up to each state to formulate policy regarding access of asylum seekers to, for example, national courts, employment and education, three institutions states are required to allow refugees to access on

the same conditions as citizens (Goodhart 2009). One notable exception, however, is the principle of *non-refoulement*, an international obligation prohibiting states from deporting refugees and asylum seekers alike to situations where they are likely to be persecuted or tortured (Haddad, 2008). States therefore have to allow asylum seekers that have reached their territory to stay in the state while their application is considered.

Although the Geneva Convention contains the definition of refugees, its application to individuals is up to each state granting refugee status. As a consequence, the procedures to do so vary between countries (Goodwin-Gill, 1983). However, since the convention takes an individualist approach defining refugees as persons persecuted due to their individual attributes obtaining refugee status under the Convention often hinges on providing proof of individual persecution (Gibney & Hansen, 2003; Haddad 2008; Hayden, 2006). The extent to which such proof is necessary can, however, vary depending on the situation in an asylum seekers origin state (Hayden, 2006). In the event that many refugees flee from the same conditions in the same time-frame, their group status is sometimes sufficient to acquire refugee status on a *prima facie* basis (UNHCR, 2005). One such example can be found in the granting of supplementary protection status for Iraqi asylum seekers in Sweden in 2003. In this instance, the conditions of their homeland were considered too dangerous for them to be sent back and the Iraqis were granted the right to stay in Sweden based on their identity as Iraqis rather than proof of individual persecution (Sperl, 2007).

Many states have also decided to extend their asylum regime beyond the criteria of the 1951 Convention to include humanitarian considerations and persecution due to gender and sexual orientation as criteria for granting an individual protection (Abraha, 2007). One such example is a directive published in 2004 by the European Commission which sets out the minimum standards for granting protection to individuals seeking asylum (European Council, 2004). Other than 'refugee status' as defined in the Geneva Convention, the document also establishes 'subsidiary protection' and 'humanitarian reasons' as two supplementary categories allowing individuals to remain in their country of refuge (Albertinelli, 2011). Subsidiary protection is granted to individuals who do not qualify for refugee status, but who risk "suffering serious harm" (Albertinelli, 2011:23) such as torture, execution or "indiscriminate violence in situations of internal or international conflict" should they return to their state (European Council, 2004). The last category, 'humanitarian reasons' is quite loosely defined, and includes protection of persons considered particularly vulnerable due to ill health or their status as minors (Albertinelli, 2011).

b) Evolution in movements of refugees

Although the international legal definition of 'refugee' has remained the same since it was first established in 1951, many scholars argue today that there is an increasing confusion among the general population as to what the term really means. Politicians and news-media have contributed to the blurring of the lines between refugees, asylum seekers, illegal immigrants and economic migrants by using the terms to designate ill-defined groups of individuals (Haddad, 2008). As

previously mentioned, debates over the relevance of the category 'refugee' in movements of forced migration have been prominent since the 1970s and 80s. The increased globalization and facility in travelling between states and the geopolitical changes since the end of the Cold War are only a few of the changes that have fuelled this debate, in particular in Europe.

Prior to the 1980s, refugee movements were largely phenomena caused by widespread conflict and violent persecution and concerning mainly southern states (Haddad, 2008). As a result, the situations causing the forced migration were such that it was easy to determine who was a refugee for the humanitarian organizations involved in the management of the refugee regime in the south (Zetter, 2007). Simultaneously, in Western states, and especially Western Europe, most asylum seekers were from neighbouring states such as Poland and Czechoslovakia and individuals seeking protection from persecution by communist government. Refugees were thus equated to "refugees fleeing communism" by Europeans and their protection was framed in the context of the Cold War rivalry between the Soviet Union and its allies and the US's camp (Gibney & Hansen, 2003; Haddad, 2008: 157).

Non-European refugees first started increasing in Europe during the 1980s (Zetter, 2007; Betts 2009, Eastmond, 2011). With the fall of the Iron curtain in 1989, however, the image of refugees as people fleeing communism broke down. This has resulted in a return to the 'original' image of refugees created during the Second World War, namely that of individuals fleeing persecution due to ethnic, religious and national affiliation (Haddad, 2008). The ethnic cleansing and

genocides in states such as Rwanda, Bosnia and the Sudanese region of Darfur have generated large flows of refugees seeking protection for these reasons (Zetter, 2007). In instances such as these, the granting of asylum remains relatively clear-cut as their reasons for fleeing are widely publicized and well-known.

Due to the changing nature of refugee movements since the 1980s, forced migration and refugee flows are increasingly seen as linked to other areas of social and political protection (Betts, 2009). Alexander Betts recognizes the “asylum-migration” nexus as the most important of these and points to three reasons why forced migration and voluntary migration have become increasingly intertwined in the last 30 years. First, the evolution of asylum and immigration policies has made seeking asylum one of few ways for individuals from the developing world to gain access to European states. Since the 1970s, there has been a declining demand in Western European states for labour immigrants (Haddad, 2008), and higher barriers for migrants entering these states. The adoption of tighter border controls in order to prevent the entry of ‘unwanted migrants’ has been undertaken in a blanket manner, restricting access to both voluntary migrants and refugees (Betts, 2009). These policies bring us to the second reason linking asylum seekers to economic migrants, the channels used to enter countries of asylum. The stricter border controls have caused both refugees and other migrants to use the same illegal channels to enter Western states, thereby making it difficult to distinguish between the two groups (Zetter, 2007;

Betts, 2009). The third reason is the multiplicity of factors other than repression, persecution and violence that force individuals to leave their home state.

Table 1. Top three origin states for asylum applicants calculated by annual number of first instance asylum applications (Data source: UNHCR Statistical Online Population Database)

Top three origin countries for asylum applicants				
2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Afghanistan	Iraq	Russia	Russia	Myanmar
Iraq	Serbia	China	Serbia	Somalia
Turkey	Turkey	Serbia	China	Serbia
2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Somalia	Iraq	Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe
Iraq	Somalia	Eritrea	Myanmar	Somalia
Zimbabwe	Eritrea	Somalia	Eritrea	DRC

The table above shows the top three origin countries for asylum applicants during the years 2000 – 2010. The great variety of states and the situations creating these ‘refugee flows’ show the diversification of reasons individuals apply for asylum. Many of the refugees from states such as China claim political persecution as reasons for leaving their state, and the current situation in Somalia of political instability, violence and famine during 2011 matches conditions often considered to generate ‘legitimate refugees.’ The large quantity of Zimbabweans seeking refugee status since 2005, however, is illustrative of the multiplicity of reasons pushing some asylum seekers to leave their home. In a report published by the UNHCR, Alexander Betts and Esra Kaytaz note that “a combination of state collapse, livelihood failure, and environmental disaster” have pushed many Zimbabweans to leave their home (Betts & Kaytaz, 2009: 1). Since many Zimbabweans cannot show proof of individual persecution and they, as a group,

are not recognized as *prima facie* refugees, their migration constitute what Betts and Kaytaz call “survival migration,” a class of migrants falling outside definitions of ‘refugee,’ yet in desperate need of protection from the international community (Betts & Kaytaz, 2009).

Despite questions regarding the applicability of the 1951 definition of refugee contained in the Geneva Conventions, it still forms the core of many states’ refugee laws and the criteria they use to determine who gets awarded refugee status. The debate over the refugee definition stems largely from the changing nature of refugee flows. As more refugees have arrived to the rich industrialized states and the causes of refugee flight have become more complicated, applying the refugee definition has not only become more difficult, but also more selective. The increased scrutiny of asylum seekers’ reasons for requesting protection from persecution thus both questions the ‘push’ factors that cause them to leave, and the ‘pull’ factors that attract them to a particular state. This thesis focuses on the latter question: which characteristics of destination states attract asylum seekers? The large-N study below examines several factors influencing asylum seekers’ destination state, while the two case studies of Denmark and Sweden provide further insight into the impact of one of these factors, asylum policy.

III. Determinants of refugee destination choice

Building on previous large-scale quantitative studies and models of refugee choice, I undertook a large-N study using time-series cross-sectional data for 16 OECD countries during the period 1997-2006 in order to ascertain which factors determine destination choice of asylum seekers. Most previous studies conceptualize refugees either as individuals making relocation decisions under highly constrained circumstances (Moore and Shellman, 2007), or as a consequence of utility-maximizing behaviour (Neumayer, 2004, 2005). Global studies of refugee destination choice have found geographic proximity to be the most important determinant of destination state. Using UNHCR data on changes in refugee stocks of different states to model refugee flow, Moore and Shellman argued that refugees seek asylum in the closest country to their origin state (2007). The large proportion of refugees, around 75% of the world's total refugee population, residing in neighbouring states further supports the influence of geographic distance as an important factor in refugee destination choice. When refugees flee beyond their immediate geographic region, however, other factors serve as the most important determinants for their destination choice.

Examining OECD states as destination choice, several studies have found that colonial ties and network effects play significant roles in determining refugee destination (Böcker and Havinga, 1997; Neumayer 2005; Moore and Shellman, 2007). Neumayer's 2004 study of the number of asylum applications lodged in the EU-12 states plus Norway and Switzerland from 1982 to 1999, for example, found that network effects measured as existing communities of past asylum

seekers dominate the other variables, but that higher levels of GDP per capita in the country of destination and colonial ties between destination and origin countries also contribute to higher numbers of asylum seekers. In this study I use the number of asylum applications lodged per year and state as the dependent variable and variables accounting for economic attractiveness, historic ties, network effects and asylum policy as independent variables. I analysed these variables using ordinary least squares regression (OLS) with random effects, fixed effects and panel corrected standard errors (PCSE). The findings of this analysis reflect those of other studies in that historic ties were found to be important in determining destination choice, but it also shows that asylum policy can deter asylum seekers from coming to a particular state.

a) Literature Review

Two separate branches of research on patterns of refugee flows stand out in the literature on forced migration movements. There are studies that focus on reasons for refugee flight, in other words, the 'push' factors mentioned earlier, and those attempting to find explanatory factors for refugee destination choice, or 'pull' factors. There are also studies modelling refugee flows from specific origin countries (see for example Sperl, 2007) or flows to single destination states (Neumayer, 2005). Relatively few aggregate-level studies on refugee destination choice have, however, been conducted. At the time of their 2007 global study of refugee destinations from 1964 to 1995, Moore and Shellman note that only two other large-N studies on the same topic have been published. There is general agreement that there is no single factor that explains refugee destination choice,

but rather a complex combination of economic, geographic and political factors and so called network effects, i.e. the presence of previous asylum seekers and/or immigrants in the country of destination (Böcker and Havinga 1997; Havinga and Böcker, 1999; Thielemann 2003; Neumayer, 2004, 2005; Moore and Shellman, 2007; Hatton, 2009).

Several studies propose economic conditions in destination states as pull-factors. However, economic attractiveness was found to be of little importance explaining destination choice in most studies (Böcker and Havinga, 1997; Neumayer 2004; Moore and Shellman, 2007). In contrast Thielemann (2003) and Hatton (2009) found unemployment rates to be negatively related to the number of asylum applications at a statistically significant level. However, in both studies, the effect was only minor since the coefficients showed only a small increase in the number of asylum applications associated with lower unemployment rates.

The effectiveness of asylum policy in regulating refugee flow to a state has recently been given more attention in the literature on refugee destination choices (Hatton 2009; Hatton et al, 2004; Vink and Maijerink, 2003; Moore and Shellman, 2007; Neumayer 2004; Sperl, 2007; Thielemann 2003). However, due to the difficulties in measuring asylum policy quantitatively, there is no commonly agreed upon measurement and proxies are often used by researchers (Czaika and de Haas 2011). One proxy measure of asylum policy used in many studies is first instance recognition rate of asylum applications (Hatton 2009; Vink and Maijerink, 2003; Neumayer, 2004). This is the only method used by Neumayer as a proxy for asylum policy restrictiveness. In his study he found that

the recognition rate had a small and statistically insignificant influence on asylum applications.

