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Benedicte Nessa

Navigating Expectations

Concurrent Processes of Inclusion and Exclusion in Refugees' (Dis)Integration into the Norwegian Labour Market

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Benedicte Nessa

Stavanger, 23.06.23

ABSTRACT

The debates following the 2015-2016 refugee influx put the topic of immigration high on the political agenda and accentuated the issue as highly politicized. In a universal welfare state like the Norwegian, labour market participation is considered the leading indicator of successful integration. With the desire to reveal how such policy-led perspectives on integration are negotiated, this thesis explores refugees' experiences settling in a society that combines a highly formalized labour market with high expectations of labour market participation. The study focuses on refugees' experiences during settlement, considering their aspirations of and actual labour market integration. In addition to focusing on the individual refugee, I explore the interaction between refugees settling in Norway and civil society organizations by investigating how civil society organizations offer support for refugees through integration processes. In the Norwegian context, the coinciding of neoliberal reforms and increased immigration has led to the development of policies aiming to make immigration cost-effective, giving increased attention to the voluntary sector as an important stakeholder in the integration processes. As such, studying the role of civil society organizations in the labour market integration of refugees is a case in point to explore how the volunteer sector navigates the increased expectations as welfare contributors in a modern welfare state influenced by neoliberal discourses and reforms.

The research design has a qualitative approach based on ethnographic fieldwork among refugees in three civil society organizations. The analysis draws on extensive participant observation and several semi-structured interviews with ten refugees and four employees in civil society organizations.

This thesis contributes to the field of migration research by portraying contemporary post-migratory narratives from a Norwegian context. Through the lens of refugees' labour market integration, the three articles comprising this thesis, in different ways, highlight how the concurrence of exclusion and inclusion portrays the intertwined connection between processes of integration and disintegration. Article I discuss the different (subtle) forms and consequences of perceived discrimination as a specific and salient constraint influencing refugees' labour market aspirations. Based on these findings, I argue that the intersectional outcomes of labour market aspirations are connected to intersectional experiences of discrimination. Article II deals with the role of civil society organizations in the labour market integration of refugees considering how integration processes are experienced by the refugees in the study. The findings suggest a particularly vulnerable phase immediately after the public introduction program for refugees not

moving on to employment, education, or training. Moreover, civil society organizations are highlighted as facilitators of arenas that are salient for capital acquisition. Article III delves into the entanglements of integration, belonging, and precarity. Taking gig economy employment as a case in point, the article discusses the refugees' perceptions of how such a specific occupational context shapes their sense of belonging and integration. The findings suggest that structural and individual limitations in many ways condition the refugees to precarious work. Being relegated to precarious work at the bottom end of the labour market acts as an imaginary boundary line of exclusion, dichotomizing 'us' and 'them'. Based on these findings, I argue that their belonging is precarious: fragile and conditional.

Finally, the findings of this study speak to the broader discussion on how immigration and integration issues pose an intriguing case to reflect on the social sustainability of the Norwegian society by accentuating its ability to transform itself due to the new circumstances. While the authorities' perspective on the integration challenge is to increase the competence of the individual refugee, this thesis has shown that structural and contextual dimensions significantly impact refugees' chances of inclusion or exclusion. On a deeper level, it reflects how structural and contextual dimensions should be considered when shaping a future socially sustainable society and welfare state.

SAMMENDRAG

Debattene etter strømmen av flyktninger som ankom i 2015-2016 satte temaet innvandring høyt på den politiske dagsorden og tydeliggjorde tematikken som svært politisert. I en universell velferdsstat som den norske regnes arbeidsdeltakelse som den tydeligste indikatoren på vellykket integrering. Med ønsket om å avdekke hvordan slike politikkstyrte perspektiver på integrering oppleves, utforsker denne avhandlingen flyktningers erfaringer med å bosette seg i et samfunn som kombinerer et sterkt formalisert arbeidsmarked med høye forventninger til arbeidsdeltakelse. Studien setter søkelys på flyktningers aspirasjoner om og faktisk arbeidsdeltakelse. I tillegg til å fokusere på den enkelte flyktning, utforsker jeg samspillet mellom flyktninger som bosetter seg i Norge og sivilsamfunnsorganisasjoner ved å undersøke hvordan sivilsamfunnsorganisasjoner tilbyr støtte til flyktninger i integreringsprosesser. I norsk sammenheng har kombinasjonen av nyliberale reformer og økt innvandring ført til utvikling av politikk som tar sikte på å gjøre innvandring kostnadseffektiv, som videre har bidratt til økt oppmerksomhet på frivillig sektor som en viktig aktør i integreringsprosesser. Som sådan er det å studere sivilsamfunnsorganisasjoners rolle i arbeidsmarkedets integrering av flyktninger et eksempel på hvordan frivillighetssektoren navigerer i de økte forventningene som velferdsbidragsytere i en moderne velferdsstat påvirket av nyliberale diskurser og reformer.

Forskningsdesignet har en kvalitativ tilnærming basert på etnografisk feltarbeid blant flyktninger i tre sivilsamfunnsorganisasjoner. Analysen bygger på omfattende deltakerobservasjon og flere semistrukturerte intervjuer med ti flyktninger og fire ansatte i sivilsamfunnsorganisasjoner.

Denne avhandlingen bidrar til migrasjonsforskning ved å skildre nyere post-migrasjon narrativer fra en norsk kontekst. Ved å se på flyktningers integrering arbeidslivet fremhever de tre artiklene i avhandlingen, på ulikt vis, hvordan samtidigheten av ekskludering og inkludering bidrar til en sammenveving av integrasjons- og desintegrasjonsprosesser. Artikkel 1 diskuterer de forskjellige (subtile) formene og konsekvensene av opplevd diskriminering som en spesifikk og fremtredende begrensning som påvirker flyktningers aspirasjoner om arbeid. Basert på disse funnene argumenterer jeg for at de interseksjonelle resultatene av arbeidsaspirasjoner er knyttet til interseksjonelle opplevelser av diskriminering. Artikkel 2 omhandler sivilsamfunnsorganisasjoners rolle i arbeidsintegrering av flyktninger med tanke på hvordan integreringsprosesser oppleves av flyktningene i studien. Funnene peker på en spesielt sårbar fase umiddelbart etter det offentlige introduksjonsprogrammet for flyktninger som ikke går

videre til arbeid, utdanning eller opplæring. Dessuten fremheves sivilsamfunnsorganisasjoner som tilretteleggere for arenaer som er fremtredende for relevant anskaffelse av kapital. Artikkel 3 fordyper seg i sammenhengen mellom integrering, tilhørighet og prekaritet. Med plattformøkonomi som eksempel, diskuterer artikkelen flyktningenes oppfatning av hvordan en slik spesifikk yrkeskontekst former deres opplevelse av tilhørighet og integrering. Funnene tyder på at strukturelle og individuelle begrensninger på mange måter betinger flyktningene til prekært og usikkert arbeid. Videre fungerer det å bli hensatt til usikkert arbeid i et begrenset segment av arbeidsmarkedet som en markering av eksklusjon, som dikotomiserer «oss» og «dem». Basert på disse funnene argumenterer jeg for at deres tilhørighet er prekær: skjør og betinget.

Til slutt bidrar funnene i denne studien til å løfte diskusjonen om immigrasjons- og integreringsspørsmål som et utgangspunkt for å reflektere over det norske samfunnets sosiale bærekraft ved å fremheve dets evne til å transformere seg selv under nye omstendigheter. Mens myndighetenes perspektiv på integreringsutfordringen er å øke kompetansen til den enkelte flyktning, viser denne avhandlingen at strukturelle og kontekstuelle dimensjoner i betydelig grad påvirker flyktningers sjanser for inkludering eller ekskludering. På et dypere plan reflekterer det hvordan strukturelle og kontekstuelle dimensjoner bør tas til etterretning når man skal utforme et fremtidig sosialt bærekraftig samfunn og en bærekraftig velferdsstat.

THE ARTICLES OF THE THESIS

I)

Nessa, B. Linking Labour Market Aspirations to Perceived Discrimination: the Case of Refugees in Norway. (Accepted to be published in *Revue Européenne Migrations des Internationales,* 2nd issue of 2024).

II)

Nessa, B., 2023. One Step Forward and Two Steps Back: The Role of Civil Society Organizations in Reversed Integration Processes among Refugees in Norway. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 13(3), p.4.DOI: https://doi.org/10.33134/njmr.580

III)

Nessa, B. Gig economy and precarious belonging: experiences of refugees navigating labour market integration in Norway. (Accepted to be published in *Migration and Society*).

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

In the spring of 2022, Ahmed Fawad Ashraf, debate editor in *Avisa Oslo* stated that “I no longer have the need to be perceived as Norwegian” in an open-ed called “Norsk nok for de svina” [Norwegian enough for those bastards][1]. “In proportion to the increase in hatred against minorities, I feel less belonging to the Norwegian", he said. "I am Norwegian" turned into "I am born here", and "I am a Norwegian journalist" turned into "I work for a Norwegian Newspaper". This open-ed triggered a debate about identity and belonging in the Norwegian society. Abid Raja, a former Minister of Culture in the Norwegian government with a minority background, criticized Ashraf's decision to define himself out of "the Norwegian". Raja was provoked that someone who had been given every opportunity in Norway choose to resign and claimed Ashraf's actions to be devastating for the minority population and dangerous for our society. The debate accumulated in a book called “Norsk nok” [Norwegian enough] (Naveen, 2022), where people representing a variety of minority populations shared their reflections about identity and belonging, aiming at challenging the perception of who make up today’s Norway.

Simultaneously, Karpe, a Norwegian rap duo with roots in Egypt and India, did something never done in Norway before; they performed ten sold-out shows in Oslo Spectrum, the largest concert scene in Norway, in a row. Their latest project, «Omar Sheriff», which they call "diaspora pop", is a highly progressive culture clash in both language and references. With this project, they were now officially referred to as a “national treasure”, loved by the nation. Before the album's release, Karpe thought “Omar Sheriff” was a project with limited reach and was surprised that such a wide range of the population embraced it. Chiraq and Magdi, the two who make up the band Karpe, are children of immigrant parents, and the record particularly portrays that legacy. In the book "Norwegian Enough", journalist and writer Yohan Shanmugaratnam interpret "Omar Sheriff" and its stories about class journeys, family, roots and belonging in a text called "The sound of the diaspora":

> *Karpe puts into words the migrants' melancholy and has built an entire soundscape for a diverse diaspora and nation. (...) We, their children, are believers and faithless, ashamed and shameless, rooted and rootless. We were children when we filled out public forms for our parents, called customer service on their behalf, and wrote condolence cards to their Norwegian friends. We were children when the rest of Norway laughed at skits where the*

[1] The full open-ed can be read here: https://www.ao.no/norsk-nok-for-de-svina/o/5-131-3048.

> *only point was that people talked like our parents did. Now Norway shuts up and listens to Chirag when he sings with his mother's accent. One day our parents will leave us here, between the places they left and the place they tried to be a part of. When it is our turn, we will look back to reassure ourselves - and them - that we managed to get one step closer.*[2]

The book, and the debate it followed, invites into reflections on what it means to be Norwegian *enough*, and what foster or constrain belonging.

This study explores the labour market integration of refugees in Norway[3]. The participants are refugees settling in Norway and employees in civil society organizations (CSOs) aiming to support refugees in the integration processes. At first glance, this study has nothing to do with the above-described conversations on who are 'Norwegian enough', who belongs here, and who does not. But it does. Those conversations symbolically frame the context the refugees in this study enter. The discrepancy between Ashraf's abandonment of the need to be perceived as Norwegian and the wide embrace of Karpe's 'diaspora pop' represent the ambiguity found in the Norwegian context. Moreover, this apparent contradiction is a symbolic marker of the context in which refugee (labour market) integration occurs. Ashraf's choice is a response to experiences of increased hatred against minorities, indicating this as a marker of the Norwegian society. Research from the Norwegian context supports the experiences of Ashraf as increasingly accurate for minorities in Norway (J.-P. Brekke, Fladmoe, & Wollebæk, 2020; Larsen & Di Stasio, 2021; Midtbøen, 2016). Such tendencies are also structurally embedded and contribute to shaping the opportunity structures refugees navigate toward the labour market (Fibbi, Midtbøen, & Simon, 2021; Midtbøen & Rogstad, 2012). The crowning of Karpe as a national treasure, on the other hand, denotes the gradual shift from (the perception of) Norway as an ethnically homogenous society to a multicultural and diverse society. At the core of such ambiguity are images and narratives of exclusion and inclusion in various forms. For refugees embarking on a new life here, labour market integration can, in many ways, accentuate and portray similar dichotomies of inclusion and exclusion, belonging and longing to be.

[2] The text is originally in Norwegian and translated into English for this occasion (Naveen, 2022, p. 67)

[3] By “refugees in Norway”, I refer to individuals that have been granted refugee status and are as such considered refugees by the Norwegian state. See further elaborations on terminology under 1.2.2.

This thesis is part of a larger research project at VID Specialized University called "Mellom Ambisjoner og Virkelighet. Arbeidsmarkedsintegrering av nyankomne flyktninger i Norge" [Between Ambition and Reality. Labour market integration of recently arrived refugees in Rogaland, Norway] (MAVI)[4], examining the experiences and roles of multiple stakeholders in the processes of labour market integration: municipal agencies, civil society, asylum seekers and refugees. My project focuses on refugees' experiences during settlement, considering their aspirations of and actual labour market integration. Additionally, I investigate civil society organizations, as examples of non-public stakeholders, to explore how they contribute to refugees' labour market integration. Through ethnographic fieldwork with two CSOs working with refugees, I explore how refugees in various stages of settlement negotiate their aspirations through constraints and impediments, as they reach for what is expected of them – *labour market integration*.

In what follows, I elaborate on the primary incentive for studying the labour market integration of refugees in Norway in general, and the role of CSOs specifically. These reflections serve to introduce the research questions guiding the study, which includes clarification of some essential terms. Next, I situate the study as part of the conversation in migration studies, particularly within the sociology of migration. Finally, I have provided space to detail the most relevant contextual framework of the thesis and outline the structure of the extended abstract.

1.1 Elaborating on the research conundrum

Globalizing processes have transformed the world as we know it. Increased migration flows are a characteristic of the contemporary era, leading migration to become a critical, contested, and politicized issue (Zetter, 2007). The number of people forcibly displaced due to persecution, conflict, violence, and human rights violations reached 89.3 million by the end of 2021, which represent more than a doubling since 2012. In Europe alone, the number of people forcibly displaced across borders increased by 3 percent in 2021 and now reads more than 7 million (UNHCR, 2022). Since the large refugee movements of the 1990s, the year 2015 marks what is commonly referred to as the new 'refugee crisis', based on the unprecedented number of asylum seekers and refugees seeking protection in Europe from war and conflict elsewhere (Dustmann, Fasani, Frattini, Minale, & Schönberg, 2017). In 2015 over 1 million asylum seekers and

[4] More detailed information about the research project can be found here: https://www.maviproject.no/.

refugees came to Europe, and thousands drowned in the Mediterranean Sea during their attempt to cross over to European territory. Around 30 000 of them made their way up to Norway, the highest number ever recorded (Østby, 2016). However, due to stricter immigration policies and border controls, the number of asylum seekers entering Norway decreased by 95 percent, comparing the last quarter of 2015 with the first of 2016. Nevertheless, the ability to integrate the high number of asylum seekers and refugees that came in 2015 has been a major political concern in Norway (Østby, 2016). Additionally, due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, a significant number of Ukrainian asylum seekers and refugees have arrived in Norway. At the beginning of 2023, 30 300 more Ukrainian immigrants than the previous year were registered, consequently leading to the highest increase of settled immigrants than any other year, which also impacted the total number of immigrants. Updated figures from Statistics Norway show that in 2022 the number of settled immigrants increased more than in any previous year. In 2023, a total of 57,900 more immigrants lived in Norway than the year before, which is the largest increase we have seen from one year to another. A total of 877,200 immigrants were registered as residents, which made up 16 per cent of the population (Steinkellner, 2023). Although the war in Ukraine significantly impacts the current immigration trend, Ukrainian refugees arrived in Norway after this study's fieldwork was conducted, hence no Ukrainian refugees participated in this study.

The rising trend of large refugee movements has put refugee integration high on the political agenda and gained significant prominence in academic circles (Agustín & Jørgensen, 2018; Campion, 2018; Crawley & Skleparis, 2018). In a universal welfare state like the Norwegian, the state perceives labour market integration as the leading indicator of success (Brochmann, 2017; Joyce, 2019; Øverbye & Stjernø, 2012). However, the refugee experience has proven to differ distinctively from that of other migrants, which considerably impacts their prospects of labour market integration (Brell, Dustmann, & Preston, 2020). Compared to labour migrants, for instance, refugees have often left their country of origin unexpectedly, with few opportunities to choose their destinations and thus do not necessarily entail appropriate resources that fit the labour market in the destination country. Additionally, the refugee experience itself adds, for many, complexity to the integration process with traumatic experiences of violence and persecution, in addition to long and difficult flights in search of a safe haven (ibid). From a policy perspective, refugees' low labour market participation is considered the main integration challenge (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2018). I wanted to explore how refugees, as a particularly vulnerable group of migrants, experience settling in a society like the Norwegian that combines a highly formalized labour market with high expectations of labour market participation.

Considering the political aims of quick labour market integration of refugees, substantial interest has been dedicated to the outcomes of public policies and measures (Djuve, Kavli, Sterri, & Bråten, 2017; Enes, 2017a; Guribye & Espegren, 2019; Lillevik & Tyldum, 2018). However, there is a need for further research on refugees' own perspectives (Gullikstad, Kristensen, & Sætermo, 2021; Wong, 2020), and this thesis contribute by showing how refugees experience and negotiate policy-led perspectives on integration.

In addition to exploring refugees' experiences, this thesis focuses on the role of CSOs in integration processes. The extensive literature dealing with outcomes of public integration measures reflects the strong emphasis on the state's role in the subject matter. However, less attention has been given to the role of non-public actors. Recent Norwegian government reports have increasingly emphasized the importance of civil society connected to developing social networks that can increase the chances of entering the labour market and as an arena for language training (Brochmann, 2017; Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2021). It has been argued that the volunteer sector in the future will become even more crucial, both because of the increased burden on the welfare state and because of their importance as arenas for community building and as bridges to the labour market (Segaard & Wollebæk, 2011; Søholt, Tronstad, & Vestby, 2015). For these reasons, I wanted to explore how encounters with CSOs affect aspirations and actual participation in the labour market for refugees during settlement in Norway. Internationally, there is currently a growing body of literature on the role of CSOs in the labour market integration of refugees (Bagavos & Kourachanis, 2022; Baglioni, Calò, & Numerato, 2022; Bontenbal & Lillie, 2021; Osanami Törngren, Öberg, & Righard, 2018; Sunata & Tosun, 2019). However, it is still scarce. I aim to contribute to this literature by providing empirical research on the subject in the context of a universal welfare state like the Norwegian.

Finally, I explore how this thesis contributes to the broader discussions on the societal consequences of immigration and refugee integration. Emerging debates on the sustainability of the Norwegian welfare state are increasingly associated with integration challenges, posing refugees and other immigrants as a potential threat to the welfare state (Brochmann, 2017; Isaksen, 2019). Such indications build on arguments that too many individuals benefit from the welfare state without contributing to it (Le Grand & Robinson, 2018). Based on the understanding that the sustainability of a society can be reflected through its ability to transform itself in response to change (Gallant & Tirone, 2017), like increased immigration, this thesis adds to that conversation by emphasizing structural and contextual dimensions as pivotal to understanding the Norwegian society's ability to manage diversity, and, thus, influencing refugees' chances of inclusion and exclusion.

1.2 Research questions

The following two main research questions guide this study:

- How do refugees in Norway experience and negotiate policy-led expectations of labour market integration?

- What is the role of civil society organizations in the labour market integration of refugees under a welfare state like the Norwegian?

Additionally, I have chosen several sub-questions to focus on different aspects of the main research question. The first question particularly seeks to capture how the refugees' aspirations are changed and redefined as part of their migration experiences, taking in aspirations retrospectively while simultaneously paying attention to how these evolve. The second question is related to the various dimensions that contribute to shaping the refugees' opportunities of both entering and staying in the labour market. The third question concerns the role of CSOs, but is more focused and specific than the overarching research question:

- How are refugees' labour market aspirations redefined over the course of their migration experiences[5]?
- In what ways do individual, structural, and relational dimensions shape the opportunity structures in which the refugees seek labour market integration?
- What are the contributions of the civil society organizations in regard to the needs of the refugees?

1.2.1 Contextualizing the thesis within the PhD program

Before delving further, it is necessary to briefly describe the program within which this thesis is written. The thesis is submitted to VID Specialized University's PhD program in Diakonia,

[5] By *migration experience,* I refer not merely to their travel from one place to another but include the different encounters and experiences they have as they settle in a new country.

Values and Professional Practice. A core component and aim of the program is to do research "in close cooperation with professionals and citizens as participants in public and voluntary services"[6]. Moreover, the program seeks to investigate how professionals in the welfare sector and civil society cope with power and responsibilities, with a particular focus on citizens or groups of citizens that are in vulnerable positions. This thesis contributes to the program with empirical research on a group of citizens in vulnerable situations, namely refugees, and professionals in civil society organizations. The study examines formal organizations that practice outside the frame of the public welfare state yet provide (supplementary) welfare measures. The organizations in this study respond to particular social issues contrary to public agencies' duty to ensure refugees' access to rights. It is common for migration research to inform policy-making and, by that, inform professional practice. Especially theories and research developed concerning integration impact regulations of practices (Djuve et al., 2017; Enes, 2017a; Lillevik & Tyldum, 2018; Sandbæk & Djuve, 2012). As such, this thesis particularly contributes to the research program's focus on professional practice.

1.2.2 Clarification of terms

In this section, I clarify how I understand some terms essential to this study, namely "refugee" and "civil society organizations". However, on some occasions, I refer to "migrants", which I understand as an umbrella term meaning anyone "who moves away from his/her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons" (IOM, 2016). For this reason, I have added a paragraph on the discussion on forced migration. Also, "volunteer sector" is occasionally used instead of "civil society organizations" when referring to texts or cases where that is the applied term. Therefore, in the following paragraphs, I clarify how I understand the terms which are most relevant to this study.

"Refugee"

Since exceptions were made for refugees in immigration laws, the term *refugee* has fueled debates about who exactly is a refugee (FitzGerald & Arar, 2018). The different connotations

[6] See the program description here: https://www.vid.no/site/assets/files/12804/studieplan-ph.d-i-diakoni-verdier-og-profesjonell-praksis-engelsk-2018-2019-vid.pdf?1cpbju.

and regulations the term bears in contexts like everyday life, law, and social sciences, has created some confusion (ibid). The United Nations Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (The UN Refugee Agency, 2010) defines refugees as any person seeking refuge abroad "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion" (p. 14). However, from a bureaucratic perspective, forcibly displaced people who have fled their countries need to be granted refugee status by a country that offers them protection (FitzGerald & Arar, 2018). As such, "refugees" differ from "asylum seekers" because their asylum applications have been accepted. In addition to people seeking asylum, it is possible to obtain refugee status in Norway as part of the annual resettlement quota. Resettlement refugees are people who are usually registered as a refugee with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) but cannot be offered a permanent solution in the country they are in and who are therefore offered to transfer to a third country. Also, in some cases, during mass flight situations, refugee status through collective protection can be obtained. This has, for instance, been the case for Ukrainian refugees in Norway. All the participants in this study had been granted refugee status. Some were granted refugee status after having their asylum applications approved in Norway, while others had already been granted refugee status by the UN before they arrived.

"Forced migration"

By entering the conversation on refugees' labour market integration, this thesis has intrinsically made a distinction between "refugee" and "migrant". In doing so, the debate on forced migration needs to be mentioned, if only briefly. UNHCR claims that refugees are not *migrants*, distinguishing them from economic or labour migrants for instance, building on the argument that refugees are in particular need for protection. This understanding stems from a perception of migration as either *forced* or *voluntarily*. However, such a clear-cut distinction between the two have been severely debated. Whether the move is forced or voluntary often refer to the motivation behind the move, and several scholars argue that the lines between different motives are blurred and often overlapping (Carling, 2017), calling academia and beyond to move away from dichotomizing approaches that can potentially undermine migrants' right for protection (Bakewell, 2021; Erdal & Oeppen, 2018; Pastore, 2015). Notwithstanding these ongoing debates, in this thesis I refer to refugees, not migrants, as all the participants in this study were legally categorized as refugees by the state.

"Civil society organization"

Contested and competing terms like 'civil society organizations', 'non-governmental organizations', 'interest groups', 'non-profit organizations' and 'third-sector organizations' are all used in different contexts when referring to a variety of non-state actors: private foundations; non-commercial cooperatives, social enterprises; and individual activities that are carried out without pay or coercion (Enjolras, Salamon, Sivesind, & Zimmer, 2018; Schoenefeld, 2021; Sætrang, 2018). A bibliographic analysis of the most frequently used frames to describe and analyze non-state actors finds 'interest group', 'non-governmental organization (NGO)' and 'civil society organization (CSO)' the most common (Schoenefeld, 2021). However, the different terms should not be used randomly as they contain normative visions about their role in European democracies (Kohler-Koch, 2009; Schoenefeld, 2021). For instance, *NGO* often signifies a position which is neither the state nor the market, deriving from a perception of independence (Lewis, 2010). In contrast, CSOs are mainly understood through participatory or deliberative notions, often perceived to work alongside state structures in ways that connect citizens with governing institutions (Cohen & Arato, 1994; Schoenefeld, 2021). Although the organizations in this study are independent, they are publicly funded, and through their work with refugees in various ways function as intermediates between refugees, citizens, and the state. By filling in the gaps of the welfare state, they also contribute to fulfilling the political aims of integration. Given this study's focus on the role of the organization in a policy-led perspective like labour market integration, I use the term *civil society organization* (CSO).

1.3 A contribution to the field of migration research

The objective of this thesis is to study the consequences of migration as portrayed through narratives of refugees who have settled in Norway. In the following, I will demonstrate how my research is situated within migration studies, particularly as part of the conversations in the sociology of migration.

Migration research is, by nature, a highly interdisciplinary field that builds on different theoretical and analytical traditions (Horvath & Amelina, 2017). The phenomenon of migration is studied from various perspectives by economists, human geographers, political scientists, sociologists, and anthropologists. However, sociological research on migration has primarily

focused on migration-related *social processes* rather than the politics of migration, which coincide with the analytical focus of this study. Responding to international migration as one of the most significant and contested issues of recent times, the sociology of migration has emerged as a multifaceted field of research (Amelina & Horvath, 2017). Stephen Castles, a sociologist, and highly acknowledged migration researcher, perceives the study of forced migration as central to sociological inquiries:

> "Sociology – as the study of the individual, society and the relationship between structures and group processes – is involved in research on all the above aspects of the migratory process. Its task is to help bring together all the varying perspectives in an overall understanding of the societal dynamics of forced migration" (Castles, De Haas, & Miller, 2014, p. 22)

His understanding echoes the inquiry of this study with its aim to explore the interfaces of individual, group, and structural processes, explored through the lens of labour market integration of refugees and the role of CSOs in such processes. I additionally attempt to analyze the findings in relation to overarching and persistent social transformation processes, which are reflected in discussions on the development of the welfare state and the future of (precarious) work. Although refugee movements are nothing new, there is a need for contemporary sociology to analyze the characteristics of forced migration within this specific epoch (Castles, 2003). This thesis adds to this conversation by portraying contemporary post-migratory narratives from a Norwegian context.

In particular, two strands of objectives have substantially impacted the development of the sociology of migration. Firstly, the "coming" of "the stranger" – the population movement – has been under scrutiny within migration research for a long time. However, in the past few decades, the "staying" of "the stranger" – post-migration incorporation processes – have gained considerable eminence (Amelina & Horvath, 2017). This thesis contributes to the latter trajectory of the sociology of migration, the "staying" of "the stranger". Amelina and Horvath (2017) invite us to reflect on three central questions: "Who is construed to be a "stranger" in the first place; how are these constructions anchored in relations of power and inequality; and how should sociologists relate to these common understandings?" (p. 4). Such questions resemble the objectives of this study. Refugees are, to a great extent, perceived as "strangers", and in many ways, experience themselves as "strangers" while navigating a new language, culture, relations and structures, all of which becomes evident through their moves towards the Norwegian labour market. As such, this thesis aims to explore how power and inequality structures are revealed

through the experiences of refugees in their encounters with the Norwegian society. Additionally, this study responds to the third question of Amelina and Horvarth by paying attention to how common understandings of how "the strangers" should integrate are experienced and negotiated by the refugees themselves.

1.4 The Norwegian Context - Immigration, integration, civil society, and the welfare state

In this section, I provide an overview of the contextual frame in which the refugees in this study navigate labour market integration. I start by giving a brief historical account of immigration to Norway, followed by a description of the development of Norwegian integration policies. Finally, I delve into the Norwegian welfare state's characteristics to situate the civil society organizations' role.

1.4.1 Immigration to Norway

Historically Norway has been a country with more emigration than immigration. During the last decades of the 19th century, Norway was a country with one of the highest emigration rates in Europe, mostly to the US (Cappelen, Ouren, & Skjerpen, 2011a; Odden, 2018; Østrem, 2014). However, due to the last decades' significant increase in immigration, this has changed. In the late 1960s, immigration to Norway slowly increased, and has since the 1970s had a positive and gradually increasing net immigration. The first immigrants to Norway came from countries on the European border, like Turkey and Morocco. However, in the early 1970s, Pakistani labour immigrants started coming to Norway, and rapidly became the largest immigrant group in Norway (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008; Korbøl, 2000; Midtbøen, 2017; Odden, 2018). Why exactly Pakistani labour immigrants ended up in Norway, seem to be a combination of coincidence and structural possibilities (Odden, 2018). For instance, at the time, several west-European countries introduced immigration freeze, making Norway an attractive destination (Khan, 2009). In the early 70s, Norway tightened their immigration policies. While the government did not want to *stop* labour immigration, it aimed at covering the employer's need for labour. This led to regulations stating that non-Nordic foreigners had to apply for a work permit from *outside* the Nordic region, which was enforced more strictly against non-Western

migrant workers (Korbøl & Midtbøen, 2022). However, more liberal policies were introduced in 1981 and following the expansion of the EU in 2004, there was a substantial increase in labour immigration. Norway then became an attractive labour market for Eastern Europe immigrants. Particularly, the number of labour migrants from Poland grew significantly and by 2007, Polish immigrants were the largest group of immigrants in Norway (Cappelen, Ouren, & Skjerpen, 2011b; Odden, 2018).

