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# **Problematizing “Integration”: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Integration Policy and Practice for Refugees in Norway**

Alicia Earnest

Global Development Studies

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lishearnest@gmail.com

Noragric  
Department of International Environment and Development Studies  
The Faculty of Landscape and Society  
P.O. Box 5003  
N-1432 Ås  
Norway  
Tel.: +47 67 23 00 00  
Internet: <https://www.nmbu.no/fakultet/landsam/institutt/noragric>

## Declaration

I, (Alicia Earnest), declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

Signature: *Alicia J Earnest*

Date: 01-06-2021

## Abstract

The predominant story of asylum seeking in Norway is one that describes an exponential explosion of growth throughout the past century, depicting a country that was once homogenous, and is now increasingly “multicultural”. The Norwegian government has developed strategies for how to reconcile difference between the “Norwegian society”, and those arriving from “elsewhere”. Within the past four decades, the term “integration” has taken center-stage as the dominant approach towards reconciling this difference. This study analyses what is meant by the term integration, how it is outlined within current policy, and how it is interpreted and implemented at ground-level. A textual analysis is conducted of the aims of the new integration law (*Integreringsloven*), and conversations are conducted with those working with this law. Through this, processes that promote assimilationist goals, exacerbate inequalities amongst refugees, and create a dichotomy between a paternalistic, modernist Norwegian nation-state and the “other” it must teach how to act, are identified. In addition, disconnects are identified between motivations shaping policy creation and desires of those bound to work by these policies. Though positive developments in policy are discussed, this study makes suggestions for how creating counternarratives and rejecting the processes listed above can contribute to a more wholistic and meaningful approach to integration and center the subjective desires of refugees themselves.

## **Opening Remarks**

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### **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to all refugees resettling in Norway. May we do everything in our power to challenge any systems that pose complications and frustrations for you during your resettlement in our country.

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## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Setting the Scene

The predominant story of asylum seeking in Norway is one that describes an exponential explosion of growth throughout the past century, depicting a country that was once homogenous, and is now increasingly “multicultural”. The Norwegian government has had to develop strategies for how to reconcile difference between the “Norwegian society”, and those arriving from “elsewhere”, including those forced to migrate as asylum seekers and refugees. Within the past four decades, the term “integration” has taken center-stage as the dominant approach towards reconciling this difference. However, precisely what is meant by “integration” can be unclear. Perspectives on what integration *should* aim to accomplish, and *how* it is supposed to do this, are highly influenced by discourses surrounding immigration and asylum seeking, and how they problematize difference and the refugee.

This study aims to explore some of those discourses. Through an analysis of current policy directing integration, and conversations with select actors implementing this policy, I explore motivations, fears, expectations and frustrations that influence how “integration” is defined and pursued. This project addresses a highly polarized and salient issue within Norwegian society, where topics concerning immigration, asylum seeking, and integration are prominent in current media debates and political discussions, and influence the way people vote. Furthermore, 2021 is a particularly pertinent year to investigate this topic as the Norwegian government has approved a new law defining integration initiatives, which went into effect on January 1<sup>st</sup> of this year.

This thesis begins with a brief exploration of the history of immigration and asylum seeking in Norway, with special attention paid to how discourses on reconciling difference evolved into the concept of “integration” that is used today. Based on this history, I specify the research objectives and questions for this project. I then explain the approach of critical discourse analysis I use to investigate my research questions and what concepts inform this analysis. After outlining how data collection was conducted, I explore my findings through an integrated presentation of data and analysis. Finally, I discuss what these findings mean, and offer my own conclusions and suggestions on the topic. Throughout this thesis I support my claims and interpretations by incorporating relevant literature.

By problematizing the term “integration”, I am refusing to take its understanding for granted. Instead, I am casting it into a critical light to investigate the different ways it can be



defined, the different motivations that can shape these definitions, and the impacts that these underlying motivations may have for policy implementation. By the end of this thesis, I aim to show how counternarratives to homogenous accounts of Norwegian history, and refugee-centered mapping and evaluation of integration objectives, can contribute to a more holistic and just process for difference reconciliation.

## 1.2 My Personal Motivations

My decision to focus on this topic stems from my time as a student at a Danish language school for adults, while I was an Au Pair in rural Denmark. I studied there during the refugee “crisis” of 2015, and most of my classmates were refugees from Syria and Afghanistan. As our Danish language proficiency grew together and we could finally communicate in a common language, I had the opportunity to hear their stories. They explained what their lives were like back home, and what led them to embark on the dangerous and uncertain journey to Europe. Their anecdotes and memories of the journey were sobering and heart-breaking, and, for many of them, the struggles they faced feeling unwelcome in the Danish countryside were not helping them to heal.

They explained the policies that affected them – the language and work requirements, and the screening processes that decided if they were allowed to stay in Denmark at all. Many of these policies seemed formulated to respond first and foremost to the fears of the Danish society – fears of negative consequences of refugees entering Denmark, fears that I often heard repeated amongst the Danes living around me – more so than concerns of wellbeing and happiness of the refugees themselves. It became clear to me that even though we sat in the same classroom, together as newly arrived immigrants to Denmark, my background as a white, middle-class, western immigrant from the United States resulted in a very different Danish experience for me than the refugees I studied with.

Therefore, I am highly motivated to analyze the systems that shape how we interact with those seeking refuge in our societies from elsewhere. This project focuses on the situations and policies in Norway, as that is where I am currently located. However, my wish is that lessons learned during this study can inspire researchers, students, and everyday people elsewhere in the global north to critically consider how we treat those that are different to us, and whether that treatment is informed by fear, or by love.

## 2.0 Background

In this section, I explore a brief history of immigration and asylum seeking in Norway, and discuss how approaches to reconciling difference between “the Norwegian society” and “the immigrant” have developed throughout the past, resulting in “integration” today. I also discuss the policies that emerged as a reaction to those approaches, ending with a short overview of the new integration law (*Integreringsloven*) that is featured in this thesis. This historical overview is far from exhaustive as it is, necessarily, a simplification for the sake of this thesis. It is also not objective. It is important to keep in mind, when reviewing the histories of social phenomena, that history is storytelling that always comes from a certain perspective. Accounting for characteristics of integration throughout history will be colored by subjective personal experiences and perceptions of this history, and because of this, contradictory and inconsistent accounts of it may be found. This is discussed in the Findings section of this thesis. For the sake of this background section, I present a dominant account of history, meaning, it is the story most often told, most internalized by those working in this field, and most influential for how immigration and integration is theorized in Norway today.

### 2.1 A brief account of history

For most of its history, Norway was considered a highly homogeneous country (in terms of population demographics), characterized by the outward-bound emigration of its citizens (Eriksen, 2002). The first significant wave of immigration into Norway in the form of asylum seekers did not occur until around the mid 1930's, when anti-Semitic sentiments forced many Jewish Europeans to seek safer places to live. This led to Norway's establishment as a destination country for asylum seekers, and Norway accepted its first organized group of refugees two years after World War II in 1947 (Parveen, 2020). Following this, Norway ratified the United Nations' Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees in 1953, and by doing so, made an international commitment to the acceptance and protection of those fleeing from war and persecution (UNHCR, 2013). For the next couple of decades, Norway mostly received refugees from other European countries, fleeing from cold war era persecution (Parveen, 2020).

The first significant wave of non-European refugee immigration occurred in the early 1970's, with refugees from Uganda and Chile escaping from authoritarian and dictatorial governmental regimes, and refugees from Vietnam escaping war (Parveen, 2020). At this point in time, there was no national mandate addressing how newly arrived immigrants were

to reconcile their own backgrounds and cultures with Norwegian culture. The government was expected to facilitate immigrants who decided to learn Norwegian and enter the Norwegian workforce, but it was also emphasized that immigrants should have a real choice on whether or not they wanted to do this at all (Hagelund, 2002).

By the mid 1980's, Norway had entered the world stage as a major destination for asylum seekers, and immigration to the country took off in, what is often described as, a previously unparalleled trajectory. Several years were designated as “boom” years, with record-high applications for asylum, and discourses emerged describing the new immigration trends as “explosive” and “unprecedented”. 1987 was the first of these “boom” years, with 9.642 asylum seekers from 60 different countries entering Norway (Parveen, 2020).

It was at this point in Norwegian history that the question of integration began to take center stage. As the demographics and population of Norway were changing at dramatic rates, politicians in the country could no longer treat immigration and integration as a non-issue. It became politicized, and grew into a central issue underpinning the political platforms of many parties in Norway. Hagelund (2002) explains, making specific reference to this “boom year”: “With the sudden increase in numbers of asylum seekers from 1985 to 1987, the public interest, concern, and outrage over immigration issues increased enormously. Election researchers speak about this as the time when immigration was politicized, in the sense that it started to matter for how people voted” (Hagelund, 2002, p. 405).

Accompanying this politicization, the language around reconciling difference between immigrants and Norwegians began to shift. The previous notion that refugees should be guaranteed a “freedom of choice” when deciding whether or not, and to what degree, to integrate into Norwegian society was abandoned. In 1987 - 1988, white papers (orientation documents from the Norwegian government that inform parliament about certain issues, which lead to discussions that shape policy creation) about immigration argued that the approach of ‘freedom of choice’ should be replaced with ‘respect for the language and culture of immigrants’ (Kommunal- og arbeidsdepartementet, 1987-1988, ). This argued against the immigrants’ possibility to refrain from integrating into Norwegian society. The Norwegian government wished to communicate that “there are limits to the right to be different, and that freedom of choice should not be taken to mean the freedom to stay completely outside the Norwegian society, for example, by not learning Norwegian and acquiring knowledge about the Norwegian society” (Hagelund, 2002, p. 407).