Hatton, in his 2004 and 2009 studies, constructs his own asylum policy index to account for changes in legislation as a more precise way to measure the influence of asylum policy on the inflow of refugees. Both Thielemann (2003) and Hatton (2009) have constructed indices of asylum policy change over periods of time. Using information from the OECD Yearbooks and the UNHCR, Hatton constructed an index measuring change in asylum policy in 19 OECD states from 1997 to 2006 (2009). Thielemann's index covers the period 1985 – 1999 for 20 OECD countries and provides a very rough measure of states' policy since he measures only five aspects of asylum policy through dummy variables (2003). Both studies found that policy change aimed at restricting asylum applications had a deterrent effect on asylum seekers. Asylum policy as measured by the index also showed stronger negative correlation with asylum applications than recognition rates (Hatton, 2009).

The presence of right-wing populist parties is another political factor advanced as an explanation for asylum seekers' destination choice. In Neumayer's study, the percentage of votes earned by right-wing populist parties in national elections is used as a proxy for the receptiveness in the destination country to asylum seekers (2004). Since asylum seekers presumably flee their home state in order to find protection from persecution, the assumption is that they will choose to travel to a country where they will be welcomed and easily

integrate. Neumayer finds some evidence that the variable influences the number of asylum applications, however the effect is very small.

This brief review of past studies undertaken shows that with regards to Europe, colonial ties and network effects play important roles in determining where certain populations of refugees seek asylum. Far less emphasis has been placed on the asylum policies of destination countries. Hatton's study found that stricter asylum policy decreased the number of asylum seekers; however, this model only takes into account network effects as another factor influencing asylum seekers decision making. Although Thielemann includes other explanatory variables such as geographic proximity and economic attractiveness as pull factors for asylum seekers, his regression model only showed that the prohibition to work deterred asylum seekers, the four other dummy variables were not statistically significant. Both studies thus found support for the hypothesis that asylum policy changes can act as a deterrent for asylum seekers. However, they did not include many other measurements that can explain why asylum seekers choose a particular destination state.

b) Formulation of Hypotheses

As the literature review has demonstrated, several characteristics of destination states have been proposed as pull factors that 'attract' asylum seekers. They can be roughly divided into six groups: geographical proximity; economic attractiveness; historic ties; network effects; deterrent policy measures and receptiveness to asylum seeker in destination states. As in previous studies, asylum seekers are here conceptualized as individuals making choices under

highly constrained circumstances with the goal of obtaining the best outcome in terms of the destination choices available to them (Moore and Shellman 2007; Neumayer 2004, 2005; Thielemann 2003).

As previously mentioned, asylum claims and the subsequent granting of refugee status to individuals is based on the ability of asylum applicants to demonstrate a well-founded fear of persecution in their home country which has forced them to flee to another state and request protection. Due to the forced nature of their migration, the distance to the country of refuge is frequently the most important determinant of where an individual seeks asylum (Moore and Shellman 2007). This is also closely linked to the monetary cost of getting there due to the higher transportation prices associated with increased travel distances (Neumayer 2004, Thielemann 2003). However, research on refugee flows to Europe and OECD states have found that geographic proximity plays a minor role in determining which states receive the most asylum claims (Thielemann 2003; Neumayer 2004), thus indicating that once individuals travel beyond neighbouring states, geographic proximity plays a small role in determining where they lodge their asylum application (Moore and Shellman 2007).

In economic theories of migration, the economic opportunities available to migrants, especially in terms of future employment, are important determinants of destination country (Thielemann 2003; Neumayer 2004). Since asylum applicants make decisions under constrained circumstances I expect that factors such as the wealth of a destination country and unemployment rates play a lesser role in determining where they choose to lodge their claim. However, taking into account

the fact that the media has increasingly portrayed asylum applicants as economic migrants in disguise (Moore and Shelleman 2007, Neumayer 2004, 2005; Hatton 2009), and that asylum seekers leave their country of origin in order to find better conditions elsewhere, these factors should be taken into account when explaining differences in the number of asylum applicants across countries.

Apart from the monetary costs associated with any migration, adapting to the culture of the destination country and transitioning to life in a new society also represents a cost to asylum seekers. This becomes especially important when considering forced migration since individuals fleeing their homes are less likely to have time to learn extensively about their possible destination choices. They are therefore more likely to travel countries of which they have prior knowledge or with which their home country has closer ties (Thielemann 2003; Neumayer 2004; Hatton 2009). I therefore expect historical ties between origin and destination countries such as those created through colonization or long-lasting trade relations to increase refugee flows to former colonizing states.

Historical ties are, however, not the only way future asylum seekers learn of the conditions in possible destination countries. Studies have shown that information from friends and family already present in a potential destination country plays an important role in determining where an individual chooses to lodge their asylum application (Böcker and Havinga 1997). A large community of former asylum applicants or immigrants from the same country can help newcomers settle into a new society and aid in the transition through their knowledge of the job- and housing-market as well as the asylum system. These

network effects are frequently represented by the presence of former asylum applicants or the amount of foreign nationals from a particular origin state in a destination state. Large communities of foreign nationals are thus expected to increase the number of asylum applications received by a country.

Although it is unclear from previous studies of the knowledge asylum applicants have of asylum policy (Böcker and Havinga 1997; Thielemann 2003; Neumayer 2004, 2005), there are several hypotheses of how policy can be used to deter asylum applications. The most common assumption is that asylum seekers will maximize the probability of having their asylum claim accepted (Thielemann 2003; Neumayer 2004; Hatton 2009). Information regarding the conditions for asylum seekers during the processing of their application as well as their chances of obtaining refugee status can be obtained from network connections or individuals arranging the trip to the country of asylum. Assuming that asylum seekers have access to such information I expect that stricter asylum policy decreases the number of asylum applications lodged in a particular state.

Since asylum seekers leave their home country for reasons of persecution and violence, it can be expected that they will flee to countries where they can integrate into their host society and will not face violent or repressive situations. As utility-maximizing individuals, refugees choose their destination states in order to avoid hostility and violence (Neumayer 2004). I therefore expect high levels of hostility towards foreigners in destination countries to deter asylum applicants from choosing to lodge their claims in such a state. Since measurements on hostility toward foreigners are difficult to measure and compare

between states, I follow Neumayer's study and use the proportion of the national vote going to right wing populist parties as a proxy.

c) Research Design

Based on the theories regarding factors making a particular destination choice more attractive, I include measures for economic attractiveness, historic ties, network effects, and the deterrent effects of hostility towards foreigners and stricter asylum policies. Since this study focuses on 16 OECD states (Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States), and research has consistently found that geographic proximity from their country of origin matters little in asylum applicants choice between such states, it has not been included (Thielemann 2003; Neumayer 2004; Moore and Shelleman 2007). Using time-series cross-sectional data for the 16 states and the time period 1997 to 2006, the relative strength of the four other proposed pull-factors is tested. Unless otherwise noted, the data collected is annual. Sources for the data can be found after the bibliography.

The dependent variable is the number of first-instance asylum applications lodged in each state per year measured in thousands as reported by the UNHCR. The data from the UNHCR generally allows for comparisons between states although it should be noted that since all countries included in this analysis report their own statistics some differences in counting applications may differ. Some

states, for example, require individual applications to be submitted for each person, whereas others count only one application by family (Neumayer 2004).¹ In general, however such differences can be considered to be of minor importance since they concern relatively small numbers of individuals (Hatton 2009).

Since larger states are expected to receive more asylum applications, I use the natural log of the population in each destination state as recorded by the World Data Bank, to control for variations in asylum claims due to the size of each country. In order to capture the economic attractiveness of destination states, three measures recorded in the World Data Bank have been taken into account. The GDP per capita in constant 2000 US dollars is intended to model for the wealth of each state, whereas the growth rate of GDP as an annual percentage and the unemployment rate are measures of the economic prospects available to asylum seekers. A state's GDP and its GDP growth-rate are expected to be positively associated with the number of asylum applications received whereas the unemployment rate is expected to display a negative relationship with the dependent variable. Since, to my knowledge, no data is available on the access of asylum seekers to the welfare state of the selected countries, overall social spending, measured as the percentage of GDP going to going to welfare provisions or other programs, was added as a proxy for the availability to asylum seekers of economic support provided by the state. Data for this variable was taken from the OECD.

¹ For more information regarding data from the UNHCR see UNHCR Statistical Online Population Database: Sources, Methods and Data Considerations: <http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/STATISTICS/45c06c662.html#asylum-seekers>

In order to account for historic ties between origin and destination states I calculated the population of each state's former colonies. Since this study only focuses on destination-specific effects, this measure is intended to capture the existence of colonial ties, as well as the magnitude of the potential number of asylum seekers generated from former colonies of each state. Only colonies since 1900 colonized by a state for five or more years during this period are included in the measurement. Protectorates were excluded. To calculate the former colonial population, only colonies that are today independent states are taken into account. In the event that multiple states colonized the same country, the most recent of these was counted (given that they were in possession of the colony for more than 5 years)². When a contemporary independent state had formed from territory colonized by more than one state, the one with the largest landmass or the latest claim was considered the ultimate colonizer³. States with more inhabitants in former colonies are expected to receive more asylum applications. To decrease the spread of this data I took the natural log of the variable.

To model network effects, the proportion of the population with foreign citizenship was used. Since this study looks only at characteristics of the destination states in order to determine which factors attract more asylum seekers, creating a measure taking into account the composition of each country's immigrant community and the asylum applicants for each state was not feasible.

² Current day Cameroon, for example, was colonized by the German Empire until 1916, but later became a part of the French colonial empire.

³ For example, French India, colonized by the French from 1887 through 1954 is today a part of contemporary India that gained independence from Great Britain in 1947 after more than 100 years as a colony. Since Great Britain colonized a larger portion of the territory that is now India that France did, I included this state in the list of former British colonies.

Although the measure used here only roughly represents network effects, it is expected that states with larger proportions of immigrants will have more extensive networks and thus attract more asylum seekers in general. Since data regarding the stock of immigrants was not available for each country included in the analysis, the proportions recorded by the OECD every five years were used. The data for 1997 through 1999 is therefore the same as that reported for 1995 and so forth. It can also be expected that potential asylum seekers receive information from individuals already present in the country and not arriving there at the same time as them, to account for this the variable was lagged by one year.

The potential deterrent effect of asylum policies was measured in two ways, first by the first-instance recognition rate of asylum applications as reported by the UNHCR. This data is calculated as the percentage of asylum applications with positive outcomes relative to the number of asylum applications processed during the year. For this variable it is important to note that this is not as a percentage of the number of applications received during a year since applications sometimes take years to process, as well as the fact that it does not take into account how many of the applications were rejected and how many were withdrawn. Since asylum seekers would consider the probability of their asylum application being recognized based on information of previous years' recognition rates, this variable is also lagged by one year.

The second measure of asylum policy is the index developed by Hatton (2009). Using data from the OECD and country reports from the European Council on Refugees and Exiles as well as the US Committee for Refugees and

Immigrants, Hatton's index reports changes in three aspects of states' asylum policy over time: access to the territory of the state; processing of the asylum applications; and outcome of the application in terms of the welfare of the asylum seeker during the processing of their claim and in the event they are rejected (for a more extensive discussion of the policy index, please see Appendix 2 of Hatton's 2009 study published in the *Economic Journal*). The Access variable takes into account changes making it more difficult to gain access to a state's territory or to lodge an application. Processing registers changes in the conditions asylum seekers live in during the time their application is evaluated. It includes changes pertaining to the right to work as well as the amount of government allocation awarded asylum seekers.