Regarding *refugee* immigration, the Norwegian authorities prioritized particularly vulnerable refugee groups from Uganda, Chile, and Vietnamese boat refugees in the 1970s. In the 1980s, the main countries refugees migrated from were Vietnam, Sri Lanka, and Chile, while the wars in the Balkans and mass flight from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo made an impact in the 1990s in terms of refugee groups. Later asylum seekers from the conflicts in Somalia, Afghanistan, and Iraq came to Europe and Norway (J.-P. Brekke, Aarset, Lidén, & Andenæs, 2010). Since 1990, 19 percent of immigrants have arrived as refugees, while 36 percent have arrived by family reunification (SSB, 2021).

Like many European countries, Norway experienced an upsurge in immigration during the fall of 2015 due to the so-called 'refugee crisis'. By the end of November 2015, more than 30 000 people had applied for asylum in Norway, the highest number ever recorded in one year. Such numbers were nearly three times as many as the previous year and almost twice as many as the previous peak of asylum seekers in 2002 (Thorud et al., 2016). In addition to the asylum seekers, Norway admitted refugees as part of the annual resettlement quota. The initial resettlement quota in 2015 consisted of 1 120 places plus an additional quota of 2000 places for Syrian refugees. Due to the outbreak of the Syrian war, Syrians, for the first time, made up the highest inflow of immigrants. This has made Syrians the third largest refugee group in Norway, after Somalis and Iraqis. According to Statistics Norway, 19,900 Syrians lived in Norway at the start of 2017, compared to 9,100 the year before (Enes, 2017b).

1.4.2 Norwegian integration policies and the integration program

After the Second World War, the Norwegian welfare state emerged, intending to provide welfare to all citizens. Since then, the public sector has expanded substantially providing (gradually) extensive welfare benefits in the important areas of society for the vast majority. Central characteristics of the Norwegian welfare state is ordinary taxation which makes up the foundation for social redistribution: a system of reciprocity and social solidarity (Brochmann &

Hagelund, 2012). Since the 1970s, when the immigration population had started to grow, it was recognized that some minority groups had particular needs, eventually leading to 'integration policies' which targeted the immigration population. These policies were further developed in the 1990s to increase equality between immigrants and native Norwegians concerning economic and social rights, participation, opportunities, and duties (Valenta & Bunar, 2010). The Nordic welfare states are commonly referred to as an example of generous refugee and integration policies (Alseth, 2018; Valenta & Bunar, 2010). However, Norwegian integration policies have shifted from what used to be a focus on refugees` *rights* to increasing interest in concerns of the *nation-state*. Previously, it was established that the main emphasis governing the arrival of refugees would be on the rights of refugees and asylum seekers. The change of focus involves a greater legitimacy for arguments involving considerations of the state, which has evolved over the past 20-25 years. This align with how the arguments for the last years of austerity build on consideration for the nation-state, the burden of the reception system, and the lack of burden sharing in Europe (J.-P. Brekke et al., 2010).

One of the main characteristics of the Nordic welfare model is that welfare services are universal. However, as a response to the growing integration challenge, the three Scandinavian countries have, in similar ways, set up extensive integration programs to facilitate refugees' labour market integration (Djuve & Kavli, 2019). In the Norwegian context, such a program was launched as part of the Introduction Act[7] in 2003. The Introduction Act is the most concrete governmental integration measure to be established. In line with a shift towards civic integration agendas across most states in Europe (Brochmann & Midtbøen, 2021; Gebhardt, 2016; Goodman, 2010; Joppke, 2017), the law introduced more rights while also having an increased focus on the obligations and duties of the refugees (Djuve & Kavli, 2019). The two components of the Introduction Act are the introduction program on the one hand and Norwegian language training and social science on the other[8]. Immigrants, in general, might be entitled and obliged to Norwegian language training and social science, although they are not part of the introduction program. However, refugees who are granted a residence permit and are settled in a municipality, which was the case for all the refugees in this study, are all obliged to participate in the introduction program. The Norwegian language training and social studies then become a

[7] Read more about the Introduction Act here: https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/2020-11-06-127?q=introduksjonsloven.

[8] A more thorough introduction to the introduction program can be found here: https://introduksjonsprogrammet.imdi.no/.

mandatory program element. Thus, I will provide an overview of the introduction program's content, structure, and implementation.

The introduction program is for newly arrived refugees (aged 18-55) and their families who have been settled in a municipality, aiming to prepare and qualify participants for the Norwegian labour market. The program's key components are language training, work praxis, an introductory course on Norwegian society, and individual counseling. Municipalities are obliged to offer refugees the program as soon as possible and no later than three months after the refugee has been settled (Brochmann, 2017; Djuve et al., 2017). Although the content of the introduction program is tailored to the needs of the individual refugee, there are some mandatory elements. The most recent mandatory additions to the program are a course on coping with life in a new country and parenting guidance (for participants with children). However, the program's key components are the Norwegian language training and social studies in addition to work- or education-oriented elements.

Participants in the introduction program are entitled and obliged to receive Norwegian language training and social science for free. It is, however, worth mentioning that asylum seekers who have been granted a residence permit start their training while still living in reception centres. Therefore, even though they embark on the process of resettlement in a municipality, it could take time for the municipality to accept the resettlement of the individual refugee and find appropriate accommodation. For this reason, asylum seekers covered by the Introduction Act who live in reception centres must participate in language training. It is then the responsibility of the host municipality of the reception centre to provide the training. Refugees arriving as part of the resettlement quota are immediately accommodated and settled in a municipality. Once refugees are resettled in a municipality, it is the municipality's responsibility to ensure and provide each refugee with an individual language training plan as part of their introduction program.

Although work- and education-oriented measures are mandatory for the introduction program, it is tailored to individual needs. Each participant gets an individualized plan with an *end goal* of the program. The Introduction Act contains guidelines for what kind of end goal each participant should have, based on their educational background. For instance, participants arriving with education at the upper secondary level or higher must have an end goal of qualifying for higher education or work, while participants under the age of 25 who have not already obtained education at the upper secondary level or higher have an end goal of completing upper secondary education. All other participants must have an end goal to complete primary

school, upper secondary education, or work. These guidelines are part of a renewed version of the Introduction Act from 2021 which contains an increased focus on acquiring formal competence, allowing refugees arriving with less formal competence to stay in the introduction program longer. Such an emphasis stems from a political goal that more refugees should gain formal competence within the framework of the introduction program, aiming at reducing the gap between the competence of the individual and the needs of the Norwegian labour market. The municipality where the participants are settled is responsible for the introduction program and eventually decides on the end goal for each participant. The end goal determines the program length for each participant, lasting from three months to four years, depending on the individual needs.

It is up to each municipality to organize the program's implementation. For instance, each municipality can choose whether to offer the different measures within its system or buy services externally through approved private providers. Neighbouring municipalities can also collaborate and create a joint offer of services. Collaborative partners to fulfil the statutory services of the program can be the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV), the local office for Refugee service, local primary and secondary schools, or civil society organizations. Consequently, the implementation and quality of the program are hugely differentiated depending on the local context. Although all the municipalities are obliged to offer individually tailored programs, evaluation of the program shows that many municipalities are unable to offer an adequate quality level of their services. Municipalities with fewer refugees meet national and political requirements more than municipalities with higher numbers (Djuve et al., 2017).

The contributions of CSOs in the introduction program vary depending on the collaborative relations in the local municipality. An extensive evaluation of the introduction program shows that 31 per cent of the municipalities cooperated with CSOs to fulfil the *statutory activities* in the introduction program. However, to offer activities that *supplemented* the program, the municipalities mostly only cooperated with CSOs (Djuve et al., 2017; Espegren, Eimhjellen, Ervik, Guribye, & Lindén, 2019). In this study, one of the CSOs offered language training for refugees and other immigrants *after* completion of the introduction program. In contrast, the other CSOs offered work praxis for refugees *in* the program and thus contributed to fulfilling the particiapants' mandatory work-oriented measures.

The participants receive a (modest) fixed income during the program period, which is deduced if or when they have undocumented absences. Considering the refugees' limited opportunities for alternative income, this contributes to making the program mandatory (Djuve &

Kavli, 2019; Hagelund & Kavli, 2009). Additionally, participation in the program and passing language tests at a certain level are prerequisites for permanent residency and citizenship (Alseth, 2018). After the introduction program, the refugees are followed up by NAV, for their continual needs for support in welfare and assistance in job search if needed. However, the follow-up from NAV is less intensive, and might be considered weaker, than the support they receive during their time in the introduction program.

The introduction program is argued to be a classical example of activation policy as it "combines measures aimed at increasing participants' labour market opportunities with sanctions or incentives intended to regulate their behaviour" (Djuve & Kavli, 2019, p. 27). The policy changes have mainly been the disciplinary elements of the program, a development that has been particularly evident since 2013. Such policy changes have increasingly framed "unemployment as the 'problem' and a lack of motivation as its cause" (Djuve & Kavli, 2019, p. 39), consequently emphasizing individual responsibility when measures of the activation program fail.

While there are various parameters in which public stakeholders measure integration, a welfare state like the Norwegian consider labour market integration as the primary indicator of success (Helse- og sosialdepartementet, 1994-95; Joyce, 2019; Øverbye & Stjernø, 2012). This is coherent with the "everyone at work" policy that has marked the general development of the welfare state, targeting various social problems. This policy line consists of a series of measures to strengthen or maintain work motivation. Like other European states, activation policy has become an essential social policy paradigm, which now acts as a critical consideration in the design of virtually all types of benefits (Hagelund & Kavli, 2009). This means that potential recipients should be activated before, possibly at the same time, that they receive social benefits (Øverbye & Stjernø, 2012). The Norwegian Introduction Act represents trends evident in European social and integration policies in that it ties income support to activation participation through a mandatory, comprehensive introduction program aiming at higher employability (Hagelund & Kavli, 2009). These trends are additionally claimed to be a result of neoliberal ideology and reforms, which have substantially impacted the development of current welfare states(Alseth, 2018; Kourachanis, 2020b).

Two white papers essential to understand the most recent developments underpinning current integration policies are the Brochmann I Report (Brochmann, 2011) and the Brochmann II Report (Brochmann, 2017). While the first report primarily considers labour immigration, the second concerns the long-term socioeconomic consequences of high immigration. Based on

these reports, amongst others, Isaksen (2019) conducted a comparative analysis of Norwegian and Swedish immigration and integration policies, countries that initially share many commonalities. One of the main distinctions between the two is that while Sweden considers immigration as a positive and necessary contribution to the welfare state, Norway perceives immigration as something potentially positive, but also a significant challenge to the welfare state: "immigration is seen as bringing specific challenges to the Norwegian welfare model as it presupposes large labour participation and a relatively equal income distribution in order to maintain a generous and universal welfare state" (pp. 8-9). Alseth (2018) argues that particularly the Brochmann II Report supports the liberal idea of 'welfare nationalism', which is based on the notion that "a shared national identity is an essential prerequisite to the shared solidarity underpinning systems of state welfare" (p. 49). Welfare nationalism is perceived as a result of neoliberal reforms by reducing immigrants, and refugees in particular, to a cost issue, which assesses the willingness of the society to 'pay the price' of integrating newcomers. Similar debates are occurring not only in Norway but also in other European countries, reflecting increased marginalization and polarization (Alseth, 2018).

1.4.3 The welfare state and the role of civil society organizations

This study explores the role of CSOs in integration issues while also considering their wider role in the Norwegian welfare state. The Scandinavian societal model is characterized by a strong and large public sector, a universal welfare state, which accentuates economic, social, and gender equality (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Rothstein, 2009). Moreover, democratic politics, local government autonomy, and cooperation between state and civil society describe its democratic governance (Amnå, 2006; Barth, Moene, & Willumsen, 2014; Enjolras & Strømsnes, 2018), constituting the Scandinavian countries as social-democratic. The Scandinavian societies are also regarded as 'state-friendly', reflected in the relationship between state and civil society, characterized by nearness and cooperation. Historically, the volunteer sector has contributed alongside the state, taking on social responsibilities in various areas of the welfare field, but consistent with the development of the welfare state, such responsibilities were increasingly perceived as the public sector's duty (Enjolras & Strømsnes, 2018; Grindheim & Selle, 1990; Selle, 1993). The formal organizations of civil society have been strong and, in many ways, operated as intermediaries between citizens and the state. However, substantial social transformations have been taking place in the past decade, which also influence the role of civil

society in modern welfare states (Amnå, 2006; Enjolras & Strømsnes, 2018; Loga, 2018; Selle, 1993). Enjolras and Strømnes (2018) highlight three particularly salient changes; increased levels of individualization and mobilization, the ongoing digitalization process, and the intensified immigration in what traditionally were ethnically homogenous societies (p. 3). In various ways, these changes affect how civil society organizations perform their activities and who participates. For instance, civic engagement in Norway has experienced a gradual shift from welfare to culture and leisure, and participation in organizations has declined. However, it does not necessarily indicate less civic engagement but reflects structural changes in civic participation (Eimhjellen, Steen-Johnsen, Folkestad, & Ødegård, 2018; Loga, 2018). Moreover, the relationship between the state, market, and civil society have changed in the last couple of decades. For instance, the emphasis on more effective welfare states aiming at decreasing welfare dependency has made the ground for the influence of neoliberal ideologies (Kamali & Jönsson, 2018). These trends are for instance reflected in activation policies that have dominated the integration of refugees since the 90s (Alseth, 2018). The European financial crisis and the emergence of neoliberal ideas and New Public Management has led to a renewed interest in the voluntary sector, with the perspective of cost-effectiveness (Kourachanis, 2020b; Selle, Strømsnes, & Loga, 2018). In the Norwegian context, the market has been more prominent than civil society in welfare production, at least when looking at large-scale welfare production. However, less political attention is given to civil society as providers of welfare services, while the small-scale activities[9] provided by CSOs, such as the social integration of various groups, are of greater interest (Enjolras & Strømsnes, 2018). This is evident in the several policy documents released by the Norwegian government aiming to strengthen civil society organizations' role in the integration field, particularly at the local level (Justis- og Beredskapsdepartementet, 2016; Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2018, 2021).

The collaborative relationship between the state and the CSOs varies in different phases of the integration process, and what types of CSO contributions may be relevant in different phases (Eimhjellen, Espegren, & Nærland, 2021). For instance, in the aftermath of the unprecedented number of incoming asylum seekers in 2015-2016, a large number of civil society initiatives contributed to fulfilling the gaps in the welfare state in an acute reception phase (Fladmoe, Sætrang, Eimhjellen, Steen-Johnsen, & Enjolras, 2016; Sætrang, 2018; Aasen, Haug, &

[9] I lean on the distinction between 'small-scale' and 'large scale' as understood by Selle et al. (2018): *small-scale activities* refer to activities going on mainly at the local level in more traditional civil society organizations, focusing on the individual and individual participation, while *large-scale activities* are more institutionalized voluntary-based welfare-service producers (p. 118).

Lynnebakke, 2017). As previously mentioned, CSOs sometimes provide statutory services within the introduction program but ever so as supplementary measures for refugees in the program (Espegren et al., 2019). Additionally, CSOs offer measures and activities aiming at contributing to refugee integration *after* the introduction program, and as such take up tasks where the welfare state ends. For instance, many CSOs offer language training after the introduction program for people who are in need of more training than what is offered through public measures. How many CSOs are involved and what activities they offer depend on the local context. Some organizations are local initiatives; others are large, national CSOs with local departments. Several reports find that the state collaborates more with established, larger CSOs than with newer network-oriented- and minority organizations (Garvik & Paulsen, 2018; Aasen et al., 2017). At the state level, the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) and the Directorate of Immigration (UDI) have established collaboration agreements with several established CSOs. Although such agreements exist, the activities and measures are often performed locally. However, recent studies indicate some discrepancy between the political aims of CSOs' contributions to integration issues on the one hand and the municipalities' understanding of their role in such collaborations, which in some cases limit the involvement of CSOs in refugee integration (Eimhjellen et al., 2021; Espegren et al., 2019).

1.5 The structure of the extended abstract

This thesis is an article-based dissertation, meaning that in addition to this extended abstract it comprises of three independent articles. As such, this extended abstract aims to connect the articles to the overarching research questions that guide this study and elaborate on and demonstrate how the findings as a whole contribute to research on refugee integration.

The chapter following this introduction situate the thesis within the existing literature both considering the labour market integration of refugees and the role of CSOs in these issues. How this study contributes to elaborating and filling the gaps in previous research is highlighted. Chapter 3 delve into the methodological choices that underpin the study, considering reflections on the philosophy of science, the research design, in addition to ethical reflections of the research process. Chapter 4 discusses the main theoretical approaches that informed the three articles attempting to weave them together in the overarching conversation on the labour market integration of refugees. This chapter additionally adds the perspective of social sustainability, to connect the articles on a theoretical level. Chapter 5 summarize each of the three articles that

comprise this thesis conveying the most significant arguments that are made. Finally, in chapter 6, I return to the research questions and in light of these discuss the study's key observations and arguments relating to the existing literature and theoretical considerations.

2 SITUATING THE RESEARCH IN THE LITERATURE

The body of literature dealing with the experiences of immigrants and refugees has caught the attention of scholars for decades and has grown extensively in recent years (Campion, 2018; Silove, Ventevogel, & Rees, 2017; Young & Chan, 2015). Moreover, the so-called 'refugee crisis' in 2015 further fueled the interest in such issues and put the topic of immigration high on the political agenda. The debates following the 2015-2016 refugee influx highlighted the issue as highly politicized (Crawley & Skleparis, 2018; Greussing & Boomgaarden, 2017; Østby, 2016). Moreover, the unprecedented media coverage and political attention given to the steep increase in the number of asylum seekers has impacted public opinion and, in some cases, fostered hostility in the country of settlement (Bygnes, 2020; Hopkins, 2010; Weber, 2015). On the other hand, many studies have demonstrated a mass mobilization and various solidarity movements within civil society that occurred to show solidarity with refugees (Agustín & Jørgensen, 2018; Bygnes, 2017; Fladmoe et al., 2016). Moreover, attention has been given to CSOs as welfare extenders when governments have lacked the capacity, or the willingness, to manage the incoming flow of refugees (Bagavos & Kourachanis, 2022; Garkisch, Heidingsfelder, & Beckmann, 2017). CSOs have worked alongside the government to provide basic services like shelter, catering, health services, social welfare, advocacy, and capacity development to facilitate integration and inclusion (Ambrosini, 2015; Garkisch et al., 2017; Meyer & Simsa, 2018).

Against this backdrop, I focus on the already existing knowledge about the labour market integration of refugees and what we know about the role of civil society actors in these processes. I start by differentiating the experience of refugees from that of other immigrants, which is followed by an overview of refugees' employment after settling and various dimensions that have an impact on their participation in the labour market, as highlighted in previous research. I then present research on the role of CSOs in the labour market integration of refugees focusing on the most recent knowledge from both the European and Norwegian contexts. This chapter thus aims to provide an overview of the literature in which I situate my study and show the current research gaps this thesis seeks to fill.

2.1 The labour market integration of refugees

An extensive number of studies deal with the labour market integration of immigrants (I. Brekke & Mastekaasa, 2008; Brännström, Giritli Nygren, Lidén, & Nyhlén, 2018; Kalter & Kogan, 2014; Lancee, 2012). Although refugees are also considered immigrants, they differ distinctively from other groups of immigrants in their labour market trajectories. While economic migrants usually move to another country for better opportunities, conflict and war often make refugees relocate unexpectedly. Compared to other migrants, refugees are more likely to arrive in the country of settlement, entailing less applicable human capital. For instance, the lack of language and relevant job skills lead them to start at significantly lower levels of wages and employability (Brell et al., 2020). Moreover, the refugee experience itself is characterized by conflict and trauma, causing (mental) health issues to be widespread among refugees (Bakker, Dagevos, & Engbersen, 2014; Brell et al., 2020; Phillimore, 2011). Additionally, some have spent extensive time in refugee camps, awaiting decisions on their asylum applications, which deprive them of human capital development and leads them to have fewer opportunities to work (Bakker, Dagevos, & Engbersen, 2017; Brell et al., 2020; Robleda, 2020). As this study specifically deals with the Norwegian context, this literature review focuses on studies conducted in the Norwegian, and comparably, the European context.

First, refugees' employment rates are significantly lower than other immigrant groups, and especially refugee women's employment rates are meager (Bratsberg, Raaum, & Roed, 2017; Brell et al., 2020; Olsen & Askvik, 2021; Umblijs, 2020). For instance, Bratsberg, Raaum og Roed (2017) found that in Norway, 80 per cent of female labour migrants from EU countries were employed compared to only 46 per cent of the female refugees. The literature points to several explanations for the low employment rate. Discrimination, low levels of education or education that are not acknowledged or in demand in Norway, health issues and family obligation have been highlighted to impact refugee women’s participation in the labour market (Kavli, 2020; Umblijs, 2020). The general employment and wage gap between refugees and other immigrant groups are often called 'the refugee gap', pointing to the employment and wage gap between refugees and other immigrant groups (Bakker et al., 2017; Connor, 2010). A recent study comparing the labour market integration of refugees and other immigrants in 20 European countries finds that refugees are 22 % more likely to be unemployed than immigrants with similar characteristics (Fasani, Frattini, & Minale, 2021). However, refugees’ employment subsequently increases, most sharply two to three years after arrival, and then continues to increase at the highest pace in the first half-decade, and then slows down in the second half-

decade. In Sweden, the employment gap between refugees and other immigrants is nearly closed after a decade. In contrast, in countries like Norway and Finland, the gap remains large over time (Brell et al., 2020). In fact, several studies from the Norwegian context demonstrate an increase in employment rates the first five to seven years after immigrants' arrival, however, after these first few years, the employment rates not only stagnate but even go into *reverse*, consequently leading to a consistent widening of the refugee-native gap (Blom, 2014; Bratsberg et al., 2017). Such a pattern contradicts findings from European cross-sectional studies, which point to *reduced* employment differentials with years since migration (Dustmann et al., 2017). Bratsberg et al. (2017) claim that such disintegration tendencies a few years after arrival are specific to Norway. This pattern could have several explanations. Although labour market fluctuations make an impact, the importance of human capital for labour market success makes refugees particularly vulnerable, both compared to natives and other immigrant groups. The low employment rate among refugees is not merely due to *entry* barriers but is additionally connected to the reduced prospects of *staying* in the labour market, which indicates that even though quick labour market introduction is important, the ability and competence to obtain high-quality jobs are necessary to get a strong foothold in the labour market (Bratsberg et al., 2017; Elgvin & Svalund, 2020). This can challenge refugees with low formal competence as the Norwegian labour market is highly formalized with strict competence requirements. As such, the focus of current integration policies to increase immigrants' formal competence and language sufficiency reflects the attempt to qualify newcomers to meet the labor market requirements.

Several studies across various European countries show that migrants, and refugees in particular, are more vulnerable to precarious jobs because their capabilities to enter the labour market and obtain decent work are staggered by various barriers (Knappert, Kroon, Kornau, & Abdelmageed, 2022; Mendonça, Kougiannou, & Clark, 2022; T. Montgomery & Baglioni, 2020; Waite, 2009). This align with studies from the Norwegian context, which found that immigrants are often underemployed and overrepresented in segments of the labour market that are more insecure, characterized by fewer mobility opportunities and competence development (Elgvin & Svalund, 2020; Friberg, 2016; Friberg & Midtbøen, 2018). Additionally, immigrants from Asia, Africa, and Latin America are more likely to be hired part-time involuntarily (Kavli & Nicolaisen, 2016; Kavli, Nicolaisen, & Trygstad, 2019; Kavli & Nielsen, 2019). Such a vulnerability of precarious working conditions are due to barriers like health issues, language insufficiency, low or unrecognized formal competence, discrimination, and lack of network (Bakker et al., 2017; Elgvin & Svalund, 2020; Søholt et al., 2015), leading many into un- and

underemployment (Friberg & Midtbøen, 2018). In the following, I present various dimensions that research highlights as the most influential on refugees' labour market integration.

2.1.1 Individual parameters

Research has shown that many refugees deal with trauma and mental health issues due to flight and experiences of conflict, violence, and uncertain living conditions (Dahl, Dahl, Sandvik, & Hauff, 2006; Rosenbaum & Varvin, 2007; Silove et al., 2017). A literature review on the long-term mental health of refugees suggests that exposure to pre-migration traumatic experiences and post-migration stress were associated with depression, PTSD, and anxiety, while depression was mainly related to poor post-migration socio-economic status (Bogic, Njoku, & Priebe, 2015). Moreover, it indicates that refugees are at risk of poor mental health many years after resettlement (ibid). Although many studies have emphasized that immigrants, in general, are healthier upon arrival, the health of refugees, however, tend to be lower than both other immigrant groups and the majority population (Brell et al., 2020; Giuntella, Kone, Ruiz, & Vargas-Silva, 2018). As such, the refugee experience contributes to inhibiting successful labour market integration.

There has been substantial scholarly interest in immigrants' language proficiency and its effect on labour market integration (Brell et al., 2020; Morrice, Tip, Collyer, & Brown, 2019). An evaluation based on the 2014 EU Labour Force Survey found that 59 percent of refugees with intermediate or higher-level language skills were employed, compared to 27 percent for refugees with lower-level language skills (Dumont, Liebig, Peschner, Tanay, & Xenogiani, 2016). Based on such numbers, the authors argue that much of the employment gap between natives and refugees is related to language proficiency. Fasani, Frattini, and Minale (2021) state that refugees across Europe report language difficulties as the main impediment to employment. Similarly, a Swiss study found a correlation between language proficiency and an increased probability of employment (Auer, 2018). The importance of language proficiency to obtain work is reflected in Norwegian integration policies and measures, where acquiring the language as quickly as possible is explicitly stated as an expectation (Brochmann, 2017). Furthermore, it is the reality of highly formalized labour markets, where the language level required can be high, even for "low-skilled" jobs (Wolffhardt, Conte, & Huddleston, 2019). For refugees, many entry-level jobs are found in the service sector rather than manufacturing. While some jobs allow for a reliance on English, most public sector service jobs require Norwegian proficiency (Joyce,

2019). The general pattern of refugees' language skill development is that while they start at a lower level than other immigrants, both refugees, and immigrants in general, improve slowly but steadily over time. However, refugees lag behind in this area compared to other immigrant groups, even when measured decades after the migration (Brell et al., 2020).

Analyses of refugees in the Norwegian labour market strongly indicates a positive correlation between educational attainment and higher employment rate (Bratsberg et al., 2017; Bratsberg, Raaum, & Røed, 2016; Djuve et al., 2017). Moreover, if one inhibits educational attainment from Norway the probability of employment rises further. For instance, male refugees with upper secondary school from Norway have 13.6 percentage points higher employment rates than others with similar education from abroad. For female refugees, the differentials are even more significant, with 27.3 percentage points higher employment rates. In general, for both genders, educational attainment acquired in Norway is a strong predictor of labour market success, even if the attainment is lower than what is acquired abroad (Bratsberg et al., 2017; Bratsberg et al., 2016).

Another demographic factor that affects the employment rate is the age at arrival. Male refugees who arrived below the age of 35 have a significantly higher probability of employment, even with low educational attainment (Bratsberg et al., 2017; Djuve et al., 2017). For women, however, low age does not compensate for low educational level as it does for men. For refugee women, the highest employment rates correspond to high educational attainment at arrival and above 30 years of age (Djuve et al., 2017).

2.1.2 Discrimination

Increased ethnic and religious diversity in European countries due to increased mobility has gained a renewed interest in both the prevalence and consequences of discrimination. This has been particularly prominent concerning immigrants' access to and mobility opportunities within the labour market (Fibbi et al., 2021). Recent research on ethnic discrimination in the labour market unequivocally demonstrates its high prevalence (Bertrand & Duflo, 2017; Kaas & Manger, 2012; Lancee, 2021), giving ethnic minorities a significantly lower chance of finding employment compared to the majority population. For example, a field experiment on hiring discrimination conducted in Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, and the UK (Di Stasio, Lancee, Veit, & Yemane, 2021) found substantially fewer callbacks for members of minority populations in the Netherlands, the UK, and Norway. Another study comparing callbacks on

resumes and cover letters with a Pakistani name and a Norwegian name found that applicants with a Norwegian name had a 25 % higher chance of receiving a callback than applicants with a Pakistani name, despite equal qualifications (Midtbøen, 2016). Also, compared to Britain, discrimination is more severe in Norway (Larsen & Di Stasio, 2021). This aligns with a vast literature arguing that ethnic discrimination is widespread in the Norwegian labour market (Evensen, 2009; Fangen & Paasche, 2013; Midtbøen, 2015; Tronstad, 2009). Furthermore, research on employers' attitudes toward employees from various ethnic backgrounds favors applicants from the majority population, which also affects children of immigrant parents (Midtbøen, 2014; Rogstad, 2001; Tronstad, 2010). The name-based discrimination that are found both in the Norwegian, and other European contexts, demonstrate how negative attitudes toward minority groups shape their opportunities in the labour market.

Several studies argue that hostility, prejudice, and negative attitudes specifically against Muslims are increasing challenges both in Norway and other parts of the world (J.-P. Brekke et al., 2020; Di Stasio et al., 2021; Larsen & Di Stasio, 2021; Strabac, Aalberg, & Valenta, 2014). In addition, regardless of their ethnicity, there seem to be especially strong penalties for Muslims on their employment opportunities (Khattab, 2009; Pierné, 2013). Furthermore, the previously mentioned study comparing callbacks from applicants with Pakistani and Norwegian names in Norway and Britain revealed an additional disadvantage for minorities with an overt Muslim affiliation with further reduced chances of a callback in the Norwegian context (Larsen & Di Stasio, 2021). Together, these findings convey that ethnic and religious discrimination is widespread and negatively influences minorities' access to the labour market.