In terms of discourse, at the end of the 1980's, politicians and prominent leaders began to speak about the notion of a “multicultural Norway” for the first time. This discourse quickly

became polarized, and some political parties, particularly the Norwegian Progress Party (FrP), attempted to capitalize on growing fears and xenophobic sentiments of the Norwegian society by establishing an anti-immigration stance as a central aspect of their political platform. This resulted in an increase in their popularity (Cooper, 2005). Responding to the newly formulated “problems” of migration and multiculturalism, FrP introduced guidelines for resettlement aligned with assimilationist approaches towards reconciling difference between “Norwegians” and “others”, “emphasizing immigrants' unilateral responsibility to adapt to Norwegian ways and values” (Hagelund, 2002, p. 405).

As these shifts were occurring, immigration and asylum-seeking applications continued to climb, with refugees fleeing from the Yugoslav wars throughout the 1990's (Parveen, 2020). By the end of the 1990's, integration started being referred to as a right and *duty* of immigrants (Hagelund, 2002). This shift in language is worth noting. While in the 1970's, the conversation emphasized the normative statement that ‘we need to protect immigrants from being forced to give up their culture,’ at the turn of the century, the conversation argued that ‘we need to protect immigrants’ rights to be seen as individuals, and not just as their culture.’ The former perspective problematized assimilation, while the latter problematized (at least discursively) essentialization. In reality, this meant a shift towards creating obligations and even coercive programs, through tools such as economic penalties for non-participation. These tools were to ensure that immigrants “integrate”, with a justification that this will lead to them being respected and accepted in Norwegian society, and not reduced to and stereotyped by their own culture and background of difference.

This shift led to the creation of the Law Concerning the Introduction Scheme and Norwegian Training for Newly Arrived Immigrants (*Lov om introduksjonsordning og norskopplæring for nyankomne innvandrere* in Norwegian, hereafter referred to as the *Introduksjonsloven*) in 2003 (Introduksjonsloven, 2003). In accordance with this law, the Norwegian government launched the Norwegian Introduction Program (NIP). This program was designed to guarantee language classes and on-the-job training as a method for integration. According to this program, as mandated by the law, immigrants and refugees were given a right to two years of language and work training, with the possibility to apply for an extension to three years following a progression assessment (Djuve & Kavli, 2019). While securing these rights, the law also outlined obligations for participants. Refugees were guaranteed economic support in the form of a stipend as long as they attended Norwegian language and society classes, and participated in work-training programs (Enes & Henriksen, 2012). A penalty system was therefore introduced, where refugees falling behind on their

coursework or training without “valid” justifications faced economic consequences. This law also outlined the obligations of local institutions such as municipalities and adult learning centers, who were charged with designing work and education plans for refugees, and providing justifications for choices they made for each participant (Introduksjonsloven, 2003).

This is how the stage was set for the so-called refugee “crisis” in 2015. This refugee “crisis” is used to describe a, yet again, unprecedented influx of refugees arriving to Europe, primarily from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq, due to war. According to the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI), a conservative estimate of 31.000 people applied for asylum in Norway in 2015, which was a 300% increase from the year before (Brekke & Staver, 2018). Several shifts in policy and discourse on immigration resulted from this influx.

First, all Scandinavian countries changed their immigration policy in more restrictive directions, albeit using different discourses to justify this change, and different tools to implement it (Hagelund, 2020). While Denmark’s policy change was a continuation of increasingly restrictive and anti-immigrant policy, and Sweden’s change was communicated as an unfortunate, sad, but necessary U-turn from its previously relaxed immigration policies, Norway’s shift in policy after 2015 can be seen as a combination of these two processes. Polarized arguments infiltrated public discourse. Hovden (2019) comments on how discourses within Norwegian media also occupied this middle ground of immigrant-friendly news (which was dominant in Sweden) and anti-immigrant news (which was dominant in Denmark). On one hand, publications appearing in newspapers and online began referring to a “Syria dugnad”, using the Norwegian concept of “dugnad” (best translated as shared projects of voluntary work towards a greater good) to appeal to humanitarian sentiments of aid and good-will towards those fleeing from war in Syria (Hagelund, 2020). On the other hand, an influential political argument emerged (particularly from conservative political actors) that we do not have the possibility or responsibility to help everyone, and we *should* not continue to accept refugees and allow them to enter Norway, instead helping them “elsewhere” and “where they are” (Grytvik, 2015).

Second, Lien’s (2016) study discovered increasing expressions of Islamophobia and anti-immigrant sentiments from the Norwegian public in the media and online. Since 2015, such polarized discourses have dominated debates and discussions concerning immigration and integration, and the issue has become a divisive topic that often invokes strong emotional response.

Third, and especially after 2015, countries in Europe engaged in a so-called “race to the bottom” in terms of policy adjustment (Hernes, 2018). Without completely rejecting asylum

seekers from entering, many countries still tried to limit arrivals by making sure that the living conditions for asylum seekers in their countries held no comparative advantage to those around them. Hagelund (2020) identifies that Norway was a part of this race, and that a goal of the government after 2015 was to ensure that “social conditions for refugees in Norway do not make it so that Norway is more attractive than other countries” (Hagelund, 2020, p. 17).

In the few years since this “crisis”, the number of applications for asylum in Norway have been decreasing dramatically, from approximately 31,000 applications in 2015, to approximately 2.300 in 2019, more similarly reflecting the application rate of the first “boom year” of 1987 (Norwegian Ministries, 2020). In addition, the types of applications for asylum have been changing. Since 2015, fewer asylum seekers have been arriving to Norway by their own means, applying from within the country on their own accord. Instead, a greater proportion of refugees granted asylum in Norway are quota scheme refugees, meaning they are part of a resettlement program where Norway accepts a pre-determined number of refugees, usually resettling them from refugee camps in other countries (Norwegian Ministries, 2020). Despite these changes in influx and backgrounds of refugees since 2015, many of the arguments and narratives that emerged during the refugee “crisis” continue to shape the discourse of immigration and integration today.

## 2.2 The Integreringsloven

In 2020, a new law was discussed that would re-focus the aims of integration initiatives in Norway. This new law entitled The Law Concerning Integration through Training, Education, and Work (*Lov om integrering gjennom opplæring, utdanning og arbeid* in Norwegian, hereafter referred to as the *Integreringsloven*,) was approved in November of 2020, and went into effect on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021 (Integreringsloven, 2020). It outlines the motives, goals, and desired structure of programs working towards integration in Norway, and explains the rights and obligations that the Norwegian state and the immigrant have towards each other. It applies to all immigrants obtaining residency after January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021, as well as those who obtained residency before this date but did not enter Norway until after. (The *Introduksjonsloven* from 2003 still applies to all immigrants who obtained residency and entered Norway this date).

While the law applies to all immigrants, it makes a particular distinction between immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, and the definition of this distinction is presented in the second chapter of the law. Refugees (understood as more of an umbrella term to describe

all those fleeing to Norway from war or persecution) and asylum seekers (understood as those who have fled to Norway but have not yet received a decision on asylum) as groups are referred to distinctively throughout the law, and specificities of who is responsible for the acceptance, distribution, and integration of asylum seekers is clearly outlined.

Actors at several different levels are expected to adjust their planning and conduct according to the goals outlined in the new *Integreringsloven*. Local municipalities, asylum centers, adult education centers, and work and welfare authorities are all bound to comply with the strategy outlined in the law. Norway also has a specific governmental directorate, the Directorate for Integration and Diversity (IMDi), that is in charge of ensuring that the law is implemented by these actors and monitoring the success of their programs. Non-governmental organizations hold a special place in relation to this law, where they are not legally bound to fulfil the obligations outlined in it, but are necessitated to work in cooperation with governmental organizations who are. These entities also have the ability to advocate, lobby, and attempt to influence the law itself, and other policies from the government.

### 2.3 Today

The story I have explored here is a story that is told on repeat: that once upon a time, about 100 years ago, Norway was isolated and homogenous. Since then, immigration and asylum seeking have exploded in an exponential manner, and attitudes towards immigrants within Norwegian society have shifted from accepting difference, to demanding integration (Hagelund, 2002). While this is certainly a simplified version of one perspective of this history, it will be useful to keep in mind when considering how past processes of politicization and polarization of the issue of migration might affect attitudes towards asylum seekers and their integration today.

At this point in time, we are left with a somewhat frustrating dilemma when it comes to understanding “integration”. The term has held its position at center-stage within policy creation and political discourse for four decades now. Yet attempts to define what it actually *means* largely result in vague definitions, invoking sentiments of equality and cohesiveness. As Hagelund (2002) explains, “the meaning of integration tends to be formulated as what it is not: integration is not assimilation, not segregation. At the same time, the necessity of integration – whatever it is – has become irrefutable and beyond debate” (Hagelund, 2002, p. 402). In 2021, in the wake of the new *Integreringsloven*, “integration” seems to be just as *imperative* as it is *unclear*. Thus emerges the necessity for projects that map out what is meant

by “integration”, and how those meanings shape interactions between the Norwegian society, and the “other” that seeks refuge within it.



## 3.0 Research Objectives

### 3.1 Aims of this research

Policies regarding integration, and the way they are implemented at ground-level, have real life consequences for the well-being of refugees resettling in Norway. As I explored in the background section of this thesis, these policies can be influenced by the discourses created and reproduced by politicians, the media, and Norwegian society. It is therefore important to critically analyze what motivations, fears, objectives, and perspectives on integration influence how we work with refugees throughout the resettlement process in Norway.

This research project attempts to discover what some of these motivations, fears, objectives, and perspectives may be. I do this by first discussing the *Integreringsloven*, paying attention to the language it uses, the objectives it emphasizes, and the changes it makes to its predecessor, the *Introduksjonsloven*. I then investigate how actors working with this law interpret it, through exploring their own perspectives on what integration *does* and *should* mean.

### 3.2 Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How can “integration” be understood?
2. Why do we choose integration as a method for reconciling difference within a multicultural society, and why do we *do* integration the way that we do?
3. What “problems” does integration aim to address?
4. How do policy guidelines and goals compare to the lived experience of integration work?