Hatton evaluated the loosening or tightening of a state's asylum policy; each policy change was awarded between -1 (for more permissive policy) to 1 (for stricter policy) in .25 increments in order to account for the magnitude of the change. In 1997 all states had indices of 0 with changes in policy added up each subsequent year until 2006 when the index ends. This measure thereby takes into account only changes within a state and not between states. An increase in any of the three measures of the index is expected to decrease the number of asylum applications lodged in a state.

The last independent variable, right-wing populist parties, is designed to capture the hostility of a country's inhabitants toward foreigners (Neumayer 2004). It is a measure of the percentage of the national parliamentary vote in a state going to right-wing populist parties as defined by Hans-George Betz and

recorded by Duane Swank from 1950 to 2009. Higher support for parties with political agendas hostile toward foreigners and with the goal of restricting immigration is therefore expected to reduce the number of asylum applications.

d) Analysis and Assessment

The results of OLS regression with random effects and panel corrected standard errors are reported in **Table 2**. Coefficients for all variables are presented in bold, followed by standard errors in parenthesis⁴:

As expected, the variable for population is highly statistically significant in both the model with random effects and PCSE indicating that larger states do receive more asylum applications simply because they are larger. With regards to the variables modelling economic attractiveness of a state, the only one that was constantly statistically significant at the 1% level was the unemployment variable. The observed effect of the impact of higher unemployment rates is supported by the findings presented in Thielemann's (2003) and Hatton's (2009) studies. They also found that GDP growth was statistically insignificant and, if anything associated with a decrease in asylum applications as indicated in Neumayer's study (2004).

⁴ In these results it should be noted that no adjustments were made to correct for autocorrelation of unobserved errors since it was outside the scope of the paper. I am, however, aware of the potential for OLS regression models to disregard the correlation of standard errors and the resulting underestimation of these.

Table 2: Results table

Thousands of asylum applications	Time series regression	Panel Corrected SE
Intercept	-158.4 (125.4)	-321.7 (71.0)***
Ln population	10.9 (2.69)***	10.2 (1.38)***
Ln GDP per capita	-.280 (11.8)	15.4 (6.71)**
GDP growth	-.691 (.777)	1.06 (.717)
Unemployment rate	-2.71 (.783)***	-2.27 (.594)***
Social spending	.363 (.586)	.597 (.251)**
Recognition rate	.162 (.650)**	.012 (.050)
Access	-6.89 (1.70)***	-7.74 (1.76)***
Processing	-5.20 (1.61)***	-7.26 (1.32)***
Outcomes	3.18 (1.99)	3.72 (1.44)**
Right-wing populist parties	.023 (.211)	-.206 (.142)
Ln colonial population	1.02 (.395)**	1.48 (.192)***
Foreign population %	.406 (.505)	1.16 (.247)***
R-squared within	0.33	

*** \square .01, ** \square .05, and * \square .1 statistical significance

The variable modelling colonial ties, that is, the population of former colonies was, as expected, positively associated with the number of asylum applications and statistically significant. This is also in line with previous research. In contrast with previous studies, however, where colonial ties are often only measured as dummy variables, this measure indicates that larger colonial empires such as France or Great Britain are likely to receive more asylum applications when compared to states such as the Netherlands due simply to the number of former colonies. These results fall in line with the intuitive assumption

that historic ties to more countries increases the number of asylum seekers coming to a destination country.

Since network effects were found to dominate all other explanatory variables in previous studies (Neumayer 2004, Moore and Shellman 2007), it is worth noting that the variable used here to model such effects was only statistically significant in the calculations using PCSE. In this case a 1% increase in the foreign population of a state has the estimated effect of increasing the number of asylum applications lodged the subsequent year by 1000. The reasons for this marked difference can be attributed to the impreciseness of the chosen measurement. The percentage of a country's population that are foreigners does not take into account that it is through specific nationalities and ethnic or social groups that network effects operate. A Chinese national and an Iraqi citizen living in Sweden have as much in common with each other than they do Swedes and have no more reason to be connected to each other prior to their arrival than they do to know ethnic Swedes in their destination country.

The deterrent effect of hostility towards foreigners as modelled by the support for right-wing populist parties was not statistically significant in any of the models. This could indicate that asylum seekers are unaware of how their destination country views foreigners, or that it is of minor importance to them since their motivation for leaving their country of origin is often related to discrimination against them or persecution. The two other measures intended to capture measures of deterrence, recognition rates and asylum policy both proved to be statistically significant. An increase in recognition rate is associated with an

estimated increase of 160 – 170 asylum applications the year after. In terms of asylum policy, the two indices that assumed statistical significance and coefficients with the expected negative signs were access and processing, a result that is in line with those obtained by Hatton (2009). In the case of Denmark and Sweden, for example, this means that the changes in Swedish asylum policy in 2006 that led to a value of -1 for processing, and the changes in Danish policy the same year that produced a change of 1 in both access and processing could potentially result in Sweden receiving 17 000 more applications than Denmark the same year if all other variables are held constant.

In line with previous studies on the determinants of ‘asylum seekers’ destination choice, this analysis also found historical ties to be an important determinant. These studies found however, that network effects also represents one of the main ‘pull’ factors that attract asylum seekers to a particular state. The fact that the chosen measure of such network effects, a state’s foreign population percentage, was found to be statistically significant only in one of the models where it had the effect of modestly increasing the number of asylum seekers the following year can be attributed to the inaccuracy of the variable. In order to obtain better data on the effects of networks as a ‘pull’ factor, a model specifying the links between origin and destination states such as the one used by Neumayer (2004) or Hatton (2009) could be used.

The deterrent effect of stricter asylum policy measures was confirmed in this study, especially with regards to policies changing the terms of access to a state’s territory or the conditions under which applications are processed. Out of

the three measures intended to measure the quality of life an asylum seeker could expect to lead if their claim is accepted, only the unemployment rate proved to be statistically significant. Hostility toward foreigners as measured by support for right-wing populist parties and social spending by the government were both found to be statistically insignificant. This could indicate that asylum seekers are less concerned about being integrated into their host country than they are about becoming economically successful. It also disproves the claim sometimes advanced by media that asylum seekers come to exploit the welfare system of rich European states.

Researchers have, however, also conducted case-studies and country comparisons in order to evaluate the efficiency of asylum policy (see for example, Holzer, Schneider & Widmer's 2000 paper on how legislative measures have influenced the level of asylum seekers in Switzerland). Comparing numbers of asylum seekers and influences of their decision choices and thus the impact of refugee and immigration policy is rendered complicated by the multitude of factors that have to be taken into account. As the above analysis has shown, asylum policy, unemployment rates and colonial ties influence asylum seekers destination choice. Network effects, proximity to country of asylum and language are other factors that studies have found to influence destination choice of asylum seekers. Furthermore, the diversity of refugee policies, integration programs and cultures have led authors to avoid comparative approaches and focusing instead on individual case studies (Segal, Elliott & Mayadas, 2010). In order to cast further light on the influence of asylum policy on the number of asylum seekers,

the last part of this paper is dedicated to two case studies of Denmark and Sweden. The cultural and historical similarities of these two Scandinavian states and the variation in the number and origin of asylum applicants each year provide for the possibility of exploring how diverging asylum policies can influence asylum applicants' destination choice.

IV. Seeking asylum in Scandinavia

The definition of Scandinavia varies. For a Swede, it denotes the two countries of the Scandinavian Peninsula, Sweden and Norway, while many English speakers often include Finland, Denmark and Iceland. In these countries, the broader term *Norden*, or the North, is often used to speak of the five states (Hilson, 2008). For the sake of simplicity and to avoid confusion I will use the more widespread definition of Scandinavia in the English language to speak of the five above-mentioned states. Several characteristics of these countries have contributed to the definition of Scandinavia as a region. Although each of the five states has their own language, the close philological relationship in particular between Danish, Norwegian and Swedish has facilitated population movement between the three states. While Finnish is radically different from the other language, the close historical ties and the fact that Finland and Sweden were part of the same political entity until 1809 has linked the country closer to its western neighbours than those to the east (Hilson 2008). The common traits of Protestantism as the dominant religion rather than Catholicism and the lack of colonial and imperial influences on other parts of the world are also elements that unite the Scandinavian states by distinguishing them from other European states (Hilson 2008).

In the 1930s, the notion of a “Nordic model” as an approach to governance and politics emerged. Several important features of this “model” include strong popular support for social democratic parties and their dominance in elections, low social divisions and a high degree of support for the political system as well

as low levels of conflict regarding the exercise of power (Hilson, 2008). In other words, politics in the Scandinavian countries since the end of the Second World War up until the 1990s have been characterized by popular support both for the system in place as well as the social democratic parties running the system and formulating policy. The ideology of these parties is largely based on Marxist ideas of class conflict as well as the idea of a common people living under the rule of democracy sharing the same conception of a community (Hilson 2008). Sweden and Denmark had the most successful social democratic parties based on time in office. From 1932 – 1976, the Swedish Social Democrats had 44 consecutive years in office, and in Denmark they were out of office for only four years in the period 1947 – 1968 (Hilson, 2008). In more recent years, however, these parties have lost much of their popular support and parties such as the Danish People's Party, Junilistan (Sweden) and the Sweden Democrats have emerged and gained popular support as discontent with the political system has emerged.

Due to the similar histories of the Scandinavian states, many of the hypotheses proposed earlier regarding which factors influence asylum seekers destination choice can be discounted in the comparison of Sweden and Denmark as destination choices for asylum seekers. Since the two states are neighbours and located in northern Europe, their geographical proximity to states generating asylum seeker flows is the same. The economic conditions of the two states are also close to identical with similar unemployment rates, GDP and GDP growth rates (World Data Bank). Neither of the two states have had important colonies during the 20th century. The two languages are mutually intelligible and spoken

only in the Scandinavian region. In terms of population, Sweden has almost twice the number of inhabitants as Denmark with 9 million compared to 5.5 in 2012 (europa.eu). It is thus not surprising that Sweden receives more asylum applications than Denmark as a general trend. In the discussion below I have therefore normalized the number of first instance asylum applications by national population when comparing the number of asylum seekers for both states.

Two additional hypotheses remain as explanations for asylum seekers choosing Denmark and Sweden as destination choices, network effects and asylum policy. With a foreign population percentage twice that of Denmark's during the late 1990s and 2000s, the potential of networks to influence asylum seekers coming to Sweden is greater than for Denmark (World Data Bank). However, in my study, network effects as measured by the percentage of the population that are foreigners was not statistically significant. Examining the impact of network effects on asylum seekers would therefore necessitate using a model similar to Neumayer's with origin and destination effects (2004), or conducting interviews with asylum seekers in Scandinavia to determine which factors influenced them in their destination choice. Such research is, however, beyond the scope of this thesis. It is worth noting, however, that the Scandinavian region is one that has experienced substantive immigration primarily after the Second World War (Runblom, 1995; Hilson, 2008), and that immigrant groups from countries sending many asylum seekers are not yet well established. As one observer has noted "[d]iversity and heterogeneity are two of the most noteworthy

features of the immigrant populations in the Nordic countries” (Runblom, 1995: 300).