Moreover, research has highlighted the gendered dimension of discrimination reflected in how the intersected identities of refugees are portrayed. For instance, being a Muslim minority woman, one can face discrimination on multiple levels, such as religion, ethnicity, and gender. As such, the intersectional discrimination experienced by Muslim women wearing a hijab as they approach labour markets in the Western countries has been given particular attention (Ahmed & Gorey, 2021; Helbling, 2014; Khattab & Hussein, 2018). Recently, three independent meta-analyses demonstrated that Muslim women's chance of being hired wearing the hijab was 40 % lower than otherwise similar women (Ahmed & Gorey, 2021; Bartkoski, Lynch, Witt, & Rudolph, 2018; Samari, Alcalá, & Sharif, 2018). Similar findings have been in studies conducted in the Norwegian context, emphasizing that higher education did not seem to reduce the adverse effects of wearing a hijab (Strabac, Aalberg, Jenssen, & Valenta, 2016). Additionally, several studies illustrate how discourses on unwanted migration are highly gendered and racialized by depicting male migrants as dangerous and criminal (Allsopp, 2017; P. Scheibelhofer, 2017;

Wyss, 2022). Wyss (2022) found that public (and political) discourses in Switzerland associated Arab male migrants with militant Islam and African male migrants with criminal networks, allowing such gendered and racialized perceptions to allude to stricter migration governance. Similarly, Scheibelhofer (2017) demonstrated how Austrian politicians posed young male Muslim refugees as a security threat. During the 'refugee' crisis in 2015, negative images of foreign masculinity were used to regain political acceptance for new restrictive asylum laws. As such, male refugees are portrayed as a threat from which the nations need to be protected, contributing to further stigmatization, exclusion, and non-belonging.

2.1.3 Social networks

For newcomers settling in a new country, social connections both co-ethnic and with the majority population play a crucial role in the broader integration processes, but also for labour market integration (Ager & Strang, 2008; Brell et al., 2020). Several studies have engaged with the contribution of social ties' to shaping patterns of inclusion for migrants as they resettle in a new country (Bagavos & Kourachanis, 2021; Cheung & Phillimore, 2014; Easton-Calabria & Wood, 2021; Gericke, Burmeister, Löwe, Deller, & Pundt, 2018; Kalter & Kogan, 2014; Korhonen, 2006; Lancee, 2012; Popivanov & Kovacheva, 2019). A study among refugees in Germany emphasizes that social ties with people of different nationalities and ethnic background seem especially valuable for refugees' labour market entrance as they 'provide individuals with access to valuable career-related information and offer them social mobility' (Gericke et al., 2018). Other studies, however, find that ethnic networks facilitate the economic integration of refugees by transmitting information about employment opportunities (Badwi, Ablo, & Overå, 2018; Martén, Hainmueller, & Hangartner, 2019; Saksela-Bergholm, 2020). Nevertheless, the social networks they are embedded in might, in some cases, hinder upward social mobility and increase the risk of underemployment by locking them into low-quality segments of the labour market. When relying on their existing social network, many end up in employment niches with high concentration of migrants, which are often in low-paid jobs requiring lower qualification levels (Ahmad, 2015; Kracke & Klug, 2021; Lancee, 2013; Leschke & Weiss, 2020).

As these sections of the literature review has shown, many and varied dimensions influence the labour market integration of refugees. A greater focus on how refugees deal with

and enact agency within the expectancy of labour market integration is needed to further understand the impact of policy-led integration processes in a context like the Norwegian.

2.2 The role of civil society organizations in the labour market integration of refugees

The potential embedded in civil society has gained increased attention. The proliferation of neoliberal reforms in European welfare states and the financial crisis has, amongst other, contributed to such an interest (Kourachanis, 2020b). Additionally, the 2015 refluxes of refugees made the public sector in many European countries struggle to satisfy the need for labour market integration services (Numerato, Čada, & Hoření, 2019). While previous research has focused on CSOs' role in the overall integration and inclusion of newcomers (Garkisch et al., 2017; Mayblin & James, 2019), the politicized attention these issues have gained urged a growing interest in the role of civil society in the labour market integration of refugees (Bagavos & Kourachanis, 2022; Baglioni et al., 2022; Bontenbal & Lillie, 2021; Calò, Montgomery, & Baglioni, 2022; Numerato et al., 2019; Åberg, 2013). It has additionally been argued that the specificity of the refugee experience requires diversified support systems that contribute to refugees' move toward employment (de Jong, 2019). The role of CSOs in the labour market integration of refugees is argued to be twofold. On the one hand, they offer individualized services like linguistic and working skills to prepare them for the labour market. In many contexts, they additionally provide legal, social, and economic counseling, helping refugees navigate the infrastructures of a new society (Garkisch et al., 2017; Numerato et al., 2019). On the other hand, they advocate for rights and take part in decision-making processes and policy development on a state level (Sunata & Tosun, 2019; Verschraegen & Vandevoordt, 2019). For the relevance of this study, I focus on the former, namely the individualized services provided by CSOs to mitigate barriers the refugees face on their move toward the labour market.

2.2.1 CSOs filling gaps in the welfare state

A literature review on the contributions of CSOs in view of flight, migration, and the refugee crisis, points out that a considerable amount of organizations provide measures for human development, economic development and employment, acculturation, and social capital

(Garkisch et al., 2017), embedding the potential of mitigating the barriers refugees face when seeking employment (Baglioni et al., 2022). A large EU-funded research project (SIRIUS[10]), including studies from Finland, the UK, Greece, Italy, Switzerland, and the Czech Republic, represents the most recent and systematically developed knowledge about the current position of CSOs in the labour market integration of refugees across Europe (Baglioni et al., 2022). The project has developed a typology to show the various patterns of private-public collaboration in the respective countries and how CSOs contribute to tackling barriers to labour market integration (Baglioni et al., 2022; Numerato et al., 2019). In the case of the UK, the role of CSOs in the labour market integration of refugees is distinctively related to the paradigmatic policy shift in 2010 referred to as 'the Big Society' (Kisby, 2010), making charities, private enterprises, and social enterprises central actors in the running of public services (Baglioni et al., 2022). An analysis of the services offered to refugees by CSOs in the UK highlights five primary areas of contribution: *employment*, *integration support*, *education and training*, *skills development*, and *policy advocacy* (Calò et al., 2022). However, this study found that most organizations, in a limited way, offered concrete employability services but had a stronger focus on training and education activities (ibid). For different reasons than the UK, Greece has also experienced an upgrade of the role of CSOs in recent times. The combination of an economic downturn and the refugee crisis led to large mobilizations of civil society to meet the needs of asylum seekers and refugees in Greece (Bagavos & Kourachanis, 2022; Baglioni et al., 2022). The public sector focused merely on the reception and identification system, leaving nearly all social integration in the hands of CSOs, so that they can compensate for the governmental gap (Bagavos & Kourachanis, 2021; Kourachanis, 2018b). In Greece, the attempt of CSOs to help integrate refugees into the labour market takes place in the context of high unemployment rates and a lack of public integration policies and measures. As such, many refugees are routed into low- and unskilled labour (Bagavos & Kourachanis, 2022; Xypolytas, 2017). The Czech Republic and Finland are contexts where the state is the dominant welfare provider, including integration services. In such contexts, CSOs have a more limited role (Bontenbal & Lillie, 2021; Čada, Numerato, & Hoření, 2021).

The SIRIUS project has identified ten ways in which CSOs embed the potential to enable labour market integration for migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers (Numerato et al., 2019). I will highlight the most relevant areas for this study. First, the research project found that CSOs

[10] SIRIUS is an EU Horizon 2020-funded project looking at the skills and integration of migrants, refugees, and asylum applicants in European Labour markets. https://www.sirius-project.eu/.

entail higher levels of flexibility than public services, which allows them to tailor their services to the specific needs and aspirations of the individual. Moreover, they highlight the network capacities of CSOs as essential to facilitate encounters both with other immigrants and native-born. They also function as brokers to connect with employers, trade unions, and public officials. Additionally, several CSOs provide valuable soft knowledge that can enhance immigrants' chances in the labour market (Numerato et al., 2019, p. 11).

Bontenbal and Lillie (2021) claim that CSOs fill the gaps in the public introduction program and, due to their flexible and innovative labour market services, can, tailor and adjust measures to the specific needs of the recipient to a greater extent. However, there are also several limitations of CSOs that hinder their integration initiatives. One of the significant external pressures of CSOs are their dependence on public funding. Such dependency creates instability, temporality, and uncertainty, affecting the consistency and long-term prospects of the CSOs' work. Another consequence of such economic dependency on the state is the influence of public administration on their agenda when defining target groups or determining how the services should be provided, which could force them to offer more narrow support and thus also limit flexibility and innovation (Numerato et al., 2019). Similar findings are demonstrated in a recent study exploring the role of CSOs in integrating refugees in Sweden, which emphasizes that increased government funding does not necessarily lead to more independence for the organizations (Osanami Törngren et al., 2018). A Czech study of the position of CSOs in policy work, highlight how close partnership with the government in addition to the dependency of public funding sometimes blurred the boundaries of responsibility and as such loose part of their critical capacity (Čada & Ptáčková, 2014). Similarly, research on the volunteer-public relationship has raised issues concerning the autonomy and legitimacy of CSOs (Beller & Haß, 2014; Brandsen & Johnston, 2018; Cornforth, Hayes, & Vangen, 2015). A Norwegian study of voluntary policy on a municipality level and local CSOs, questions the CSOs' autonomy in close collaborative projects with the municipalities when the boundaries between the values and goals of the CSOs and the public agencies are blurred (Trætteberg, Eimhjellen, Ervik, Enjolras, & Skiple, 2020). Given such unintended effects the researchers call for more knowledge on public-volunteer relationships and the consequences of CSO autonomy. Additionally, Numerato et al. (2019) found that some migrants or refugees did not take advantage of CSOs' services because they perceived them as insufficiently professional. Moreover, many CSOs experience low recognition from policymakers (Numerato et al., 2019, p. 11).

2.2.2 CSOs and the labour market integration of refugees – the Norwegian context

In the Norwegian context, research on civil society and integration has been paying particular attention to the minority groups' participation in civil society, which clearly states that the minority population, for various reasons, is less represented in CSOs (Eimhjellen et al., 2021; Kraglund & Enjolras, 2017; Loga, 2012). Nonetheless, less research has been exploring the specific role and contributions of CSOs in the labour market integration of refugees. There are indications, however, of increased awareness of civil society as a valuable stakeholder in integration processes. For instance, in 2021, the Norwegian government released a strategy to strengthen civil society's role in integration processes (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2021). The strategy, in particular, highlights language learning as a specific area where CSOs could have a more profound role in increasing refugees' chances of entering the labour market. While it is still the state's responsibility to offer adequate language training, this strategy calls for CSOs to *supplement* the measures of the public introduction program, claiming it would allow the refugees to increase their language skills by practicing it more frequently. To support this, the government simultaneously increased the budget for language training offered by CSOs, in addition to the already existing funding through the public introduction program. Moreover, the strategy calls for further development of cross-sectional cooperation between actors from civil society, social entrepreneurs, and employers with new ideas for work-oriented measures for immigrants (ibid). Additionally, a Norwegian Official Report (NOU) emphasizes the importance of newcomers' participation in civil society for developing social networks that can increase the chances of entering the labour market and as an arena for language training (Brochmann, 2017).

Empirical evidence from a study exploring various factors influencing the employment of immigrants in three broader regions in Norway (Søholt et al., 2015) found that many jobs, particularly in the private sector, were communicated through acquaintances and social networks, which made local networks salient for those trying to enter the labour market. For this reason, public stakeholders actively tried to connect refugees and immigrants with CSOs. Findings from the study demonstrated that CSOs played a significant role as facilitators of arenas where the majority and minority populations could meet. The study argues that in addition to the activities' intrinsic value, a significant side effect is that 'you get to know people and people get to know you', which can increase the chances of entering the labour market. Immigrants' probability of being employed increased by 23,9 percent by having one or more friends with a Norwegian background, compared to immigrants without such a network (Søholt et al., 2015).

A recently published literature review on civil society and integration in the Norwegian context (Eimhjellen et al., 2021) distinguishes between studies that explore immigrants' and refugees' participation in civil society on the one hand and studies that look at civil society actors' contributions to the field of integration on the othe. Several of the studies in this literature review demonstrate how civil society mobilized as a response to the refugee crisis (Bygnes, 2017; Fladmoe et al., 2016; Sætrang, 2018), in addition to CSOs' contribution in social network development (Ravneberg, 2017). Another literature review on the role of social entrepreneurs on integration issues found that social entrepreneurs embedded a stronger ability for innovation than the public sector and were additionally important contributors in the qualification and work practice for immigrants who are not part of the labour market (Søholt, Liodden, Aasen, Vilhjalmsdottir, & Staver, 2020). However, empirical studies on the contributions of CSOs in the labour market integration of refugees in Norway are still sparse. Taking into account the various barriers refugees face to gain employment, in addition to the governmental call to strengthen the role of civil society in the integration field, research on the contribution of CSOs in this particular context is both highly relevant and essential.

3 METHODOLOGY

This chapter is devoted to reflecting on the methodological choices made during this study. The chapter is divided into three main sections. First, I delve into the ontological, epistemological, and methodological presumptions that guide this study. Secondly, I provide detailed descriptions and analyses of the research design. This includes reflections on the recruitment criteria, the sample of the study, the ethnographic fieldwork consisting of participant observation and semi-structured interviews, and the analytical strategies employed. Finally, the last section discusses ethical considerations that have been made during this study.

3.1 Epistemological and ontological reflections

The question of what distinguishes scientific knowledge from other types of knowledge points to the broader epistemological questions of what knowledge *is* and how it is *obtained*. Even though the general aim of science is to "understand, explain, and predict the world we live in" (Chalmers, 2013, p. xx), there are two distinctive features that are regarded as fundamentally important for knowledge to be perceived as scientific: namely the scientific methods and the construction of and engagement with theories (Chalmers, 2013; Okasha, 2002). The research process is a social activity: "It is knowledge, therefor intellectual, conceptual and abstract. It is inevitably created by individual men and women, and therefore has a strong physiological aspect. It is public, and therefor molded and determined by the social relations between individuals" (Klemke, Hollinger, Rudge, & Kline, 1998, p. 52). Scientific knowledge is not obtained in an isolated space but emerges in an intellectual, psychological, and sociological space. For science to become published knowledge, the arguments must be convincingly demonstrated through systematic, methodological, and theoretical engagement. This chapter reflects on the ontological, epistemological, and methodological presumptions that underpin this study.

Although there are many different ways of naming the various research paradigms, I prefer the distinction proposed by Haverland and Yanow (2012), amongst others, who signify the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of the different ways of knowing by distinguishing between *positivist* and *interpretive* research. In general terms, one can say that a positivist paradigm's ontological and epistemological presumptions are based on the understanding that there is a 'real' world that can be objectively examined (Guba & Lincoln,

1994). Moreover, this paradigm is more concerned with the *cause* of a phenomenon, often tested by causal hypotheses. The main objective of the researcher, then, would be to build up arguments explaining why certain causes have specific effects (Haverland & Yanow, 2012). The inquiry of this study, however, is to explore the phenomena of refugee labour market integration, the contexts in which this happens, and the various factors that influence their experiences of settlement and move toward the Norwegian labour market. The reality I am studying is not an objective reality waiting to be discovered `out there,` but the reality understood through subjective perceptions and interpretations (Burrell & Morgan, 2017). Hence, the ontological, epistemological, and methodological presumptions underpinning my research project align with the interpretative paradigm. In the following, I reflect on the variations within the interpretative paradigm and situate my research within such variations.

3.1.1 The interpretative paradigm

Aiming to search for an understanding of *meaning*, I lean on an approach that seeks to gain "access to the conceptual world in which our subjects live so that we can, in some extended sense of the term, converse with them" (Geertz, 1973, p. 24). Unlike the classic, or positivist, paradigm, an interpretive approach concerns the meaning that subjects attribute their experiences, exploring the reasons and motives – the `why` behind a phenomenon (Haverland & Yanow, 2012). Interpretivism's primary focus lies in the attempt to understand and explain the social world from the perspectives of different actors involved in social processes (Burrell & Morgan, 2017). My study explores the migration and integration processes given the influence of individual, structural, and relational factors on such processes. As such, this study echoes the interpretative understanding of the world "as an emergent and social process which is created by the individuals concerned" (Burrell & Morgan, 2017, p. 28). Historically, interpretivism arose as a reaction to positivism. It grew out of a realization that the human experience could not be understood and analyzed through the methods of the natural sciences (Burrell & Morgan, 2017; G. Ryan, 2018). Sometimes the term interpretivism is used interchangeably with *constructivism*, or *social constructivism*, referring to the common understanding that reality impinges on the way an induvial perceives and experiences it and is not something possible to obtain objectively (J. W. Creswell, 2013; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Haverland & Yanow, 2012). Hacking (1999), however, is a philosopher who has critically engaged in discussing the way of understanding social constructionism. He points to two distinct ways in which social constructionism is applied.

On the one hand, it is used overarchingly, understanding the world we live in as socially constructed. On the other, it is applied to explore the social construction of a specific phenomenon. Although I situate my study within the understanding of reality as constructed on an overarching level, the aim of my study, namely the refugees' labour market integration, is not directed towards the social construction of this specific phenomenon. I sympathize with the term *interpretivism*, as it, also linguistically, makes an apparent reference to the understanding of the reality I am studying as no single, shared reality and that my role as a researcher is to interpret the meaning the participants give to their experiences (G. Ryan, 2018). For instance, the individual refugee carries their perspectives and experiences of settlement in Norway and the move towards labour market integration. These perspectives are informed by their interaction with public staff and agencies, other refugees and migrants, family members, people from the majority population, and previous experiences. Equally, the representatives from the civil society organizations have their perspectives and experiences informing their point of view. The refugees' perspectives, as the ones targeted by integration, differ from the perspectives of the CSOs, who aim to provide support in integration processes.

The early works of Dilthey, Husserl, and Weber have heavily shaped the interpretative paradigm. Moreover, hermeneutics is one of the central theories within interpretivism. In the following, I will do a more in-depth presentation of hermeneutics to explain why and how I approach my research hermeneutically (Burrell & Morgan, 2017).

3.1.1.1 Hermeneutics

Consistent with the interpretative paradigm, hermeneutics is concerned with processes of *understanding* and *interpreting* the social and cultural world (Burrell & Morgan, 2017; Gadamer, 1989; Heidegger, 1953), seeking to *understand* human experiences of a phenomenon. This tradition builds on the early works of Dilthey, who carved out hermeneutics as a key discipline in human science (Burrell & Morgan, 2017). Moreover, Gadamer's seminal work "Truth and method" (1989) has saliently impacted the development of modern hermeneutics. A central element in this approach is the 'hermeneutic circle', which refers to the perpetual process by which one interprets a text on several levels to create meaning in the text and new understandings of the particular and the whole (ibid). A core element of hermeneutics is the focus on preunderstandings as an integral part of the interpretative process, as "its work is not to develop a procedure of understanding, but to clarify the conditions in which understanding takes place" (p. 295). This study follows Gadamer's idea that understanding has a circular structure

and is conditioned by history, tradition, and language, which highlights our situatedness in interpretation: "this openness always includes our situating the other meaning in relation to the whole of our own meanings or ourselves in relations to it" (Gadamer, 2006, p. 271). Thus, such an approach rejects the idea of objectivity and instead demands awareness of the fore-structures, fore-conceptions, and fore-judgments that are embedded in us as researchers and interpreters:

> A person who is trying to understand a text is always projecting. He projects a meaning for the text as a whole as soon as some meaning emerges in the text. Again, the initial meaning emerges only because he is reading the text with particular expectations in regard to a certain meaning. Working out this fore-projection, which is constantly revised in terms of what emerges as he penetrates into the meaning, is understanding what is there" (Gadamer, 1989, p. 269).

A central question is whether my study seeks to capture the very *essence* of the phenomena, which would be the case in phenomenology, for instance, or rather, from a hermeneutical perspective, seek interpretations related to different layers of meaning and certain contextual possibilities and limitations (Johansson, 2016). It evidently becomes an epistemological question: Is it possible, or even desirable, to set aside one's own previous experiences and preconceptions in an attempt to arrive at the core? For the case of this study, instead of attempting to 'bracket' my prejudices, I allow theoretical knowledge and previous experiences from the practice field guide my questions. I simultaneously seek new and deeper understandings of how refugees' labour market integration and settlement are experienced from various perspectives while also considering the structural and contextual frames in which the phenomena are experienced. As such, I take on a hermeneutical approach.

3.1.2 Positionality and reflexivity

The hermeneutic approach rejects objectivity as the desirable position of the researcher, which thus makes transparency, positionality, and reflexivity crucial points in demonstrating the study results as something more than personal opinions. Alvesson and Sköldberg (2017) claim that reflexive research pays particular attention to "the perceptual, cognitive, theoretical, linguistic, (inter)textual, political and cultural circumstances that form the backdrop to – as well as impregnate – the interpretations" (p. 9). Two points are essential when practicing reflexivity. Firstly, it requires reflections on one's past experiences, and secondly, how such experiences potentially shape interpretations formed during the study (J. Creswell & Creswell, 2017)

The past eight years before I started my PhD, I worked in a local CSO in projects dealing with issues of exclusion in various forms. The last project I was working in supported migrants, amongst others, as they navigated the complex infrastructures of the Norwegian public systems. Before that, I had worked with unaccompanied minor refugees and done qualitative research among Nigerian migrants working in prostitution in Norway. These experiences had provided insights into some migrants' experiences settling in Norway. Particularly my role in the last project I led contributed to shaping my interest in and framing the project's object of inquiry. Furthermore, these experiences urged me to seek more profound knowledge in a field of research that we, as far as I am concerned, have yet to understand fully, namely how refugees experience labour market integration in Norway and what influences these experiences. However, it would be naive to believe that my fore-conceptions did not impact my interpretations. For instance, one of the findings in my study is that there is a crucial time of precarity for refugees in the phase immediately after the public introduction program. This was not surprising to me because I had talked to many refugees, employees in CSOs, and public stakeholders who were painfully aware of this gap, or weakness, in the measures to support refugees during settlement. Hence, it is reasonable to believe that my previous experiences have influenced my gaze toward this vulnerable phase. However, this was an issue raised by various stakeholders many times before I entered the study. Therefore, it would have been even more surprising if this did not occur when I studied refugees in this phase. I still approached the study with questions that were open, and not pre-shaped, intending to explore how they experienced settling in Norway. Hence, the different descriptions of how they perceived and experienced these challenges and their strategies to navigate them were new to me. This allowed me to contextualize the issue in the broader context of the future of the welfare state. Making one article focus on this finding was based on the lack of literature concerning this issue.

Positionality within migration research has been paying particular attention to the insider-outsider divide, understanding the 'insider' researcher as part of the migrant group being studied and the 'outsider' researcher as a member of the majority population in the place of settlement (Agyeman, 2008; Breen, 2007; Carling, Erdal, & Ezzati, 2014; Nowicka & Ryan, 2015). Such insider-outsider divides are often relationally constructed in encounters between researcher and participants, in which different social categories determine the 'us' or 'them' (ibid). Going into the fieldwork, I continuously considered my privileged position as a white, ethnic Norwegian woman with high education and a steady job. Although I did not formally represent national authorities, they could easily perceive me as representing the powerful Norwegian welfare state. Merely as part of the majority population, familiar with the country's culture, history and

language, there was an embedded power imbalance that I was uncomfortably aware of. One of the organizations in this study offered language classes and community course targeting immigrant women. On the first day of fieldwork there, I presented the research project to a group of immigrant women. I recognized a few faces from my previous job working for another local CSO. I started the introduction of myself by saying, among other things, that the people I met here the last time might remember me with a huge belly because I was pregnant with my third child. Afterward, I reflected on why I had presented myself as a married woman and the mother of three children. In other circumstances, I rarely introduce myself by talking about my family situation. I usually present myself with my name, age, education, and work experience. I knew that most women at the community course were mothers and quite family oriented. I did this in a search for 'common ground', by focusing on our similarities rather than our apparent differences. This echoes the idea that what constitutes 'us' and 'them' changes from one context to another (Carling et al., 2014, p. 41) and that which social categories are prominent in which contexts differ. As such, this can be regarded as an attempt to transcend the most apparent social categories, which dichotomized 'us' and 'them'. Despite this, I, in many ways, remained an outsider researcher, which demands high awareness of its potential impact on the analysis. For instance, the main object of inquiry, to study the labour market integration of refugees, builds on a normative premise of labour market participation as successful integration, representing the authorities' perspective. I have consciously attempted to move beyond such normative categories and discourses and presented diverse perspectives. This is for instance illustrated in my article on gig-economy employment and belonging, which uses participants' employment narratives to contest the state narrative of labour market participation as an indicator of successful integration.

3.2 Research design and research process

The research design has a qualitative approach by exploring natural settings, attempting to understand the phenomena of refugees' labour market integration in terms of the meaning people give to them (Lincoln & Denzin, 2008). The fieldwork takes on an ethnographic approach collecting data through participant observation and semi-structured interviews. I conducted the fieldwork at mainly two CSOs working with refugees, over a period of 18 months. The fieldwork had two primary data collection phases: the fall of 2020 and 2021. However, there is no clear-cut line between the two, as I stayed in touch with the organizations and participated in events

between the main data collection phases. This sub-chapter describes how the project came about and the methodological choice I made along the way. I explain the ethnographic approach to the fieldwork and describe how the participant observation and semi-structured interviews were conducted. Moreover, I provide details about the process of entry and access to the field, and the study's final sample. Finally, I go through the analysis process and discuss some of the ethical considerations that impacted the study.

3.2.1 An ethnographic approach to qualitative fieldwork

Although there are various ways of defining the nature of qualitative research, I follow the definition proposed by Lincoln and Denzin (2008) as a "situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretative, material practices that makes the world visible" (p. 4). The different methodological practices in qualitative research are equally positioned. Thus, I have navigated the jungle of different practices to find the most suitable approach to answer the research questions of this study. Given participant observation's central part in the research design and the focus on investigating a small sample of cases, the fieldwork takes an ethnographic approach. Ethnography has its roots in Western anthropology, providing thick descriptions of cultures or communities at locations usually outside the West. It was later employed by scholars from various disciplines (P. Atkinson & Hammersley, 1998; J. W. Creswell, 2013). There has been several controversies around the definition of ethnography, where it, for some researchers, implicates a total commitment to a philosophical paradigm, while it, for others, "designates a method that one uses as and when appropriate" (P. Atkinson & Hammersley, 1998, p. 248). I relate to the latter, as I apply ethnography as an appropriate *method* to be used in my fieldwork. In line with Ajjawi and Higgs (2007), the strategies chosen for collecting data in this research underpinned "the philosophical framework of the research paradigm and methodology and enabled access to participants' experiences" (p. 617), and as such the ethnographic fieldwork align with the interpretive, hermeneutical paradigm in which this study is located.

As mentioned, my research design consists of semi-structured individual interviews and participant observation. After a couple of interviews with employees in organization A, I started with participant observation at one of their community courses directed at migrant women. The initial intention of participant observation was to create a space for gaining trust and acceptance, being acquainted with refugees interested in participating in the study and getting to know the

organizations` work and interactions with the refugees. But as I started the fieldwork, I realized I got more valuable and interesting data from observing the participants than I first anticipated. Participant observation became an essential part of the research design. Hence, the fieldwork from the beginning took a more ethnographic approach than I initially planned. The extensive participant observation allowed me to observe the participants in a more natural environment than in formal interviews, as also suggested by previous research (Jackson, 2013). I observed them over time as they actively engaged in discussions and conversations about different aspects of life in Norway. I witnessed how they narrated their stories and explored their responses to the different inputs they were given on Norwegian society. It also became evident what aspects of life were more important to them. The possibility to do this was due to the organizations and participants allowing me to join their activities, events, courses, and work internships. In addition, some refugees welcomed me into their homes and let me meet their families. Therefore, the ethnographic approach has been beneficial in studying how experiences of labour market integration develop and change during different settlement phases.

3.2.1.1 Participant observation

As mentioned, ethnography has been employed by scholars from a variety of disciplines. Traditionally, anthropologists consider participant observation their primary method, while for others, it is considered one of several methods (Fangen, 2010). I follow the latter approach, as semi-structured interviews and participant observation played an equally important role in the data collection. Although I use the term *participant* observation, which indicates the researcher as a known actor in the field, the role one has as a participant observer can vary and sometimes shift within the same fieldwork (P. Atkinson & Hammersley, 1998; Fangen, 2010; Whyte, 1984). A typology commonly used to differentiate the roles refers to *complete observer*, *observer as participant*, *participant as observer*, and *complete participant* (P. Atkinson & Hammersley, 1998, p. 248). Such classifications depend on several dimensions of variations. For one, whether the researcher is known to be a researcher influences what type of observation one does. Secondly, it depends on how much and what is known about the researcher and by whom. Thirdly, what types of activities one engages in affect how one relates to the group and how much the researcher situates herself as an insider or outsider (P. Atkinson & Hammersley, 1998, p. 249). Most of the time, I would classify my role in the category of *participant as observer*, as I usually actively participated in the activities, like work tasks or food preparations, together with the participants. However, the transition over to *observer as participant* was sometimes quite

fluent and shifting. In the following, I describe the participant observation and reflect on my role as a participant observer.

I started my fieldwork in May 2020, which happened to be amid a pandemic. At this point, everything was essentially closed down, and none of the organizations met physically. However, the most intense phases of fieldwork were during the fall of 2020 and the fall of 2021, a time when Rogaland was marked by fewer restrictions. This meant that the organizations could, for the most part, uphold their activities and meeting points physically. I initially intended to conduct fieldwork in three CSOs (A, B and C), however, organization C could, unfortunately, not uphold its activities as planned. Because of various circumstances they had to close its activities and eventually dissolve the organization. Therefore, I have followed organizations A and B, with various intensities, for 18 months. Altogether, I conducted around 120 hours of participant observation.

At organization A, I participated in a community course, targeting migrant women. I also engaged in several informal conversations with employees of the organization. The course was organized to host guest speakers on various topics, which facilitated conversations and discussions between the guest speaker and the group. This course took place once a week, and I joined 12 times altogether between august 2020 and May 2021. The other days of the week, the women attended language classes arranged by the organization, which I did not observe. I did not actively take part in the course's discussions and conversations, but observed both what was communicated at the course, and the participants' response to each week's input. During these observations, I was physically placed in the back of the room on a fixed chair, due to the covid restrictions. I talked to the participants when I came in to find my seat, but during the teaching, I did not actively participate, and few people noticed me due to my physical placement in the room. I took notes along the way during the course. However, after the teaching, I stayed behind, talked to different participants, and sometimes joined them for lunch. For a time during the spring of 2021, however, the course had to be conducted digitally, as covid restrictions prohibited the possibility of meeting physically. This made it easy for me to take extensive notes of what was being said, but I could not see the different participants as most of their cameras were turned off. Unfortunately, I lost the opportunity to engage socially with the participants during this time. Based on the typology presented above, my role during the participant observation was somehow fluid and shifted between *participant as observer* and *observer as participant*. My passive role during the teaching and my fixed seating, almost invisible in the back of the room, made the *observer* part of the role quite distinctive, more than I envisioned before I entered the field. This became particularly evident when the course sometimes had to be

conducted digitally. Even though the participants could see me as one of many squares on 'teams', this situation did not allow me to participate more than as a passive observer. However, when we met physically, spent time together before and after the course, and ate lunch together, I was, to a greater extent, included as part of the group, hence *participant as observer*.