## 4.0 Theoretical Framework

Before proceeding with my research design and findings it is important to understand the theoretical framework I use to approach my research. It is imperative that I refrain from taking terms such as “discourse” and “problematization” for granted, and instead present them as I understand them, to locate my perspective on the tools and concepts used. First, I explain how the terms “discourse”, “narratives”, “homogenizing discourse”, and “critical discourse analysis” are understood and implemented in this study. I also elaborate on my focus on power and problematization as helpful tools from critical discourse analysis, to address my research questions. Finally, I explain the concepts that inform my analysis, and justify their selection.

### 4.1 Discourses, Narratives, Homogenizing discourses, and CDA

Discourses are understandings of reality or phenomena, supported by narratives. Narratives are the particular stories that are told, that identify actors and ascribe them to certain roles. As Jones and McBeth explain, focusing on policy narratives, actors are identified and described as victims, villains, or heroes (2010). Discourses are not only the words that are spoken within these narratives, but also the “who, when, where, why, and how” of these words. As van Dijk (1997) explains, discourses serve a *functional* purpose, and through communication they shape, define, and reshape how we perceive whatever subject they describe. For example, discourses surrounding contemporary forced migration are not just about the facts that are communicated – how many people are migrating and why – but also the way this information is communicated, the words that are used, and the normative understandings that those communications produce.

Essentially, discourses and narratives *simplify* and *reproduce*. However, while simplifying realities might be problematic, if it essentializes the people represented and their epistemologies, it also has the possibility to communicate them in a way that is more easily understood by those receiving these discourses. In other words, discourse as simplification is not necessarily a *good* or *bad* thing. For example, a discourse representing refugees as “victims in need” may motivate members of Norwegian society to be accepting and kind towards them through invoking a humanitarian desire to aid. However, it may also cast refugees into a trap of being portrayed without agency, without voice, and needing someone to make decisions for them.

A discourse may be described as hegemonic if it is widespread across many contexts, if it appears to dominate how a certain reality is understood, and especially if it is translated into institutional and political practices. As Place and Vardeman-Winter (2013) explain, hegemonic discourses “win” common understanding, and the reality they communicate is often understood as self-evident, or common sense. During this project, I do not necessarily categorize discourses discovered as “hegemonic” or “not hegemonic”, as the nature of the qualitative methodology will not allow me to make generalizations. However, I am able to discuss different hegemonic tendencies in the discourses I discover, according to their relationship with policy creation. If a discourse seems to be highly evidenced in relevant literature on this topic, appears prominently throughout conversations during data collection, and seems to play a significant role in the formulation of integration policy, I could analyze the narratives and problematizations that it reproduces through a hegemonizing process.

I start my handling of discourses on this topic by identifying what some of the prominent discourses are in refugee integration policy. I began some of the work on this throughout the background section. For example, I discussed discourses such as refugees arriving to Norway in “explosive, unprecedented” numbers, the language of which could invoke urgency, and even perhaps sympathy for an overwhelmed Norwegian state. This thesis examines discourses that emerge throughout the analysis of the *Integreringsloven*, and throughout conversations with actors working with this policy. Once present discourses have been identified, a critical discourse analysis (hereafter referred to as CDA) is conducted.

## 4.2 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

In this this thesis, I understand public policy as first, a coaching of norms, values, and objectives, and second, as a response to perceived problems. Therefore, I specifically focus on CDA methods of discovering power relations through communication of norms, and problematizations.

### 4.2.1. Power and Norm Communication

As Fairclough (2013) explains, policy acts as a tool to teach the general public how to behave, and socializes us to think certain ways about what is right and what is wrong. It teaches us what we should and should not want. The ability to do this, to decide how a society should think, is as powerful as it is hidden. However, this power is not unilateral, as discourses amongst the general public also have the ability to influence policy. As Woodside-

Jiron (2004) argues, it is therefore necessary to analyze policy alongside the social practices that accompany it. CDA's focus on analyzing power within policy creation on an institutional level, and implementation on a social practice level, helps to reveal these hidden power structures, and will be a useful tool in addressing my research questions. When doing this, my task is to ask: who gets to speak?, who can influence and decide policy?, who is affected by this policy, and how?, do these two groups overlap – that is, do those who are greatly affected by policy change hold any decision-making power over what those changes are?, and finally, what norms, values, and goals are communicated within integration policy and practice?.

#### 4.2.2. Problematization

As Hagelund (2005) explains, policies can also be understood as responses to perceived problems. This is where the tool of problematization will come into play, and I use a Foucauldian influence in constructing my problematization by trying, as Foucault (1994) explains, to analyze how solutions to a problem are constructed, and how these solutions result from a specific approach to problematization. When analyzing policy discourse using problematization, I ask: what problem is this policy attempting to address?, and what does the formulation and goals of this policy tell us about how we understand this problem?.

As Wodak (2014) explains, CDA can include a variety of different approaches depending on the perspective of the one employing it. While it could be argued that all types of CDA have a problem-oriented approach to analysis in common, the analysis will still be influenced by the concepts and theories that inform it. For example, to employ a Marxist approach to CDA might mean to focus more on how power within policy creation is reinforced through unequal class relations, while to employ a post-structuralist approach might mean to focus more on locating power reinforcement through concepts such as “governmentality” or “biopolitics”. In order to address my research questions, my power analysis and problematization need to be informed by concepts and theories that unsettle the institutions and categorizations involved in refugee studies, and integration work. This is my rationale for selecting concepts from decolonial theory.

### 4.3 Concepts informing my CDA

It might not be clear, at first, how decolonial theory and refugee studies go hand in hand. Traditionally, and perhaps most prominently, decolonial theory is concerned with

analyzing how historical legacies of internal, external, and settler colonialism continue to shape power relations today, and how to work towards dismantling the hierarchies that are founded in these power relations. What does that have to do with the phenomena of contemporary forced migration to the global north? Specifically for this thesis, what does that have to do with how we relate to those who arrive in Europe from conflict or persecution happening elsewhere?

Within integration work, and within larger concerns of migration and allowance of refugee resettlement, concerns informing policy pin incoming population flows against the priorities of the nation-state. How many refugees are accepted and enrolled into introductory and integration programs are contrasted with how many resources the Norwegian state has, and how this population will balance with the “ethnically Norwegian” population. Beyond acceptance, questions of integration are framed within a concern of how new ways of being (new cultures, new religions) will interact with the ways of being that exist within the Norwegian population. The priority then becomes considering the needs of the state – its concerns, its culture, its religion - over the prevalence of “others” existing in different ways.

In addition, analysis of conflict “elsewhere” within the global north tend to ignore the north’s role in conflicts. While this thesis does not focus specifically on which conflicts are leading to refugees’ migration to Norway and how the global north is involved in these conflicts, it is important to consider how framing the conflicts as something occurring “elsewhere” shapes the way we understand people from these areas, and shapes how they are constructed as problematic. Neglecting to analyze the role the global north plays in, for example, the conflict in the middle east, allows us to perceive this problem as something manifesting simply from the people who live there – that it is their conflict, their war, their misfortune.

As Arat-Koç (2020) explains, “Using a colonial, or what we may specifically call an Orientalist lens on Third World conflicts, this perspective sees the countries and peoples in the South as unable to govern themselves” (Arat-Koç, 2020, p. 376). This not only creates space for homogenizing stereotypes of people from these places as conflict-oriented, and even inherently violent, it also allows for northern countries to be painted as the democratic savior – that it is the host country that becomes responsible for teaching refugees and people from regions of conflict how to live in an orderly, peaceful society. Dismissing responsibility therefore creates a perceived dynamic between an innocent, democratically “successful” northern state, and the people fleeing from a “failed state” of their own making – and thesis alone – where the former is seen as a charitable hero and paternalistic warden of the latter.

This dynamic is important to keep in mind when assessing the construction of integration programs, how we “teach” newly arrived refugees how to behave, and how we justify this behavioral governance.

Incorporating decolonial theory into our analysis will also allow us to identify dichotomies and essentializations. As Arat-Koç explains, “In the absence of anti-colonial and anti-imperialist perspectives in international politics and international political economy [sic], refugees are perceived either as threats and burdens, or as helpless victims dependent on Northern charity” (Arat-Koç, 2020, p. 378). These perceptions can have implications for how refugees are treated within processes of integration, and what we identify as the “problem” that needs to be “fixed” within them. In addition, the perception that the Norwegian state is acting in charity towards, immigrants and refugees, has implications for how we problematize refugees’ reception of monetary assistance from the neoliberal welfare state.

Also, as Strang & Ager write, “prevailing notions of nationhood and citizenship determine understandings of integration and [...] this powerfully shapes the social space available to refugees with regard to ‘belonging’” (Strang & Ager, 2010, p. 589). This means we have to cast the modern nation-state of Norway, and what it means to be a citizen of Norway, into a critical light to understand how integration and “belonging” might be influenced by those notions. Decolonial theory allows the theoretical space to do this.

Motivations within integration programs can also be about coaching norms related to refugees’ private life through discouraging “undesirable” practices such as “negative social control”, which I define and discuss in my analysis. These practices, such as paternalistic family structures, arranged marriages, or female circumcision, are deemed unacceptable by Norwegian integration authorities, and intervention is therefore justified for their prevention through coaching different norms and values to refugees. Since this means that integration initiatives also meddle in private family spaces, and teach norms about gendered social relations, it will also be helpful to apply a gendered decolonial lens to my analysis when these topics are brought up. This means that I assess how gender and family relations are taught from the “Norwegian society” to the “refugee” in the name of integration. I question if and how western, neoliberal understandings of individualist autonomy, and whitestream “liberationist” feminism might influence these teachings. I do this using Khader’s (2018) and Piedalue & Rishi’s (2017) conceptualization of how “imperial feminism” aids in recognizing imperialist power within private, intimate spaces.