The remainder of this essay focuses on two case studies of asylum policy in Sweden and Denmark and how they have changed over time. In the large-N study I conducted I found asylum policy change to be statistically significant. Hatton’s (2009) and Thielemann’s (2003) studies both had similar results, thus supporting the hypothesis that asylum policy is a factor in asylum seekers destination choice. However, it is difficult to discern the precise effects of asylum policy changes on the number of asylum applications lodged in a state due to the multitude of factors influencing destination choice. By examining how policy changes have affected the number of asylum seekers coming to Denmark and Sweden, it is possible to see that significant tightening of asylum policy reduces the number of asylum seekers. Based on the two case studies it also seems as though policy measures aimed at reducing the number of asylum seekers from particular origin states also have a significant impact in reducing the number of asylum claimants. Comparing the fluctuations in the number of asylum seekers in the two states further supports the hypothesis that asylum policy is an important factor in asylum seeker destination choice.

a) Overview of post-World War II Immigration to Scandinavia

During the period after the Second World War and under the rule of the social democratic countries, Scandinavia prospered and all five countries consistently rank high on development and wealth indicators such as GDP per capita and the human development index (HDI). In 2011, for example, all five

states were among the 25-highest rated on HDI, all classifying within the category of very high human development (United Nations Development Programme, 2011). The large economic expansion of the Scandinavian states following the after-war period and into the 1970s contributed to making the region a net-immigration area rather than net-emigration states as had been the trend until the 1930s (Hilson, 2008). Prior to the 1930s, and in particular during the 19th century, Scandinavian society was largely agrarian and relatively poor. As a result, many emigrated to find better economic prospects elsewhere, especially in the United States (Hilson, 2008).

From 1945 until the 1970s, Sweden, Denmark and Norway pursued policies of open immigration, especially of labour (Hilson, 2008). The creation of the Nordic Council after 1945, and a common Nordic labour market in 1954, which abolished the need for work permits for any Nordic citizen wishing to work in the other four states, facilitated intra-Nordic migration. As a result, many immigrants to the five states came from the other Scandinavian countries. Sweden especially saw many workers move from the other Scandinavian states as the economy took off earlier there than in Denmark or Norway (Runblom, 1995). In the 1950s, Sweden and later Denmark and Norway, started recruiting labour migrants from Southern European states, especially Italy, Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey (Hilson, 2008). Labour migration to Finland and Iceland remained relatively low during the same period.

In the early 1970s, however, as economic growth slowed down and unemployment rose, Sweden, Denmark and Norway all abandoned their policies

of open migration in favour of restrictions on labour migration (Hilson 2008, Runblom 1995). At the same time, refugee policies in the three states remained relatively unrestricted, and, as a result, immigration inflows came to be characterized by growing numbers of refugees rather than labour immigrants (Runblom, 1995; Bevelander, 2011). Until the mid-1970s, much of the refugee migration to Scandinavia consisted of Hungarians, Slovaks, Czechs and Poles leaving states in the Soviet bloc (Runblom, 1995). Arrivals of asylum seekers from these states were especially large in 1956 and 1968 when uprisings took place in Hungary and the “Prague Spring” occurred respectively (Hilson, 2008).

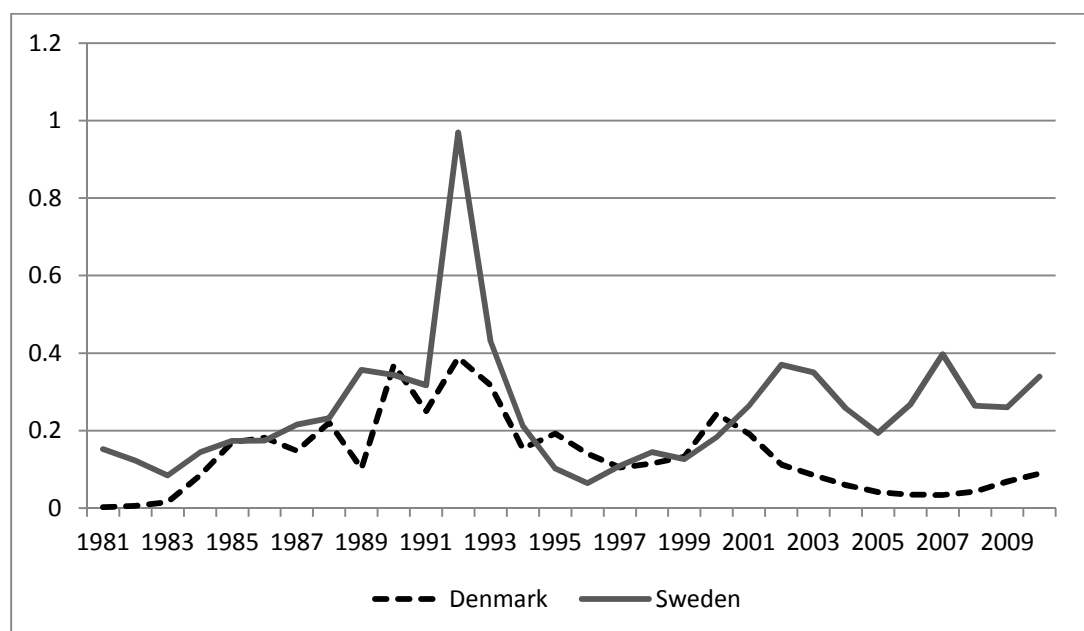
Throughout the 1980s the number of asylum seekers to Scandinavia rose steadily, peaking in the early 1990s with large inflows of individuals from the Bosnian conflict arriving in 1992 and 1993 (Hilson, 2008). Since the 1970s, however, asylum seekers have come from a wide variety of countries in South America, Europe and Africa. **Table 3** shows the largest groups of asylum seekers to Sweden and Denmark in three ten year periods covering 1981 through 2010. Due to insufficient data availability regarding origin states for asylum seekers during the 1980s and to a certain extent also the 1990s, many were grouped under the label “various.”

Table 3: Top five origin countries/territories of asylum seekers to Denmark and Sweden, 1981 – 2010 (Data source: UNHCR Statistical Online Population Database)

1981 - 1989	
Denmark	Sweden
Various	Iran (Islamic Republic of)
West Bank and Gaza Strip	Various
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Chile
Sri Lanka	Poland
Lebanon	Pakistan
1990 - 1999	
Denmark	Sweden
Afghanistan	Serbia
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Iraq	Iraq
Serbia	Somalia
Somalia	Iran (Islamic Republic of)
2000 - 2010	
Denmark	Sweden
Afghanistan	Iraq
Iraq	Serbia
Serbia	Somalia
Somalia	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Russian Federation

As this table shows, Denmark and Sweden only had one large group of asylum seekers in common during the 1980s, Iranians, while in the 2000s, Iraqis, Serbians and Somalians made up three of the five largest groups of asylum seekers arriving in both states, indicating that the groups of asylum seekers coming to the two states have become more similar over time. The number of asylum seekers, have not, however been similar. The graph in **Figure 1** shows the number of asylum seekers arriving in Denmark and Sweden as a percentage of the total population for each state.

Figure 1: Number of first instance asylum applications lodged per year in Sweden and Denmark as a percentage of national population (1981 – 2010) (Data source: UNHCR Statistical Online Population Database)



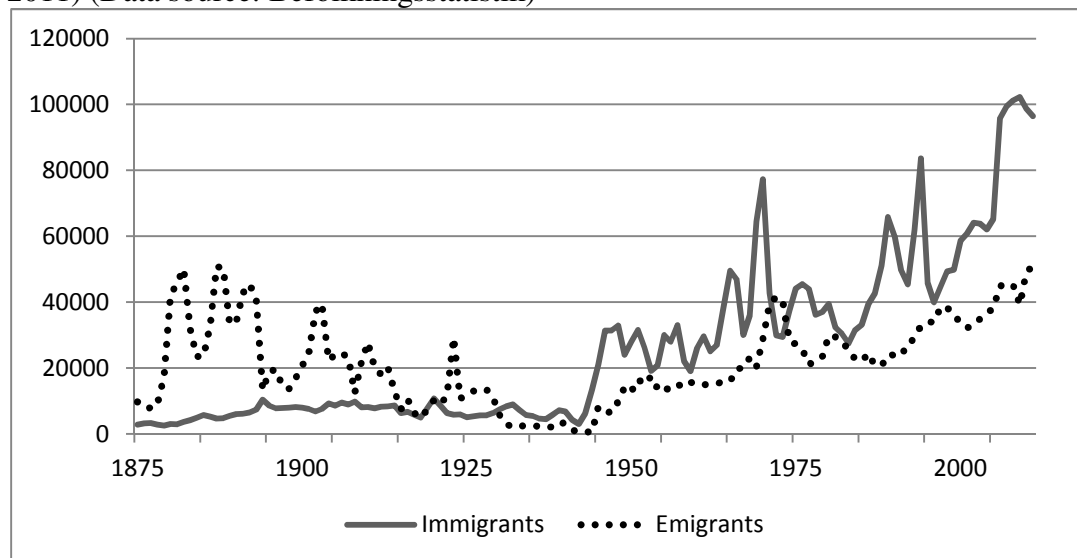
Throughout the 1980s and 1990s Denmark and Sweden received roughly the same number of asylum applications as a proportion of their respective populations with some year to year fluctuations. From 2003 to 2010, however, the number of asylum applicants to Denmark remained relatively stable fluctuating from 2,000 to 5,000 for each year. At the same time, the number of asylum seekers to Sweden fluctuated from 17,000 in 2005 to 31,000 in 2010 (UNHCR Statistical Online Population Database). The two case studies of Denmark and Sweden will provide possible explanations as to why the number of asylum applications to Denmark has decreased so drastically since 2000, and why over one quarter of asylum seekers from Bosnia sought refuge in Sweden in 1992. Based on the results obtained in the large-N statistical study and from other studies, I have chosen to focus on how changes in the asylum and refugee policies

of each state have influenced the number of asylum applications received in Sweden and Denmark.

b) Sweden

Sweden is the largest of the Scandinavian states both in terms of territory and population, with the Swedish population exceeding 9 million inhabitants by 2005 (World Data Bank). It also has the largest immigrant population of the five states with 14% of the total population born outside of Sweden. Like the other Scandinavian states, Sweden has been characterized by emigration rather than immigration. Current numbers of immigrants in Sweden can be compared to the foreign population of 1945 which amounted to only around 100,000 individuals (Nilsson, 2004). It was also around this time that migration to Sweden started surpassing emigration, a trend that has not been reversed since. **Figure 2** illustrates this evolution.

Figure 2: Emigration and Immigration to Sweden in number of migrants (1875 – 2011) (Data source: Befolkningsstatistik)



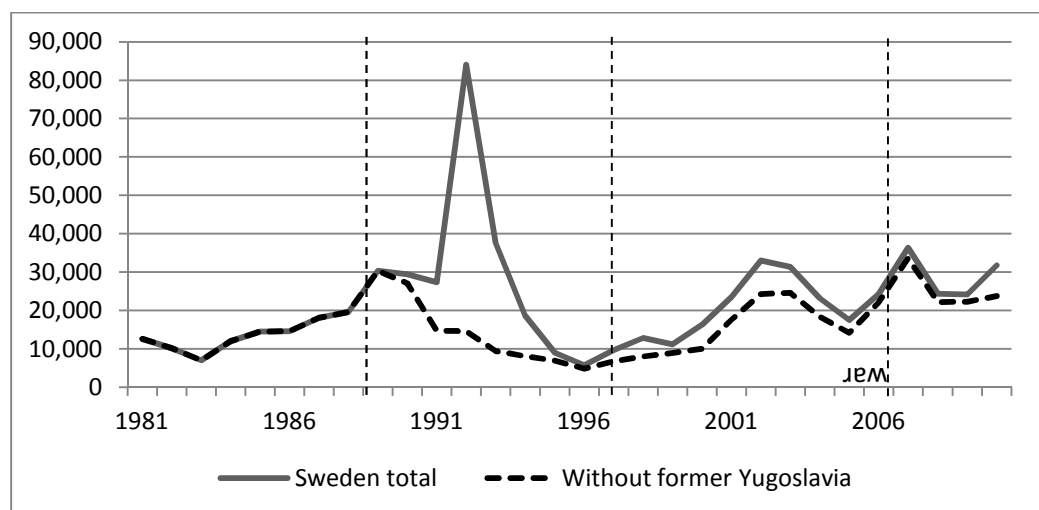
From 1945 to 1965, immigration to Sweden remained relatively stable at 20,000 to 30,000 individuals arriving each year. Labour migration dominated these immigration flows and spiked in the late 1960s with close to 80,000 individuals arriving in Sweden in the year 1970 (Nilsson, 2004). The economic slowdown in the late 1960s, however, led the government to abandon the policy of free immigration in 1972 (Hilson, 2008). Immigration to Sweden since then and especially from the 1980s onward, has been dominated by refugees and individuals reuniting with their families (Nilsson, 2004; Bevelander 2011). According to estimates made by Pieter Bevelander, refugees account for nearly a third of total immigration to Sweden during the time period 1980-2007 (2011).