At organization B, I participated in a project offering work internships for refugees in the public introduction program, which included three participants, two volunteers, and one employee[11]. I participated once a week for three months. The same three participants usually worked for organization B two days a week and were in the introduction program for the remaining three days. The work internship consisted of physical work, often outside. We usually met at a tourist cabin in the area and started the day with coffee and a morning chat. Afterward, we worked a few hours, ate lunch together, and then worked a few more hours. I was working alongside the participants and the volunteers with equal work tasks. I also participated in a Christmas party hosted by the organization for all the current and previous refugees who had work internships there. When an employee from the organization was interviewing a participant and his family for an internal magazine story, I was invited to join. I went to his home and met his family, where we stayed for a few hours. I also joined one employee, one volunteer, and one participant on an overnight hiking trip to do maintenance work at a mountain cabin. Additionally, I participated in meetings between the employees and public stakeholders. My role as a researcher during participant observation in organization B operated more as a definite *participant as observer*, sometimes even gravitating towards *complete participant* (P. Atkinson & Hammersley, 1998; Fangen, 2006). Throughout the fieldwork, I additionally met up many times with the organization's project manager for informal talks.

Organization B was additionally part of another study conducted by an independent research institution, which started its data collection towards the end of my fieldwork. From the beginning, we had an open dialogue, ensuring we did not overwhelm the refugees in work internships with our data collection. In our conversations, we discovered some overlapping interests and topics and decided to conduct one collective data collection. Together we planned and facilitated a full-day evaluation, where eight refugees and three volunteers assessed and shared their experiences of having work internship with organization B. We handed out written information and consent forms about both research projects, which all the participants signed. Additionally, we started the day by presenting both research projects before dividing them into

[11] To protect the anonymity of the participants in the study, I do not detail the content of the work internship in organization B.

three groups. Each group had one researcher who facilitated the conversation. Each researcher wrote notes from their group, which were then collected into one shared document.

The participant observation has provided the study with insights that I would not have been able to obtain from the formal interviews. For instance, it allowed me to get the perspectives of participants who did not want to share their stories in individual interviews. This was particularly evident in the fieldwork at organization A, where quite a few were sceptical of participating in interviews. It seemed like the group context disarmed the sharing of their thoughts and ideas. It allowed the participants to voice their opinions when they wanted to instead of being asked direct questions. Several participants actively engaged in discussions and conversations in the group but were still negative to individual interviews. Moreover, Whyte (1984) argues that "participant observation offers the advantage of serendipity: significant discoveries that were unanticipated" (p. 27). One of the emerging findings in the study was the impact perceived discrimination had on the refugees' labour market aspirations. This was not asked for in the interviews, nor was it in any way highlighted as a topic in the description of the project. However, when I presented the research project and the topic of labour market integration, the group immediately started sharing stories of discrimination as part of their experiences. When a researcher sees something happen in a particular way once, it is unknown whether it is a coincidence or a pattern repetition. However, further observations weaken or strengthen the basis for assuming it is a pattern (Skilbrei, 2019). The participant observation revealed that the participants brought up such experiences in many different conversations and contexts, which strongly indicated discrimination as a salient concern in their experiences of labour market integration. This was further illustrated when an interpreter in the group chose to step out of her role as an interpreter to share how perceptions of discrimination led her to change the way she chose to dress. She had abandoned the hijab and replaced her ethnic and religious attire with western clothing. The context of participant observation revealed how it was only concerning this specific topic that she chose to step out of her role as an interpreter and communicate her point of view.

Fieldnotes

During my observations, I continuously wrote fieldnotes of my observations. This was sometimes a demanding task, as I wanted to avoid taking notes when interacting with the participants. The only time I took notes while observing was during the teaching at organization A when I was physically placed in a fixed chair in the back of the room. The rest of the time, I

had to remember as much as I could from the field to the best of my ability. I sometimes snook away to the restroom and made small notes on my phone to remember details from conversations or situations that occurred. To get as detailed field notes as possible, I was consistent in writing them out immediately after I left. This allowed me to write out conversations accurately when I had them fresh in mind. Going into the field knowing I needed to remember as much as possible sharpened my senses and memory (Fangen, 2010). When observing, it is helpful to have some points of reference to direct your gaze towards something instead of going in 'blind', which makes field notes selective to a certain extent (P. Atkinson, 2007; Fangen, 2010). My gaze through the observation was informed by the thematic focus of the study and guided by the research questions. I was particularly interested in their experiences of integration and work in Norway and made notes of everything that was said that could either be related to such experiences or their migration experiences in the broader sense. I was also interested in their background, stories from their upbringing, current life situation, and encounters with people in Norway. The study gives special attention to the role of civil society organizations, and notes on the interaction between the refugees and employees or volunteers from the CSOs also had my attention as I took notes.

One way to organize the field notes is to distinguish between descriptive, methodological, and analytical notes. *Descriptive notes* are first and foremost clean descriptions of what happened, without much interpretation. *Methodological notes* are often reminders or instructions for you as a researcher, but also critical self-reflection or personal impressions. Analytical ideas or reflections often arise as we observe or write up field notes. Such notes are crucial to write down and are often called *analytical notes* (P. Atkinson, 2007; Fangen, 2010). I followed this approach and organized the field notes by color-coding them as *descriptive*, *methodological*, or *analytical* notes. Afterward, the notes were uploaded to Nvivo and coded as texts equivalent to the interviews. During fieldwork, I also wrote memos as analytical notes on specific topics that emerged as particularly salient. Later on, during the phase of more profound analysis, both the memos and the analytical notes in the field notes became crucial as they had captured findings of substantial importance in the study.

3.2.1.2 Semi-structured interviews

I embarked on this study to learn more about how refugees experienced processes of labour market integration in Norway and the role of CSO in such processes. I wanted their perspectives of encounters with Norwegian society, the people and the institutions, the individual and the

structural. Moreover, I wanted to understand how they navigated expectations of labour market integration and their experiences of available resources and capacities to meet such expectations. I was additionally interested in their aspirations, particularly of labour market integration, and how these (had) changed over time. To explore this and to provide the space for them to give in-depth information about different aspects of their experiences, I found semi-structured, individual interviews to be the most suitable method (Dalen, 2011; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Skilbrei, 2019). Semi-structured interviews are conversations where the intentions of what you want to discover are clear. You have open-ended questions to cover the main topics, yet the conversation can vary and change substantially depending on the participants (Fylan, 2005). This approach gave me the information I needed to answer the research question. Nevertheless, the interviews were open enough so that interviewees could talk about what was most important in their experiences.

Altogether, I conducted 20 interviews with 14 participants. In the first round, I interviewed ten refugees and four CSO employees. I stayed in touch with and re-interviewed five of the refugees one year after the initial interview to better understand how they made meaning of their experiences in different settlement phases. Additionally, I interviewed one of the refugees a third time. The first round of interviews with the refugees lasted between 1 – 2 hours, was inspired by a life story approach (R. Atkinson, 1998), and touched upon topics like background, education, migration journey, current situation as well as thoughts and ideas about work in Norway. However, the second (and third) interviews were more focused than the first. While I, in the first interview, wanted to know more about their life stories, the second and third interviews were more concerned with what had happened since our first interview. Some were still in the public introduction program when I first interviewed them, which made it particularly interesting to do follow-up interviews. Nevertheless, the conversation remained around settlement and labour market integration. The CSO employees were only interviewed once and had a stronger focus on their role in the organizations and the activities they were engaged in.

Conducting the interviews

To make the participants as comfortable as possible, I aimed to conduct the interviews on the premises of the organization they were connected to. This way, the interviewees would be in a familiar and safe setting. In some cases, however, this was not feasible. At the beginning of the fieldwork, there were still heavy restrictions due to covid-19. I started by doing three interviews with representatives from the CSOs by phone. All these participants knew of me from before,

which made the issue of trust building easier, making it possible to interview in such a way. Another interview with one of the refugees was postponed several times due to restrictions, and I conducted a walk-along interview outside to comply with the regulations. A second interview with another refugee was conducted in her home, as she was no longer connected to the CSO. Moreover, two interviews were conducted at the campus of VID because there were no vacant rooms available at the organization's premises.

I have approached the interviews in line with Kvale and Brinkmann's (2009) understanding that the interviewer and interviewee are constructing a reality together. As such, the interview subjectivity, for both parts, is shifted from being passive to constructively active. I have used the interviews as a dialogue where we try to understand the participant's experience together as a reflexive and communicative act. This means that I sometimes, in the interviews, have tried to recap my understanding of something they have said and ask if this perception echoes how they experienced the situation. This has usually led to further nuancing of the experience from the participant's perspective. However, the interview is still not a conversation between two equal partners. As a researcher, I, to a great extent, define and control the situation. The aim has been to explore the participant's framework of understanding and create a dialogue where I, in different ways, try to see how they give meaning to their experiences.

Most of the interviews were conducted in Norwegian. However, with three participants, the language level required an interpreter to be present. Previous literature describe many of the challenges on the use of interpreters, highlighting, amongst other, the need for awareness of the embedded power structures, the interactions between the interpreter, the interviewee and the researcher, in addition to the challenges of finding suitable interpreters (Edwards, 1998; Kapborg & Berterö, 2002; Squires, 2009). The interpreters used in this study spoke the participants' language of choice. With the participants from organization A, I used the interpreter already interpreting at the community course, as I knew she was highly regarded within the group and was their preferred choice. As such, the participants were already familiar with the interpreter. In the third case, I booked an interpreter through an agency and asked the participant, a woman, if she had any preference regarding the interpreter's gender, which she did not. In the three cases I used interpreters, I felt the participants were comfortable with the interpreter's presence. They spoke openly and freely and did not seem restricted regarding what they shared. From my point of view, though, I felt like the interviews conducted without an interpreter had a more natural flow, and it was easier for the conversation to go back and forth. In that sense, it entailed some disturbance, yet it did not seem to impact the information given. In an interview, however, there was one incident where the interpreter voiced her opinion on an issue. The participant had talked

for a while about how she felt like, despite her many efforts to get a job, no one would hire her. I asked her how that impacted her motivation. She responded in her mother tongue, and I could tell something happened in the conversation between the interpreter and the participant beyond the regular translation. They laughed, and I could understand the word 'hijab'. The interpreter turned to me and translated how the participant perceived that her hijab diminished her chances of getting a job. The interpreter then explained to me that she had replied to the participant, "*yes, but then you just take [the hijab] off*", followed by a laugh and "*I know it is not easy. I am just kidding*". The point of Burja (2006), underscoring that interpreters are not "simple ciphers without political or social views of their own" (p. 7), became evident in this case. The interpreter did, however, overstep the boundaries and agreement of her role. The interpreter entailed a high level of trust within the group, despite how she, on several occasions, contested this particular issue.

In an interview with another participant, I would prefer to have an interpreter present because of the language barrier. However, despite struggling with the language, the participant wanted to do the interview without an interpreter. In the interview, though, he was very constrained by being unable to express himself as he wanted. He started to share things a few times but could not find the words, and he just said that he wished he had the words to tell me about it but was unable to. These cases highlight both the strengths and limitations of using interpreters. Even though some of the interviews were affected by the use or not of interpreters, I did not feel like it impacted the material gathered tangibly.

3.2.2 Recruitment and final sample

To answer the study's research questions, I wanted data from two different groups of participants. Firstly, I wanted to engage with refugees in different stages of settlement and explore their experiences of labour market integration in Norway. Secondly, I wanted to get the employees' perspectives from different CSOs engaged in refugee integration issues. Moreover, I wanted to explore the encounters between these two 'groups' of participants. For such (and pragmatic) reasons, I chose only to invite refugees who were somehow connected to CSOs participants in the study.

3.2.2.1 Recruitment criteria and access to the field

Initially, the study targeted *newly arrived* refugees, which also coincides with the target group of the larger research project this study is part of, MAVI. However, from the beginning of the fieldwork, I realized that it was not the most fitting term for the participants in my study. I have initially been interested in the refugees' stories *after* the introduction program as many refugees have less support from public stakeholders during this time. This means that some of the participants in my study have been in Norway for up to eight years. For this reason, I set the criteria to be *refugees* and not *newly arrived refugees*.

The criteria for the CSOs to be part of the study was first that they provided some activities or measures targeting refugees or migrants in general. Moreover, I was looking for activities related to supporting refugees in their move toward the labour market. In this project, one of the main entries to contacting relevant participants and conducting observation were more formally structured organizations, contrary to informal social networks or communities. As CSOs are often represented more strongly in bigger cities, I conducted my study in the two biggest cities in Rogaland: Sandnes and Stavanger.

To recruit CSOs to be part of the study, I started by mapping relevant CSOs in Sandnes and Stavanger. To do this mapping, I employed a variety of strategies. In 2020, one of the municipalities handed out grants on behalf of the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) specifically directed towards CSOs working on integration issues. I made a list of organizations that were selected for this grant. I additionally wrote down all the organizations connected to the "international cultural network" at Sølvberget Library and Culture House, the main library in Stavanger and a hub for cultural activities in the Rogaland region. I looked for organizations engaged in activities for (or by) refugees and/or integration. I also used frivillig.no (*volunteer.no*), where I searched for *Stavanger/Sandnes* and *organization.* Finally, I made a table of all the organizations that had come up through either of the strategies, mapping their measures, activities, and target groups. I then started to contact the organizations that seemed most likely to provide data that could answer the study's research questions. According to Whyte (1984), the entry process to access the field in a formal organization is different than in a community. While an organization has official gatekeepers who give access, informal communities have unofficial gatekeepers who can either facilitate or counteract access. In a couple of these organizations, I already had connections through my previous job, both with employees and refugees that were a part of their activities. In these organizations, I had previous contact with official gatekeepers interested in helping facilitate fieldwork for the study.

Nevertheless, I contacted most of the organizations based on information I acquired through the mapping. I started by emailing the organizations, and in cases that I did not get a response, I tried to call a contact person. I ended up establishing connections at six organizations in Stavanger and Sandnes. However, it turned out that one of the organizations mainly worked with labour migrants, and hence the participants would not meet the study's recruitment criteria. Two more organizations were re-organizing their activities at the time, making it challenging to participate in a study. Finally, I ended up with three organizations that fitted the study and allowed me access. The ethical considerations concerning access to the field will be discussed in a later section. In the following, I will give an overview of the three different organizations (organizations A, B, and C), and the sample of the study.

3.2.2.2 Sample

Organization A is an organization with measures and activities targeting immigrants in general. The part of the organization which participated in this study specifically targets female immigrants, offering formal language classes, courses on civic values, creative activities, digital training, and CV writing. The organization specifically aims at providing services for individuals who no longer have the rights to language training for free through the public system. Thus, organization A contributed to integration processes *after* the introduction program.

Organization B is oriented around physical activity and targets the Norwegian population in general, but currently has a three-year project directed at newly arrived refugees, offering work internships for participants *in* the introduction program, with the aim of long-term inclusion in the organization. As such, organization B contribute to fulfilling mandatory elements of the introduction program, in close collaboration with the public agency implementing the program.

Organization C has been established by a social entrepreneur and offers work internships to people with an immigrant background who need help to enter the labour market. The work internship is approved as part of the training toward professional certification, hence fulfil the element of mandatory work-oriented measure in the introduction program. In addition, the organization employs professionals with refugee backgrounds as supervisors or mentors.

In organization C, I started by interviewing the project manager, who was a refugee himself. Unfortunately, due to covid-restrictions, they could not uphold their activities at the time. Therefore, I was awaiting participant observation there until they restarted their activities.

Sadly, the pandemic hit the newly founded organization hard, and it had to shut down the organization due to a lack of financial security. For this reason, I could not follow that organization over time.

The interview sample consists of ten refugees and four employees from CSOs. Three CSO employees from organization A and one from organization B. Moreover, one of the refugee participants was also employed in organization C. Additionally, through the ethnographic fieldwork, I observed and talked to more refugees and volunteers than the number of interviewees. I observed fifteen participants through organization A's community course, while only two participated in interviews. In organization B, I observed eleven refugees in various activities through the fieldwork, whereas seven participated in interviews. I did not conduct formal interviews with any of the volunteers, but had informal talks with them on several occasions.

Table 1. Overview of refugees participating in interviews

Participants	Gender	Age	Educational level	Region of origin	Time of residence[12]	Migration status[13]
1	F	50s	Primary school	Middle East	5 yrs minus	Permanent residency
2	M	20s	BA-level	Middle East	5 yrs minus	Temporary residency
3	F	30s	Primary school	East Africa	5 yrs plus	Permanent residency
4	M	30s	MA-level	Middle East	5 yrs plus	Permanent residency
5	M	30s	BA-level	Middle East	5 yrs minus	Temporary residency
6	F	30s	Primary school	East Africa	5 yrs plus	Permanent residency

[12] The exact time of residence is not provided to ensure the anonymity of the participants in the study.

[13] All the participants in this study had received positive answers to their asylum applications and then received temporary residency. However, according to Norwegian regulations, they can apply for permanent residency after three years.

7	M	30s	No schooling	Middle East	5 yrs minus	Permanent residency
8	F	40s	BA-level	Middle East	5 yrs minus	Temporary residency
9	M	30s	Primary school	Central Africa	5 yrs minus	Permanent residency
10	M	40s	Primary school	Middle East	5 yrs minus	Permanent residency

Table 2. Overview of CSO employees participating in interviews

Participants	Organization	Role
1	Organization A	Teaching Norwegian language classes.
2	Organization A	Organizing volunteers.
3	Organization A	Cleaning and social activities.
4	Organization B	Project manager.

3.2.3 Data analysis

The material has been analyzed in line with the "six-phase approach" to thematic analysis introduced by Braun & Clarke (2012). The six phases they suggest are 1) Familiarizing yourself with the data**,** 2) Generating initial codes, 3) Searching for themes, 4) Reviewing potential themes, 5) Defining and naming themes, and 6) Producing the report. Following this approach, I started familiarizing myself with the data. Once the material was collected, I properly wrote up the field notes from participant observation and transcribed the interviews. Interviews and field notes were imported to Nvivo, ready to be organized, coded, and analyzed. Wanting to immerse myself in the data, I listened to the interviews several times and read the transcripts at least

twice. I also did an intuitive reading of the field notes, ensuring that they were accurately written out, and read through documents collected from the organizations (Braun & Clarke, 2012). While doing this, I wrote down initial reflections and observations. I created memos in Nvivo, on both interviews and fieldnotes, to continuously comment as I did the first readings of the material. To get more intimate with the data, I wrote out some preliminary findings I could withdraw at this point. This valuable exercise highlighted primary observations of what the material was telling me.

The next step was to generate initial codes. Saldaña (2021) describes the essence of a code in qualitative inquiry as: "most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data." (p. 3) Thus, I went on to code in Nvivo by creating around fifty initial codes, based on words or short phrases that stuck out while I familiarized myself with the material. I then continuously created new codes as I worked through the interviews and field notes. However, my reflection during this process is that I ended up somewhat confused after I coded all the data. I was left with a sense that the data did not belong together anymore, almost to a degree of nothing making sense. I then started the mundane and systematic work of interpreting, creating knowledge that made sense, discovering patterns across cases, and simultaneously staying responsible with what the participants trusted me. During this process, I sympathize with Rinehart's (2020) argument that all the (digital) tools a researcher is provided with can sometimes veil findings hidden in the mess: "Through the use of digital technologies and applications (such as NVivo), it is suggested that evidence can be sifted, sorted, and labeled by following systematic and efficient procedures" (Earl Rinehart, 2020, p. 306), yet one should strive to navigate the mess searching for "the confusion, paradox and imprecision" (Earl Rinehart, 2020, p. 306) that are sometimes hidden. I have strived to find what is hidden in the mess, looking for disruption and letting the material confuse and surprise me, to understand better how the participants make sense of their experiences.

To do so, I searched for themes by organizing my codes. I started this process after the first intensive phase of fieldwork and continued this process as the fieldwork evolved. The evolvement of the fieldwork made me review potential themes as new data enhanced and developed the initial themes. When the fieldwork ended, and all the material was gathered, I made a final table that defined and named the themes.

The final, and in my process, the most important analysis stage, was when I started the process which is named "writing the report" (Braun & Clarke, 2012). This phase of the analysis

contributed to lifting the findings from merely description and categorization to deeper analysis. Consistent with the study's hermeneutical approach and the hermeneutical circle's emphasis on the perpetual process of interpreting a text on several levels to create meaning and new understandings, I take on an abductive approach to frame the study's relationship between data and theory. This choice heavily influenced the analysis process. The abductive approach develops that conversation by adding the reciprocal relationship between the research material and theoretical considerations (Earl Rinehart, 2020). Brinkmann (2014) argues that while both induction and deduction address (yet from different approaches) the relationship between data and theory, abduction "is a form of reasoning that is concerned with the relationship between situation and inquiry" (p. 722). He refers to it as a way of *doing* research, a practice where you engage with your material, not focusing solely on the data *or* theory, but on what "occurs in situations of breakdown, surprise, bewilderment, or wonder» (ibid). For instance, working abductively with a form of reasoning "through which we perceive the phenomenon as related to other observations" (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012, p. 171), various theories on discrimination and aspirations inspired me to link these themes in a creative conversation. Thus, the material categorized as *stories of discrimination* were linked to the participant's *aspirations* to further my understanding of how experiences in their migratory trajectories shaped their move toward finding work in a new country. Tavory and Timmerman (2014) perceive abductive research as "recursively moving back and forth between a set of observations and a theoretical generalization" (p. 4). Asking, "what is this a case of ", encouraged by a continuous movement between theoretical generalizations and empirical observations, accentuates the ongoing construction of meaning. For instance, when a few of the participants shared stories of gig-economy employment, either personal or friend's experiences, something in those stories operated as an epiphany; they somehow represented a 'disrupt of harmony' in the text. Even though these cases represented a particular part of the material and not a substantial pattern across many cases, it stirred me to question, "what is this a case of"? Even though these refugees actively participated in the labour market, this did not come across as the indicator of the successful integration the state was aiming for. To construct meaning in these cases, theories on precarity, belonging, and integration informed the analysis, which made the interpretation consist of this continuous conversation between observations and theory: "one part empirical observations of a social world, the other part a set of theoretical propositions" (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014, p. 2). This enabled me to theoretically engage with also such peculiar parts of the empirical material.

3.3 Ethical considerations

Research ethics concerns the moral implications of research, pointing to both laws and regulations, quality, and professional ethics. The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity emphasizes that "good research practices are based on fundamental principles of research integrity" (Academies, 2011). Such principles guide researchers with the practical, ethical, and intellectual challenges one comes across as part of the research process. This imposes reflecting on questions of quality: do the methods used help answer the research questions? Are the necessary approvals and formalities considered? Moreover, a central principle within research ethics is that the research's goal of providing new knowledge and insight must not be at the expense of other people's integrity and welfare (Dalland, 2000, p. 215), often referred to as the principle of 'do no harm'. This is particularly important when researching people in vulnerable situations. There is an ongoing debate among researchers on the tension between the need to develop policies that take into account the lived experiences of the refugee population and the need to protect vulnerable populations against exploitation or harmful practices (Hugman, Pittaway, & Bartolomei, 2011; Jacobsen & Landau, 2003; Leaning, 2001; Temple & Moran, 2006). From the beginning of the study, I have asked questions like: Will the research add strain on the participants? If so, can that be justified? Some researchers argue that research on vulnerable populations, like refugees, can only be justified if it contributes to substantial improvement in the living conditions of the participants or if the participants are actively involved in the study (Beresford, 2003; Jacobsen & Landau, 2003). In response to such criticism and aiming at moving beyond the idea of 'do no harm' to ensure that ethical standards are realized, some researchers approach the field through more collaborative and participatory research, where the involvement of the participants is salient (Hugman et al., 2011; Pittaway, Bartolomei, & Hugman, 2010). Such participatory methods aim to avoid exploitation and enact agency. In this study, many participants had complex life situations as they settled themselves and often several children in a new country while simultaneously navigating policy-led requirements and expectations of language learning and job qualifications. I wanted to avoid adding to their burden by expecting them to contribute substantially to the study. However, I have focused on making their stories visible as another way of enacting agency and, in this way, making them contribute to developing better and more suitable policies and practices. It would have been feasible to involve employees from the CSOs more actively in the interpretation process, which was an option that was discussed more thoroughly with one of the employees. But, since I did not involve the refugees in the analysis process, I felt like it would be unfair to significantly include just one group of participants (CSO employees). Reflecting on this decision

toward the end of the study have, however, made me question the perception that involving the refugees in several phases of this study would add strain on them. Or if it would have instead empowered them. In the following, I discuss more of the ethical considerations that were made in the process of this study.

First and foremost, the research project has been approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (reference number 123755), which was in place before I started the fieldwork. Before I entered the field through participant observation, a gatekeeper from the organization informed the participants about the project. However, when gatekeepers have ensured access to a field, it is still the researcher's responsibility to certify that the participants in the field receive the correct information about the study and what it entails (Skilbrei, 2019). Thus, when I first entered the field, I presented the project again and underlined my role as a researcher. Additionally, all participants were given detailed oral and written information upon the individual interviews. The written information was given in Norwegian, English, or their native language. All the participants gave oral or written consent. In a few incidences, the participants were illiterate. They were then read the written text aloud and gave their consent orally. To ensure the participants' anonymity, their names are made fictitious in all publications, their country of origin is not identified, and neither are the names of the civil society organizations.

At the beginning of the fieldwork, a particular incident made me reflect on and work hard at specifying my role as a researcher. I first encountered this specific organization through my previous job assisting migrants in navigating the public systems. For such a reason, I was often referred to, not by name, but as 'the lady that helps'. Therefore, it could be difficult for participants who knew of me before to understand my role as a researcher. This became evident in my encounter with a woman I met during my fieldwork at organization A.

Sarah had been in Norway for almost eight years and could not get a job since moving to her current city. Her housing conditions were intolerable, and she needed a new place to live. After we had talked for a while, I asked if she would be interested in taking part in an individual interview. She said yes, and we planned an interview a week later when we would meet again at organization A. After our initial conversation, I was still questioning whether she understood the research project and her participation in it. The following week, we met at organization A's premises while I was doing participant observation during one of their activities. We talked a bit before the interview, and I understood that what she envisioned for the "interview", was assistance finding her a new place to live, as this was an urgent matter for her. It was reasonable that she thought I could help her with the housing situation, as this was my role in my previous

job. Once again, I told her that I was now researching and wanted to talk to refugees to hear their stories and thoughts about settlement and work in Norway. She replied, “but I just want to know how you can help me?". I responded that I, unfortunately, could not. Her premium concern was getting a better housing situation; therefore, I chose not to conduct the interview. Instead, we contacted an organization that could assist her through such a process. This case highlighted, and made me particularly aware of, the importance of making sure that participants in the study understood the implications of taking part in a research project and making it clear that I was not in a position to assist, even in vulnerable situations. The fact that Sarah still treated me as 'the lady who helps' underlined the difficulty of distinguishing my previous and current roles. Moreover, this relates in general to my position as an 'outsider' researcher: "Informants' expectation of help or fear of betrayal from the researcher could be greatest if the researcher is firmly placed in the archetypal outsider category: a member of the majority population in the country of settlement" (Carling et al., 2014).

Getting access to a field and establishing trust can be a long process, depending on the field one is entering and the researcher's relationship with the field (Fangen, 2010). In organization A, trust was already established among the participants in the group who knew me before. Their acceptance was also crucial in gaining acceptance within the rest of the group. In organization B, I had yet to have any previous encounters. Before entering the field, I got to know the project leader, who was salient in gaining access to the field and establishing trust. Creswell and Creswell (2017) point to the intrinsic power imbalance embedded in research, claiming that all interviews and observations “should begin from the premise that a power imbalance exists between the data collector and the participants” (p. 94). The perception of me as 'the lady that helps' added to the asymmetrical power balance in the relationship between the participants and myself. For such reasons, I tried to spend much time explaining the research project's aims and outcomes. I did this several times in group settings, through the gatekeepers, and with the participants in individual interviews. I was also transparent and realistic about how this would not directly benefit them but could shed light on important issues.

The Research ethical guidelines for social science, law, and the humanities emphasize researchers' responsibility for the interest of vulnerable groups during the entire research process (NESH, 2006). In this study, both refugees and CSO employees are participants and provide insights into the investigated phenomena. While the CSO employees give information based on their roles, the refugees share personal experiences in a challenging time. They have been uprooted from their country of origin and fled from circumstances characterized by violence and uncertainty. Common for all the refugees is that they are rebuilding their lives in a new country

with a new language and culture. The refugees are facing new, challenging life situations, both financially and socially, whereupon participating in this type of research project might have little gain for them personally. I have made substantial efforts to refrain from pressuring the informants to participate in interviews and to ensure that arrangements were made on their terms and familiar territory. My role as a participant observer also allowed me to know a bit about their circumstances before I asked to interview them. In a few cases, I considered their current life situations to be heavy and overwhelming and that a potential interview would add strain on the participant. In these cases, I choose not to ask for interviews. I stayed in close contact with the gatekeepers in the organizations, who knew the participants well, to ensure that I was not pushing or intruding if participants were going through difficult phases. In organization A, several participants wanted to talk to me during participant observation but were uncomfortable participating in an individual interview. However, in most cases, the participants were very interested in the research project's topic and were eager to share their experiences. They wanted their stories to be heard, hoping that they would benefit refugees in the future. They were particularly interested in sharing their experienced barriers, both individual and structural, with the aim of future improvements and change.