As Arat-Koç explains, discourses on refugees arriving in Europe in the post-cold-war era often communicate “racialized, victimized and feminized depictions of Third World refugees as faceless, nameless, undifferentiated masses of humanity, lacking political agency and political voice” (Arat-Koç, 2020, p. 379). In this thesis, decolonial theory will inspire me to identify various homogenizing discourses, essentializing narratives, and dichotomies that fuel these perceptions. This completes the picture of the theoretical framework I employ throughout this thesis: a critical discourse analysis, informed by concepts from decolonial theory, in order to focus on the CDA tactics of assessing power and problematization. The phenomena of forced migration, and reconciling difference between the “host country” and the “other” as integration work aims to do, are complex and dynamic processes. I have chosen these theories as they are specifically designed to incorporate flexibility, subjectivity, and complexities by rejecting knowledge production based on categorization, repeatability, and “objective” knowledges.

## 5.0 Research Design

The CDA methods I have just outlined were applied through a two-stage process in this research project: a textual analysis of the *Integreringsloven* (supported by other relevant texts discovered throughout the research process), and a series of interviews with relevant actors. In this section, I outline the methodology used during the research process. First, I explain my sampling methodology for the text(s), including a justification for selection, and how they were found. I then explain the technicalities of how the textual analysis was conducted. Next, I explain the same processes for the interviews, including how respondents were selected and contacted, and how interviews were conducted and analyzed. After I explain the methodology behind my data collection for these two processes, I comment on the timeframe and limitations of this project, ethical considerations, and offer a critical reflection of my methodology.

### 5.1 Texts

#### 5.1.1 Sampling Methodology

The central text analyzed for this study was the *Integreringsloven*. As explained in the background section, this new law is the current legal framework that guides the structure, goals, and implementation of programs aimed towards the integration of refugees into Norwegian society, which is the justification for its selection. Throughout this analysis I also discovered supporting publications to better understand findings from the *Integreringsloven*. Supporting publications were selected based on their ability to provide contextualizations for the policies outlined in the *Integreringsloven*, and further information on how these policies are defined and measured by integration authorities and the Norwegian government.

As the texts are from Norwegian sources, the original publications are in Norwegian. All translations of quotes in this thesis from Norwegian to English have been done by me. Original quotes with their corresponding translations are included in appendix 1, to provide the reader with an overview of how original words and phrases were interpreted into English.

#### 5.1.2 Analysis Methodology

To conduct my CDA of the *Integreringsloven*, I read the law carefully line by line, underlining indications of actors involved and the impacts implied. I analyzed the language



chosen in each paragraph of the law, and underlined words that seemed to portray meanings and values from the policy level to the reader. Finally, guided by the focuses of the framework I outlined in my theoretical framework section, I selected sentences, words, and phrases that seemed to carry interesting, strong, or telling language, and might be able to provide insight into the behavioral norms and problematizations the policy is designed to respond to. I present these selected terms along with a justification for why I selected them, and an analysis of what these terms can reveal regarding my research questions. This procedure was based in Fairclough's (2015) exploration of what textual analysis of policies should include when employing CDA.

For every supporting publication I analyzed, I also present a justification for its importance when using it to strengthen my analysis of the *Integreringsloven*. However, it is important to point out that since the *Integreringsloven* is new, and only went into effect on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2021, these supporting documents are not responses to this law in particular. Instead, I investigate ground-level interpretations and consequences of this *specific* law through the interview process.

## 5.2 Interviews

### 5.2.1 Sampling Methodology

For the interviews, I contacted individuals and organizations personally. This research aimed to gain a diversity of perspectives from individuals working with projects relevant to the integration of refugees. This included everyone from those responsible for formulating the *Integreringsloven*, to those implementing its goals and directives at ground-level, in a classroom setting, for example. The sample involved in this study is by no means representative of all perspectives of actors working with integration—nor is it meant to be. Instead, I aimed to discover a variety of viewpoints that could exemplify various ways of thinking about and doing integration, and not narrow my exploration of these viewpoints to those that were generalizable or repeatable.

The sampling methodology was highly purposive (as understood by Bryman, (2016) – only organizations and that worked specifically with integration, in ways that could help address the research question of this project, were contacted. The first few contacts were made through personal connections I had to other students who had written their thesis on similar topics. Snowball sampling (also as understood by Bryman, (2016) was also used, as each participant was asked at the end of their interview if they knew anyone they felt I should

reach out to. All other participants were contacted based on my own investigation into what organizations would be most relevant to speak with, largely as a result of searching on the internet for organizations working with implementing the *Integreringsloven*.

It was important to learn about both typical, standardized views of organizations working within the normative framework of integration law in Norway, as well as more critical views of more independent organizations. The sample therefore resulted from a combination of Typical Case Sampling and Critical Case Sampling (as understood by Patton (2007)). For example, respondent Susanne was from a governmental organization tasked with implementing the *Integreringsloven*, and spoke largely from the perspective of the organization, providing few personal opinions and subjective statements. However, respondent Gabriel worked more independently on projects in their own non-governmental organization, with a greater degree of separation from the legal mandate, and was under no obligation to speak from a specific script about the law. This person therefore provided a more critical account of the law, voicing their own opinions and personal reflections around it. It was important to include both these “typical” and “critical” perspectives, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of possible motivations behind integration projects.

In the end, this phase of the research project included eight interviews with eight individuals from six organizations.

I contacted respondents directly, either via an email or phone call to the general organization they work for. In cases where specific participants were recommended by others, these respondents were contacted via their own personal email addresses or phone number, depending on the information I was provided with. I gave potential respondents information about who I am and what my project is, and I asked if they would be available for an interview on the topic. I also sent a document containing a more detailed explanation of the project, what questions would be asked, and how the conversation would be recorded. (See appendix 2.) Those who responded to this request agreeing to be interviewed were asked for preferred meeting times, and interviews were scheduled according to these preferences.

### 5.2.2 Conducting the Interviews

Interviews were conducted over the video conferencing application Zoom. Respondents were asked for consent for the conversation to be recorded. I explained that only audio would be recorded (no video), that this audio would be stored on my own personal, password-protected computer that no one else had access to, and that the audio recordings would be

permanently deleted upon submission of the thesis. All written notes, quotes, or transcriptions of these recordings would also be destroyed at that time as well. Respondents were given the possibility deny consent to be recorded. All respondents agreed to the audio recording.

The conversations roughly followed the outline of a semi-structured interview guide (See appendix 3). While this guide included a list of themes and questions that were to be addressed, the specific topics and order of questions varied greatly between respondents. I tailored the interview guide according to the specific position the interviewee held, and their organization's specific work focus. I chose this method to allow for flexibility and flow within conversations. Since the aim of the interviews was not necessarily to produce highly comparative responses to pre-determined questions, there was no need for the questioning to be identical in formulation or sequence.

I also wanted to allow for the interviewee to have space to lead the conversation if they wished. This way, I could gain a sense of what concerns or focuses the interviewee was most preoccupied with, and what seemed most important to them. Some interviewees responded this way, speaking uninterrupted and unprompted for long periods of time about topics that lead from one to another, while others simply responded to exactly what was asked – nothing more – and needed a bit more prompting to elaborate on things they said. The semi-structured interview guide served as an adequate and flexible tool when responding to either kind of situation.

One tactic I decided to implement was to have respondents define the concepts I was working with myself. During my background reading, terms like “integration”, “assimilation”, and “multiculturalism” were defined and related to each other in various ways depending on the author. I wanted to avoid taking the definitions of these concepts for granted while speaking about them with others. My plan was then to ask respondents to define these terms themselves, and then use their own understandings to analyze the meanings of their responses. Therefore, all interviews included a “concept defining” session where respondents were asked what the words immigrant, refugee, integration, assimilation, and multiculturalism meant to them. A reflection on how this tactic went is presented in the section “critical reflections on methods”.

### 5.2.3 Analysis Method

After each interview was conducted, I produced a written transcript using the audio recording made during the interview. I typed up, word for word with no grammatical corrections or changes, exactly what was said.

The analysis was conducted using these transcriptions. I read each line of the transcriptions carefully, and annotated which themes, concepts, and opinions were expressed in each part. All of these annotations were compiled into one document. I then looked for patterns and consistencies (such as themes that were brought up often across interviews, or which questions prompted discussions of which concepts) as well as inconsistencies and contradictions (like themes on which the participants disagreed, or explained certain phenomena in very different ways). I did not use pre-determined, rigid coding techniques, as I wanted to allow for a more flexible, iterative analysis process where I discovered different ways words and phrases could be understood and grouped as I read, as Deterding & Waters (2021) discuss.

As I was not only interested in demonstrating commonalities and dominant narratives, but also in uncovering unique perspectives that stood out against the rest, I also annotated if a participant offered an opinion or response that no other participant did. These “outlier” responses, in qualitative research, can be unique windows into certain lesser-known perspectives, and their deviance from the norm can in fact inform us even more about the norm itself (Bryman, 2016).

In the end, I grouped themes into 14 different categories, such as “concerns of the welfare state”, “opinions on the *Integreringsloven*”, and “gendered issues”. These categories helped me understand the main discourses, motivations, and justifications for how different actors in Norway understand and approach integration. Transcription proved to be a helpful and worthwhile tool for uncovering these underlying consistencies and inconsistencies across the different conversations.

### 5.3 Timeframe and Limitations

This project was affected both by standard time frame and resource limitations that usually accompany master’s level research, as well as limitations and challenges posed specifically by the Covid-19 pandemic. Standard limitations included the constrained timeframe of five months for project implementation, and no provision of funding. This had implications for how many interviews could be conducted, and in what language they could be conducted, as there was no possibility to hire an interpreter.

A major perspective missing from this research is that of refugees themselves. I acknowledge that this missing perspective creates an unfortunate blind spot in the lived experiences and effects of integration policy for refugees, and I will therefore not make any claims to refugee experience. The original research design of this thesis was to center the perspectives of refugees, through interaction, group conversation, and robust interpretation of their experiences. However, this design had to change due to the Covid-19 pandemic. As schools were closed down and visitors to organizations and centers were limited, the original research design became unfeasible. The interviews were also conducted during the strictest lockdown measures in my area, which is why they were all conducted via an online platform. This severely limited who I could speak with – namely, only those able to join remote meetings using digital means, and those able to speak English without the need for interpretation.