Immigration to Sweden is regulated by the Swedish Aliens Act, currently in its third version. The acts of 1980, 1989 and 2006 all define refugee according to the Geneva Convention and its Protocol and have posited that Sweden grant refugee status to individuals meeting the criteria specified in these documents (see p. 7 of this essay for more information) (Bevelander, 2011). The implementation of this legislation is conducted by the Board of Migration who oversees the entire asylum application process for asylum seekers, from their arrival in Sweden and reception by the authorities to the granting of refugee status or other statutes of protection (Asplund 2007). The number of asylum seekers granted refugee status under the convention has remained below 10% for most years since the 1990s. Many asylum seekers not recognized as refugees do, however, receive permanent residence in Sweden under other protection statuses. Approximately 50% of all asylum seekers granted the right to stay in Sweden since 1980 have received such

additional status (Bevelander, 2011). Although the changes to asylum policy since the 1980s have made it more difficult to obtain refugee or other protection status in Sweden, the most important modifications to policy seem to have had little impact on the number of asylum seekers arriving in Sweden.

Apart from the new Aliens Acts of 1989 and 2006, the legislation underwent important changes in 1997 as well. **Figure 3** shows the number of asylum applications received in Sweden from 1981 to 2010, with dotted indicating the dates for important policy changes. As can be observed in this graph, it was only following the changes in 1989 that the number of asylum applicants fell, the policy modifications of 1997 and 2006 followed by increasing numbers of asylum applications. The graph also illustrates the impact on overall numbers of asylum seekers by the many individuals fleeing the war in Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. The dashed line includes all asylum seekers apart from Bosnians and Serbians.

Figure 3: Evolution of number of first instance asylum applications to Sweden (1981 – 2010) with and without refugees from the former Yugoslavian republics of Bosnia and Serbia (vertical dashed lines denote major asylum policy changes) (Data source: UNHCR Statistical Online Population Database)



Although the Aliens Act of 1980 had adopted the definition of refugee according to the Geneva Convention, application of the definition was not always followed to the letter. The increasing number of asylum seekers arriving in Sweden throughout the 1980s therefore led the government to change the legislation in 1989 in order to restrict the number of individuals granted refugee status only to those fitting the definition in the Convention. The decision that introduced these decisions into law is called the Lucia decision (so called because it entered into force on December 13, the Lucia-day in Sweden) (Eastmond, 2011). Following these changes, and probably as a result of them, the number of asylum seekers recognized as refugees dropped from between 10 – 15% in 1987 through 1989 to an average of 2 – 7% 1990 through 1996 (Befolkningsstatistik).

The 1989 legislation also introduced new categories of protection besides refugees that provided residency in Sweden for individuals based on criteria other

than those in the 1951 Convention. Between 1989 and 1997, asylum seekers were allowed to stay in Sweden as *De facto* refugees and as so called war rejecters, i.e. individuals who fled their home due to war or the possibility of being drafted into military service (Bevelander, 2011). The introduction of these categories did not, however, mean that the number of asylum seekers granted the right to stay increased after the policy changes; the result was in fact the reverse. In 1984 through 1989, 50% or more of asylum seekers were granted permanent residency in Sweden. In 1990, this number fell to 39% and in 1992, only 11% of asylum seekers were allowed to stay in the country (Befolkningsstatistik).

While the number of asylum seekers coming to Sweden increased steadily throughout the 1980s, in the beginning of the 1990s, and in particular in 1992 and 1993, there was an enormous increase in the number of individuals applying for asylum. This is due largely to the conflict in Yugoslavia and the arrival en-masse of Serbs and Bosnians fleeing the conflict in their homeland. In 1992 alone, Sweden received close to 84,000 applications for asylum, out of which 69,396 were from Serbians (UNHCR Statistical Online Population Database). This represents close to 30% of Serbian asylum seekers worldwide in 1992. In 1993, Bosnians and Serbs made up almost 30,000 out of the 38,000 asylum applicants lodging a claim in Sweden that year (UNHCR Statistical Online Population Database). During 1994 through 1996, the number of asylum seekers arriving from the former Yugoslavia dropped steadily, as did the total number of asylum applications received. In 1996, only 5,753 asylum applications were lodged in Sweden, the lowest during the 1981 through 2010 time period.

One possible reason Sweden received such a large portion of Serbian asylum seekers despite the stricter asylum policies that decreased the number of asylum seekers from other countries is the large community of Yugoslavs living in Sweden. During the 1950s and 60s Sweden imported labor migrants from Yugoslavia, many of whom remained after the end of open immigration policies in the 1970s. In the late 1980s, Sweden was therefore home to around 40,000 individuals holding Yugoslav citizenship (Befolkningsstatistik). Since statistics are not available of how many individuals in Sweden were born abroad or born in the country to immigrant parents, no data exists on the total size of the Yugoslavian community in Sweden. However, since Yugoslavs represented around 8.5% of all foreigners residing in Sweden by 1990, it is reasonable to assume that a large community of Yugoslavs was residing in Sweden at the time the war broke out.

Although the impact of network effects on the number of asylum seekers is difficult to discern without conducting interviews with individuals as was done by Böcker and Havinga (1999), the case of Serbians applying for asylum in Sweden in the early 1990s suggests that many chose Sweden due to such connections. The 60,000 Serbian asylum seekers arriving in Sweden in 1992 can be compared to the 4,100 Serbians applying for asylum in Denmark and the 1,000 claiming asylum in Norway that same year (UNHCR Statistical Online Population Database). Although the three countries asylum policies at the time were not identical, neither Sweden nor Denmark had policies that were particularly strict. Denmark did, however, have a substantially smaller Yugoslav community than

Sweden with only around 7,000 Yugoslavian citizens residing in the country in 1990 (StatBank Denmark).

The peak of asylum applications received by the Swedish government in 1992 and 1993 is therefore due to emigration from one particular area. As the dotted curve in **Figure 3** illustrates, when Bosnian and Serbian asylum seekers are removed from the total number of first instance asylum applications, there is a distinct reduction in the number of asylum applications lodged in Sweden between 1989 and 1995. The overall decreasing trend in the number of asylum applications received throughout the early 1990s can therefore be partially attributed to the stricter asylum policy implemented in 1989.

The large inflow of asylum seekers from Yugoslavia to Sweden in 1992 gained much notice among the Swedish population, as did the atrocities perpetrated against Bosnians during the war (Abiri, 2000). However, not all Yugoslavs were considered legitimate asylum seekers by popular opinion and the Swedish government. To restrict their arrival, visa requirements were therefore instituted in 1992. As Bosnian asylum seekers continued arriving in Sweden in large numbers, visa requirements were instituted for them as well in 1993 (Abiri). **Table 4** compares the number of asylum seekers from Bosnia and Serbia overall with the claims lodged in Denmark and Sweden during the 1990s. In 1991, prior to the introduction of visa requirements, Sweden received 12,557 asylum applications from Bosnians and Serbs. In 1998 and 1999, when worldwide numbers of asylum claims was close to those of 1991, Sweden received only 4,777 and 2,298 applications respectively, significantly lower than rates in 1991.

Between 1991 and 1999 no other major changes were made to the Swedish Aliens Act, making it highly plausible that the visa requirements reduced the number of asylum applications.

Table 4: Annual number of first instance asylum applications lodged by Bosnian and Serbian nationals (1990 – 2000) (Data source: UNHCR Statistical Online Population Database)

	World	Denmark	Sweden
1990	33,803	77	2,272
1991	117,288	705	12,557
1992	237,509	8,950	69,396
1993	176,324	8,835	28,130
1994	79,602	944	10,593
1995	70,169	3,964	2,071
1996	46,298	1,233	898
1997	57,831	628	2,857
1998	109,551	581	4,777
1999	129,944	1,233	2,298
2000	57,833	2,378	6,299

In contrast to the changes implemented in 1989, the 1997 revisions to the existing law and the entry into force of the new Aliens Act in 2006 did not restrict asylum policy to the same extent. In 1997, the additional categories of protection besides convention refugee were merged into one called “refuges in need of sanctuary” (Bevelander, 2011: 26). This actually broadened the scope of individuals considered in need of protection. The new category provided protection for individuals fleeing environmental disasters and civil wars as well as those persecuted due to their gender or sex (Bevelander, 2011). As an EU member since 1995, Sweden is also under the obligation to grant refuge to individuals under the conditions specified by the European Council’s 2004 directive

(European Council, 2004). The 1997 law also introduced a 'temporary' protection category for asylum seekers not granted refugee status that enabled the government to provide short-term protection for individuals fleeing conflict and crises (Abiri, 2000).

Since the 1997 legislative changes were followed by a steady increase in the number of asylum seekers until 2002, it is possible that individuals fleeing the above mentioned conditions started arriving in Sweden in greater numbers from this point onwards, thus showing that asylum seekers react to an expansion in the asylum policy as well. However, it is difficult to draw these conclusions based solely on the fluctuations in the number of asylum applications received. Unlike the early 1990s, no one group of asylum seekers dominated the number of asylum applications lodged. Serbians and Bosnians continued as two of the largest groups of asylum seekers together with Iraqis. The number of asylum applications lodged by individuals of each of the three nationalities did not exceed 7,000 in any year until 2007, hovering instead closer to 2,000 or 3,000 individuals arriving each year from each nationality. Additionally, the five origin states for asylum seekers arriving in Sweden did not change substantially. The three above mentioned nationalities were all among the top five origin states for asylum seekers in Sweden from 1994 until 2003. Russians, Somalis, Iranians and Afghanis were also large groups during this time.

If the impact of the 1997 legislative changes is ambiguous at best, those implemented in 2006 have had even less of a discernible effect on the number of asylum applications received. These changes somewhat facilitated the access of

asylum seekers to Swedish territory (Hatton, 2009), but the number of asylum applications have fluctuated since and it is possible that more time is needed in order to observe any trends in the number of asylum applications received.