As a researcher, their willingness to share simultaneously gives me a responsibility to handle the material carefully, attempting to make their voices heard to the best of my ability. As research ethics serve as a starting point for reflections on one's research practice (Skilbrei, 2019), this responsibility has also been considered throughout the research process. I have continuously reflected on how I (re)present the participant's perspectives, particularly given my position as an 'outsider' researcher. For instance, although none of the participants was asked about discrimination, the material highlighted such experiences as a salient concern in their move toward the labour market. To make sure that what was prominent from the perspectives of the refugees, I chose to make this the main topic in one of the articles. The attempt to make the participant's voices heard is also reflected in my entrance into the conversation on integration, a highly debated topic. I have done this by making sure to not merely reproduce concepts and frameworks of understanding from political and welfare state discourse but be particularly attentive to how the participants' stories can challenge and widen previous understanding of refugees' labour market integration.

4 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

As mentioned in the methodology chapter, I approach this thesis abductively and, as such, consider the relationship between the empirical material and theoretical perspectives as reciprocal (Earl Rinehart, 2020). Hence, theories have been salient in making sense of the empirical material and situating the findings in the academic conversation. Such an approach has particularly aided me in analyzing the empirical material's peculiar parts. Each of the three articles is informed by different theoretical considerations. This thesis attempts to weave these different conversations together and, on a more overarching level, contribute to the multifaceted body of literature dealing with the labour market integration of refugees. As such, this chapter reflects the different theories that have informed each of the articles in various ways. However, I have chosen to provide more space to some theoretical discussions that were limited by the article format, which I nevertheless find essential to elaborate on to frame the study properly. Hence, I start with an in-depth dive into the academic debate on the concept of integration – a concept essential to this study, yet a deeply contested concept. I situate this study within this debate and add perspectives on belonging and discrimination concerning integration. I move on by conceptualizing aspirations and discussing the aspirations/capabilities framework in the context of labour market integration, which is beneficial to account for the refugees' agency properly. Then I present the Bourdieusian perspective on different forms of capital, with more focus on social capital and network analysis, followed by a discussion on the volunteer-public nexus on integration issues. Finally, to connect the articles on a theoretical level, I additionally introduce the concept of social sustainability.

4.1 The integration framework

The term "integration" is used in academic and political discourses and has been marked by heated and polarized debates in the public sphere. It is, however, attributed various meanings in different contexts, leading scholars to suggest it as “a chaotic concept: a word used by many but understood differently by most’ (Robinson, 1998, p. 118). It is, for instance, extensively used by policymakers, making refugees and other immigrants targets of integration. However, despite many attempts, there is no commonly defined, agreed-upon understanding of the concept of ‘refugee integration’ (De Haas, Castles, & Miller, 2019; Ejrnæs, 2002). Hence, although pivotal in migration research to describe the processes of immigrants settling in a new country, the

concept is broadly contested. Nevertheless, such a concept is found at the core of this study. Although being particularly interested in one specific integration parameter, namely the labour market, it is prominent to consider the current integration debates within migration studies and use this to guide the analytical discussions of refugees' experiences of labour market integration in Norway. In the following, I start by presenting a few of the most central attempts to conceptualize integration, leading to an overview of some critical voices on integration. Next, I bring in perspectives on belonging as an intrinsic dimension within all measures of integration. Finally, an emphasis is put on theories of discrimination to highlight its influence on refugees' prospects of integration.

4.1.1 Conceptualizing integration

A commonly employed conceptualization of integration is the framework proposed by Ager and Strang (2008). Their attempt builds on normative understandings of what can be regarded as successful integration, as a response to significant public and political discussions of the subject, aiming to reveal what constitutes integration's key components. Based on document analysis, fieldwork among refugees in settlement, and secondary analysis of cross-sectional survey data, the authors suggest ten core domains of integration: *employment*, *housing*, *education*, *health*, *social bridges*, *social bonds*, *social links*, *language and cultural knowledge*, *safety and stability*, and finally *rights and citizenship*. The four domains characterized as 'markers and means,' namely *employment*, *housing*, *education*, and *health*, are frequently used to measure the success of policy outcomes. However, Ager and Strang (2008) emphasize that such domains cannot merely be considered indicators of success, as their intertwined function as markers *and* means embeds the potential of mutual reinforcement. For instance, while labour market participation can be regarded as a marker of successful integration, it could also be a *means* to achieve integration in other domains, like language and cultural knowledge. Moreover, the framework highlights *social connections* as the 'connective tissue' mediating citizenship and rights on the one hand and public measures like employment, housing, education, and health on the other (p. 177). At a local level, such connections are considered a defining feature of an integrated community, fostering a sense of belonging. Additionally, two domains where public efforts were found to be particularly influential in their potential to facilitate (or constrain) local integration were *language, cultural knowledge*, and *safety and security*. Finally, rights and citizenship make up the foundation of the framework.

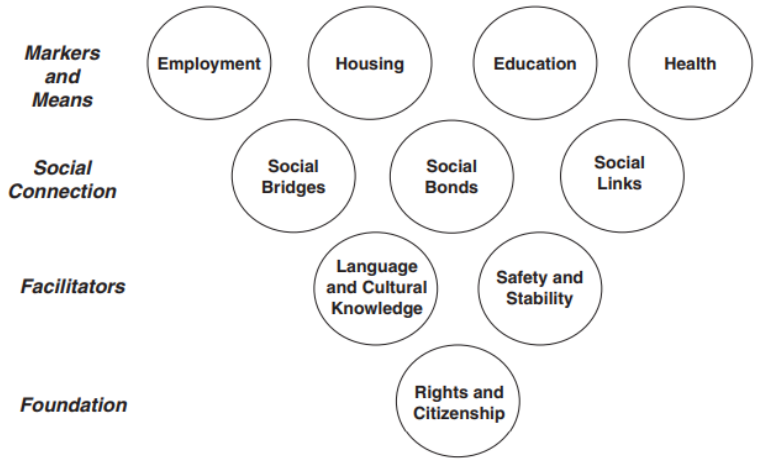

Figure 1. A conceptual framework defining core domains of integration (Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 170)

Although extensively applied in the analysis of refugee integration (Alencar, 2018; Lichtenstein & Puma, 2019; Platts-Fowler & Robinson, 2015) the framework has been criticized for not sufficiently considering the wider context in which integration takes place (Phillimore, 2020; Valenta & Bunar, 2010). One of the most recent criticisms of the attention given to specific policies and measurements that focus on the performance of the individual refugee comes from Phillimore (2020). The author calls for a shift of focus from the individual to the contextual dimensions shaping the opportunity structures of refugee integration, which can facilitate or undermine integration:

> Understanding opportunity structures as sets of resources, arrangements, and pathways that can facilitate or block integration through mechanisms such as inclusion, racism, xenophobia, policy, and practice offers the potential for examining multi-dimensional aspects of receiving-society contexts that can shape refugee-integration opportunities. (Phillimore, 2020, p. 1952)

Building on the framework of Ager and Strang (2008) and combining it with the notion of opportunity structures, Phillimore (2020) suggests five domains of opportunity structures; *locality*, *discourse*, *relations*, *structure*, and *initiatives and support*. Together these offer new possibilities to research and understand integration through a multi-dimensional framework (Phillimore, 2020). The combination of the ten domains of integration from Ager and Strang, and the focus on opportunity structures from Phillimore's work, echoes the analytical focus of this thesis, which seeks to shed light on both the individual and structural dimensions that contribute to shaping refugees' experiences of labour market integration.

4.1.2 The integration debate within migration studies

From a policy perspective, the leading focus is often on newcomers' ability to adapt to the new society, with the expectancy to integrate into the existing society's values, culture, and language. The assumption that immigrants should discard their culture, tradition, and language is often referred to as *assimilation* (Castles, Korac, Vasta, & Vertovec, 2002; Odden, 2018; Schneider & Crul, 2010). From an analytical point of view, however, integration is more often considered a 'two-way process', which concurrently considers both immigrants' rights to conserve their cultural identity while actively participating in the broader society. From this perspective, it becomes relevant to delve into issues of identity, belonging, and recognition. However, scholars have also argued the importance of asking the question 'integration into *what*?' to understand the complexity of integration processes further:

> "immigrants and refugees may find that they have access to the labour market, but are excluded or disadvantaged in the welfare and education sectors (or vice versa). They may be included in both of these, but excluded from political membership. Or they may be included in all of these sectors, but excluded in terms of culture, identity and everyday forms of social interaction." (Castles et al., 2002, pp. 114-115)

In this sense, the labour market integration of refugees should not be studied in isolation but instead asked how it relates to other areas of integration. Another central question that has informed analytical approaches to widen the understanding of integration and challenge the normative assumptions embedded in the concept is 'integration of whom?'. To offer an alternative methodological and analytical framework of integration, Pace and Simsek (2019) approach the discussion with such core questions: Do we discuss integration as perceived and defined by governments and authorities, integration for the country of settlement, or integration for the refugees themselves? Based on findings from studies conducted in Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, Denmark, Germany, and Canada, the authors find a top-down understanding of integration that, in most cases, consider the perspectives of those demanding integration (authorities in countries of settlement) while lacking the perspectives of the ones targeted by integration, which must live with and make sense of the authorities' processes of integration (ibid). This thesis aims to contribute to and add to the body of literature dealing with integration issues by focusing on how policy-led perspectives of integration are experienced and negotiated by the refugees themselves.

Willem Schinkel (2018), one of the critical voices on the use and conceptualization of integration, argues that “researching migration and immigrant integration in Western Europe occurs amidst a public discourse that is highly toxic” (p. 1), calling for scholars to move beyond the notions of ‘immigrant integration’ and paying more attention towards “what happens when migrants move across social ecologies» (p. 1). Schinkel (2017) claims that Western European national societies create their identities by highlighting who does not belong to them and that ‘integration’ allows them to create such boundaries, dichotomizing ‘us’ and ‘them’. Societies perceive themselves as under threat from immigrants by claiming them as “”not yet present in society,” although these immigrants are part and parcel of the social process in these societies” (p. 2). He advises scholars to be cautious when engaging in issues of 'integration' and refuses to prevail images of immigrant integration by assuming that ‘societies’ exist and that immigrants should somehow be integrated into them. He argues that no problems immigrants face as they settle in a new country, like unemployment, are aided by "*adding to them* an imagination of integration” (Schinkel, 2017, p. 14). On the contrary, such imaginaries add to the burden of immigrants as they not only have to cope with their unemployment, but it also operates as a marker of their lack of integration, which distances them from 'society'. Similarly, Favell, another sociologist sharing Schinkel’s critique of the analytical use of such a policy-infected term, argues that by taking on the national integration paradigm, researchers become “handmaidens to a political process” (Favell, 2019, p. 4). If used analytically, he suggests instead a *reversed* form of measuring integration: the de-differentiation of the “national” by the “foreign”, indicating that the national society ought to be anchored in a wider, global community.

Rytter (2019), another critic, suggests “writing against integration” as a means to oppose the risk of uncritical analysis and avoid becoming an active element in “the stigmatization of vulnerable ethnic and religious minorities” (p. 678). One of the problematic aspects is the normative premise and assumptions embedded when successful integration is measured by immigrant's identification with the country of settlement, relations to the majority population, and at some point internalization of the norms and values of the majority population (Saharso, 2019). In a similar vein, Dahinden (2016) has argued for a’de-migranticising’ of migration and integration research as a critique against the nation-state and ethnicity-centered epistemology that characterize the discipline. One way of ‘de-migranticising’ migration research, she suggests, is to stop treating the migrant population as a singular unit of analysis, and rather study citizens, the whole population, although not loosing sight of the influence migration and ethnicity has for the issue of investigation. As all citizens are expected to integrate into the labour market, such an

approach allows to pay particular attention to the various hurdles that are specific to migrant integration.

The question, then, would be how one as a scholar in the field of integration can move beyond the normative categories and discourses present both in academia and ever so in the political sphere and critically examine what happens when refugees settle and pave their way in a new country. Many scholars share the critique proposed against the concept, acknowledging that the use of the concept embeds the potential of marking otherness in which the ones targeted by integration are relegated to a position of passivity (Collyer, Hinger, & Schweitzer, 2020; Meissner, 2019). However, instead of abandoning the concept, they suggest ways of approaching the field that keeps sight of critical analysis. Penninx, for instance, writes in defense of integration, arguing that scholars, instead of "agreeing" with the use of the concept within integration policies, should develop "non-normative analytical concepts" (Penninx, 2019a, p. 4). In response to Schinkel's critique of researchers' engagement in 'immigrant integration', Penninx disputes the argument of abandoning the concept but instead offers solutions that operate independently from the policy concept of integration, suggesting instead studying the *processes* of integration. I sympathize with his proposal of a broad and open definition of integration as "the process of becoming an accepted part of society" (p. 5), given its consideration of both "the process of settlement, interaction with the host society, and social change that follows immigration" (p. 5). Rytter (2019) also acknowledges that integration is central in the vocabulary of public and political authorities and, therefore, cannot be ignored: "integration is always embedded in specific national social imaginaries and must be approached and studied as such" (p. 680). A response to such critiques in the Norwegian context is an edited publication on stories of integration from local Norwegian communities (Gullikstad et al., 2021), which examines the underlying presumptions the concept of integration is built on. The authors take the immigrant's perspectives and reflections as their point of departure, aiming to move the focus away from the individual responsibility that Norwegian integration policy is heavily influenced by and allow the exposure of subtle and sometimes hidden perspectives. These narratives contribute to new perspectives on how immigrants understand and negotiate the process of settling in a new country.

Another approach that takes on the task of creating such non-normative analytical concepts is the book "Politics of (Dis)Integration" (Collyer et al., 2020). Here, the authors apply the term (dis)integration to conceptualize the intertwined connection between integration and disintegration, attempting to reverse the typical approach of measuring integration in terms of outcomes. Instead, the authors argue that mining integration in constant relation to its opposite –

disintegration – allows for critical and fruitful analysis. The conceptualization builds on, among others, literature on the concurrent processes of inclusion and exclusion, particularly its concern with precarity, highlighting that "the disproportionate inclusion of migrant workers in particular sections of the labour market – such as domestic or night work – may make their exclusion from various other domains of social and everyday life more likely" (p. 5).

This thesis contributes to the debate on integration by critically engaging with the contested concept. Each of the three articles in this thesis attempts to demonstrate processes of labour market integration from the perspective of either the individual refugee or through encounters with civil society organizations.

4.1.3 (Politics of) Belonging

How the notion of belonging manifests in settlement and integration processes has stirred scholars' interest in migration studies for decades (Crul & Schneider, 2010; Flick, Hirseland, & Hans, 2019; Korteweg, 2017). In the third article, I discuss how inclusion in precarious segments of the labour market, although providing decent income, might have a disintegrative effect because of its detrimental effect on the sense of belonging. This argument builds on the understanding that belonging is crucial *within* other integration measures and essential in securing meaningful integration (Ager & Strang, 2008; Rottmann, 2020). I draw on Yuval-Davis' and Antonsichs' analytical frameworks to shed light on how various individual and structural factors shape belonging and argue that precarious working conditions can lead to *precarious belonging*: a sense of belonging that is fragile and conditional. Both authors highlight belonging as a non-static, ever-evolving process of *becoming*. Yuval-Davis (2006) claim such dynamic movements to be “processes of being and becoming, belonging and longing to belong” (p. 202). Additionally, Yuval-Davis and Antonsich discuss belonging along two lines; the personal sense of belonging on the one hand, and what they refer to as politics of belonging on the other. The former is related to emotional attachment, a personal and intimate experience of feeling at home and safe, while the politics of belonging is concerned with the boundaries of the political community (Antonsich, 2010; Yuval-Davis, 2006). However, the personal sense of belonging is not separate at work but in relation to discourses and practices in the wider community where one longs to belong.

In addition to the intimate sense of personal belonging, Antonsich (2010) emphasizes the spatial dimension of feeling at home at a place, which she refers to as *place-belongingness*. The

author considers five factors particularly influential in shaping the sense of belonging and rootedness in a place: autobiographical, relational, cultural, economic, and legal. First, *the auto-biographical* dimension refers to one's personal history, relations and memories that bind a person to a specific place. For the refugees in this study, their individual and personal narratives and memories connect them to the places they have now left. Secondly, *social relations* that tie an individual to a group or a community influences the feeling of belonging. As such, both ethnic networks and relations with the majority population in various ways contribute to fostering belonging. The Norwegian context is characterized by a high employment rate across the population, and thus, the labour market represents a crucial arena for the development of social relations which can facilitate embeddedness in a community. Moreover, *language* is considered the most important cultural factor influencing the sense of belonging. While language sufficiency for refugees settling in a new country has proven to be salient to access the labour market (Ager & Strang, 2008; Bakker et al., 2017; Elgvin & Svalund, 2020; Søholt et al., 2015), it additionally positively impacts refugees' well-being by facilitating increased relations with the majority population (Tip, Brown, Morrice, Collyer, & Easterbrook, 2019). *Economic embeddedness* in the sense of being fully integrated into a given economy is another dimension highlighted to impact place-belongingness, which makes "a person feel that s/he has a stake in the future of the place where s/he lives" (Antonsich, 2010, p. 648). Lastly, the *legal* dimension is pivotal in contributing to security and stability, which is essential to shape a sense of belonging. All the refugees participating in this study had obtained permanent residency in Norway and were as such legally protected for future prospects in the country. Taking these factors into consideration regarding its impact on the notion of belonging provides essential insight into the discussion of belonging as central within other integration measures like labour market participation and how it influences refugees' opportunities and aspirations of integration in Norway.

Yuval-Davis (2006) differentiate the politics of belonging from a personal notion by defining it as "specific political projects aimed at constructing belonging in particular ways to particular collectivities" (p. 198). The author claims that the politics of belonging is about boundary maintenance, defining the imagined 'us' and 'them': "the politics of belonging is all about potentially meeting other people and deciding whether they stand inside or outside the imaginary boundary line of the nation or other communities of belonging, whether they are 'us' or 'them'" (p. 204). Such an understanding echoes Schinkel's argument that Western European societies create their identities by defining who belongs to it and who does not. Under this assumption, definitions of what constitutes successful integration and *who* needs integration take

part in the “dirty work of boundary maintenance” (Crowley, 1999, p. 24), dichotomizing ‘us’ and ‘them’. For such reasons, it is pivotal to explore factors that contribute to disintegration, exclusion, and non-belonging. One such area that the findings in this thesis demonstrate as central to the refugees' experiences of both aspirations of and actual opportunities of labour market integration is experiences of discrimination. In the following, I will present some perspectives on discrimination that have guided my analytical focus.

4.1.4 Discrimination

When I initially started to analyse the empirical material, discrimination narratives emerged as a salient concern in various parts of the refugees' settlement experiences. These findings are portrayed in the first article, where I specifically delve into how perceptions and experiences of discrimination influence the refugees' labour market aspirations. However, theoretical considerations on the notion of discrimination are relevant to highlight other aspects of integration and belonging.

Although aspects of racism, inequality, and discrimination have been addressed in research and scholarly debates for centuries, the use of discrimination as an academic concept is relatively recent in Europe. A growing ethnic diversity in European societies, combined with the extensive evidence that immigrants and their descendants face discrimination while entering and settling in Europe, has led to a fast-growing body of research in discrimination studies (Fibbi et al., 2021). Marta Bivand Erdal (2021) argues that everyday racism, the small daily things, shape our experiences and embed structural dimensions. While terms like racism, inequality, and discrimination are sometimes used interchangeably, I lean on a definition of discrimination as “the unequal treatment of otherwise similar individuals due to their ascribed membership in a disadvantaged category or group” (Fibbi et al., 2021, p. 19). According to Fibbi et al. (2021), there are two blind spots in integration theories where discrimination research offers a different aspect. The first matter is the ethnicization and racialization of non-white minorities. The second blind spot is the interconnectedness of the majority society's structures and the agency of migrants and ethnic minorities in the processes of incorporation (ibid). In discussions of refugees' experiences of settlement and the move towards the Norwegian labour market, it is crucial to consider the prevalence and consequences of existing structures within the society that inevitably shape the opportunity structures in which integration occurs.

To discuss how refugees in Norway are particularly vulnerable to discrimination, I draw on theories of intersectionality, which refers to discrimination based on multiple grounds, emphasizing the intertwined dimension of categorical differences (Collins & Bilge, 2020; Cooper, 2016; Gopaldas, 2013). Kimberly Crenshaw initially conceptualized intersectionality based on arguments that the violence women of color experienced often was shaped by other dimensions such as race and class, and that the failure to acknowledge their intersecting identities, marginalized them both as women and of color (Crenshaw, 1990, 2018). Several studies argue that hostility, prejudice, and negative attitudes specifically against Muslims are a real and increasing challenge both in Norway and other parts of the world (J.-P. Brekke et al., 2020; Di Stasio et al., 2021; Larsen & Di Stasio, 2021; Strabac et al., 2014). From an intersectional perspective, being a Muslim minority woman, for instance, one can face discrimination on multiple levels, such as religion, gender, and ethnicity. This was evident in this study's findings, where the symbolic marker of the hijab was experienced as a constraint to their labour market opportunities.

It is common to distinguish between experiences of discrimination on an individual level and perceptions of discrimination as members of the group, often referred to as the personal/group discrepancy (Skrobanek, 2009). Research shows a tendency for higher levels of perceived group discrimination than the level of personal experiences. For instance, a person can perceive her group, Muslims in Europe, to be a target for discrimination without perceiving themselves individually as targets (Taylor, Wright, Moghaddam, & Lalonde, 1990; Taylor, Wright, & Porter, 1994). While there could be several explanations for such a pattern, one explanation is to view it as a strategy to reduce stress related to discrimination and stigmatization. Based on the assumption that people wish to establish a positive social identity, people develop various response strategies to avoid the type of negative social identity discrimination may foster (Fibbi et al., 2021; Taylor et al., 1990).

Much of the literature dealing with discrimination includes the refugee population, albeit not exclusively. However, research on the outcomes post-migration experiences have on the health and well-being of refugees finds perceived discrimination to have a detrimental effect on refugees' mental health and social adaption, particularly when viewed in connection with pre-migration trauma and stress (Beiser & Hou, 2006; Ellis, MacDonald, Lincoln, & Cabral, 2008; E. Montgomery & Foldspang, 2007; Szaflarski & Bauldry, 2019). Additionally, the refugee experience itself, often including exposure to violence and conflict, trauma, and flight, make refugees especially vulnerable when settling and establishing a new life on unfamiliar territory (Brell et al., 2020). As such, people in these circumstances are more vulnerable to experiences of

discrimination or prejudice from the majority population (Fangen, 2006). This thesis aims to contribute to the literature on how discrimination influences the refugee population in their integration processes.

4.2 Aspirations

From the beginning of this project, I have been interested in not only the refugees' actual labour market participation but also their thoughts and ideas about becoming part of the Norwegian labour market. This becomes particularly relevant when studying refugees who have yet to be able to enter the labour market or, for other reasons, are, or have been, excluded from it. To explore this, I draw on the concept of *aspirations*. In this study, I use aspirations interchangeably with "wishes", "ambitions" and "hopes" to describe the participant's imagined future (Frye, 2012). Furthermore, I lean on the understanding of aspirations as “emotionally thick representations of what one’s future might and should look like, given the present circumstances and the experience of the past as re-codified from the “here-and-now”” (Boccagni, 2017). Looking at aspirations allows for new perspectives on the interface of structure and agency as it considers how structural factors and individual orientation shape social action (Boccagni, 2017). Within migration studies, aspirations have been applied to understand its role as a driver in decisions to migrate. Czaika and Vothknecht (2014) claim that migration decisions are “both initiated and perpetuated by an ex ante aspiration gap reflecting people’s desire to realise economic, social, human or political opportunities which are within their aspirational windows” (p. 3). However, aspirations to migrate due to higher awareness of prospects of a better life elsewhere are not enough to actually migrate. One can aspire to migrate but still lack the individual, economic and relational capabilities to do so. Jørgen Carling, one of the prominent voices on the issue of aspirations in migration (Carling, 2002, 2014; Carling & Collins, 2018), proposed in his early work an aspirations/ability framework to understand experiences of mobility and immobility (Carling, 2002). Many scholars have later engaged with the issue and elaborated on and developed his work further (Bal & Willems, 2014; Boccagni, 2017; Czaika & Vothknecht, 2014; De Haas, 2010; Van Meeteren, Engbersen, & Van San, 2009). Such academic work has culminated in what is commonly referred to as *the aspirations/capabilities framework*. I will elaborate on this framework as an analytical point of departure to discuss how this can be employed to shed light on the evolving aspirations of refugees also after settlement.

Amartya Sen (1999) introduced to capability approach initially to reconceptualize development, using the concept of human capability, which he defined as "the ability of human beings to lead lives they have reason to value and to enhance the substantive choices they have" (Sen, 2014 in De Haas 2021). The early work of Carling (2002) highlights that the migrants we observe through international movements are the ones who aspire to migrate with the belief that life is preferable elsewhere, in addition to embedding the ability to act on those aspirations (Carling, 2002). On the contrary, people who aspire to migrate but do not entail the relational, cultural, or economic abilities to do so are trapped in involuntary immobility. Similarly, refugees who aspire to succeed in the Norwegian labour market but do not have the necessary abilities to either access or advance their position in the labour market could be trapped in involuntary *social* immobility. One of the more recent works on the aspirations-capabilities framework comes from De Haas (2021), who proposes a meta-conceptual framework to advance the understanding of how migrants exert agency within given – or perceived – opportunity structures such as class, religion, gender, and ethnicity. He conceptualizes migration as a "function of people's capabilities and aspirations to migrate within given sets of perceived geographical opportunity structures"(p. 2). Both Carling and De Haas' propose their frameworks as a response to how previous migration theories have failed to acknowledge the impact of human agency. De Haas (2021) claims that the main problem with migration theories is "their inability to meaningfully conceptualise how individual migrants and groups of migrants exert agency within broader structural constraints" (p. 14) and aims to contribute to a more meaningful understanding of agency in both processes and experiences of migration.

De Haas (2021) applies the twin concepts of negative and positive liberties introduced by Isaiah Berlin (1969) to link individual capabilities and aspirations on the one hand and macro-structural processes on the other. While negative liberties refer to the absence of barriers or constraints (freedom from), positive liberties focus on one's ability to take control and realise fundamental purposes (freedom to) (Berlin 1969 in De Haas, 2021). Accordingly, the absence of constraint (negative liberty) is insufficient for people to exert agency. There is a need for positive liberty that provides them with the capabilities and resources to enjoy freedom from negative liberty. In one of the articles of this thesis, I discuss how perceptions of discrimination contributed to shaping the refugees' aspirations of labour market integration. Here I used this notion of positive and negative liberties to demonstrate the intertwined dimensions of structure and agency by highlighting that although removing a structural constraint such as discrimination (negative liberty), one would still need certain "positive liberties" such as language proficiency, formal competence, and network to exceed labour market integration. I believe, however, that

this theoretical lens could be fruitfully applied to analyse how refugees, in a wider sense, negotiate the structural constraints they experience on their move towards the labour market and how their embedded capabilities to exert agency within limited opportunity structures, influences not only their aspirations to become part of the Norwegian labour market but additionally their opportunities for upward mobility. If refugees lack individual resources – the capacities – to aspire in the Norwegian labour market, they could potentially be trapped in *involuntary social immobility*.

4.2.1 The aspirations/capabilities framework and refugees' aspiration trajectories

The migration trajectory is not merely their travel from one place to another but extends to their different encounters and experiences as they resettle in a new country. Hence, in addition to being extensively applied to understand the desires and drivers of migration itself, the aspirations/capabilities framework has more recently been utilised to analyse refugee trajectories as they settle and embark on the processes of establishing their lives in a new society (Borselli & van Meijl, 2021; Van Heelsum, 2017). It has been argued that employing this framework offers a less biased perspective into the integration debate by highlighting refugees' agency in the interrelated dimensions of both migration and integration processes:

> (…) studying aspirations aids us in understanding how refugees conceive and alter their life trajectories in response to specific constraints and how, by doing so, they can influence migration and integration processes." (Borselli & van Meijl, 2021, p. 580)

Similarly, this study builds on such an understanding by discussing how the participants' aspirations evolve and are redefined as they encounter the Norwegian society. The empirical material aligns with arguments of aspirations as not merely rational choices but continuous negotiations within opportunities and constraints, social relations, and possibilities of transforming the self (Borselli & van Meijl, 2021; Carling & Collins, 2018). Carling and Collins (2018) emphasize social relations based on claims that individual aspirations operate inseparably from aspirations manifested in the social context. For instance, in the context of migratory aspirations, observing other people's achievements might influence their aspirations of realistic future prospects. This study investigates the aspirations of refugees settling in Norway. Particular attention is given to their aspirations concerning entrance to and prospects in the Norwegian labour market. Drawing on the terms of Carling and Collins (2018), such aspirations are

similarly socially grounded. The refugees are part of communities and networks that negotiate the same opportunities and constraints as themselves. Consequently, they adjust their aspirations according to their individual capabilities and observations of their peers' achievements.

Another example of research on immigrant aspirations from a settlement perspective comes from Boccagni (2017). He examines how migrants' aspirations evolve by studying immigrant domestic workers in Italy. Considering aspirations as temporally, relationally, and situationally embedded, it is reasonable to believe that aspirations change due to various migratory experiences (Boccagni, 2017; E. Scheibelhofer, 2018). Being particularly attentive to the temporal dimension, the interdependencies of past, present and future, Boccagni (2017) stresses the need to take "both at the ongoing influence of the external structure of opportunities, and at their changing potential and volition to achieve their aspirations" (p. 7) into consideration. What he found among the participants of his study was a discrepancy between the immigrant's aspirations while leaving home and their aspirations after settlement, a gap which he claims reflects the limited scope to negotiate their life in a new society. As such, the objective of this study aligns with that of Boccagni in the sense that it both looks into the imagined future from their current perspectives while also considering their aspirations retrospectively. Although I first interviewed the refugees when they had already migrated, were settled, and had embarked on their journey to become part of the Norwegian society, the participants were asked to reflect on what their aspirations for the new life in Norway were before they came, in addition to current perspectives on their prospects of labour market integration in Norway. This allows for deeper insights into how the evolvement of aspirations impinges on both encounters with the Norwegian society and other parts of their life trajectories.

This sub-chapter has demonstrated that research on aspirations within migration studies is extensively applied to understand determinants, desires, and drivers of migration (Bal & Willems, 2014; Carling, 2002, 2014; Carling & Collins, 2018; De Haas, 2010). Moreover, a theoretical framework has been developed that considers both individual aspirations and their capabilities to realize those aspirations within the opportunity structures they navigate (Carling, 2002; De Haas, 2021). However, it is only more recently that such frameworks have been applied to analyse the role of aspirations in integration processes (Borselli & van Meijl, 2021; Van Heelsum, 2017). This is still an understudied area in migration studies, despite its potential to account for refugees' agency in ways integration research fails to do. As such, this thesis aims to extend the literature on how refugees' aspirations evolve and redefine as part of their extended migratory trajectories, how they negotiate structural constraints and opportunities, and their capacities to fulfil their aspirations.