Another important perspective missing from this analysis is that of the politicians and policy makers responsible for the construction of the *Integreringsloven*, who responded that they did not have the capacity to speak with me, and made suggestions for who I should contact instead. Therefore, if policy creation and implementation is seen as a hierarchical process where those on the “top” decide what a policy should be, and it is implemented downwards to the “ground-level”, this research is missing both the very “top” and the very “ground-level” of this process: the policy creators, and the refugees. Based on the challenges and limitations posed by this particular situation, I opted to change the focus of the research, and center the *Integreringsloven* and its implementation through those bound to work by it instead.

Moreover, conducting interviews online during the Covid-19 pandemic posed challenges for recruiting a larger number of respondents, as well as for the quality of data recorded. Many local actors involved with implementing integration programs were simply too busy and overwhelmed responding to the Covid-19 situation to make time to speak to me. Institutions like local schools for adults, or *voksenopplæringscentre*, for example, had to close their doors and devise plans for delivering lessons to adult refugees via remote and digital means, adding to their workload. Due to this, several teachers, project leaders, and other individuals contacted responded that they unfortunately did not have time in their schedules to speak with me.

For the interviews that were conducted, the format of video conference conversations posed its own difficulties. Technical challenges such as video and audio sharing, and internet connection, often disturbed the flow of the conversation, and time was sometimes spent fixing

these issues instead of speaking freely. Using one computer application to record audio from another computer application also posed issues in the quality of the recorded conversation, which had implications for creating accurate and complete written transcriptions. Finally, even when the technology and audio recording techniques seemed to be working as they should, the pure “human element” of connection in conversation seemed to be lacking. Respondents’ emotions, subtext, body language, and comfort level with what is being said can all be useful and telling indications of their perspectives when collecting qualitative data through interviews (Bryman, 2016). However, these things are much harder to pick up on when speaking to an image on a screen, and such indicators are therefore lacking in this project.

#### 5.4 Ethical Considerations and Anonymity

This project was reported to the Norwegian Center for Research Data (NSD), and I worked with a consultant from this organization to ensure that my data collection methods and storage were in line with their standards. As this thesis is now complete and submitted, all audio recordings, transcriptions, and notes taken during interviews have been deleted.

Respondents in this thesis are presented anonymously, with fake names. Each participant was given 2-3 different fake names, to further anonymize the responses, so that any background information or characteristics of respondents reflected here cannot be traced back to the individuals I spoke with. (This will mean that there are more names presented in this thesis than interview participants I spoke with.) The names of the organizations and places of employment of the respondents are also anonymized, and no real employer name is used.

Direct quotes that I selected to use as data from interviews were compiled in documents and sorted by respondent. I sent out these documents, so that each respondent received a list of all quotes I was planning to use from them, accompanied by an explanation of the context in which each quote would be used. This was done as a special request of several of the respondents, who asked to see their quotes before they were included in the final thesis, so they could approve of how their words were going to be used. Respondents had the opportunity to deny the use of any of the quotes I had selected, and to ask that I make any changes. Some respondents did this, and the quotes I used from them were edited before this thesis was submitted. This final thesis will also be sent out directly to all respondents to ensure they have access to it.

## 5.5 Critical Reflections on Methods

Before diving into the presentation and analysis of results gathered, it will be important to evaluate how certain plans and methods played out during the implementation of this project, and to keep this in mind when considering the accuracy of the data.

### 5.5.1 Back-and-forth, and Dead Ends

My sampling methodologies of purpose and snowball sampling often lead to some back-and-forth when attempting to find respondents, and many dead ends. For example, I would often attempt to contact an organization one way, then be asked to contact them another way, only to never come in contact with someone willing to speak with me. Some organizations voiced that they would be happy to help me, but never got back to me about interview times, or did not respond when I attempted to follow up with them. Other organizations did not respond about when they could speak with me until it was too late in the research process. It is hard to pinpoint the cause of these cycles and dead ends, but I consider that it could be due to sampling methodology, the stressful Covid-19 situation, or simply the fact that assisting a master's level research project might not have been a priority for these organizations.

### 5.5.2 Reflections on Concept Mapping

My original plan to begin each conversation with a “concept defining” session did not go as I had hoped. For the first three terms I asked participants to define, which were “immigrant”, “Refugee”, and “integration”, respondents seemed to easily understand what I was asking about, and were quick to offer their responses. However, this shifted when I asked them to define concepts like “assimilation” and “multiculturalism”. Respondents, for the most part, did not recognize these words (especially “assimilation”) and asked for a Norwegian translation. When realizing the word is the same in Norwegian, respondents explained that this is simply not a term used in their work, and not one they were familiar with. While this was informative for me in its own way, and provided insight into the vocabulary most used (and not used) within integration work, the conversation seemed to take on an unfortunate “teacher-student” dynamic whenever this occurred, where participants asked what the “correct” response to this was. This change in tone was not a comfortable or productive

development, and after it happened consistently within my first four interviews, I decided to remove these last two terms from the “concept defining” portion of the interview, and instead try to find other ways to assess attitudes towards assimilationist tactics and multiculturalism elsewhere in my questioning.

### 5.5.3 Varying Interactions With the Law

It is also worth noting that not all participants had equal interaction with or understanding of the *Integreringsloven*. For example, one respondent had been busy working on constructing a draft for a different law that is to be voted on this year, and had not had time to review the *Integreringsloven* in depth. This was also true for a respondent that had recently taken time off of work. It will be important to keep in mind that not all participants were able to reflect specifically on the *Integreringsloven*, and some perspectives may therefore be missing.

### 5.5.4 Language Difficulties

Finally, I must note that language differences and translation difficulties may impact the quality of the data gathered from the interviews. All conversations were conducted in my native language, English, as I did not feel that my Norwegian conversation skills were advanced enough to understand the respondents accurately in Norwegian without the aid of an interpreter. However, none of the respondents had English as their native language, and they had varying levels of fluency within the language. This can impact the quality of the data collected through interviews, as respondents may have had difficulties expressing what they meant exactly how they meant to, in a language they may not use every day. It also meant that some things were up to my interpretation, as some respondents would use a Norwegian word or phrase here and there if they could not think of the English equivalent. I interpreted these words and phrases to the best of my ability, but this should be kept in mind when assessing the accuracy of the data presented.

## 5.6 Positioning Myself

It is important to reflect that I am not an unbiased, neutral actor regarding this topic. First of all, I have never been a refugee myself, nor as anyone in my family. This creates a degree of separation between me and the understandings I have about the processes of fleeing,



seeking asylum, living in a refugee camp and integrating into a new society as a refugee. I have experience from adult language and society classes for newly arrived immigrants in a Scandinavian country, specifically Denmark, but I was a student in these courses as a part of an Au Pair work visa in Denmark, where my choice to move to Denmark and work there was completely voluntary.

This separation by no means, however, indicates any level of objectivity or impartiality. It does not locate me “nowhere”. Quite the opposite – it means that I occupy a specific position characterized by my outsideness to these experiences. It is also important to note that I entered this project with my own pre-conceived ideas and attitudes towards refugees. Having previously built friendships and relationships with refugees, I hold greatly sympathetic attitudes towards those seeking asylum, and believe that their needs should be prioritized over fears and prejudices from the “host” society. It is important to state this, as no researcher is purely objective, and the ways in which I perceive asylum seekers and refugees can influence how I hear and interpret the concerns expressed about their integration.

## 6.0 Findings

### 6.1 Texts

This section outlines the main findings from my reading of the *Integreringsloven*, and supporting documents.

#### 6.1.2 Integreringsloven

This section presents key words, phrases, and sections of the *Integreringsloven* that were either identified as relevant to the research questions when analyzed, or that are important to know for discussions later in this thesis. Direct quotes from the law are presented with their corresponding paragraph number (§), while general translated summaries are provided for sections not quoted directly.

(A note about translation: This law specifies duties of the *Fylkeskommune* and the *Kommune*. In this English interpretation, the *Fylkeskommune* is understood as the county, and the *Kommune* is understood as the municipality. Counties are larger areas that contain numerous municipalities geographically and legally.)

The first notable observation in the *Integreringsloven* comes before the reading of the law even begins – its title. The law introduced in 2003 was titled the *Introduksjonsloven*, or, in English, the Introduction Law. Using the word “introduction” implies a somewhat one-way process, and identifies a pre-existing entity (in this case, Norwegian society and life) to which a recipient is introduced. This presents the pre-existing entity as something statically classifiable. It also presents a dichotomy between this pre-existing entity, and those that are categorically “different” to it. To be introduced to something implies that this thing is not something the newcomers are familiar with – introduction implies a first-time exposure. It also does not allow much room for interaction between this identified entity and those being introduced to it. To say refugees are “introduced” to Norwegian society does not imply that either refugees or Norwegian society are shaped by, transformed by, or become a part of the other.

The move, then, from *Introduksjonsloven* to *Integreringsloven* (in English, The Integration Law,) in the shorthand title of the law, seems to signify a shift in the expectations of how immigrants and refugees are to interact with Norwegian society upon arrival. The shift implicit in this language is one that moves away from a more unilateral process of simply introducing an entity to a recipient, and towards a more interactive process of different

entities and individuals coming together. It also seems to be a shift away from the homogenizing tactics of assimilation, and towards a two-way narrative of mutual interaction, at least discursively.

The opening paragraph of the *Integreringsloven* defines the purpose of the law. Right from the first sentence, it is clear what the most important objective of this law is. It reads “The purpose of this law is for immigrants to be integrated early into the Norwegian society, and become economically independent” (Integreringsloven, 2020, §1). The use of the word “early” is a new addition to the opening sentence from the original purpose statement in the *Introduksjonsloven*, and expresses a sense of urgency. Being placed prominently in the opening statement indicates that the *speed* at which immigrants integrate is just as central as *how* they integrate, and is not just a secondary concern. The emphasis on immigrants’ economic independence is one that has remained in the opening sentence from the *Introduksjonsloven* (Introduksjonsloven, 2003, §1).