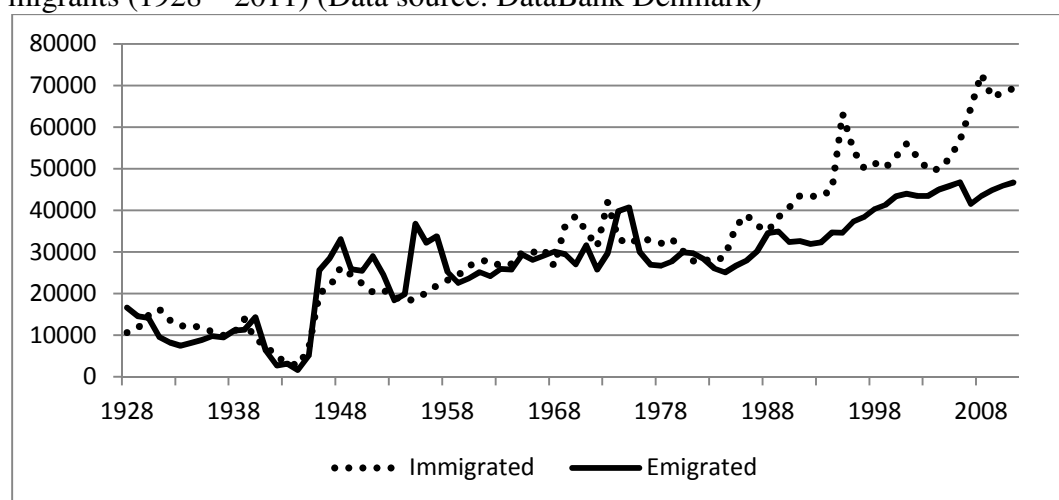
The example of how changes in Swedish asylum policy have affected the number of asylum seekers thus shows that stricter asylum policies, such as those of the 1989 Aliens Act, can influence the number of asylum applications a state receives. However, events beyond the control of the destination state, in this case the war in former-Yugoslavia, can overshadow the effects of policy changes. While it is more difficult to determine if the more recent changes to Swedish asylum policy have led to increased numbers of asylum seekers, Denmark is an example of how stricter asylum policy can effectively reduce the number of asylum applications received in recent years. The most recent Danish Aliens Act made it substantially more difficult to obtain asylum in Denmark, and has led to a significant decrease in the number of asylum applications received by Denmark as compared to other Scandinavian states.

c) Denmark

The immigration history of Denmark is very similar to that of Sweden with emigration exceeding immigration well into the 20th century (see **Figure 4**) (Hilson, 2008). Denmark did not, however, experience a similar drastic increase in the number of immigrants in the late 1940s as Sweden (Runblom, 1995). This was largely due to lower numbers of labor immigrants as Denmark's economic recuperation after the Second World War was slower than Sweden's and labor demand thus lower. It was therefore not until 1967 that labor migrants started

arriving in Denmark in large numbers. Open labor immigration policies in Denmark only lasted for a short time however, as the economic slowdown of the 1970s caused them to impose immigration controls in 1973 (Hilson 2008). Like Sweden, many laborers came from Yugoslavia and southern European states such as Italy and Greece, but also from Morocco and Pakistan (Runblom, 1995; Hilson 2008).

Figure 4: Immigrants and Emigrants to/from Denmark in annual number of migrants (1928 – 2011) (Data source: DataBank Denmark)



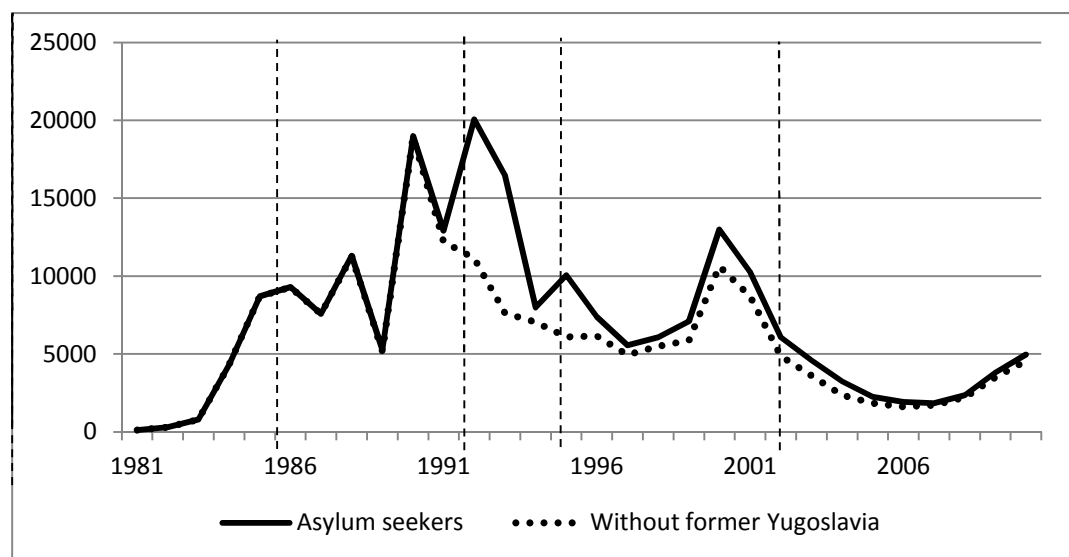
It is not surprising that Denmark has lower absolute numbers of immigrants and asylum seekers than Sweden since its population of approximately 5.5 million in 2012 is a bit more than half of Sweden's (European Commission, 2007). Denmark also covers a territory that is roughly one tenth of Sweden's. However, Denmark is the only Scandinavian state that shares a border with continental Europe, and the longest standing member of the EU of the five states (European Commission 2007), two factors that have facilitated migration to Denmark from other European states. Despite this, Denmark's foreign population is only half of Sweden's at 7% of the national population. As illustrated by

Figure 1, the number of asylum seekers coming to Denmark is also below that of Sweden for most of the period since the 1980s. As in the case study of Swedish asylum policy, the following section details the substantive changes in Danish asylum policy and their effects on the number of asylum seekers arriving in Denmark.

Denmark's first Aliens Act was consolidated in 1983 from a multitude of separate regulations (Bröcker, 1990). Since then, three major policy changes have been instituted, in 1986, 1995 and 2002. Out of these the most significant impact on the number of asylum seekers has been the recent policy changes implemented in 2002 and 2003 (**Figure 5** illustrates the fluctuations in the number of asylum applications received overlaid with the policy changes). Although Denmark today has a very strict refugee policy, the Aliens Act from 1983 was heralded as the most liberal and humanitarian asylum policy in Western Europe at the time (Vitus & Lidén, 2010). The law obliged the Danish government to house any and all individuals lodging an asylum application in Denmark and gave asylum seekers a legal right to asylum in the country as soon as they were recognized as refugees (Bröcker, 1990). Following the policy changes, the number of asylum seekers arriving in Denmark increased substantially. In 1983, 800 individuals applied for asylum in Denmark, the subsequent year the number rose to 4,312 and by 1986, close to 9,300 asylum applications were received by the Danish government. Media attributed the substantial increase in the number of asylum seekers arriving in Denmark to the liberal policies. However, the number of asylum claims lodged in Western European states also increased by a factor of 6 from 1983 to 1991

(Freeman, 1992), thus making it difficult to discern how much of the increase can be attributed to the policy.

Figure 5: Number of first instance asylum applications lodged in Denmark (1981 – 2010) (vertical dashed lines denote major asylum policy changes) (Data source: UNHCR Statistical Online Population Database)



In 1986, the government amended the Aliens Act in response to political and popular pressure to make it more difficult for asylum seekers to reach Denmark. Following the implementation of the law in October, foreigners without passports and visas could be turned away at the Danish border unless they came from a country or ethnic group where they were under threat of persecution. The new legislation also instituted fines for airlines that transported individuals without the required documentation, thereby incentivizing airlines to turn away potential asylum seekers in their origin state if they lacked sufficient documentation (Bröcker, 1990). Some scholars attribute the low number of asylum seekers in 1989 to this policy change and claim that the return to safe third countries provision cut down the number of asylum seekers by as much as two

thirds (Hardy, 1994). Although the policy changes made it more difficult for individuals to reach Denmark in order to apply for asylum, the policy does not seem to have had a large influence as the number of asylum seekers fluctuated greatly at the end of the 1980s and start of 1990s.

As discussed in the Swedish case study, Sweden did not implement stricter asylum policies until 1989, and unlike Denmark they experienced a steady increase in asylum seekers from 1983 until 1989. Comparing the two countries' inflows of asylum seekers it is therefore possible to see some impact of the asylum policy changes in Denmark. However, it is difficult to draw any clear conclusions based on such comparison since the top five origin states for asylum seekers during the 1980s for both states are very different. While Denmark received many asylum seekers from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Iran and Sri Lanka, Sweden was a destination state for Iranians too, but also Chileans and Poles (see **Table 1** for more information). Separating the effects of asylum policy from other factors, such as network effects, that influence asylum seekers destination choice by comparing the two states is therefore difficult. Additionally, statistics of asylum seekers for both countries are not very detailed for the 1980s and the nationality of many claimants is not registered as indicated by the high numbers of individuals from 'various' countries (see **Table 1**).

During the 1990s, several minor policy changes were made, many of them aiming at reducing the number of asylum seekers arriving from the former-Yugoslavia. In 1992, for example, the Danish state instituted a visa requirement for Bosnians to enter Denmark and set up an office in Zagreb where individuals

from Yugoslavia could lodge an asylum application with the Danish state (SOPEMI 1997). Like Sweden, this was done in reaction to the large number of asylum seekers from former Yugoslavia. As **Figure 5** illustrates, asylum seekers from Bosnia and Serbia still made up approximately half of all claimants in Denmark in 1992 and 1993. As a consequence, the 1995 changes to the Danish asylum policy included a fixed quota of asylum seekers from the former Yugoslavia that could be granted refuge in Denmark (SOPEMI 1997).

More importantly in 1995, the Aliens Act was changed so that the terms of admission for granting asylum claims were made stricter (SOPEMI 1998). With these modifications, asylum seekers could be turned away due to insufficient information or ‘unfounded claims’ (SOPEMI 1997). This meant that more information was needed from asylum seekers regarding their situation in their origin state. The new act also enabled the government to detain asylum seekers (SOPEMI 1998). After the implementation of the new law, asylum claims were halved from 10,000 in 1995 to 5,500 in 1997 (UNHCR Statistical Online Population Database). Part of the decrease was due to fewer Serbians and Bosnians applying for asylum in Denmark. As **Table 4** shows, the number of Bosnian and Serbian asylum seekers coming to Denmark has been quite low, especially since 1995. The asylum policy changes thus seem to have had an impact on the targeted individuals since the surge in asylum seekers originating from the two former Yugoslavian republics in 1998 and 1999 was not accompanied by a significant increase in the number of asylum seekers from these countries coming to Denmark.

Since the numbers of asylum seekers arriving in Sweden and Denmark during the latter half of the 1990s were roughly equivalent at between 0.1% and 0.2% of national population and the largest groups during these years came from the same countries, the impact of the policy changes on the overall number of asylum seekers can be deemed minor. Even though the number of asylum seekers decreased slightly in Denmark after 1995, Sweden experienced a similar decrease, as did Norway. In the latter half of the 1990s, the number of asylum seekers coming to each of the Scandinavian states was roughly equal with the exception of minor fluctuations (UNHCR Statistical Online Population Database). Since the three countries did not implement policy changes at the same time, yet they received similar numbers of asylum seekers, the impact of asylum policy on the number of claimants is uncertain.

With the modifications to the Aliens Act in 1992 and 1995, obtaining asylum in Denmark was thus made more difficult, the changes do not, however, seem to have had a great impact on the number of asylum seekers. Despite these changes, from 1992 to 2002, Denmark had the highest recognition rates in all industrialized countries (Hilson, 2008). However, after 2001, when a centre-right coalition came into power, Danish immigration and asylum policy changed drastically, in particular with regards to the processing of asylum applications (Vitus & Lidén, 2010). The new Aliens Act that entered into force in 2002 was interpreted by many as the strictest in Europe and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Ruud Lubbers, openly criticised the Danish government for it (Hilson 2008). The explicit intent of the policy was to decrease the number of asylum

seekers coming to Denmark as well as the number of individuals obtaining refugee status there (Regeringen, 2002), and the policy seems to have had the intended effect.