4.3 The different forms of capital – a Bourdieusian perspective

This thesis is interested in exploring the opportunity structures in which refugees navigate to move towards or enter the labour market. I have been attentive to their ability to utilize and convert their available resources and how this benefit or constrain them in relation to labour market integration. To do so, I draw on capital theory as an analytical prism that describes how a social group's position is determined by economic, cultural, and social structures of inequality (Nohl, Schittenhelm, Schmidtke, & Weiss, 2006). Capital, as understood by Bourdieu (1986) bears the "potential capacity to produce profits" (p. 81). This approach enables us to understand how different forms of capital contribute to and determine the relative position of a group within a social space:

> "the structure of the distribution of the different types and subtypes of capital at a given moment in time represents the immanent structure of the social world, i.e., the set of constraints, inscribed in the very reality of that world, which governs its functioning in a durable way, determining the chances of success for practices" (Bourdieu, 2011, p. 81)

Bourdieu (1986) introduced the concepts of *different* forms of capital as a critique of how economic theory had reduced the world of exchanges to be merely mercantile, which is geared towards maximizing economic profit, and as such, *disinterests* noneconomic exchanges. Consequently, besides *economic*, he proposed *cultural* and *social* as forms in which capital can present itself. While economic capital can immediately transform into money, cultural and social capital can, under certain circumstances, convert into economic capital. One of the reasons integration policies concentrate on labour market participation stems from the political aims of self-sufficiency and decreased welfare dependency. From a Bourdieusian perspective, one can say that the refugees' ability to convert cultural and social capital into economic capital, a job with a steady income, is a fruitful way to analyze how refugees utilize their resources.

Cultural capital reveals itself, according to Bourdieu, in three different forms; institutionalized, objectified, and embodied. Cultural capital in the institutionalized state is often referred to as educational qualifications, while the objectified state concerns the possessions of cultural goods like pictures, books, or instruments. The embodied state of cultural capital refers to people's values, skills, and knowledge and is obtained through a long-lasting process of disposition of the body and mind (Bourdieu, 1986; Erel, 2010; Pinxten & Lievens, 2014). In migration research, cultural capital has commonly been used to understand integration processes

by looking at how the cultural resources that migrants entail are (under)valorised in the country of settlement (Nee & Sanders, 2001; Zhou, 2005). This becomes evident in refugees' struggle to get education from their country of origin approved and acknowledges. In particular, cultural capital has been applied to analyse skilled migration (Koikkalainen, 2014; Lan, 2011). In one of the articles of this thesis, I explored language acquisition as one display of cultural capital. In addition to educational attainment, the ability to quickly acquire the language is crucial for refugees' opportunities in the Norwegian labour market. Moreover, there are indications that if one already possesses cultural capital in an institutionalized form like educational qualification, one is better positioned to acquire more cultural capital, like Norwegian language skills, than those with little embodied cultural capital.

Social capital refers to the social relations that enable an individual to advance one's interest (Siisiainen, 2003). Bourdieu defines it as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 86). Following this idea, cultural and social capital are resources that, given the right circumstances, can be converted into economic capital and utilized to overcome barriers like unemployment. Given this study's focus on the encounters between refugees and CSOs, I have been particularly, albeit not exclusively, interested in the relational and social dimension of the refugees' experiences. I have looked into what social connections are formed through encounters with CSOs and what types of social resources these encounters represent for the refugees.

4.3.1 Social capital and social network

In addition to the approach of Bourdieu, theories on social capital have been applied by various researchers to understand and measure integration and its impact in overcoming various societal struggles (Putnam, 2000; Putnam, Leonardi, & Nanetti, 1994; Siisiainen, 2003). In migration studies, Putnam, a political scientist, has been more influential than Bourdieu in theorizing social capital. He argues that the quality of a democracy is heavily influenced "by norms and networks of civic engagement" (Putnam, 2000, p. 224). This builds upon the understanding of social capital as an essential and vital part of a community: "A solution to the problem of common action and opportunism presupposes the development of voluntary collective action, and it is connected to the inherited social capital in the community"(Siisiainen, 2003, p. 4). According to this rationale, a collective willingness to establish bonds and social relations across, and not only

within, groups will increase the chances for a community to overcome a societal struggle like refugee integration. However, while Putnam understands social capital as a public good that measures resources available to cities, states, and nations (Portes & Vickstrom, 2015), Bourdieu perceives social capital as resources inherent in the individual's network and one's ability to transform these resources into economic and cultural capital.

Although theories on social capital have been repeatedly applied to shed light on refugees' settlement and labour market integration, there is, however, inconsistency in the literature on the importance of social capital. One of the main critiques comes from the argument that merely focusing on the possession of social capital downplays the importance of other types of resources, like education, previous work experience and language sufficiency (Cheung & Phillimore, 2014; Potocky-Tripodi, 2004). Critique has additionally been raised towards theories on social capital for underestimating the importance of temporal differentiations and gender and power relations (Anthias, 2007; Erel, 2010; L. Ryan, Sales, Tilki, & Siara, 2008). In this study, I draw on the Bourdieusian perspective of *different forms of capital*, to explore how the varied and intertwined dimensions of resources contribute to shaping the experience of entering the Norwegian labour market.

While theories on social capital provide valuable insight into how social and relational resources can be mobilized and become beneficial for the individual, I additionally apply Granovetter's theory of *strong ties and weak ties* (1973). I use this theory to highlight how the various strengths and compositions of the refugees' social ties in different ways formed the social capital available to them. Granovetter is well known for his argument of the cohesive power embedded in *weak ties*, referring to the social connections in people's overlapping networks. He claims such connections are salient in facilitating mobility opportunities because they, more often than strong ties, can create linkages between members in *different* groups (Granovetter, 1973). In the second article, I delve into the role of CSOs in processes of what I refer to as *reversed integration* and argue that the CSOs facilitated arenas that expanded refugees' social network that contributed to preventing isolation and loneliness and, as such provided opportunities for social capital development that could increase their chances in the labour market. However, when working on issues of belonging, which is the case of the third article, *strong ties* in the form of long-lasting, deep and significant relational connections are shown to be of greater importance. The 'belongingness hypothesis' proposed by Baumeister and Leary (1995) suggests that "human beings have a pervasive drive to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships" (Baumeister &

Leary, 1995). Deriving from such an argument, weak ties “would not be sufficient to generate a sense of connectedness to others on which belonging relies” (Antonsich, 2010).

Together, theories on the different forms of capital, particularly social capital, provide this thesis with perspectives that accentuate how available resources and the refugee's ability to command those resources into desired capital shape the opportunity structures in which they navigate labour market integration.

4.4 The volunteer-public sector nexus in integration issues

In addition to focusing on the individual refugee's experience, this thesis explores the interaction between refugees settling in Norway and formalized civil society organizations. I look into how these encounters shape refugees' settlement and integration experiences in Norway. However, it additionally seeks to understand the space in which the CSOs navigate to offer support for refugees through integration processes in a welfare state like the Norwegian. In the following, I will present some of the theoretical approaches I draw on to discuss the role of CSOs in refugees' integration processes in contemporary welfare states, including the Norwegian. Although touched upon in the second article, which deals with the role of CSO in integration processes, I make use of the space available in this extended abstract to elaborate on some theoretical considerations which is beneficial to a more thorough discussion on the role of CSOs in the future welfare state, specifically in relation to integration issues.

4.4.1 The neoliberal influence on the Nordic welfare states

Since the 1980s, neoliberal thoughts and ideas have increasingly contributed to shaping the advancement of welfare states. According to Kamali and Jönsson (2018), the shift towards neoliberalism is the most influential socio-economic, political, ideological, and cultural change the world has seen recently. A core element of the neoliberal ideology is the freedom of choice. According to this ideology, "the market offers more effective forms of democracy by enabling everyone to make their own choices" (Kourachanis, 2020a, p. 52). In addition, the European financial crisis fueled the proliferation of neoliberalism, giving increased attention to new and innovative ways of reducing bureaucratic costs and efficient solutions to social demands and challenges (Kourachanis, 2020b). Such a focus has led to a paradigmatic shift in European social

policy, promoting market liberalization and professionalism to decrease welfare dependency (Kamali & Jönsson, 2018; Kourachanis, 2020b). Bourdieu (1998) has argued that neoliberalism gives individualism such a dominant role that it decreases collectivism, leading to an individualized society. Similarly, Kourachanis (2020b) has argued that the modern discourse of social policy “center on the axis of individual responsibility” (p. 67). In integration policies, such a shift is reflected through an increased focus on the responsibility of the individual refugee.

The Nordic countries, which traditionally have been regarded as developed welfare states with a strong public sector, have since the 1990s likewise been the subject of reforms which have the political aims of more effective welfare states, cheaper governance, and decreased welfare dependency, facilitating the proliferation of neoliberal ideologies (Kamali & Jönsson, 2018). However, such reforms have been shown to increase inequalities in egalitarian countries like the Nordics. They are, as a result challenging the image of these countries as "bastions of equality, equity and social cohesion" (p. 8). Ann Kristin Alseth (2018) analyses Norwegian immigration and integration policies in light of the past decades' neoliberal shift and perceives the recent increase in migration to Europe, including Norway, as a result of neoliberal globalization. In the Norwegian context, the coinciding of neoliberal reforms and increased immigration has led to the development of policies aiming to make immigration cost-effective. This is particularly reflected in activation policies that have been salient in integrating refugees since the 90s. For instance, participation in the introduction program determines economic benefits and opportunities to gain citizenship. Moreover, the refugee crisis in 2015 was, from a government perspective, perceived as an economic problem and a threat to the sustainability of the welfare state (Alseth, 2018). Such trends have renewed interest in the voluntary sector's role in future welfare states (Kamali & Jönsson, 2018; Selle et al., 2018).

4.4.2 Civil society and the future of the welfare state

The increased expectations of the voluntary sector and the sector's response to public service provision (Loga, 2018) are often discussed in terms of 'welfare pluralism', 'the welfare mix', or 'mixed economy of welfare' (Dahlberg, 2005; Loga, 2018). The concept of welfare pluralism focuses on how various actors can provide welfare services and is characterized by a purposeful duplication of activities where users can choose in a pluralized market of services (Dahlberg, 2005). Bagavos and Kourachanis (2022) emphasize that the concept of welfare pluralism accentuates how “a number of institutions, such as the informal family protection network, wider

civil society, and even the private sector, can complement or autonomously contribute to the provision of welfare" (p. 888). While such approaches are not necessarily competitive, Dahlberg (2005) argues that 'social care markets', nevertheless, "are at the core of the mixed economy of welfare" (p. 744). For instance, while most CSOs dealing with issues related to refugees and integration are funded by the state, they compete against each other for the same (limited) funding, often characterized by short-term prospects. Kourachanis (2020b) argues that the financial crisis in Europe contributed to accepting welfare pluralism as the dominant approach to social issues, which led to accepting CSOs as resolutions to social problems. However, debates on the division of welfare production between different sectors are not merely on the welfare state's sustainability regarding economic issues and efficiency. Increased focus has been given to how these trends additionally influence democratic aspects and diversity: "civil society's actualization in current debates concerns more than just economic, ideological pluralism in welfare services. Arguments tied to participation and empowerment are increasingly highlighted» (Loga, 2018, pp. 578-579), which reflects the ongoing debates on the role of CSO in future welfare states. As such, studying the role of CSOs in the labour market integration of refugees is a case in point to explore how the volunteer sector navigates the increased expectations as welfare contributors, in a modern welfare state influenced by neoliberal discourses and reforms, in addition to their added value as providers of services that enhance participation and inclusion.

4.4.3 Variations in the civil society – public relationship

Although a general trend toward upgrading civil society's role, the voluntary sector's role in the welfare state varies over time and in different contexts. In some countries, CSOs are central providers of welfare services, while they, in others, play a marginal and supplementary role (Bruzelius, 2020). Based on empirical studies conducted in Greece, Italy, Finland, the Czech Republic, the UK, and Switzerland, Baglioni et al. (2022) propose a typology of CSOs relationship with the public sector concerning the labour market integration of migrants. They found four types of interplay that characterize how CSOs relate to the state and simultaneously shape their role in these issues: (a) traditional public administration planning and delivery; (b) co-management; (c) co-production with a partial or no role for public sector organizations; and (d) full co-production (Baglioni et al., 2022, p. 856). Although co-production is a terminology used in various ways, this typology is based on a definition differentiating co-production from

co-governance and co-management: “coproduction includes the collaboration of the public sector and CSOs in both planning and delivery services, co-governance is conceptualised as involving CSOs in planning services. Co-management instead sees the role of nonprofit organisations only in delivering public services” (p. 856). In the UK, for instance, there has been a call for the private sector to step in, operating with a public welfare system designed to cover the 'national minimum' (Baglioni et al., 2022; Dahlberg, 2005). However, several scholars have raised concerns in regards to the autonomy of CSOs when integration measures are outsourced through public funding questioning whether the private and volunteer sector then becomes instruments of governance for the state and as such, coproducers of neoliberal expectations (Alseth, 2018; Kamali & Jönsson, 2018; Numerato et al., 2019).

In Norway, the public state is still regarded as the dominant welfare provider, perceiving the voluntary sector as supplementary actors, which would, in terms of Baglioni et al.'s typology, situate the interplay heavily on the side of (a) traditional public administration planning and delivery. Historically, Norway has a long tradition of a close and collaborative relationship between the public and volunteer sectors (Loga, 2018). However, the past few decades have shown increased political attention given to the voluntary sector, with public reports and political speeches emphasizing how the public sector alone cannot bear the responsibility of welfare production in the future, calling on new and innovative developments of different forms of cooperation between the public sector and civil society (Selle et al., 2018). This is reflected in the past decade’s governmental work to develop a comprehensive voluntary sector policy.

Currently, the national social policies tend to have a stronger orientation toward small-scale voluntary activity, with clear expectations of the voluntary sector's contribution, thus perceiving civil society actors as significant in fulfilling various political aims. This development has also been evident in issues of integration and inclusion. In 2021 the Norwegian government released a strategy aiming at strengthening civil society's role in the integration field (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2021). This reflects a renewed interest in civil society as a valuable stakeholder in integration processes. The strategy encourages public stakeholders to actively collaborate with civil society to qualify and train refugees for the labour market. Moreover, social capital growth at the local level, emphasizing the importance of networks, norms, and trust, has been explicitly stated in public papers as expectations of contributions from the volunteer sector (Selle et al., 2018). Against this backdrop, this thesis contributes with an empirical case discussing the potential of CSOs in the labour market integration of refugees in a welfare state like the Norwegian.

4.5 The triangle of sustainability

The three articles of this thesis employ different theoretical approaches to shed light on distinct and particular parts of findings from the empirical material. The aim of this extended abstract, however, is to view the interfaces of the various perspectives each article focuses on and weave them together to address the findings as a whole. A theoretical space I did not enter in either of the articles that I nevertheless believe the three articles in various ways speak into is the discussion on *social sustainability*. In the following sub-chapter, I provide insights into the different understandings and discourses of such a buzzword and create an analytical departure to discuss social sustainability in the context of refugee integration.

Sustainability is often referred to as a triangle, consisting of three overlapping and mutually dependent pillars of sustainability; *environmental*, *economic*, and *social* (Dillard, Dujon, & King, 2008; Eizenberg & Jabareen, 2017; Opielka, 2022). As summarized by Dillard et al. (2008), the goals of sustainability focus on "(a) to live in a way that is environmentally sustainable or viable over the long term; (b) to live in a way that is economically sustainable, maintaining living standards over the long-term; and (c) to live in a way that is socially sustainable, now and in the future" (p. 2). With the UN as a protagonist in the discourse on sustainability goals, increased international attention has been given to sustainability issues with a substantial upsurge in business, governmental, and nongovernmental engagement in various initiatives and policies (Dillard et al., 2008). However, the *social* pillar in the sustainability triangle is the most neglected and least developed of the three (Dillard et al., 2008; Eizenberg & Jabareen, 2017; Opielka, 2022). Nevertheless, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly have outlined a strategy with 17 Sustainable Development Goals, whereas 10 out of 17 are social policy goals (Opielka, 2022), which suggests an increased awareness of the social aspect as fundamental for the development of a sustainable future. The most prominent disciplines to engage academically in discourses on social sustainability have been geography, urban studies and planning, and anthropology, while sociology has been less visible (Eizenberg & Jabareen, 2017). This most likely stems from the diverse understandings and definitions of social sustainability. I will delve into some of the discourses on the subject and elaborate on the approach in which this study situates its discussion.

4.5.1 The social in sustainability

Much of the literature on social sustainability argue that there needs to be a coherent, clear, and applicable definition. There are, however, several attempts to define the concept, creating various analytical prisms to discuss issues concerning socially sustainable development. One such attempt is found in Eizenberg and Jabareen's "Social sustainability: A new conceptual framework" (2017). Deriving from perspectives from various disciplines, they suggest a framework that considers both physical and non-physical aspects of social sustainability, which illuminates the interconnectedness of the social, environmental, and economic pillars. Firstly, they understand *risk* as "a constitutive concept of social sustainability" (p. 5) because different conditions of uncertainties pose threats to contemporary societies. Thus, the social sustainability of society would be marked by its response to such uncertainties and its ability to counter the risks. For instance, the migration crisis can be perceived as a risk to contemporary societies because of its embedded uncertainties. The indication of a socially sustainable society could be explored through its response and ability to counter and adapt to new circumstances in ways that make such developments *not* pose a threat to society. Secondly, the authors conceive equity and justice as fundamental premises for achieving social sustainability:

> "the demand for equity, social, economic and environmental justice is for all people regardless of their origin, race, gender, ethnicity, color, minorities, citizenship status, local and immigrants, and developed and developing societies. Under the prism of social sustainability, the cry for equality for all, including the welfare of following generations, is fundamental for coping with climate change and environmental crisis." (Eizenberg & Jabareen, 2017, p. 8)

While Eizenberg and Jabareen explicitly set the demand for equity as a premise to cope with climate change and environmental crisis, I would argue that this additionally is a premise to cope with the consequences of mass movements due to conflict and violence, which is the case for the refugees in this study.

Similarly, Dillard et al. (2008) also perceive equity as crucial to obtaining social sustainability. However, they emphasize three additional aspects to ensure socially sustainable societies for current and future generations: *human well-being*, *democratic government*, and *democratic civil society*. The dimension of *human well-being* centers on the individual and focuses on fulfilling basic needs. One indicator of social sustainability, then, should be that the basic needs should be met for all community members. *Democratic government* refers to government protection that goes beyond human rights and fundamental freedom and extends to

the expansion of choices in addition to protection from discrimination and economic, physical, and political catastrophes. Lastly, *democratic civil society* has proven to enact agency in numerous significant social changes (ibid). Together, these perspectives provide an analytical prism that sets the stage for a discussion on the social sustainability of the Norwegian welfare state concerning integration issues.

4.5.2 The sustainability of the welfare state

Operating with the understanding that sustainable development meets the needs of today's society without compromising future generations, a sustainable welfare state encompasses the ability to carry both current and future welfare needs (Rahman & Skorstad, 2018). However, public discourses show an emerging concern regarding the sustainability of the Norwegian welfare state as we know it today. This concern arises from arguments that the current welfare state cannot cope with the citizens' diverse life situations and individual needs. Furthermore, such critiques claim that too many people will benefit from the welfare state without contributing themselves (Le Grand & Robinson, 2018). This echoes how immigration is increasingly perceived and discussed as a potential threat to the welfare state (Brochmann, 2017; Isaksen, 2019). Thus, immigration and refugee integration pose a particularly interesting case in point to enter the debate on the development of a socially sustainable welfare state.

In the third article of this thesis, I discuss the link between belonging and precarious work, exemplified through gig-economy employment. The empirical findings from this study and an emerging body of literature indicate that refugees are particularly vulnerable to precarious working conditions. For example, a study comparing the development of migration policies and the differential effects the financial crisis had on migrants in Germany, the UK, and Spain found that immigrants were segregated in the most insecure segments of the labour market in all three countries and claimed that immigrants as such operate as a 'buffer' for employment uncertainty (Meardi, Artiles, Remo, & van den Berg, 2012). These findings made the researchers raise concerns regarding the social sustainability of such developments: "if they are segregated in the most insecure jobs, is such segregation socially sustainable in the long term, i.e. resistant to socialisation, but also not feeding social unrest or inter-community tensions? Moreover, is it sustainable for the workers themselves?" (p. 3). Assuming that change is constant and inevitable and that increased immigration and the "refugee crisis" represents a change to Norwegian society, Gallant and Tirone (2017) argue that the resilience of a community depends on its ability

to respond and transform itself in response to various changes. Informed by the above-described conversations on social sustainability, I question whether current Norwegian integration policies foster socially sustainable development. Do structural constraints like discrimination, for instance, have detrimental effects on developing a socially sustainable welfare state by preserving refugees on the outskirts of the labour market? Moreover, does the Norwegian society, both on a structural and relational level, embed the ability to respond to changes like increased immigration in a way that does not pose immigrants and refugees as a threat to the welfare state? Finally, retaining the critical engagement of Schinkel on the 'imagined society' (2017), a more intriguing question occurs: a socially sustainable welfare state *for whom*?

5 SUMMARY OF ARTICLES

Given that this is an article-based dissertation, I will give a brief summary of each of the three articles and the main theoretical and empirical arguments that are made. The summaries presented here are similar to the formal abstracts found in each of the articles yet include some further elaborations.

5.1 Summary article I

Linking Labour Market Aspirations to Perceived Discrimination: the Case of Refugees in Norway

Accepted to be published in "Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales".

This article discusses the possible connection between labour market aspirations and perceptions of discrimination. While research on policy implementation and public measures are plentiful regarding immigrants' labour market integration, less attention has been given to what shapes immigrants' motivation and desires to become part of the labour market. Given the evidence of discrimination as a prominent concern for refugees, this article brings in theoretical discussions on discrimination and aspirations where existing literature has failed to consider the connection between the two. Following the idea that migrants' capacity to exert agency is shaped by given – or perceived – opportunity structures such as class, religion, gender, and ethnicity, perceived discrimination could affect their capacity to aspire in the labour market. I ask the following research question: *How are labour market aspirations influenced and shaped by different intersectional experiences of and responses to discrimination?* This article draws on ethnographic fieldwork among refugees settling in Norway. Aiming to look at labour market aspirations, I did not expect perceptions of discrimination to influence their aspirations significantly. However, although none of the participants was asked about discrimination, the material highlighted such experiences as a salient part of their migration experiences. I discuss the different (subtle) forms and consequences of discrimination observed through the refugees' lived realities as a specific and salient constraint influencing refugees' aspirations. The findings account for three different responses to experiences of discrimination: *withdrawal*, *working harder*, and *assimilation*. In addition, I coin the terms *aspirational deprivation* and *aspirational*

deskilling to capture how the refugees negotiate and resist discrimination. Based on these findings, I argue that the intersectional outcomes of labour market aspirations are connected to intersectional experiences of discrimination.

5.2 Summary article II

One Step Forward and Two Steps Back: the Role of Civil Society Organizations in Reversed Integration Processes Among Refugees in Norway

Accepted to be published in "Nordic Journal of Migration Research".

The growing interest in the contributions of civil society organizations (CSOs) to the labour market integration of refugees is fueled by the proliferation of neoliberal reforms in European welfare states and restrictive budgets, leading to increased recognition of CSOs as resolutions to social issues. In this article, I deal with the role of CSOs in the labour market integration of refugees. Moreover, the potential of the CSOs is discussed in specific relation to how integration processes are experienced by the refugees in the study. Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of the different forms of capital, in addition to Granovetter's theory of social network, the article seeks to further our understanding of how CSOs can offer refugees access to resources that increase their chances of capital accumulation. I benefit from the term 'reversed integration' to describe processes where the refugees' capital accumulation is declining. Based on ethnographic fieldwork among refugees and employees in two CSOs in Norway, the findings suggest a particularly vulnerable phase immediately after the public introduction program for refugees not moving on to employment, education, or training. In this phase, the findings show that the refugees need more chances to acquire salient capital important for labour market integration, particularly language skills and network development. The article contributes to the debate on the impact capital accumulation has on refugees' labour market integration in a specific phase where the development and sustainment of capital could not only oppose an adverse path but positively influence refugees' gravity towards the labour market. Moreover, restrictive budgets and neoliberal reforms in many European countries, including Norway, have led to social policies with an increased focus on and expectations of the voluntary sector as an important stakeholder in societal challenges like immigrant integration, often referred to as welfare pluralism (Dahlberg, 2005; Kamali & Jönsson, 2018; Kourachanis, 2020b). As such, this article

is an empirical case in point on how CSOs fill the gaps in a comprehensive welfare state like the Norwegian (Bontenbal & Lillie, 2021; Loga, 2018).

5.3 Summary article III

Gig Economy and Precarious Belonging: Experiences of Refugees Navigating Labour Market Integration in Norway

Submitted to the journal "Migration and Society".

Integration is high on the political agenda in many European countries, including Norway, operating with labour market participation as the leading indicator of success. This article critically engages with the concept of integration by analyzing refugees' subjective experiences. The analysis draws on three theoretical concepts – integration, belonging, and precarity – while considering gig economy employment as a sub-category of precarious work. Taking gig economy employment as a case in point, the article discusses the refugees' perceptions of how such a specific occupational context shapes their sense of belonging and integration. Several studies have dealt with the interconnection between belonging and integration on the one hand, and precarious work and gig economy employment on the other. However, few studies have explored the impact precarious work has on refugees' integration and belonging. The findings presented in this article is based on an in-depth analysis of two participants, however, additionally benefit from the entity of the ethnographic fieldwork conducted among refugees settling in Norway. The narratives of the two participants provide an entry point to explore the interconnections between belonging, integration, and precarity embedded in specific occupational contexts. The findings suggest that structural and individual limitations in many ways condition the refugees to precarious work, here represented by gig economy employment. Such an occupational context deprives them of the chances of work as a 'connective tissue' to the wider Norwegian community and limits their occupational mobility. As the personal sense of belonging is in constant relation to discourses and practices in the wider community, being relegated to precarious work at the bottom end of the labour market additionally acts as an imagined boundary line of exclusion, dichotomizing 'us' and 'them'. Based on these findings, I argue that their belonging is precarious: fragile and conditional. Additionally, I find that gig

economy employment challenges the state's idea of labour market participation and self-sufficiency as indicators of successful integration. For the refugees, experiences of various barriers on their move towards inclusion in a highly formalized labour market make gig economy employment the easy solution. The long-term consequences, though, are a continuum of insecure and unstable work, likely to lead to 'shadow lives' on the margins of society, fostering disintegration.

6 CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

This final chapter starts by returning to the two main questions of investigation that have guided this study: *How do refugees in Norway experience and negotiate policy-led expectations of labour market integration?* And *what is the role of CSOs in the labour market integration of refugees under a welfare state like the Norwegian*? I summarize and discuss the study's key observations and arguments relating to the existing literature and theoretical considerations presented in previous sections of the thesis. I start by discussing how the findings point to concurrent experiences of exclusion and inclusion, highlighting the importance of paying attention to individual, structural, and relational influences in integration processes. Furthermore, I delve into how refugees exert aspirational agency within limiting structures. I end the discussion by reflecting on the role of CSOs in the welfare state and how integration can be fruitfully analyzed through the lens of social sustainability.

6.1 (Dis)Integration: managing the concurrence of exclusion and inclusion

The main objective of this study has been to explore the labour market integration of refugees in Norway. As such, the study builds on the normative premise of labour market incorporation as an indicator of successful integration. Although integration is measured on several levels (Ager & Strang, 2008), there is a substantial political interest in refugees' success or failure in the labour market (Brochmann, 2017; Eimhjellen et al., 2021; Øverbye & Stjernø, 2012). This is particularly evident through the primary governmental integration measure, the introduction program, strategically aiming to prepare refugees for the labour market (Djuve & Kavli, 2019; Djuve et al., 2017). This additionally reflects the 'work first' policy which marks the past few years' general developments of the Norwegian welfare state (Øverbye & Stjernø, 2012). For refugees and other immigrants, the expectancy of labour market integration also stems from arguments concerning the capacity of the welfare state. From a policy perspective, failure to integrate refugees into the labour market is explicitly regarded as a threat to the sustainability of the welfare state (Alseth, 2018; Brochmann, 2017; Isaksen, 2019). Thus, refugees settling in Norway are met with a clear expectancy of labour market integration and it is perceived as a success if they manage to do so. However, this study has not aimed at measuring the refugees' success in the labour market. Instead, this thesis expands the literature on refugee labour market

integration by providing an empirical case demonstrating how refugees deal with such an expectancy. To do so, I have focused on the individual, structural and relational resources and constraints that shape their response to such requirements. In the following, I discuss how this thesis in a wider perspective, contributes to demonstrating the concurrence of exclusion and inclusion in integration processes.

6.1.1 The concurrence of individual, structural, and relational constraints

As mentioned, the refugee experience itself, which is characterized by being exposed to trauma, conflict, and violence, is considered a complicating factor in integration processes (Bogic et al., 2015; Brell et al., 2020; Dahl et al., 2006; Rosenbaum & Varvin, 2007; Silove et al., 2017). Although not dealt with specifically in either of the three articles comprising this thesis, the findings align with the existing literature on how dealing with trauma strongly influences their health and well-being, particularly, but not exclusively, in the early phases of settlement (Gleeson et al., 2020; Hunkler & Khourshed, 2019; Schick et al., 2016). For instance, one of the participants in the study provided meaningful insight into the intertwined dimensions of trauma and language learning by narrating how it was only after two years that his stress and anxiety were at a low enough level for his 'ears to open up' so he could start learning the language. Similar narratives from the material highlight that the language training offered through the public introduction program is perceived as insufficient because the refugee experience itself can result in slower progress in language learning than what is required for quick labour market integration. As such, there is a discrepancy between the time given to learn the language, the required language sufficiency in the labour market, and the ambition of quick labour market integration.