The duties of the county and municipality are outlined in chapter 2. The county is responsible for regional integration work, and it is responsible for recommending how many refugees should be relocated into each individual municipality. The county is also responsible for career counseling, and Norwegian language and society classes for participants enrolled in full-time secondary education. The municipality is responsible for early competency mapping for refugees, defined as creating an overview of their work and educational backgrounds, and Norwegian language and society classes for participants not enrolled in full-time secondary education. It is also specified that “The municipality’s duties do not apply for people who have stopped or refused participation in training in the asylum center, introduction program, or in Norwegian and society classes” (Integreringsloven, 2020, §3). The inclusion of the duties of the county is a new addition from the *Introduksjonsloven*, and as some responsibilities such as career guidance are transferred to the county in the *Integreringsloven*, this could signify a trend towards centralization, or a more integrated approach combining local and regional governmental bodies.

In paragraph §13, the law defines program goals and length for different classifications of participants. Program extension can be considered after a progress evaluation of the participant is conducted. Participants are divided into three categories:

1. For participants with secondary education: the goal is qualification for entering higher education, or the workforce. These participants are guaranteed between three and six months to reach this goal, with the possibility to extend the program by six months.

2. For participants over 25 years old without secondary education: the goal is completion of secondary education. These participants are guaranteed between three months and three years to reach this goal, with the possibility to extend the program by one year.
3. For other participants: the goal is entrance into the workforce, or completion of primary or secondary education. These participants are guaranteed between three months to two years to reach this goal, with the possibility to extend the program by one year (*Integreringsloven, 2020*).

This categorization is something new within the *Integreringsloven*, as only one standard program length was outlined for all refugees in the *Introduksjonsloven*. In these categorizations, difference is based completely on age and educational background, effectively essentializing participants according to skills relevant for their integration into the labor market or school, for the sake of categorization.

Despite the change in the name of the law, the program refugees follow is still referred to as the “introduction program”.

Paragraph §14 outlines four basic elements that introductory programs must include

- (a) Norwegian language lessons
- (b) Norwegian society courses
- (c) A life-skills course
- (d) Education and work preparation (*Integreringsloven, 2020*)

This paragraph further specifies that if participants have children under 18, or are expecting children soon, they are to participate in childrearing courses, although it makes no demands for what those courses should be. These courses are also a new addition from the *Introduksjonsloven*, implying that a shift towards integration must include attention to family dynamics between parents and children, incorporating topics from the private realm.

When specifying what element (d) will consist of, the municipality and the participant are to come up with a plan together. The goal of this plan is to outline what is needed for the participant to reach their pre-determined goal as quickly as possible. This plan must include a justification for the choices made. The law further specifies what party holds decision-making power in the case of disagreement, and states “The municipality decides the contents of the integration plan in the case of disagreement between the municipality and the individual” (*Integreringsloven, 2020, §15*). The use of the word “disagreement” here seems to portray

neutral, equal conflict, that is not powered or politicized. The favoring of the decision of the municipality reveals who is seen as more fit to make the best decisions concerning individual refugees' integration.

It is also noted that although both parties, the municipality and the refugee, sign a contract agreeing on the integration plan, that the plan can be adjusted throughout the integration process. It states "The plan shall be evaluated regularly, and in the case of significant changes in the participant's life" (Integreringsloven, 2020, §15). This seems to demonstrate that this plan *can* be flexible and responsive to particularities of the refugee's distinct personal situation.

Chapter 5 of the law explains that participants also have a right to financial support during the duration of the program. It states that "participants in the introduction program have a right to an introduction stipend" (Integreringsloven, 2020, §19) and "the Introduction stipend is twice the amount of the yearly minimum public welfare support" (Integreringsloven, 2020, §20). Stipends can be halted or reduced if the refugee does not participate in the introductory program, and does not have a valid reason for this absence. Valid reasons are defined within the law as "illness or other unpreventable welfare reasons" (Integreringsloven, 2020, §21). This stipend is not reduced if the refugee earns other income, unless that income is earned within work that is as a part of the integration program.

This stipend has two affects. On one hand, it allows the refugee to be able to attend classes while not worrying about how they will support themselves. The same values behind this idea also lay the basis for stipends for students in Norway: that someone should be able to study full time, and attend training programs full time, and still be able to support themselves, even if that full time attendance means they are not employed. In this sense, we can see a sort of equal treatment between refugees, and others in Norway that receive such support, like full-time university students (Berg, 2014). On the other hand, this stipend can signify a turn to coercive approaches to integration, such as the trend discussed in the background section. Here we must analyze agency, and question: what refugee, in Norway, has the opportunity to say "no" to such economic support?. In this sense, the refugee has no option but to attend the program, and follow all rules, as not doing so effectively results in economic sanctions.

One paragraph outlined in both laws stands out in particular in its handling of difference. Paragraph §40 states that it is not permissible for participants to wear any kind of clothing that partially or fully covers their face while taking part in any training or education programs outlined in the law. Participants who do this receive written warnings, and if they continue to wear such clothing, their training and education will be halted until they comply.

Here it is important to remember that if a participant is not taking part in education or training programs, they will not receive economic support. In this sense, there is an economic pressure for participants to comply with the regulations and refrain from wearing face coverings, lest they risk losing this stipend they depend on.

While the law does not outline the motivations behind this condition, or use any gendered or religious language, I contend that this can have gendered and discriminatory consequences for some participants, as Muslim refugees who wish to wear burkas, niqabs, or other religious clothing, do not have the same freedom to express their religion as non-Muslim participants. This topic is further discussed in the section “integration as equality”.

Throughout the law, the phrase “right and duty” is repeated numerous times, both regarding the refugee and Norwegian authorities. It seems that this language has persisted since its emergence in the 1990’s. Discursively, it seems to express, yet again, a more mutually, two-way process of integration. The language used focuses on accountability of both parties. For the county and the municipalities, it highlights what they are obligated to *give* the refugee (such as certain hours in the classroom, and career guidance) and for the refugee, it highlights how they are obligated to *act* in response to these things given to them (such as by attending classes). The law therefore outlines more concrete, practical duties for the counties and municipalities, and more normative behavioral duties for the refugee. This distinction is discussed further in the section “integration as a two-way street”.

### 6.1.3 Other Publications

One key publication selected to contextualize integration policy was *How to Measure Integration*, a report developed by Proba (2019), a social research and consultancy organization, for IMDi. The goal of this publication is to establish how integration policy should be pursued and evaluated, and the report explores conceptualizations for “successful integration” according to the law. After defining assimilation, segregation, and multiculturalism, this report argues for what they call “segmented assimilation”, where certain individual qualities (such as spoken language) undergo assimilation, and through this, differences decrease over time. This argues against seeing the concept of “assimilation” as inherently negative. However, in the end, it is a process of a society becoming “one”. The report outlined the following focus areas for assessing integration:

- Economic integration
- Political integration

- Social integration
- Experienced integration (with an elaboration that this means measuring the connection refugees feel to Norwegian society, and perceptions Norwegians have of refugees) (*Proba, 2019*)

The second relevant publication is a list of Norwegian Society subjects that have been created for classes according to the directives of the law. In practice, the organization Skills Norway is responsible for creating Norwegian culture and society courses, and is commissioned by the Ministry of Justice and Public Security to create presentations that are given to refugees. They have done so by creating presentations on the following 9 topics, as outlined on their website:

- 1) Day-to-day life and social interaction
- 2) Family structures and forms of cohabitation, celebrations, red letter days, and milestone ceremonies
- 3) Equality and protection against discrimination
- 4) Health, with a particular focus on sexual health and drug and alcohol abuse
- 5) The rights of children and the role of parents
- 6) Violence in close relationships
- 7) Sexual harassment and sexual assault
- 8) Democracy and values
- 9) Threats to democracy (*Kompetanse Norge, 2017*)

The selection of these topics as central units within Norwegian culture and society curricula reveal which subjects curriculum designers see as imperative to cover, with the underlying assumption that these topics *should* be taught, since they are likely subjects unfamiliar to the refugee.

## 6.2 Interviews

In this section, I present the main findings from my interviews. Throughout my interviews, I aimed to explore what respondents meant by “integration”, what problems integration policy seemed to be designed to address, what their perspectives were on the new *Integreringsloven*, and what they felt integration *should* mean. Findings in this section are

presented through featured quotes that express the respondents' perspectives, juxtaposed with words and phrases selected from texts explored earlier, and supported by relevant literature. I refer to interview respondents by the names they were given for this study (instead of saying respondent 1, respondent 2, etc., for example), in order to present this data in a way that expresses the humanity of conversational connection that I experienced during interviews.

### 6.2.1 Motivations

In order to understand the perspectives of respondents, it was important to consider what motivated them to work with integration processes in the first place. One of the opening questions in each interview therefore asked respondents why they entered into their line of work. For most, motivations were grounded in humanitarian sentiments of good will, inclusion, and equality for all. Respondent Rita stated that her background as the child of parents with different nationalities and religions sparked her interest in working with cultural difference and integration. She commented "I'm very interested in human rights [...] and helping people, so it felt natural to go with this field". Elisabeth was also motivated by the notion of helping people: "I think it's very interesting, I love people! [...] I think it's interesting to help them have it easier, and to help them with 24 hours living. I think I have a really big heart for that". Maria's motivation was founded in an interest in working with reconciling difference "while doing my masters, I personally found that the most interesting thing about the degree was working with people of different cultures, [...] and figuring out how to live together, how to cooperate together". Respondent Elena expressed humanitarian motivations, and a desire to work towards a more peaceful world "It's because I believe that the only way to get peace in the world [...] is to see the value in people and make people believe in themselves".

The key words of "helping" "love" and "peace" present in these responses indicate motivations founded in a sense of a greater humanitarian good. It was interesting to hear that values that laid the foundation for involvement in integration work were not necessarily shaped by fear, but rather by a sense of virtuosity and care. This is worth consideration, as the policies that these individuals are bound to work by are often formulated as responses to fears and concerns of the Norwegian public, and often theorize difference as a problem, as I discuss later in this analysis.