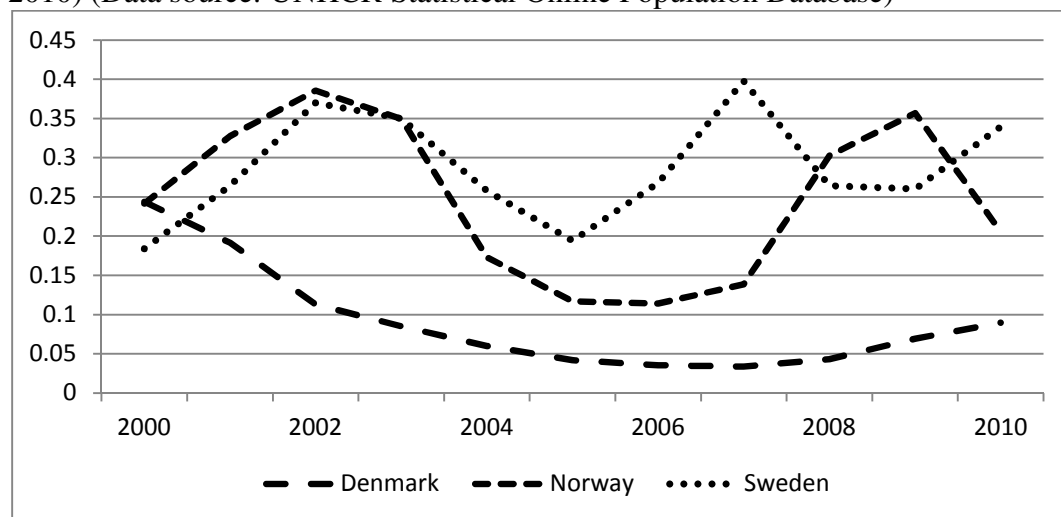
According to the 2002 law, all applications for asylum to the Danish state must be lodged in Denmark (SOPEMI 2004). Since all non-EU citizens entering Denmark must do so with passports and visas, except in extraordinary circumstances, this makes it more difficult for individuals lacking documentation or who are unable to obtain visas to enter Denmark (Consolidation Act 2009). Additionally, the provisions from 1986 regarding fines for airline carriers transporting individuals without visas still stand (Regeringen 2002). Since Denmark is a signatory to the 1951 Geneva Convention and its 1967 protocol it grants asylum to individuals according to the criteria specified therein. Prior to 2002, *de facto* refugees were also granted permanent residency (SOPEMI 2004; Montgomery & Foldspang, 2005). The new law abolished this category and introduced ‘humanitarian grounds’ as the only other criteria for granting asylum (Vitus & Lindén, 2010). Since then, only around 1% of asylum seekers are granted the right to stay in Denmark on ‘humanitarian grounds’ (Montgomery & Foldspang, 2005). Most of them are allowed to remain due to health reasons such as severe illness that cannot be treated in the home country. (Vitus & Lidén, 2010).

The 2002 law and some additional provisions introduced in 2003 also changed the treatment of asylum seekers during the processing of their application. These include so called “motivation advancement measures” that aim

at discouraging individuals from applying for asylum and to encourage rejected asylum seekers to return to their origin country. As a part of these measures, the allowance for asylum seekers during processing has been lowered and they are required to report their whereabouts with the local police (Vitus & Lidén, 2010). Also, to receive cash benefits from the government, asylum seekers must now meet certain stipulations. For asylum seekers residing in Denmark for more than a year this includes taking Danish language classes as well as courses in Danish society and culture (SOPEMI, 2004).

As the first part of this essay has indicated, many factors influence asylum seekers destination choice, however, it is clear that in Denmark's case, the strict asylum policies since 2002 have had noticeable effect on the number of individuals applying for asylum in the country. In 2000, asylum seeker numbers peaked with 13,000 new arrivals, since 2003, however, when all new measures entered into force, the number of new claimants each year has been between 5,000 and 1,800. **Figure 6** shows how these numbers compare to the number of asylum claims lodged in Sweden and Denmark during the 2000s.

Figure 6: Number of first instance asylum applications lodged per year in Sweden, Denmark and Norway as a percentage of national population (2000 – 2010) (Data source: UNHCR Statistical Online Population Database)



While the number of asylum seekers arriving in Denmark remained low since 2002, those in Norway and Sweden have fluctuated during the 2000s. The number of asylum seekers coming to Norway and Sweden has also been higher than those applying for asylum in Denmark during the entire period. This low rate of asylum seekers coming to Denmark compared to its two neighbouring states is even more remarkable considering that the three states had similar asylum trends during the latter half of the 1990s. The three states also receive asylum seekers from the same origin states. During the 2000s, Serbians and Iraqis were among the top three origin states for all three states under consideration. Out of Denmark's ten largest sending states, only one is not among the ten in either of the other two states.

The asylum policy changes undertaken in Denmark to limit the number of asylum applications lodged and accepted thus have a mixed record of succeeding in their aim. However, policy changes attempting to limit access to certain

populations, such as those instituted in 1992 and 1995 to reduce the number of asylum seekers from Bosnia and Serbia, seem to have resulted in the desired outcome. The impact of the 2002 law is also an interesting case since the strict policies have resulted in a reduction in the number of asylum applications lodged in Denmark as it is today harder to obtain asylum in Denmark than elsewhere in Europe.

V. Conclusion

Asylum seekers' destination choice is influenced by many factors. In my large-N study, I found the size of the destination country, historical ties and asylum policy to be the most important determinants. Several other studies have found these factors as well as network effects to play an important role in asylum claimant's destination choice (Böcker and Havinga 1997; Hatton, 2009; Havinga and Böcker, 1999; Moore and Shellman, 2007; Neumayer, 2004, 2005; Thielemann 2003). The two case studies of Denmark and Sweden provide further evidence for asylum policies potential in influencing how many asylum seekers a particular state receives.

In both Sweden and Denmark many minor policy changes have been undertaken since their immigration policies were consolidated in the 1980s. A few large policy changes pertaining to asylum seekers have also been implemented. While the stricter asylum policy implemented in 1989 in Sweden seems to have discouraged many asylum applicants from coming to Sweden, the policy instituted in Denmark in 2002 has been the most effective in its aim of dissuading asylum applications. For policy changes to deter asylum applicants it thus seems they have to be significantly stricter than neighbouring states' policies and rigorously apply Convention status as the principal category for granting asylum seekers refuge. The two case studies also indicate that, regardless of asylum policy, asylum applications increase when major conflicts or crises occur, such as the war in Yugoslavia in the 1990s that generate large numbers of refugees.

While changes to overall asylum policy do have some impact on the number of asylum applications, policy measures aimed at restricting specific groups of individuals from applying for asylum appear to be more successful in this goal as indicated by the examples of asylum seekers from former-Yugoslavia. In both Denmark's and Sweden's cases, visa requirements for asylum seekers from Yugoslavia and Bosnia reduced the numbers of asylum seekers arriving from these states. Additionally, permissive policies for certain nationalities have led to increased numbers of asylum applicants from those states, as shown by Sperl with regards to Iraqi asylum seekers coming to Sweden in the early 2000s (2007).

Much work yet remains to be done, however, in order to ascertain more precisely the effect of asylum policy in the framework of large quantitative studies. Further research is also needed in order to enable quantitative comparison of asylum policy across countries since no such measurement currently exists. Incorporating variables for asylum policy changes into a model with origin and destination specific effects such as the one used by Neumayer (2004) would also be able to provide further insight on the matter.

The findings regarding the importance of asylum policy as a deterrent measure have significant implications for the future of the international refugee regime. Tightening these policies only dissuade individuals from seeking asylum in a particular state, but does not solve the root problems causing refugee flows. Stricter policies may therefore only move the number of asylum applicants from one country to another thus leading to a 'race towards the bottom' where fewer

individuals will choose to seek protection outside their state through legal means since their claims have a low chance of being accepted. Understanding how policy influences asylum seekers' destination choice and the limits of this influence can thus help states develop more comprehensive responses to refugee flows that take into account their unpredictability, and the importance of addressing the causes generating asylum seekers.

Works cited:

- Abiri, E. (2000). The Changing Praxis of 'Generosity': Swedish Refugee Policy during the 1990s. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 13(1): 11 – 28
- Abraha, G (2007) *A Handbook for Asylum Seekers in Sweden*. (Asylum Reception in Focus, A series from NTN-asylum & Integration no.5). Karlskrona, SE: NTN-asylum & integration
- Agerskov, U. (2009). *Nordic Statistical Yearbook 2009* (Nord 2009.001). Copenhagen, Denmark: Nordic Council
- Albertinelli, A (2011) Asylum applicants and first instance decisions on asylum applications in 2010. *Data in Focus 5/2011*. Luxembourg: Eurostat
- Asplund, M (2007) *Är Asylprocessen i Sverige Rättssäker: En Undersökning om de Offentliga Biträdena och Ombudens Roll före och efter Reformerna 2006* (Master thesis). Jönköping, Sweden: Jönköping International School of Business
- Benito, M., (2007). Sweden. In A. Triandafyllidou & R. Gropas (Eds.), *European Immigration : A Sourcebook* (pp. 335 – 347)
- Betts, A (2009) *Forced Migration and Global Politics*. West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- Betts, A & Kaytaz, A (2009) *National and international responses to the Zimbabwean exodus: implications for the refugee protection regime* (Research Paper No. 175). Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.
- Bevelander, P. (2011) The Employment Integration of Resettled Refugees, Asylum Claimants and Family Reunions Migrants in Sweden. *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 30(1), 22 – 43.
- Bröcker, A. (1990). Utländningelovgivning i Danmark 1983-86: Faktorer i den politiske beslutningsproces. *Politica Tidsskrift for politisk videnskab* 22 (Danmark og invandrerne), 332-344
- Böcker, A. & Havinga, T. (1997). *Asylum Migration to the European Union: Patterns of Origin and Destination*. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.
- Czaika, M. & de Hass, H. (2011) *The effectiveness of immigration policies: A conceptual review of empirical evidence*. (DEMIG Working paper no. 3) University of Oxford: International Migration Studies.

- Danmarks Statistik (2010) *Invandrere i Danmark*. Copenhagen, Denmark : Danmarks Statistik.
- Eastmond, M. (2011). Egalitarian Ambitions, Constructions of Difference: The Paradoxes of Refugee Integration in Sweden. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 37(2), 277-295
- European Commission (2007) *Countries in Europe*. Brussels, Belgium: European Commission, Directorate-General for Communication
- European Council (2004) Council Directive 2004/83/EC of 29 April 2004 on minimum standards for the qualification and status of third country nationals or stateless persons as refugees or as persons who otherwise need international protection and the content of protection granted. *Official Journal L 304*. 0012 – 0023
- Freeman, G.P (1992). Migration Policy and Politics in the Receiving States. *International Migration Review* 26 (4), 1144 – 1167
- Gibney, M. & Hansen, R. (2003) *Asylum Policy in the West: Past Trends, Future Possibilities* (Discussion Paper No 2003/68). Helsinki, Finland: UNU/WIDER
- Goli, M., & Rezaei, S., (2007). Denmark. In A. Triandafyllidou & R. Gropas (Eds.), *European Immigration : A Sourcebook* (pp. 71 – 87)
- Goodhart, M (2009) *Human rights: Politics and Practice*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Inc.
- Goodwin-Gill (1983) *The Refugee in International Law*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press
- Haddad, E. (2008). *The Refugee in International Society: Between Sovereigns*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Hardy, C (1994). Underorganized Interorganizational Domains: The Case of Refugee Systems. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 30 (278), 278-296
- Hatton, T. (2009). The Rise and Fall of Asylum: What Happened and Why?. *The Economic Journal*, 119 (535), F183-F213.
- Hatton, T., Richter, W. & Faini, R. (2004). Seeking asylum in Europe. *Economic Policy*, 19(38), 5-62.
- Havinga, T. & Böcker, A. (1999). Country of asylum by choice or by chance: Asylum-seekers in Belgium, the Netherlands and the UK. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 25(1). 43 – 61