The highly formalized Norwegian labour market is another critical challenge in this study's findings. Article II notes that cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) in the form of educational competence is valorised in such a formalized labour market (Bratsberg et al., 2017; Djuve et al., 2017; Olsen & Askvik, 2021). However, such competence is devaluated if one does not have sufficient language proficiency (Brochmann, 2017; Dumont et al., 2016; Fasani et al., 2021). A high number of available positions in the Norwegian labour market, even the 'lower-skilled' jobs, require a minimum of language level B2, causing significant frustration among the refugees in this study who constantly negotiate expectations of quick labour market integration. Such frustration stems from the perception of a divergence between the required language level of a

job and the language level needed to perform the job tasks. As such, the concurrency of requirements of high educational level and requirements of high Norwegian proficiency structurally confines the opportunity structures for refugees. An additional finding discussed in Article II is how a specific phase of precarity occurs for the refugees immediately after the public introduction program, particularly the ones not moving on to employment, education, or training. I found that in this phase, they lacked arenas and opportunities to practice the language, which constituted a reversed language progress.

Additionally, in this phase, their everyday life was characterized by isolation and loneliness, perpetuated by a lack of necessary social capital to enhance a sense of belonging. As argued in Article II, this phase situates refugees in positions that deprive them of the chances of capital acquisition that would increase their chances of becoming self-sufficient. Such reversed integration processes are consequential to their current low chances of labour market integration and increase their chances of perpetual social immobility. Thus, those experiencing a lack of relational resources were additionally vulnerable to feelings of exclusion.

Furthermore, experiences of discrimination emerged as a salient concern for the refugees in this study, particularly regarding their prospects in the labour market. This echoes recent research on the high prevalence of ethnic discrimination in the labour market, both in Norway and other European countries (Fangen & Paasche, 2013; Fibbi et al., 2021; Kaas & Manger, 2012; Lancee, 2021; Midtbøen, 2015; Pierné, 2013), providing ethnic minorities with a significantly lower chance of finding employment compared to the majority population. Some refugees in this study shared stories of discrimination, describing hostility and judgment based on ethnical, racial, or religious grounds. For instance, as portrayed in Article III, one participant decided to change his name to better "fit" the Norwegian context because his original name yielded strong religious (Muslim) connotations, hoping to increase his prospects in the labour market. Empirical studies from Norway support his perception of name-based discrimination in the labour market as a structural limitation (Di Stasio et al., 2021; Midtbøen, 2015, 2016). Additionally, the female Muslim participants wearing the hijab experienced the hijab as a significant constraint that reduced their chances when competing for positions. Despite experiencing other barriers in the labour market, Muslim women perceived the intertwined physical markers of religion and ethnicity as their most significant disadvantages in the labour market. This is also reflected by the existing literature demonstrating the intersectional discrimination experienced by Muslim women wearing a hijab as they approach labour markets in the west (Ahmed & Gorey, 2021; Helbling, 2014; Khattab & Hussein, 2018; Strabac et al., 2016).

Several scholars have emphasized that looking at policy outcomes on an individual level is insufficient to fully understand how refugees move toward the labour market, calling for additional focus on the contextual dimensions that contribute to shaping the opportunity structures which can facilitate or undermine integration (Phillimore, 2020; Valenta & Bunar, 2010). In a similar vein, this thesis has demonstrated how structural, contextual, and relational constraints have a detrimental effect on refugees' opportunities in the Norwegian labour market and are thus part of portraying a more nuanced picture. Moreover, these individual, structural, and relational constraints shape the refugees' opportunity structures in which they seek labour market integration. In the following, I discuss the consequences of such limited opportunity structures.

6.1.2 Precarious consequences of individual, structural and relational constraints

Scholars have argued that immigrants often are found "at the nexus of employment and immigration precarity" (Mendonça et al., 2022, p. 5), given that their capabilities of entering the labour market and upwards mobility are staggered by various barriers (Kalleberg & Vallas, 2017; T. Montgomery & Baglioni, 2020; Newlands, 2022). In Article III, I draw on an in-depth analysis of two participants to discuss how their interface of structural and individual limitations in many ways conditioned them to precarious work, which in this case was portrayed through gig economy employment. Although Article III paid particular attention to two participants and their employment in the gig economy, also other participants in the study with work experience from Norway were most often employed short-term in insecure segments of the labour market. Considering precarious work as *uncertain* and *unstable* (Kalleberg & Vallas, 2017, p. 1), their participation in the labour market can be considered precarious. When left with few opportunities in a highly formalized labour market like the Norwegian, precarious work is the easy (or only) solution. However, given that many stay in such occupational contexts longer than expected (Newlands, 2022), the long-term consequences are a continuum of insecure and unstable work. These findings echo Collyer et al.'s (2020) call to approach integration in constant relation to its opposite – *disintegration*. Participation in precarious segments of the labour market, highlight the concurrent processes of inclusion and exclusion: "the disproportionate inclusion of migrant workers in particular sections of the labour market may make their exclusion from various other domains of social and everyday life more likely" (Collyer et al.,

2020, p. 5). This was particularly salient in gig economy employment, where the social connections were at a bare minimum and did not facilitate inclusion in a broader community. In this sense, it portrays the tension within (quick) labour market integration, as integration in certain segments of the labour market could disadvantage other forms of integration like language learning and social integration. Additionally, I argue that being relegated to precarious work at the bottom end of the labour market acts as a boundary line of exclusion, dichotomizing 'us' and 'them' (Yuval-Davis, 2006). The refugees were willing to be excluded in certain parts of the labour market if it allowed them to be included in others. Additionally, this is a counter-story to the public narrative that refugees lack the motivation to integrate into the labour market (Djuve & Kavli, 2019; Djuve et al., 2017). As such, the refugees' management of the concurrence of inclusion and exclusion additionally challenges the idea of self-sufficiency as an indicator of successful integration. This aligns with the argument of Phillimore (2020) that measuring the outcomes of integration (like labour market participation) is insufficient to understand the ongoing processes of integration fully. Thus, paying attention to how the refugees manage and negotiate the structural and contextual circumstances of the Norwegian society contribute to nuance the picture of refugees' way towards inclusion.

As mentioned, the refugees constantly negotiate the labour market integration expectancy while navigating within limited opportunity structures. From a state perspective, integrating refugees into the labour market is essential to stimulate welfare independence. However, for newcomers, work is also considered the primary arena facilitating belonging, inclusion, and community (Gullikstad et al., 2021; Olsen & Askvik, 2021). But what happens if the refugees are relegated to only certain labour market segments? Drawing on theories of belonging (Antonsich, 2010; Yuval-Davis, 2006) and precarity (Kalleberg & Vallas, 2017; Standing, 2012), Article III discusses a connection in the empirical material between belonging and precarious work, portrayed through experiences of gig economy employment. Given the current knowledge of the conditions and prospects of the gig economy (T. Montgomery & Baglioni, 2020; Newlands, 2022) combined with the participants' intentional acts toward becoming acknowledged and an accepted part of the Norwegian society, I argue that such an occupational context can lead to *precarious belonging*: a sense of belonging that is fragile and conditional. Although not explicitly dealt with in either of the articles, the empirical material in this study highlights the 'longing to become,' as described by Yuval-Davis (2006), as intrinsically present in how the refugees negotiated inclusion and exclusion. The refugees demonstrated intentional acts toward creating social connections and relationships while searching to become an accepted part of the society (Penninx & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2016). The vulnerable phase after the public

introduction program for refugees who have not moved on to employment, education, or training, as described in Article II, also portrayed everyday lives enclosed by isolation and loneliness, which substantiated a lack of belonging.

Moreover, experiences of discrimination, as discussed previously, emerged as a salient concern for almost all the refugees in the study. As such, the amalgamation of various experiences which accentuate and marks them as ‘others’, distinguishing ‘them’ from ‘us’, operate as an imagined boundary line (Yuval-Davis, 2006), depriving them of a sense of belonging to the Norwegian ‘imagined community’ (Anderson, 1983). Retaining the argument of Schinkel (2017) that European societies create their identities by forming boundaries of who belongs to them and who does not, images of integration allows such boundary-making. Despite several attempts to "fit" into the Norwegian labour market, the structural and individual limitations significantly limited the refugees’ chances of meeting the expectations of labour market integration. Their lack of such a ‘success’ not only add to their burden of unemployment but feeds into the already existing gap between them and ‘the imagined society’. Pejorative experiences of othering offer a continuous depiction of a society they do not yet belong to. Moreover, to belong to it, they need to succeed in integrating into it. Hence, precarious belonging is another portrayal of the consequence of individual, structural, and relational constraints. However, the narratives of the refugees contain stories suggesting not only experienced barriers but also opportunities for inclusion. The refugees’ encounters with the CSOs represent such stories.

6.1.3 Civil society organizations as representations of inclusion

All the participants in this study were, in one way or another, connected to a CSO. For most refugees in this study, the CSOs represented their only relational connection to the majority population. As such, the CSOs embedded the potential as facilitators of inclusion and belonging. Unlike most public agencies, labour market integration was not an explicit goal for the CSOs. The organizations held a broader understanding of inclusion, not exclusively concerning the labour market. Although actively supporting the refugees’ aspirations for work and education while offering measures to increase their labour market prospects, I found that their relational capacities were among their most valuable features. Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of the different forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986), particularly social capital, and Granovetter’s theory of social network (Granovetter, 1973), Article II discussed how the CSO communities increased

the refugees' social capital as they moved towards the labour market, which aligns with other literature suggesting social capital development as crucial for access to the labour market and upwards mobility (Aguilera, 2002; Gericke et al., 2018; Søholt et al., 2015). Additionally, I found that the CSOs contributed to opposing isolation by facilitating arenas that allowed the refugees to develop critical social ties. Many refugees developed lasting relationships with employees and volunteers through their encounters with the CSO. Baumeister and Leary's (1995) belongingness hypothesis suggests that lasting and significant interpersonal relationships are essential in creating a sense of place-belongingness. Interpersonal connections to the majority population are a gateway to the labour market and upward mobility. However, they are also essential in creating a sense of belonging to the Norwegian 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983). Christine[14], a project manager in one of the organizations, displays the aim of contributing to belonging and community by coining the development of lasting and interpersonal relationships as a measurement of success:

> It is important to me that it should be real and authentic and that we go out of this project and I call them friends, and they call me friends. They do call me sister and mother and I brother, and that is what I think is, that's what makes it successful. That's where the key lies. If we operate with this professional distance, then we do not meet the completely elementary needs that they have to land here safe somehow.[15]

Similarly, statements from the refugees indicated that social ties formed during their encounters with CSOs positively influenced their sense of belonging and inclusion. Also, the refugees made new friends among each other, which contributed to a sense of community by creating social ties between people with high levels of similarities on demographic parameters, which are important in terms of emotional support and a sense of belonging (Easton-Calabria & Wood, 2021; Saksela-Bergholm, 2020). Understanding belonging as crucial *within* other integration measures and essential in securing meaningful integration (Ager & Strang, 2008; Rottmann, 2020), these findings provide insight into how CSOs offer a sense of belonging for refugees who currently have no or weak connection to the labour market. Hence, for the refugees in connection with the CSOs, concurrent manifestations of exclusion and inclusion are part and parcel of their settlement and integration processes.

However, the encounters between refugees and the CSOs did not have a unilateral impact

[14] Fictitious name.

[15] Interview conducted 30.09.20

on the refugees. The social ties established between the refugees, volunteers, and employees significantly impacted the volunteers and employees. This was particularly evident in one of the organizations, which targeted the Norwegian population in general but was trying out a three-year project directed at newly arrived refugees, offering work internships for participants in the introduction program, with the aim of long-term inclusion in the organization. Many of the volunteers in that project had no or limited experience working with refugees. Hence, for some volunteers, the relationships formed were their first and only deep social ties with a refugee. The volunteers expressed it as an eye-opening experience that transformed them. Also, on an organizational level, the project challenged the internal aim of being a diverse organization. As one of the employees framed it: "There is a long way to go in tolerating diversity. Tolerating is painful. All growth is painful." This project, nevertheless, changed the organization from within. Considering processes of integration as a 'two-way process', and that the broader society is also transformed due to new circumstances like increased immigration (Castles, 2016; Castles et al., 2002; Penninx, 2019a), the organization let the encounters with the refugees transform them and as such was breaking new ground internally in terms of managing diversity. Hence, these intimate and relational experiences of diversity contributed to tearing down barriers and crossing the imagined boundaries of 'us' and 'them', and, in a wider perspective, decreasing impediments for inclusion.

Although this section has shown that the refugees experienced several constraints on their move toward the labour market, they did not act as mere victims of their circumstances. On the contrary, they conveyed various strategies to enact agency. I will now discuss such strategies through the lens of *aspirations*.

6.2 Imagined futures in an imagined society – aspirations on the move

Another significant finding of this thesis is how aspirations, particularly imagined futures in the labour market, are redefined as part of the refugees' migratory experiences. One of the major benefits of paying attention to aspirations is that it allows for fruitful analysis of the interface of structure and agency by focusing on people's ability to exert agency within structural constraints (Boccagni, 2017; De Haas, 2021). As demonstrated in the previous section, refugees' (labour market) integration processes contain individual, structural, and relational constraints. Therefore, I have particularly engaged with literature on the aspiration/capability framework (Carling, 2002; De Haas, 2021) to understand further how the refugees' embedded capabilities to exert agency

within limited opportunities influence both their aspirations of labour market integration in Norway and their opportunities for upward mobility. As such, this thesis contributes to the more recent literature applying the framework to analyse refugee processes of integration and settlement (Borselli & van Meijl, 2021; Van Heelsum, 2017) by demonstrating the interplay between structural constraints and aspirational agency.

I found that the refugees' aspirations before they arrived in Norway were characterized by optimism and high hopes. However, their imagined futures in Norway collided with their experienced realities in Norway. Many were particularly surprised at the difficulties that occurred when trying to get a job. Hence, their aspirations are changed and redefined due to various experiences after settlement in Norway. In Article I, I show how a specific and salient structural constraint, perceived discrimination, substantially impacted the refugees' labour market aspirations. Applying the aspirations/capabilities framework (Carling, 2002; De Haas, 2021), I emphasized how the entanglement of individual resources and structural constraints shape the imagined future. In Article I, I coined the terms *aspirational deprivation* and *aspirational deskilling* to illuminate how the refugees' different responses to perceived discrimination, including their capacities to overcome such a structural constraint, lead them into various states of redefined aspirations. Although nearly all participants shared stories of discrimination, their responses to such experiences varied, aligning with arguments contending perceptions of discrimination to impinge on individual differences and interpretations (Fibbi et al., 2021). Additionally, the participant’s perceptions of discrimination were intertwined with and not separated from other experienced barriers, making the refugees' intersecting identities shape their influence on their aspirations. For instance, female Muslim women experienced the hijab as a physical marker of 'otherness' fostering discrimination. Those with low formal competence and little work experience outside the home were equipped with less positive liberties (Berlin, 1969; De Haas, 2021) to overcome or push through a structural limitation like discrimination. For these participants, their experiences led them into a state of *aspirational deprivation*, meaning their imagined futures were deprived of hopes and expectations to take control and change their circumstances and positions in the labour market. However, for other participants, such post-migration experiences redefined their aspirations into a state of what I termed *aspirational deskilling*, meaning that their aspirations were changed to aim lower than their formal competence imposed. Unlike the participants whose aspirations were characterised by hopelessness and demotivation, the ones with aspirational deskilling still had optimistic prospects for their imagined future. However, they aspired less for work aligned with their education and competence. Moreover, *aspirational deskilling* was affiliated with participants

who responded to discrimination by working harder to resist such an 'othering'. Additionally, they embedded positive liberties like previous work experiences and high educational levels, which elevated their capacity to aspire in the Norwegian labour market (De Haas, 2021).

In addition to the redefined states of aspiration - *aspirational deprivation* and *aspirational deskilling* – as alluded to in Article I, I would like to propose an additional term that fruitfully demonstrates how refugees, in a wider sense, negotiate the many structural constraints they experience on their move towards the labour market. I have coined the term *aspirational stamina*. The common meaning *of stamina relates to* endurance; "the strength or energy to keep going, even when tired or facing other unfavorable conditions" [16]. The word stems from the Finnish word *sisu*, bearing the meaning of determination in extreme adversity and courage in situations where success is unlikely. *Sisu* is also described as the ability to adhere to a decided course of action even if repeated failures ensue[17]. Based on such (non-academic) understandings of stamina, I coin the term *aspirational stamina* to describe the refugees' ability to uphold aspirational agency despite repeatedly encountering constraints that limit their opportunity structures. For instance, the in-depth analysis of Kadir and Serhat in Article III portrays an aspirational persistence despite several obstacles in their move toward the labour market. Both demonstrated high aspirations of labour market integration and inclusion in the Norwegian society, making strategic and pragmatic choices to become independent of economic support from the state. Although Serhat, for instance, showed signs of *aspirational deskilling* through the choice of temporary gig economy employment, he simultaneously continued to steer towards achieving competence that would provide him with opportunities for upward mobility in the labour market. When perceiving discrimination as an impossible obstacle in the field of his acquired competence, he recalibrated and added knowledge and competence toward a new segment of the labour market which was perceived to be less influenced by discriminatory structures. He chose this because he still aspired to, sometime in the future, hold a position in the labour market that equalized his competence. When met with structural constraints, the strategies applied showed how choices were upheld by *aspirational stamina*, the ability to keep an optimistic prospect of the imagined future, despite that success seems currently unlikely.

These three 'states of aspiration' do not operate isolated from each other but are entangled in ways that make some states more salient and visible in various phases. This echoes the

[16] https://www.dictionary.com/browse/stamina.

[17] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sisu.

argument of other scholars on aspirations understanding it as temporally, relationally, and situationally embedded (Boccagni, 2017; E. Scheibelhofer, 2018; Willmann-Robleda, 2022), making aspirations change and evolve due to various experiences and circumstances. Similar to how Boccagni (2017) explored aspirational evolvement through people's "potential to shape the future itself, given their assets, the external structure of opportunities and the relational fields in which they are embedded" (p. 1), this thesis has provided an empirical case of how structural factors and individual resources impact aspirational agency in the context of labour market integration in Norway. Moreover, it adds to the aspirations/capability framework literature by showing how individual resources influence the capability to overcome a structural limitation like discrimination. Also, the various barriers experienced in their attempts to enter and get a foothold in the labour market operate as markers of exclusion from the 'imagined society'. As such, I contend that the refugees' aspirations, their imagined futures, are shaped by their perceived opportunities to become an accepted part of the 'imagined society'.

6.3 The role of civil society organizations in a universal welfare state

Drawing on theories of the different forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986) and social network (Granovetter, 1973), this thesis has shown how CSOs facilitate arenas that increase capital development for refugees settling in Norway. Furthermore, the long-lasting ethnographic fieldwork with two CSOs has allowed me insights into the organizations' daily activities and how they understand and manage their role in the integration processes of refugees. The CSOs' negotiation of their role occurs amid public integration measures which are considered extensive and generous (Alseth, 2018; Valenta & Bunar, 2010) while still aiming at making immigration more cost-effective (Kamali & Jönsson, 2018; Selle et al., 2018). As such, it is necessary to ask in what ways the CSOs' contributions make integration cost-effective and whether it is an aim for the CSOs to contribute to such cost-effectiveness. Hence, in addition to the previous discussions on the specific contributions of the CSOs, this section provides more overarching reflections on the role of CSOs in a universal welfare state, which the articles did not provide the space for.

CSOs contribute to integration processes by creating important social ties in access to the labour market. They also oppose isolation and loneliness that can harm the refugees' well-being and prospects of labour market integration. Additionally, findings from this study align with the existing literature that CSOs are pivotal in offering language training that increases the refugees'

prospects of meeting the labor market (Brochmann, 2017; Dumont et al., 2016; Fasani et al., 2021). However, it is illusive to perceive that the contributions of the CSOs come at no cost. Thus, the Norwegian government has increased the budgets for integration initiatives offered by CSOs (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2021). The existing literature show that most CSOs are dependent on such public funding (Numerato et al., 2019; Osanami Törngren et al., 2018), which was also the case for the CSOs in this study. Based on studies conducted in Finland, the UK, Greece, Italy, Switzerland, and the Czech Republic, Numerato et al. (2019) argue that such a dependency is one of the CSOs' most significant barriers to contributing to integration processes because it causes instability, temporality, and uncertainty. The project-driven nature of the public funding is shown to undermine the long-term prospects and consistency in the initiatives from the CSOs. Similarly, in the Norwegian context, a significant part of funding aiming at including CSOs in integration processes are project-driven, usually limited to funding for a maximum of three years. Hence, the lack of long-term prospects was a major matter for the CSOs in this study. One of the projects I followed through the fieldwork was publicly funded as a new, local project within a larger, national CSO for three years. Although the staff wanted to continue developing the work among refugees, they had to shut down the project in its current state when the three-year funding was over. To continue its integration initiatives, the CSO had to re-structure the project and then apply for new funding locally every year. Similarly, the other CSO in this study had to severely limit its measures because of a lack of public funding one year. Consequently, they decreased the number of language classes from three to one, making many participants lose their opportunities for language training. However, the following year, they again obtained more funding, allowing them to restart the two classes shut down. Thus, they needed to rehire teachers that were previously laid off. This example illustrates how the strong dependency on public funding severely limits the CSOs' opportunities for consistency, affecting the quality they can offer the participants of the CSOs. Additionally, it reduces the probability of attracting qualified staff, as it is difficult for staff to accept such temporal working conditions.

Another major limitation highlighted by Numerato et al. (2019) was the state's influence on the CSOs' agenda. The report highlighted that the CSOs' dependency on public funding, in some cases, even led to CSOs becoming instruments of surveillance for the government. The CSOs in this study applied for funding through public calls and had to make their activities and measures fit the public agenda to increase their chances of being funded. In this sense, it is Norwegian integration policies that set the agenda of the CSOs' contributions. Currently, the major public call for CSOs integration initiatives aims at projects, individual measures or activities that contribute to increasing work and community participation. More specifically, the

call is divided into three areas where the CSOs can propose projects or measures that contribute to: a) preventing exclusion by facilitating arenas that foster trust and belonging in local communities, b) increased knowledge of the Norwegian society, better Norwegian skills, and strengthening qualifications for work or education, and c) prevent negative social control, honour-related violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation, and strengthen gender equality[18]. Additionally, organizations can apply for funds specifically aiming at language training. In line with the existing literature (Brandsen & Johnston, 2018; Čada & Ptáčková, 2014; Numerato et al., 2019), I would argue that the CSOs dependence on public funding combined with state's control of how such fundings can be spent, question the CSOs' autonomy. If the CSOs do not offer measures or activities that do not align with current integration policies, its chances of economic persistence would be severely limited.

Although this thesis and other studies show how and when CSOs make important contribution to processes of refugee integration, I believe a final reflection concerning the public-volunteer relationship is worth some contemplation. In contexts where the state is the dominant welfare provider, which is the case in Norway, the CSOs are argued to have a more limited role but still fill in the gaps where the public measures are considered insufficient (Bontenbal & Lillie, 2021; Čada et al., 2021). This thesis has highlighted a weakness in the Norwegian public integration system: the phase immediately after the introduction program. It has also shown how CSOs contribute to opposing reversed integration processes in this phase. As such, the CSOs contribute to filling the gaps in the welfare state, but still as *supplementary* welfare providers (Baglioni et al., 2022), and by that also contribute to fulfilling the political aims of integration (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2021; Selle et al., 2018). However, in a universal welfare state like the Norwegian, I would argue that the increased attention given to how civil society can contribute to integration processes should not come with the primary aim of cost-effectiveness. It ought not to be a disclaimer for the state to diminish their responsibility to ensure refugees have the required qualifications to stand a chance in the Norwegian labour market, and that the inclusion of CSOs rather is a way of extending the quality of measures offered to refugees. As previously mentioned, Greece represents a context that has experienced an extensive upgrade of the role of CSOs in the labour market integration of refugees. This has been due to the concurrence of a financial crisis and the large income of refugees and asylum seekers, leading to a lack of integration policies and measures from the government (Bagavos & Kourachanis, 2022; Baglioni et al., 2022; Kourachanis, 2018a). In this case, the upgrade of the

[18] https://www.imdi.no/tilskudd/tilskudd-til-integreringsarbeid-i-regi-av-frivillige-organisasjoner/.

role of CSOs is strongly connected to the state's inability to take on its responsibility. However, Norway is by no means affected by the financial crisis and the upsurge of refugees and asylum seekers in ways like Greece for instance, and therefore, the role of CSOs is not to make up for the lack of state responsibility. In the Norwegian context, the increased focus on the potential of CSOs builds on the perception of increased immigration as a threat the sustainability of the welfare state, making cost-effectiveness pivotal (Alseth, 2018; Kamali & Jönsson, 2018). As such, the upgrade of CSOs can be interpreted as an indication of a neoliberalization of the welfare state. Nevertheless, a universal welfare state like the Norwegian, where the state remains the main welfare provider, should ensure to take on its responsibility also on integration issues. The previously mentioned work of Alseth (2018) points to current debates in both Norway and other European societies highlighting how ideas of 'welfare nationalism' reduce immigrants, and refugees in particular, to a cost issue, and as such, question the society's willingness to 'pay the price' of integrating newcomers. Given that refugees are a particularly vulnerable group often framed as posing a threat to the sustainability of the welfare state, I argue that it is particularly salient that the government does not outsource or degrade its responsibility on integration issues.

Moving on to the final section, I make use of the empirical findings and theoretical discussion accentuated in this thesis to enter the contemporary discussion on socially sustainable societies.

6.4 Managing diversity – the future of a socially sustainable society

As alluded to in the theoretical considerations, the findings in this thesis make up a tapestry that allows for critically exploring both the individual and the societal consequences of how incentives of integration are experienced. While the previous sections have explored how the intertwined dimensions of individual resources, structural constraints, and relational capacities contribute to shaping the opportunity structures and aspirations of the individual refugee, I believe these deliberations allow for further exploration of how such experiences can speak into broader discussions on the societal consequences of immigration and (labour market) integration. As such, the theoretical optic of social sustainability is a fruitful approach to discuss how the Norwegian society copes with and responds to increased immigration. As argued by Eizenberg and Jabareen (2017), a marker of the social sustainability of a society is its ability to counter and adapt to new circumstances. Operating with the premise that developing socially sustainable societies that carry both the needs of current and future generations is an aim (Rahman &

Skorstad, 2018), immigration and integration pose an interesting case to discuss the Norwegian society and welfare state's response to the consequences of the large refugee movements we have seen the past few years.

From a policy perspective, immigration and the 'lack of success' in refugee integration are argued to challenge the sustainability of the welfare state (Alseth, 2018; Brochmann, 2017; Brochmann & Hagelund, 2011; Brochmann & Midtbøen, 2021; Djuve, 2016; Hagelund, 2020; Isaksen, 2019), and as such frame refugees as a potential threat to the welfare state. This is also reflected in how integration policies have shifted from concerns of the *rights* of the individual refugee to concerns of the *nation-state* (J.-P. Brekke et al., 2010), consequently framing "unemployment as the 'problem' and a lack of motivation as its cause" (Djuve & Kavli, 2019, p. 39). According to this rationale, the burden placed on the refugees is to 'not become a threat to the sustainability of the welfare state' by successfully integrating into the society, particularly the labour market, ultimately making them independent of and not a burden to the welfare state. Such understandings additionally reflect the increased focus on individual responsibility to perform within the expected measures of integration outcomes like the labour market (Djuve et al., 2019; Hagelund & Kavli, 2009; Phillimore, 2020; Valenta & Bunar, 2010). This resembles Schinkel's (2017) argument that images of integration create boundaries between 'us' and 'them'. Such dichotomies have a particularly detrimental effect if immigration is perceived as a threat to the sustainability of the welfare state and images of refugees' unwillingness or lack of motivation to integrate accentuate such boundaries.

The measures used to counter-act such an 'integration challenge', can be found in current integration policies (Djuve & Kavli, 2019; Djuve et al., 2017). While language training, work praxis, an introductory course on Norwegian society, and individual counseling have been offered to refugees through the public introduction program since 2003, the newest version of the Introduction Act additionally provides more individualized and tailored measures increasing the opportunities to obtain higher education and if needed, extended time to acquire the language. This reflects how policy-led perspectives on integration are geared towards making the refugees fit the demands and expectations of the labour market. However, even when a substantial amount of effort is given to make the refugees better qualified to fit the Norwegian labour market, the findings in this thesis suggest that structural and contextual dimensions significantly impact their chances of inclusion and exclusion.

When discussing social sustainability from an analytical point of view, equity for all, is considered a fundamental characteristic of a socially sustainable society (Dillard et al., 2008;

Eizenberg & Jabareen, 2017). But what if structures embedded in the Norwegian society foster labour market exclusion for refugees? As I highlighted in the literature review, discrimination in the labour market is highly and increasingly prevalent in the Norwegian context (Di Stasio et al., 2021; Larsen & Di Stasio, 2021; Midtbøen, 2015). Findings from this study add to this literature by demonstrating how perceived discrimination is consequential also in shaping refugees' aspirations of inclusion in the labour market. Moreover, the Norwegian labour market is organized in a way that requires both a high educational level *and* a high level of Norwegian proficiency, even in low-skilled jobs. Such requirements, particularly the demand for minimum level B2 in most jobs, contributed to frustration and demotivation for the participants in this study. Additionally, as described in Article III, I found that the sum of such experienced barriers makes the refugees particularly vulnerable to working in precarious labour market segments. In this article, I argue that such occupational attainment embeds the potential of fostering disintegration and precarious belonging. Belonging, as an integral part of the integration process, is conditioned not only by labour market participation but also by the specific occupational context they are embedded in, portraying the concurrence of inclusion and exclusion in integration processes. Hence, I retain the question from the theory chapter asked by researchers comparing the development of migration policies and the differential effects of the financial crisis "if they are segregated in the most insecure jobs, is such segregation socially sustainable in the long term, i.e. resistant to socialisation, but also not feeding social unrest or inter-community tensions? Moreover, is it sustainable for the workers themselves?" (Meardi et al., 2012, p. 3). Similarly, I ask whether the above-described structural limitations experienced by the refugees in this study contribute to creating a socially unsustainable society.