### 6.2.2 What is a Refugee?

About half of the interview subjects offered a definition for the word “refugee” in their own words in the concept-mapping section of the conversation, while the other half stated that they generally follow the UN’s definition of a refugee within their organization<sup>1</sup>. Words and phrases used often when explaining this definition were people who *need protection* for humanitarian or political reasons, who are *fleeing* from something, and who are *forced to leave* the place they would like to be.

We can see here that there is mostly a consensus on what it means to be a refugee amongst interview respondents, and this definition does not seem to depart significantly from the UN’s definition. One interesting emphasis that respondent Marte noted was “we have to remember for the refugees [...] they haven’t chosen to come. It’s not like they were going on a holiday and they ended up in Norway, it was a matter of life and death”. For this respondent, this quality that separates refugees from other immigrants is important to remember, as integration assessments that only focuses on language and employment may miss out on other needs particular to refugees, such as emotional needs of sympathy, trauma counseling, and acceptance.

### 6.2.3 What is Integration?

A central focus of my research objectives is to gain insight into how “integration” is understood by respondents. Therefore, large portions of the conversations I had with respondents were dedicated to exploring this topic. The following section contains groupings of different ways to understand what integration is, presented as metaphors: “Integration as...” For each metaphor, I discuss the discourse it employs, and the implications of that discourse, keeping an eye out for communications of norms and problematizations. I also reflect on the extent to which each metaphor is reflected in the language of the texts I analyzed, and connect it to relevant theories and literature.

It is important to note that while these metaphors are presented separately in order to explore them in depth, they were not necessarily listed separately within the interviews, and respondents did not indicate one single, specific definition from the following as *the* way to

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<sup>1</sup> The UN’s definition of a refugee is someone who is outside of their country of origin due to justified fears of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular group, or political opinion, and because of this, unable (or unwilling) to return to their country of origin (UN General Assembly, 28 July 1951).

understand integration. While I present and analyze these metaphors individually here, I acknowledge and discuss their overlaps, interactions, and inconsistencies in the discussion section of this thesis.

### *Integration as indications of accomplishments*

Echoing the emphases of the *Integreringsloven*, respondents identified a handful of measurable competencies and accomplishments as important definitions of integration. Learning the Norwegian language and gaining employment were the two most prominent focuses. Language learning was expressed as the least problematized indication of integration, with every respondent agreeing on its importance. There seemed to be a general consensus amongst respondents that, as Susanne summarized simply: “if your plan is to live in Norway, you will have a better life if you learn the Norwegian language”.

Gaining employment in Norway was listed as a mostly unproblematized indication of integration, with Rita noting when asked about what successful integration looks like: “I think if you have gotten a job very fast... then you have been doing something right”. Many respondents, however, noted that integration cannot be evaluated simply due to the *fact* of employment – we must also look into the quality and security of that employment. Peter expressed concern about many refugees who come to Norway and gain employment that is not full-time, not “formal”, and within 5-10 years they either loose or leave that job. John shared an interesting perspective related to this concern. He noted that from his point of view, earlier integration initiatives focused only on qualifying refugees for employment as quickly as possible, without paying much attention to job quality and security. Now, John commented, politicians have realized the importance of incorporating work training and career guidance into education programs, so refugees gain awareness and social competencies that will make them less vulnerable to labor exploitation. He explained “if you don’t have these formal skills you will be poorly paid and maybe just have short term jobs and so on, and you will have a difficult life”. Instead of pointing to concerns of the welfare state and dependency as the reasons why refugees should hold stable, formal jobs, this perspective focuses on the well-being of the refugee. Here, ensuring that refugees receive proper work training and guidance within integration programs is a way to combat unfair treatment and discrimination, not just a way to ensure that refugees “play their part” in the labor market.

Language proficiency and employment within quality, stable jobs are examples of indicators of accomplishments, and largely underpin the way integration is spoken about

within the documents analyzed earlier. Other examples of indicators expressed within this metaphor were educational accomplishments such as university degrees, and training certificates in specialized technical fields. These indicators are usually pre-defined, in spaces external to the refugees themselves. For example, language proficiency is measured by levels based on the *Common European Framework of Reference for Language* (Council of Europe, 2001), which defines what it means to be at a beginner's level (A1) and what is needed to achieve the advanced level (C2). Refugees enter into such pre-established frameworks, and their "success" is measured based on their ability to accomplish these indicators. This means that, at least for these indicators, it is the frameworks of Norway and Europe that decide for the refugee what it means to be successful, not the refugee themselves. I argue that this is evidence of teaching norms, as Norway and Europe have decided what it will take for refugees to live happier, better lives.

These indications also have a tendency to "render technical" the process of integration. "Rendering technical" is a process that Tania Murray Li (2007) argues goes hand in hand with problematization and policy intervention. Murray Li explains that "rendering technical" consists of two processes: devising problem categorizations to be solved according to the availability of solutions, and depoliticizing the issues involved in these categories. Progress in integration, when rendered technical, is seen as a one-directional development of proficiencies from a lower level to a higher level, quantified by percentages and classifiable levels (such as within language learning). This ignores the political and complex social processes that influence this development. Effectively, this locates the "problem" as refugees not participating in Norwegian society in ways that are expected of Norwegians, such as employment, or not progressing in the unilateral, upward-direction towards these goals. Rendering technical also means that problems are identified based on what authorities in Norway are equipped to provide. They may not have solutions ready to address any racism or xenophobia that may negatively impact integration and lead to alienation, but they *are* able to provide language courses and job opportunities. This effectively silences any political struggles that would require a transformation of Norwegian society, or the provision of justice-focused solutions that do not already exist.

#### *Integration as subjective emotional experiences*

While all respondents emphasized the importance of these achievement indications, six out of the eight respondents exhibited a level of criticism towards integration being

reduced to employment and education as it is in the law. They went further to include many subjective indications of emotional well-being and fulfillment. Terms that emerged consistently were “acceptance” “belonging”, and the feeling of living a “good life”. These respondents expressed a concern that if these factors are not included, “successful” integration will miss out on humanitarian objectives. As Marte reflected “ok so you learn the language and you get some work practice, great. But if your neighbor doesn’t invite you for tea or you don’t have any local friends you will never feel you’re a part of society”. This metaphor for integration locates the problem to be fixed as refugees feeling isolated, sad, unfulfilled, and rejected.

These subjective emotional experiences seem to take place within the refugee themselves, but still depend on interaction with Norwegian society. One of the challenges that arise when defining integration in such a subjective way, is figuring out how to then measure integration. Measuring integration can be a useful way to understand the impacts and successes/shortcomings of integration initiatives, and can produce helpful data to use when arguing for certain policy change. However, if it is insisted that integration be measured through the same research tools used now, how is it possible to quantify subjective emotional experiences, without risking the “rendering technical” tendencies of the indications of successes discussed before?

One suggestion might be to simply speak to refugees about their feelings, and emotional experiences. “Happiness” feels different to different people, and any attempt to quantify levels of happiness based on one definition of the emotion, risks simplifying and misrepresenting complex human experiences. Why not, then, just ask refugees themselves how they feel, according to their own definitions of emotions like happiness? There has been some attempt to do this, as a field of research methodology developing measurements of “subjective well-being” has emerged (see, for example, Stone & Mackie, 2013). Professors from Linköping University in Sweden have even worked with developing measurements of this subjective well-being amongst refugees already, in their report *'How do you feel?' A self-rating scale for well-being in Refugees* (Hermansson & Timpka, 1999). Still, as seen in the review of our texts, these indicators have yet to be included in dominant measurements of integration.

Deprioritizing this kind of data is symptomatic of a preference in research knowledge production to stick to data collection methods more aligned with “objective”, modernist science. Donna Haraway (1988) addresses this preference as a privileging of unlocated knowledge (which, as she argues, do not actually exist). This preference describes a way to

know a real truth that is distant and unembodied, from the perspective of an objective outside knower located nowhere in particular. According to this perspective, data and knowledge production should be comparable, repeatable, and quantifiable, which subjective emotional experiences are everything but. Creating understandings of refugees' emotional experiences would require a departure from – and even resistance to – such data collection methods, and any insistence that policy be informed only by such data. This would require addressing the shortcomings of modernist knowledge productions that constitute the foundation of Euro-American academia, research, and science, and allowing for alternative methods discovering different ways of being. These methods need to rely not on categorization or quantification, but instead on featuring all the different ways refugees can experience the feelings of difference reconciliation, allowing space for less common and even contradictory subjectivities to exist together.

#### *Integration as a “two-way street”*

Several respondents expressed the need for integration to be seen as an interactive process between Norwegian society and refugees, with found respondents using the analogy of a “two-way” street. Thomas referred often to the mutually transformative process of different cultures and ways of being interacting with each other. He rejected the notion of Norwegian society as one stagnant entity, and refuted the notion of Norwegian “values” as one thing, when commenting: “Norwegians are travelling, studying, and working abroad more, they are coming in touch with more people, so all these values are changing. Constantly”. Daniel also emphasized the two-way nature of how Norwegian society and “others” *should* influence each other: “Also Norwegian people, they have to learn to integrate with the others. They can also learn from [refugees]”. Gabriel also reflected on the importance of Norwegian society taking on an active role to accommodate to and include newcomers, and for the education process to be more mutual.

Since her motivations for getting involved in integration work were based in creating more understanding and peace in the world, respondent Elena believes that integration should mean the process of learning about each other in order to fight fears and stereotypes, as a part of the two-way process. Recognizing the humanity in others and connecting on a personal level was an important aspect of integration for her: “We have to open our eyes, both of us. Both parts. And I guess it’s possible only with education about each other [...] we have to

know that person so we are not afraid of this person. So this person is not just a Muslim refugee, but he is Muhammad. Our Muhammad”.