- Hayden, B (2006) What's in a Name? The Nature of the Individual in Refugee Studies. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 19(4). 471-487
- Hilson, M., (2008). *The Nordic Model: Scandinavia Since 1945*. London, UK: Reaktion Books Ltd
- Holzer, T.; Schneider, G. & Widmer, T. (2000) The Impact of Legislative deterrence Measures on the Number of Asylum Applications in Switzerland (1986 – 1995). *International Migration Review* 34(4), 1182 - 1216
- Levy, C., (2005). The European Union after 9/11: The Demise of a Liberal Democratic Asylum Regime?. *Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing*.
- Montgomery, E. & Foldspang, A. (2005) Predictors of the Authorities' Decision to Grant Asylum in Denmark. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 18(4): 455 – 467
- Moore, W.H., & Shellman, S.M. (2007). Whither Will They Go? A Global Study of Refugees' Destinations, 1965 – 1995. *International Studies Quarterly*, 51. 811 – 834.
- Murphy, J.L (1973). *Introductory Econometrics*. Homewood IL: Richard D. Irwin Inc.
- Nilsson, Å. (2004) *SCB, Efterkrigstidens invandring och utvandring*. (Demografiska Rapporter 2004:5). Örebro, Sweden: Statistiska Centralbyrån. Enheten för demografisk analys och jämnställdhet.
- Neumayer, E. (2004). Asylum Destination Choice: What Makes Some West European Countries More Attractive Than Others?. *European Union Politics*, 5. 155 – 180.
- Neumayer, E. (2005). B bogus Refugees? The Determinants of Asylum Migration to Western Europe. *International Studies Quarterly*, 49(3). 389 – 409.
- Nyers, P (2006) *Rethinking Refugees: Beyond States of Emergency*. New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Regeringen (2002) *En ny udländingepolitik*. Copenhagen, Denmark: Regeringen
- Regeringen (2009). *Aliens (Consolidation) Act* (Consolidation Act No. 785 of 10 August 2009). Copenhagen, Denmark: Regeringen
- Runblom, H. (1995). Immigration to Scandinavia after World War II. In Tägell, S (Ed.) *Ethnicity and Nation Building in the Nordic World*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press (pp. 282 – 321).

- Segal, U.; Elliott, D. & Mayadas, N. (2010). *Immigration Worldwide*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press
- SOPEMI (1997). *Trends in International Migration: Annual report 1996*. Paris, France: OECD Publications
- SOPEMI (1998). *Trends in International Migration: Annual report 1997*. Paris, France: OECD Publications
- SOPEMI (2004). *Trends in International Migration: Annual report 2003*. Paris, France: OECD Publications
- Sperl, M. (2007). *Fortress Europe and the Iraqi 'intruders': Iraqi asylum-seekers and the EU, 2003 – 2007*. (Research Paper No. 144). Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.
- Thielemann, E.R. (2003) *Does Policy Matter? On Government's Attempts to Control Unwanted Migration* (IIS Discussion Paper No.9). London, UK: London School of Economics
- United Nations (1951) *Final Act and Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*. Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations
- United Nations Development Programme (2011) *Human Development Report 2011: Human Development Statistical Annex*
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2005) *Procedural Standards for Refugee Status Determination under UNHCR's Mandate*. Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2011) *UNHCR: Global trends 2010*. Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.
- Vink, M.& Maijerink, F. (2003) Asylum Applications and Recognition Rates in EU Member States 1982-2001: A Quantitative Analysis. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 16(3), 297- 315.
- Vitus, K. & Lidén, H. (2010) The Status of the Asylum-seeking Child in Norway and Denmark: Comparing Discourses, Politics and Practices. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 23(1): 63-81
- Zetter, R (2007) More Labels, Fewer Refugees: Remaking the Refugee Label in an Era of Globalization. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 20(2) 171 - 192

Data sources:

Asylum applications

UNHCR Statistical Online Population Database (2011), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Data extracted: 11/08/2011.

GDP, GDP per capita, Unemployment rate, Population and Percentage of foreign population

World Data Bank (2011) *World Development Indicators*, The World Bank, Data extracted: 12/09/2011.

Asylum Policy Index

Courtesy of Timothy Hatton, Data received 7/12/2011
http://econrsss.anu.edu.au/Staff/hatton/contact_th.htm.

Asylum Recognition rates

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2006) *UNHCR: Statistical Yearbook 2005* Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Social Spending

OECD.Stat Extracts (2011) Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Data extracted 12/11/2011. Online: <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx>

Right-wing populist parties

Swank, Duane (2006) *Electoral, Legislative, and Government Strength of Political Parties by Ideological Group in Capitalist Democracies, 1950-2006: A Database*.

Colonies

Correlates of War 2 Project. *Colonial/Dependency Contiguity Data, 1816-2002*. Version 3.0. Data extracted 10/12/2011 Online: <http://correlatesofwar.org>

Scandinavian Population Statistics

Befolkningsstatistik (2012), Statistiska Centralbyrån (Statistics Sweden). Data extracted: 03/20/2012

StatBank Denmark (2012), Statistics Denmark. Data extracted: 03/20/2012

Summary

In 2010, over 10 million persons lived as refugees dispersed over the whole world. Coming from states all over the globe, they have in common the internationally recognized legal status of refugee granted to individuals persecuted due to their race, religion, political views or other reasons as defined in the 1951 Geneva Convention. Over 100 states are signatories to the Convention and thus required to allow individuals fitting under the criteria to reside on their territory and enjoy many of the same rights as citizens. However, as immigration policies in Europe have shifted from open labour recruitment and relatively unrestricted migratory flows in the 1970s to much stricter controls today, the question of who is awarded refugee protection has become a highly politicized issue. Asylum seekers, i.e. individuals claiming protection as refugees, are therefore subject to close scrutiny as the validity of their application is evaluated.

While the reasons why asylum seekers choose to leave their home state have been extensively studied, questions pertaining to why they seek asylum in one state rather than another have not received as much attention. A large majority of refugees come from poor states fraught by conflict or ruled by oppressive regimes, and 75% of them flee to neighbouring states. When asylum seekers decide where to flee to seek protection, geographic proximity is thus important. However, some asylum seekers choose to travel much further to seek refuge, coming to Europe and other Western states to lodge their claims. This thesis builds on previous studies examining which factors influence asylum seekers' destination choice when they come to Europe, and more particularly to

what extent asylum policies deter asylum applicants. By approaching these questions on two levels, through a large-N statistical study of 16 OECD states and two case studies illustrating the influence of policy changes on the number of asylum applications, I aim to contribute to the current literature on the effectiveness of asylum policy.

Determining which factors influence destination choice has important implications in many policy areas. In the European Union (EU), burden sharing and equal distribution of asylum seekers among states has been a contested point of negotiation for the formulation of a common asylum policy. The rise of right wing populist parties seeking popular support through anti-immigration agendas and the portrayal by media of asylum seekers as opportunists has also led to questions of what role economic factors play in asylum seekers decision making processes. Perhaps most important to this thesis, however, are questions regarding how much control governments have over the number of asylum seekers coming to their state and if stricter asylum policies dissuade individuals from claiming refugee status in a particular territory.

Previous studies and migration theories advance several factors as determinants of asylum seeker destination choice. Larger states, for example, are believed to receive more asylum seekers simply due to the fact that they have large populations. For non-refugee migrants, economic prospects in the destination state influence where they migrate. Measures of wealth, such as GDP per capita, and unemployment rates thus influence their migratory choices and potentially destination choices of asylum seekers. Since asylum seekers flee their

homes, it is unlikely they have time to extensively consider all possible destination choices. They are therefore more likely to travel to states of which they have prior knowledge gained through historical ties such as those formed during colonization. Additionally, such knowledge can be obtained through so called network effects, that are networks of family, friends and acquaintances who can provide information regarding different destination choices and also asylum seekers integrate into their new society. Hostility toward immigrants in a particular destination state may also hinder integration into a new society and thus dissuade asylum seekers from choosing to migrate there.

Using so called cross sectional time series data that takes into account changes in different variables within countries as well as differences across states over time, I conducted a large statistical study to determine which factors influence asylum seeker destination choice for 16 OECD countries over the period 1997 through 2006. The study includes twelve variables that take into account economic factors, asylum policy changes, the size of destination states, colonial ties, network effects and hostility to foreigners as measured by support among citizens for right-wing parties.

Of these variables, I found five to be statistically important, the size of the destination state as measured by national population, unemployment rates, colonial ties, and asylum policy changes in the areas of access to the destination state and the processing of applications. These results thus support the hypothesis that asylum seekers are more likely to come to a country they have historical ties to. They also imply that economic factors play only a minor part in the decision

choice of asylum claimants, and that employment opportunities rather than wealth of the destination state attract asylum seekers. Although network effects were deemed important determinants of asylum seekers' destination choice in many other studies, the measurement I chose here, the proportion of the population holding foreign citizenship, was not statistically significant.

Due to the difficulty in quantitatively comparing asylum policies across states, few studies have taken this factor into account. The variable used here is an index that measures changes in asylum policy within each state during the eleven year time period, assigning the value 0 to each state in 1996. I found policy changes in two areas, access to the destination state and the conditions during processing, to influence the number of asylum seekers arriving in a state. Stricter policies limiting access to a state's territory or making the conditions during processing less favourable thus discourage asylum seekers.

Asylum seekers destination choice is influenced by several destination state characteristics, including asylum policy, and it can oftentimes be difficult to discern the impact of policy changes on the number of asylum seekers from that of other factors. In order to cast further light on how governments can influence the number of asylum applicants coming to their state, I compare how asylum policy changes in Denmark and Sweden have influenced the number of asylum applications received during the 1980s through the 2000s. Due to their closely related historical pasts, absence of colonial ties and similar economic conditions, comparison between the two states allows the exclusion of several factors

influencing asylum seeker destination choice. Additionally, the two countries have undertaken policy changes at different times.

Both Denmark and Sweden implemented their first Aliens Acts regulating immigration in the 1980s. Since then, several revisions have occurred that have progressively made it more difficult to obtain asylum in these two Scandinavian states. While it is complicated to discern the impact of some of these policy changes on the number of asylum seekers, the case studies show that significant tightening of policy can reduce the number of asylum seekers. The two clearest examples of this are the impacts of the 1989 policy changes in Sweden and the 2002 policy changes in Denmark.

In 1989, Sweden made it more difficult for asylum seekers to obtain refugee status, however, these policy changes were not followed by a significant reduction in the number of asylum applications lodged. By 1992, more than twice as many individuals applied for asylum in Sweden as in 1989. This peak of asylum seekers was due largely to a massive influx of individuals from the former Yugoslavia fleeing the war there. Taking these individuals out of the equation, however, exposes a steadily declining rate of asylum seekers arriving in Sweden until 1996. External factors were thus a greater influence on the number of asylum seekers arriving in Sweden than the new asylum policies.

The strongest example of asylum policies' impact on the number of asylum seekers is, however, the policy implemented in 2002 in Denmark. This law put in place the strictest policy in Europe by reducing support for applicants during the processing of their claim and making it more difficult to obtain

protection in Denmark. As a result of this policy, the number of asylum applications lodged with the Danish state during the 2000s has been very low compared to previous years, but also compared to the number of claims received by Norway and Sweden.

The two case studies thus support the findings of the large-N statistical study that asylum policy does matter in asylum seekers' destination choice. However, they also illustrate the limits of this influence. While states such as Denmark and Sweden have been able to decrease the number of applications lodged in their states by making it more difficult for asylum seekers to obtain protection status or changing the reception conditions, they have not been able to fully control the inflow of asylum seekers. As illustrated by the large number of asylum seekers from Yugoslavia coming to the Scandinavian states during the early 1990s, events that cause many people to seek protection outside their home state can supplant the influence of asylum policy changes. While much research remains to be done in this area, the findings of this thesis indicate that governments wishing to control the number of asylum applications they receive cannot do so only by stricter asylum policies. Addressing the root causes that generate refugees can be more efficient in reducing asylum application numbers.