From an analytical point of view, integration processes are often considered a 'two-way process', indicating that the broader society is also transformed and needs to respond to changes like increased immigration (Castles, 2016; Castles et al., 2002; Penninx, 2019a). Taking increased immigration and the 'refugee crisis' as representations of changes in Norwegian society, the social sustainability of the Norwegian society depends on its ability to respond and *transform itself* in response to such a change (Gallant & Tirone, 2017). However, a socially sustainable society and welfare state is not fostered when the mere focus is to change the individual's skills to fit the Norwegian labour market while simultaneously lacking the ability to challenge the structural and contextual conditions that keep individuals excluded. Keeping up structures that condition and relegate refugees to only specific labour market segments is not socially sustainable. The knowledge of the widespread prevalence of discrimination in the labour market shows that the Norwegian society is not yet able to manage diversity. Unreasonably high

language requirements utterly inhibit refugees from entering the labour market. Suppose the sustainability of the welfare state depends on, amongst other things, higher labour market participation in the refugee population. In that case, there is a need for a collective willingness to additionally encompass and tolerate the new and diverse society on a structural level. If not, society does not respond and act on integration in a way that fosters a socially sustainable future for all.

Finally, by merely discussing integration as perceived and defined by governments and authorities and insufficiently taking in the perspectives of the ones who must live with the authorities' perspectives of integration, we additionally lose the opportunity to create a society that is socially sustainable for *all,* not only the ones included in the 'imagined society'. As such, this thesis has aimed to offer alternative perspectives on labour market integration by bringing insight into how a selected group of refugees experience and negotiate policy-led perspectives on integration.

6.5 Conclusion and implications for future research

To sum up, this study has explored the labour market integration of refugees in Norway by examining how they experience and negotiate policy-led perspectives on integration. Through ethnographic fieldwork with refugees and CSOs, the thesis has demonstrated how entanglements of individual, structural, and relational constraints shape the opportunity structures in which they navigate labour market integration. In addition, it has highlighted how the concurrence of exclusion and inclusion portrays the intertwined connection between processes of integration and disintegration (Collyer et al., 2020).

I have applied the theoretical lens of aspirations to understand how refugees enact agency within limited opportunity structures. Through engagement with the aspirations/capability framework (Carling, 2002; De Haas, 2021), the thesis has highlighted how the refugees' imagined futures were shaped by their perceived opportunities to become an accepted part of the 'imagined society'.

Moreover, although specific and salient contributions of CSOs to processes of labour market integration have been demonstrated through this thesis, the dependency on public funding as a limitation which influences the stability, consistency, and autonomy of the CSOs were discussed. Additionally, a normative reflection was made considering the relationship between

the state and CSOs, arguing that the inclusion of CSOs in integration processes should not replace the state in bearing the primary responsibility for a vulnerable group like refugees.

Finally, I believe the findings of this study speak to the broader discussion on how immigration and integration issues pose an intriguing case to reflect on the social sustainability of the Norwegian society by accentuating its ability to transform itself due to the new circumstances. While the authorities' perspective on the integration challenge is to increase the competence of the individual refugee, this thesis has shown that structural and contextual dimensions significantly impact their chances of inclusion or exclusion. On a deeper level, it reflects how structural and contextual dimensions should be considered when shaping a future socially sustainable society and welfare state for *all*.

This thesis has, amongst others, explored how inclusion in certain segments of the labour market potentially contributes to exclusion from other parts of society and thus influences the sense of belonging for refugees. This has in this thesis been portrayed through gig economy employment. Such an occupational context is part of the digitalization of our societies which significantly impacts the labour market. Further research could focus on the multifaceted consequences substantial changes in the future of work, like digitalization and artificial intelligence, has for minority groups like refugees and other immigrants in Norway. Rapid technological developments will shape the future of work in ways that are still unknown, which is likely to create both opportunities and threats for immigrants and their labour market trajectories. It would be beneficial to explore the impact of such developments in the labour market integration of both refugees and other immigrants.

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8 APPENDIX 1: ARTICLE I

Nessa, B. Linking labour market aspirations to perceived discrimination: the case of refugees in Norway. (Accepted to be published in *Revue Européenne Migrations des Internationales,* 2nd issue of 2024).

Abstract

This article discusses the possible connection between labour market aspirations and perceptions of discrimination. While research on policy implementation and public measures are plentiful regarding immigrants' labour market integration, less attention has been given to what shapes immigrants' motivation and desires to become part of the labour market. Following the idea that migrants' capacity to exert agency is shaped by given – or perceived – opportunity structures such as class, religion, gender, and ethnicity, perceived discrimination could affect their capacity to aspire in the labour market. This article draws on ethnographic fieldwork among refugees settling in Norway. The findings indicate discrimination as a salient part of their migration experiences. Based on how they negotiate and resist discrimination, I coin the terms *aspirational deprivation* and *aspirational deskilling* to capture how the refugees' responses to perceived discrimination shape labour market aspirations.

9 APPENDIX 2: ARTICLE II

Nessa, B., 2023. One Step Forward and Two Steps Back: The Role of Civil Society Organizations in Reversed Integration Processes among Refugees in Norway. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, 13(3), p.4.DOI: https://doi.org/10.33134/njmr.580

Abstract

Refugees settling in Norway experience several barriers to labour market integration, such as language insufficiency, low or unrecognized formal competence, and discrimination. While numerous scholars have dealt with the issues of both policy implementation and the outcome of public measures, there is a growing interest in the contributions of civil society organizations (CSO) to the labour market integration of refugees. Such an interest is fueled by the proliferation of neoliberal reforms in European welfare states and restrictive budgets, leading to increased recognition of CSOs as resolutions to social issues. Based on ethnographic fieldwork among refugees and employees in two CSOs in Norway, the findings suggest a particularly vulnerable phase immediately after the public introduction program for refugees not moving on to employment, education, or training. Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of different forms of capital, in addition to Granovetter's theory of social capital, I argue that CSOs have a profound role in preventing the reversed integration processes that occur in this specific phase of settlement.

10 APPENDIX 3: ARTICLE III

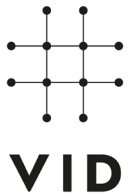
Nessa, B. Gig economy and precarious belonging: experiences of refugees navigating labour market integration in Norway. (Accepted to be published in *Migration and Society*).

Abstract

Integration is high on the political agenda in many European countries, including Norway, operating with labour market participation as the leading indicator of successful integration. This article critically engages with the concept by analyzing refugees' subjective experiences of integration. Taking gig-economy employment as a case in point, the article discusses the refugees' perceptions of how such a specific occupational context shapes their sense of belonging and integration. Several studies have dealt with the interconnection between belonging and integration on the one hand, and precarious work and gig-economy employment on the other. However, few studies have explored the impact precarious work has on refugees' integration and belonging. Based on ethnographic fieldwork among refugees settling in Norway, the findings suggest that structural and individual limitations in many ways condition the refugees to precarious work, here represented by gig-economy employment. Such an occupational context deprives them of the chances of work as a 'connective tissue' to the wider Norwegian community and limits their occupational mobility. This constitutes their belonging as precarious. Additionally, I find that gig-economy employment challenges the state's idea of labour market participation and self-sufficiency as indicators of successful integration.

11 APPENDIX 4: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEETS

Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form Norwegian



Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet «MAVI»?

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt **«Mellom ambisjoner og virkelighet. Nyankomne flyktningers aspirasjoner om og faktisk tilknytning til arbeidsmarkedet i Rogaland»**, kalt MAVI-prosjektet. I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

Formål

Prosjektet er et større prosjekt som involverer flere forskere og studenter. Prosjekt har som formål å innhente kunnskap som kan gi en bedre forståelse av de behovene og ønskene nyankomne flyktninger har når det gjelder tilknytning til arbeidslivet.

I prosjektet intervjuer vi også asylsøkere og flyktninger og vi arbeider med data fra registre og fra en spørreundersøkelse rettet mot nyankomne flyktninger.

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?

VID Vitenskapelige høgskole er ansvarlig for prosjektet.

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?

Du får spørsmål om å delta fordi du har kommet som flyktning til Norge. Vi kontakter også personer fra praksisfeltet og/eller sivilsamfunnet.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?

Å delta innebærer for deg at vi vil intervjue deg for å få innsikt i dine erfaringer som flyktning. Intervjuet vil vare i ca en time og vi vil ta notater og ta opp samtalen på bånd. I noen tilfeller ønsker vi også å bruke tid sammen med deg (det vil si observasjon).

Det er frivillig å delta

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle opplysninger om deg vil da bli anonymisert. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger

Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

- Bare forskere og studenter i prosjektet vil ha tilgang til informasjonen vi innhenter. Forskerne og studentene er primært tilknyttet VID, men også 1-2 forskere fra Universitetet i Stavanger vil ha tilgang til informasjonen. I tillegg vil et mindre antall eksterne databehandlere ha tilgang til informasjonen i forbindelse med transkribering av intervjuer. De har også taushetsplikt og vil slette sine filer når de levere tilbake sine filer til oss.

- Navnet og kontaktopplysningene dine vil vi erstatte med en kode som lagres på egen navneliste adskilt fra øvrige data
- Datamaterialet vil ligge på en server og/eller bli kryptert og/eller innelåses.

Når vi skal kommunisere resultatene fra prosjektet vil all resultatene være anonymisert. De anonyme resultatene fra prosjektet vil publiseres i skriftlig form og kommuniseres muntlig på konferanser og til studenter i undervisningssammenheng.

Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når vi avslutter forskningsprosjektet?

Prosjektet skal etter planen avsluttes i juni 2024. Ved prosjektslutt vil lydopptakene og navnelistene slettes. Øvrig datamateriale vil anonymiseres og lagres på VIDs server på ubestemt tid og kun forskere i prosjektet vil ha tilgang til dette.

Dine rettigheter

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg,
- å få rettet personopplysninger om deg,
- få slettet personopplysninger om deg,
- få utlevert en kopi av dine personopplysninger (dataportabilitet), og
- å sende klage til personvernombudet eller Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger.

Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?

Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra VID vitenskapelige høgskole har NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Hvor kan jeg finne ut mer?

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- PhD-kandidat Benedicte Nessa, på epost (benedicte.nessa@vid.no) eller telefon 48 19 16 33
- Vårt personvernombud Nancy Yue Liu, på epost (nancy.yue.liu@diakonhjemmet.no) eller telefon 938 56 277

- NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS, på epost (personverntjenester@nsd.no) eller telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen

PhD-kandidat

Benedicte Nessa

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet «Mellom ambisjoner og virkelighet. Nyankomne flyktningers aspirasjoner om og faktisk tilknytning til arbeidsmarkedet i Rogaland», og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

- å delta i intervju
- at mine personopplysninger lagres etter prosjektslutt, til videre forskning.

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet, ca. juni 2024

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form English and Arabic

Do you want to participate in the research project MAVI?

هل تريد المشاركة في المشروع البحثي مافي MAVI؟

This is an invitation to participate in a research project with the purpose of gaining knowledge about **refugees' thoughts and experiences of work in Norway**. Below you will find information about the aims of the project and what it means to participate in the project.

هذه دعوة للمشاركة في مشروع بحث يهدف الى معرفة **آراء اللاجئين وتجاربهم في العمل بالنرويج**. في الأسفل ستجد المعلومات حول أهداف المشروع وماذا تعني المشاركة في هذا المشروع.

Purpose

The MAVI project (full name: "Between ambition and reality: aspirations of and actual integration in the labour market among newly arrived refugees in Rogaland") aims at providing a better understanding of the needs and wishes of newly arrived refugees with regards to their participation in the working life. The projects will look at which job opportunities newly arrived refugees see for themselves and obstacles that they face when they stay in asylum centres, participate in the Introduction program and/or go into work or education after completing the Introduction program.

الغاية

مشروع مافي MAVI (الاسم الكامل : "بين التطلع والواقع : الطموحات من اجل اندماج حقيقي في سوق العمل للاجئين القادمين حديثاً في روغلان") يركز على تقديم فهم افضل لحاجات ورغبات اللاجئين القادمين حديثاً مع مراعاة مشاركتهم في الحياة العملية. هذا المشروع ينظر لفرص العمل التي يختارها اللاجئين القادمين حديثاً والعقبات التي تصادفهم خلال فترة بقائهم في مراكز طلبات اللجوء، او المشاركة في البرنامج التحضيري وكذلك / او التعليم ما بعد إكمال البرنامج التحضيري.

Who is responsible for the research project?

VID Specialized University in Stavanger is responsible for the project.

من هو المسؤول عن مشروع البحث؟

جامعة VID للعلوم Specialized University في ستافانغر هي المسؤولة عن هذا المشروع.

Why are you invited to participate?

If you are invited to participate in this project, it is because you are considered to have a refugee background and have lived in Norway for a rather short time. We also contact many other people who are in the same situation as you.

لماذا تمت دعوتك للمشاركة؟

إذا تمت دعوتك للمشاركة في هذا المشروع، فهو بسبب مراعاة ان لديك خلفية لجوء وإنك عشت في النرويج لفترة قصيرة. لقد قمنا بالتواصل مع العديد من الأشخاص الآخرين الذين لديهم نفس وضعك.

What does it mean for you to participate?

Participating means that we will interview you to gain knowledge about your aspirations for and/or experiences with working in Norway. For example, we will ask you about your education and work history, how your work situation looks like now, and what kind of work you imagine for yourself. The interview will last for about an hour and we will take notes and record the conversation on tape.

ماذا تعني لك المشاركة؟

المشاركة تعني اننا نقوم بإجراء مقابلة معك لمعرفة طموحاتك كذلك / او تجاربك مع العمل في النرويج. كمثال، سنسألك عن تعليمك وعملك في السابق، وكيف يبدو وضعك في العمل الآن، وما هي طبيعة العمل الذي تصورته لنفسك. المقابلة ستستمر لحوالي ساعة من الوقت وسنقوم بأخذ الملاحظات وتسجيل المحادثة عبر المسجل.

It is voluntary to participate

It is voluntary to participate in the project. Even if you choose to participate, you can always withdraw your consent at any time without providing any reason. All information that you provide us with during the interview will then be anonymized. It will have no consequences if you choose not to participate or later choose to withdraw from the project.

ان المشاركة طوعية

ان المشاركة طوعية في هذا المشروع. حتى إذا قمت بالمشاركة، بإمكانك الانسحاب في اي لحظة او وقت بدون تقديم أي سبب. جميع المعلومات التي قدمتها لنا خلال المقابلة ستصبح مجهولة المصدر. لن يكون هنالك أي تبعات إذا قمت باختيار عدم المشاركة او لاحقاً قررت الانسحاب من المشروع.

Your privacy – how we store and use your information

We will only use your information for the purposes we describe in this text. We process the data confidentially and in accordance with the Data Protection Regulations. Only researchers and students in the project will have access to the information we collect. The researchers and students are primarily affiliated with VID, but also 1-2 researchers from the University of Stavanger will have access to the interviews. We may engage one or two external data

processors in order to transcribe the interviews. They also have confidentiality and will delete any records when they return the files to us.

خصوصيتك – كيف نقوم بخزن واستعمال معلوماتك

نحن سنستخدم معلوماتك فقط في الغرض الذي نوضحه في هذا النص. نعالج البيانات بسرية ووفقًا للوائح حماية البيانات. فقط الباحثون والطلبة في هذا المشروع سيكون لهم قدرة الوصول للمعلومات التي نجمعها. الباحثون والطلبة هم ينتمون ويتبعون بشكل أساسي VID، لكن أيضا ١-٢ باحثان من جامعة ستافانغر سيتمكنون من الوصول للمقابلات. نحن لربما سنشرك خارجيا واحد او اثنان من معالجي البيانات لغرض كتابة المقابلات. وكذلك هم سيتبعون السرية في حذف التسجيلات عندما يعيدون الملفات الينا.

The data will be stored on a secure server and/or be encrypted and/or locked up. When we publish or present the results of the project, it will be done in an anonymized form, which means that your identity will not be revealed in any way.

البيانات سنقوم بتخزينها ضمن سيرفر محمي كذلك / او مشفر ومقفل. عندما سنقوم بنشر او تقديم نتائج المشروع، سيكون ذلك بشكل مجهول، وهذا يعني ان هويتك لن تظهر بأي شكل من الأشكال.

What happens to your information when we finish the research project?

The project will end in June 2024. When the project ends, the audio recordings and name lists will be permanently deleted. Transcribed interviews will be anonymized (which means that all directly or indirectly identifiable information about you will be fully deleted) and stored on VID's server indefinitely and only researchers in the project will have access to this.

ماذا يحدث لبياناتك بعد الانتهاء من المشروع البحثي؟

هذا المشروع سينتهي في حزيران من عام ٢٠٢٤. في نهاية المشروع، تسجيلات الصوت وقائمة الأسماء سيتم حذفها نهائياً. المقابلات المكتوبة ستكون لأجل غير مسمى VIDمجهولة (هذا يعني ان أي بيانات تعريفية متعلقة بك بشكل مباشر او غير مباشر سيتم حذفها بشكل كامل) وتخزينها على خادم وفقط الباحثين في المشروع سيكون لهم الوصول اليها.

Your rights

As long as you can be identified in the data material, you have the right:

- to know which information is registered about you,
- to have your personal data checked and corrected by you,
- to have your personal information deleted,
- to obtain a copy of your personal data, and
- to lodge a complaint with the Data Protection Officer or the Data Protection Authority about the processing of your personal data.

حقوقك

طالما يمكن التعرف عليك من خلال مواد البيانات. لديك الحق:

- في أي معلومات تمت تسجيلها عنك

- في الحصول على بياناتك الشخصية مدققة ومصححة بواسطتك
- في حذف بياناتك الشخصية
- في الحصول على نسخة من بياناتك الشخصية، كذلك

في تقديم شكوى إلى مسؤول حماية البيانات أو هيئة حماية البيانات بشأن معالجة بياناتك الشخصية.

What gives us the right to process personal data about you?

We process information about you based on your written consent (please, see below). On behalf of VID Specialized University, NSD – Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with the data protection regulations.

ما الذي يمنحنا الحق في معالجة بيانات شخصية عنك؟

نعالج معلومات عنك بناءً على موافقتك الخطية (من فضلك، انظر أدناه). نيابة عن VID Vitenskapelige Høgskole ، قام NSD - بتقييم معالجة البيانات الشخصية في هذا المشروع وبأنها تتوافق مع لوائح حماية البيانات.المركز النرويجي لأبحاث البيانات AS

Where can I find out more?

If you have any questions about the study, or would like to use your rights, please contact:

- PhD Candidate Benedicte Nessa, by email benedicte.nessa@vid.no) or phone 48 19 16 33
- Our Data Protection Officer Nancy Yue Liu, by email (nancy.yue.liu@diakonhjemmet.no) or phone 938 56 277
- NSD – Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by e-mail (personverntjenester@nsd.no) or phone: +47 55 58 21 17.

اين يمكنني معرفة المزيد؟

إذا كان لديك أي سؤال بخصوص هذه الدراسة، او ترغب في استخدام حقوقك، من فضلك اتصل ب:

- مدير المشروع Benedicte Nessa n، بواسطة البريد الالكتروني (benedicte.nessa@vid.no) او الهاتف ٥١٥١٦٢٧٨
- مسؤولنا عن حماية البيانات Nancy Yue Liu، بواسطة البريد الالكتروني (nancy.yue.liu@diakonhjemmet.no) او عبر الهاتف ٩٣٨٥٦٢٧٧
- NSD-المركز النرويجي لبيانات البحث AS، بواسطة البريد الالكتروني (personverntjenester@nsd.no) او عبر الهاتف + ٤٧ ٥٥ ٥٨ ٢١ ١٧

PhD Candidate

Benedicte Nessa

Declaration of consent - تصريح بالموافقة

◯ I have received and understood information about the abovementioned project and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I agree to participate in an individual interview and that my information is processed until the project is completed in June 2024 –

لقد تلقيت وفهمت المعلومات حول المشروع المذكور أعلاه وأُتيحت لي الفرصة لطرح الأسئلة. أوافق على المشاركة في المقابلة الفردية وكذلك معالجة بياناتي حتى إكمال المشروع في حزيران

_____ _____,

___/___/2020 (Participant's full name - الاسم الكامل للمشارك)

(place and date - المكان والتاريخ)

Participant Information Sheet and Concent Form Somali

Ma rabtaa inaad ka qaybqaadato mashruuc cilmibaadhiseed

«MAVI»

Tani waa su,aal adiga kugu socota inaad ka qaybqaadato mashruuc cilmibaadhiseed «waxyaabaha udhaxeeya waaqica dhabtaa iyo hamiga marka laga hadlayo soogalootiga cusub iyo waxay ka filayaan suuqa shaqada ee Rogaland» oo loogu yeedho mashruuca MAVI. Qoraalkan waxaan kuugu soo gudbinaynaa yoolasha mashruuca iyo doorka ka qaybqaadashadaada.

Ujeedo

Mashruucu waa mashruuc wayn oo ay ku jiraan cilmibaadhayaal iyo ardayba. ujeedada mashruucu waa in la helo xog bixinkarta fahansanaan fiican oo lagu ogaanayo rabitaanada iyo doonista soo galootiga cusub marka laga hadlayo iskuxidhkooda suuqa shaqada.

Mashruuca waxaan kale oo waraysanaynaa qaxootiga iyo soogalootiga, waxaan kale oo isticmaalaynaa warbixino hore looga hayay iyo ogaanishiyo laga diiwaangaliyay soogalootiga cusub

Yaa ka masuula mashruucan cilmi baadhiseed?

VID jaamacada sayniska ayaa ka masuula mashruucan

Sababta laguu waydiinayo ka qaybqaadashadaada?

Waxaa laguu waydiinayaa ka qaybqaadashadaada sababtoo ah waxaad ka shaqaysaa ama aad ku dhexjirtaa oo xidhiidh laleedahay soogalooti cusub. Waxaan sidoo kale la xidhiidhaynaa dad ku jira qaybahaa bulshada ee aynu xusnay.

Maxaa ka macno tahay inaad adigu ka qaybqaadato?

Inaad ka qaybqaadato oo aanu ku waraysano waxaa la helayaa khibradaada aad ka dhaxashay la kulanaka soogalitayada cusub. waraysigu wuxuu soconayaa hal saac waxaanu qoran doonaa waxyaabaha muhiimkaa sidoo kalena waanu duuban doonaa. marmarka waarna waxaan rabnaa inaan wakhti ku isticmaalo qaabka shaqadaada (iyo waxyaabaha aad la kulantay)

Adigaa ayaa u xora inaad ka qaybqaadato

Adaa dooranaya inaad ka qaybqaadato. hadaad doorato inaad ka qaybqaadato markaad doonto ayaad la noqonkartaa ogolaanshaagii adiga oon wax sababa keenayn. warbixinkasta oo lagaa hayo waa la qarinayaa. Wax dhibaata ah kugu keeni mayso hadaad ka qaybqaadanwaydo amaba aad hadhow la noqoto ogolaanshaagii.

Sirtaada gaarkaa - sida aanu u ilaalinayno una isticmaalayno faylkaaga

Waxaanu kaliya u isticmaalaynaa faylkaaga ujeedada aanu hore usoo qeexnay. waxaanu ula tacaalaynaa qaab waafaqsan sharciga ilaalinya sirta qofka

- Kaliya cilmibaadhayaasha iyo ardayda ayaa arki kara warbixinada aanu hayno. cilmibaadhayaasha iyo ardaydu waxay ku xidhanyihiin VID, iyo sidoo kale 1-2 cilmibaadhe oo ka socda jaamacada Stavanger ayaa iyana arki kara macluumaadka. sidoo kale shaqaalaha dhinaca kambuyuutarka ku hagaajinaya macluumaka ayaa iyana arkikara. iyaga waxay raacayaan sharciga ilaalinta xuquuqda macluumaadka qofka oo way tirtirayaan markay shaqadooda dhamaystaan.

- Magacaaga iyo macluumaadkaaga shakhsigaa waxaa lagu badalayaa eray kale oo lagu qorayo meel ugaara oo ka baxsan macluumakan kale

- Macluumadka kambuyuutarku wuxuu kujirayaa khaanad u gaara oo xidhan

Markaanu soo bandhigayno waxyaabaha kasoo baxay mashruuca dhamaan waxay noqonayaan kuwo aan qofkii loo tixraaci karin. jawaabahan waxaa lagusoo bandhigayaa qoraal ahaan iyo hadal ahaanba shirarka iyo casharo ahaan ardayda loogu soo bandhigayo iyagoo aan tixraac lahay oo dahsoon.

Maxaa ku dhacaya macluumaadka markuu mashruucu dhamaado?

Mashruucu wuxuu dhamaanyaa qorshe ahaan juun 2024. markuu dhamaado waxaa la tirtirayaa magacyada iyo cajaladaha laduubayba. wixii macluumaada ee kalena waxaa laga dhigayaa sir dahsoon oo fayl lagu kaydinayo ay leedahay VID waxaana arkikara cilmibaadhayaasha wakhti aan cayimnayn.

Xuquuqdaada

Ilaa inta lagu ogaankaro cambuyuutarka waxaan xaq uleedahay:

- in lagu tuso maluumaadka lagaa diiwaangaliyay,
- in lasaxo macluumaadka lagaa hayo,
- in la tirtiro macluumaadka lagaa hayo,
- in lagu siiyo kobi macluumaadkaaga ah iyo,
- inaad dirikartid dacwad ha,ayda ilaalinta macluudka gaarka ah ee shakhsiga oo ku saabsan sida loo isticmaalay macluumaadkaagii

Maxaa nasiinaya xuquuq inaanu isticmaalo macluumaadkaaga

Waxaanu isticmaalikarnaa macluudkaaga markaad ogolaansho nasiiso

Codsi kayimid jaamacada sayniska ee VID waxay NSD oo ah goob ka shaqaysa macluumaadka cilmibaadhiseed ee noorway qiimaysay qaabka loo isticmaalaya macluumaadku uu waafajisanyahay sharciya illaalinta xuquuqda macluumaadka shakhsiga.

Xagaan warbixin dheeraada ka helikaraa?

Hadaad haysid su,aalo kusaabsan baadhitaankan , ama aad rabtid inaad isticmaasho xuquuqdaada, la hadal

- Usharaxanaha PhD Benedicte Nessa, på epost (benedicte.nessa@vid.no) ama taleefanka 48191633
- Ilaaliayahayaga xuquuqda macluumaadka Nancy Yue Liu, (nancy.yue.liu@diakonhjemmet.no) ama taleefanka 938 56 277
- NSD - xarunta macluumadka cilmibaadhista ee noorway (personverntjenester@nsd.no) ama taleefanka 55582117

Salaan qaaliya

Usharaxanaha PhD:

Benedicte Nessa

Cadayn ogolaansho:

Waxaan helay oo fahmay warbixinta mashruuca «waxyaabaha udhaxeeya waaqica dhabtaa iyo hamiga marka laga hadlayo soogalootiga cusub iyo waxay ka filayaan suuqa shaqada ee Rogaland» waxaan sidoo kale helay fursad aan su,aalo ku waydiin karo. waxaan ogolaanyaa in:

- aan ka qaybqaato waraysiga
- in lahaynkaro macluumaadkayga la kaydinkaro si cilmibaadhiskale loogu isticmaalikaro

Waxaan ogolaanayaa in macluumaadkayga la istimaalikaro ilaa inta uu mashruuco socdo oo ah juun 2024

(saxeexa ka qaybqaadaha, taariikhda)

12 APPENDIX 5: INTERVIEW GUIDES

Interview guide refugees:

Socio-demographic information:

Age:

Country of origin:

Year of arrival in Norway:

Other countries where the participant may have stayed for longer periods:

Education:

Marital status:

Children:

Housing situation:

Current occupational status:

Central topics

1. **Childhood and upbringing**
   Can you tell me about your childhood and upbringing? What was the life situation of your parents? What kind of schooling do you have? If specific education: Why did you choose this education? When you were in your home country, what kind of aspirations did you have in terms of education and/or work?

2. **The decision to leave**
   Can you tell me a bit about how you made the decision to leave your country of origin? Can you tell me why you came to Norway in particular? Can you tell me about the trip to Norway?

3. **Arrival in Norway**
   How did you experience the earliest phase in Norway? When you arrived, what kind of thoughts did you have about how your life was going to look like in Norway (work, study...)?

4. **Experiences from the introduction program**
   How do/did you experience the introduction program? Do you work/did you work simultaneously with being in the introduction program? If so, how did you get this job? Are/were you satisfied with this job?

5. **Experiences after the introduction program (only for those who have completed the program)**

When you had completed the introduction program, what did you do then**?** Who were you in contact with during this period? (NAV or other actors) Did you feel that you got help from the ones you were in contact with?

If the participant got a job after the induction program: how did you get this job? Have you had other jobs after your first job? How do you feel about your situation now? Do you dream of a specific job/another job in the future? What do you think you need to do to get such a job? What other plans do you have for the future?

6. Social networks

Who do you live with? If other adults in the household, do they work or are they in the induction program?

Do you have someone to speak Norwegian with? How did you get into contact with the CSO you are connected to now? Why did you get connected with it? How do you experience that relationship with the CSO?

Do you spend time with others from your country of origin? If yes, when and what do you do? Do you ever talk about work-life in Norway and job opportunities? Do you stay in touch with family or friends who still live in your country of origin? If yes, what does this contact look like? How often, in what ways?

Do you often meet and spend time with people who are not from your country of origin? Where and how did you meet? Do you ever talk about work-life in Norway and job opportunities?

Is religion important to you in your life? If yes, what role does religion play? Are you connected to a religious community? Which ones? Do you ever talk about work-life in Norway and job opportunities?

7. What are the biggest challenges you face as a refugee in Norway?

8. Is there anything else you would like to talk about?

Interview guide employees in civil society organizations:

1. **What does your work consist of?**

How long have you been in your position/role? What types of activities or measures does your organization offer?

2. **In what ways do you work with refugees?**

The refugees you are in touch with, where are they in the migration process in Norway? (completed the introduction program, how long have they been residents in the municipality, etc.)

3. **What type of support/services/information do refugees in contact with you need?**

Why are they in contact with your organization? How did they get in touch with you? What is the relationship between the various participants in your activities? Did they know each other from before? Do they get to know new people? Are their social networks expanding? Do they have a lot of contact with each other outside of their activities?

4. **Do you work specifically with questions related to integration in the labour market?**

If so, what exactly does this work consist of?

5. **What kind of opportunities and barriers do you encounter when it comes to the integration of refugees into the labour market?**

What do the refugees themselves say? What barriers do you see most refugees encounter? Is there a difference in terms of what the challenges are (gender, ethnicity etc.)? What opportunities do they have? When do they succeed? The refugees that you have seen getting a job, how did they get the job? Where in the labour market do they get opportunities?

6. **Do you have suggestions for changes that should be made, based on your experience from the practice field, on a structural or systemic level?**

How could things have been done differently? What could have been done differently?


VID