Here, integration is not something assigned only to the outsider entering into a society, but a process that anyone can undergo, in any direction, once exposed to difference. It may be interesting to note that these four respondents who communicated the necessity of Norwegian society changing were also the only four respondents with immigrant backgrounds themselves. I would also like to be reflexive here: understanding integration as a two-way street, where all “sides” involved change due to the influence and inclusion of the other, is how I (also as an immigrant in Norway) understand what sets “integration” apart from other processes, such as assimilation. While we cannot generalize this trend, it may be interesting to ask: does the process of experiencing immigration lead to understanding integration as more of a two-way street?

When analyzing this metaphor, inspired by decolonial framework, the first thing to jump out is the dichotomic nature of the term “two-way street”. This language identifies two separate, categorizable, and homogenous entities that interact with each other: the Norwegian society (as one thing) and the immigrant (as one thing). This can be an example of how discourses simplify. A more robust understanding of integration in this way, that does not reduce to binaries, might be to use terms that communicate a multidirectional, mutually transformative process – such as reconstructing a web. Still, this metaphor and its simplification could be useful for communicating to Norwegian society the importance of a willingness to be influenced by others.

Assessing how this approach is communicated within texts explored earlier, we see that expectations of Norwegian society are reduced to duties at the institutional level to ensure opportunities and rights to refugees, but it stops there. Within prominent discourses discovered in this thesis, Norwegian society changing, as a result of immigrants entering the society, is seen more as a problem to be solved and prevented, than a solution in itself.

### *Integration as a “balancing act”*

The fact that all but one respondent were not familiar with the word “assimilation” is very telling. Most respondents, although they did not use the word “assimilation”, emphasized the importance of rejecting assimilationist tactics of forcing refugees to completely replace their home culture, language, and values with Norwegian ones. There seemed to be a consensus amongst those I spoke with that integration is often, in practice, a balancing act –

where those undergoing integration programs and processes are negotiating between the Norwegian characteristics they are expected to adapt, and their own characteristics they *shouldn't* let go of.

When investigating the language of this “balancing act” we can ask: who is balancing?, what are they balancing?. Here, the “who” does not seem to include Norwegians or Norwegian society. This idea of “integration as a balancing act” between two cultures locates the process of integration not between two societies – or, between one society and the perceived “other” entering it – but rather, it locates integration within the refugees themselves. They are the ones responsible for the balancing of different cultures.

This metaphor communicates, as discussed within identity negotiation theory by Stella Ting-Toomey (2015), an “ideal balancing” between interactions with those that remind and reaffirm the refugee of their own particular background of difference, and interactions with others. Within identity negotiation theory, this negotiation is seen on a spectrum, where associating only with similar cultures risks homogeneity, and associating only with “others” risks alienation. An ideal balance that the refugee should achieve is therefore identified between these two extremes.

Reflecting on the texts analyzed earlier, there is no specific mention for how, and to what extent, refugees should safeguard their own background and balance it with the Norwegian values and norms they are expected to adopt. However, it is quite clear that the refugee is expected to adopt Norwegian language and normative social values. While this metaphor of balancing and negotiation is often employed to reject ideas of assimilation, by encouraging immigrants to keep their own culture and language, and was used in such a way throughout the interviews in this thesis, this phrase in itself does not place any responsibility on the host society to balance difference – this balancing act happens within the refugees themselves.

### *Integration as equality*

Another perspective that emerged repeatedly throughout the interview process was integration as a process of creating equality – in terms of treatment, qualities of life, and opportunities. Respondent Susanne listed quite a few categories that are important to monitor when assessing this. She mentioned assessing housing equality, equality in political participation and representation, gender equality, and equal treatment from the Norwegian

public. This respondent grouped all of these categories together in defining what she formulated as “socioeconomic equal treatment”.

Elisabeth also explained that equality with Norwegians was foundational for successful integration, and elaborated that her understanding of this is: “When the person has their own house, flat, is in the neighborhood with the neighbors, going to the job or education as ordinary Norwegians do, are in sports and other organizations, like you have the same life as ordinary Norwegians”. Here, the language used communicates an understanding of equality as sameness.

Gabriel echoed similar language of equality as sameness, but from the perspective of the refugees he had interacted with: “I think that that’s what they need from society. The sincerity that we are interested, and you are welcome, and we will treat you like everyone else. I remember people saying to me, they don’t want to be treated differently, they just want to be treated like everyone else”.

While the *Integreringsloven* itself does not comment on equality or sameness to Norwegians, the indicators used to measure integration, especially within the text *How to Measure Integration*, signify that this perspective is used in measurement. For example, unemployment rates amongst immigrants and refugees are compared to unemployment rates amongst Norwegians. According to this measurement, the more equal these two rates are, the higher degree of integration there is in the work force.

Practically, however, we can question whether seeing equality as sameness actually leads to equal situations for refugees and Norwegians. For example, it can be argued that Muslim and Non-Muslim students do not have the same degree of freedom to express their religion in the classroom, as Muslim students are not allowed to wear any clothing that covers their face according to the *Integreringsloven*, including religious clothing such as burkas. Here, we discover that “equal treatment”, being that no student is allowed to wear face covering, leads to unequal situations, where this rule only negatively effects Muslim students. This is the outcome of “equality” that lacks a justice perspective of equity. In the end, it seems that this understanding of integration greatly aligns with an assimilationist approach. Here, equality as sameness is not understood as a middle-ground meeting point where different sides compromise to be the same together – it is about Norwegian culture staying as it is, and the immigrant changing whatever is necessary to achieve “sameness” to this culture.

*Integration as the wrong term*



One respondent, Marte, shared an interesting perspective when she expressed that “integration” is not the term we should be using at all. While all other respondents accepted the use of the term, albeit in varying ways, Marte respondent rejected its use altogether. To her, the language of integration still expresses a one-way process, even if the rhetorical intentions of the term may be to move away from such a tendency. She explains:

*“integration is maybe the word that the authorities use much more than we do, and I think [...] that integration is a one-way word, where the person coming to the new environment has to integrate himself into that new space or place - the community doesn’t have to do anything back. So, in [our organization] we prefer “inclusion”, because you cannot include yourself without the other part including you. If you feel included in the society, you are also integrated.”*

Here, it may be interesting to note that this respondent was the only one from a non-governmental organization, working with a great degree of separation from legal mandates. This understanding, while its motivations overlap with the “two-way street” metaphor, departs from that metaphor as it argues that the way to accomplish mutual transformation is to abandon the language of integration altogether, and adapt a more fitting language of inclusion. Here, integration may still be understood as the end goal, but it is not a process in itself.

#### 6.2.4 Policy Problematization and Fears

When conducting a critical discourse analysis of integration policy, it was important to gather perspectives on what perceived “problem” this policy was designed to address. In order to do this, I attempted to discover fears of what possible consequences would result if such a policy did not exist, and integration was not pursued.

##### *Segregation and ghettoization*

Most respondents defined “segregation” as the inherently problematic opposite of “integration”. Here, segregation was understood as refugees and immigrants forming their own groups and societies that run parallel to, but still separate from, Norwegian society. It was generally assumed that segregation would be a naturally occurring phenomena that would

result from a lack of inclusion and acceptance in Norwegian society. Segregation was therefore described as a result in the breakdown in both directions of the “two-way street” of integration.

Digging deeper to locate the aspects of segregation that render it problematic, negative consequences for both the refugee and Norwegian society were expressed. Concerning the individual, the inability to participate meaningfully in society had consequences for a sense of self-worth and dignity.

Sarah pointed out that institutional structures play an important part in preventing this experience of isolation and exclusion:

*“When the government doesn’t provide the structures for you to succeed and realize, and try to live your own life, then you may refrain from being a part of the society, or being a part of something bigger. Then you may try to look for people who look more like you and have the same situation as you, and then you may start to kind of establish your own small submissive group.”*

Respondents Victoria and Gabriel also voiced this concern, and identified the formation of submissive groups within society, identified crime, radicalization, and conflict as potential outfalls of segregation.

Sarah also went on to explain that this process of alienation can lead to ghettoization. She continued from their comment above “if you don’t feel welcome and then you don’t try to get closer to be a part of the society, you will start living in ghettos and you will be outside of the society”. Daniel was also quick to name ghettoization as a negative consequence of non-integrative approaches to immigration: “If we don’t have integration then we will have separation, so we will have ghettos. We will have people being here but being outside of the society, which is not good [...] then there will be ‘us’ and there will be ‘them.’” Using a decolonial lens, ghettoization can be seen as a perpetration of colonialist tendencies, and as a tool that “[works] to authorize the metropole and conscribe her periphery” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 5). Ghetto creation here is a method of a society and nation that operationalizes modes of control by creating designated spaces for the “other”, pushing the “other” into these spaces through alienation, and trapping the “other” occupying these spaces into inherently problematic labels.

It is interesting to see how the process of ghetto creation is understood amongst respondents. It is clear that according to Sarah, the host society and its institutions play a

crucial role in whether or not immigrants feel welcome, and feel that they can navigate the society on an equal level. Here, the theorization of how ghettoization occurs then *begins* with host society, and not with individual rebellion from immigrants. Any feeling of rebellion or isolation within the individual refugee is understood as a symptom resulting from failed integration measures from the state and society, and that is where the ground-level problem is located. According to Eriksen (2013) there is evidence that this fear of ghettoization is growing amongst the Norwegian population, especially in urban centers like Oslo, where it is optically visible.

### *Islamization and the minoritization of “ethnic” Norwegians*

Another problem that was identified was that of Norwegian culture being negatively transformed by refugees, which would happen less if refugees are more integrated into Norwegian culture. Respondent Elena reflected:

*“I think some of them fear losing the Norwegian culture. Now the extremists they are using that term ‘Islamization,’ and they think ‘we will lose our religion, we will lose our culture,’ because [the refugees] are coming, and they will be so many because they always get five or six children in each family, and we only get one child. And the democracy is still working, so they will have more rights than we have, and we will lose our rights.”*

Islamization, literally, is the process of a society shifting towards becoming more Islamic. Rhetorically, and especially in reference to immigration to Europe, this term has a negative connotation, invoking fear and worry amongst non-Muslim Europeans. (Uenal, 2016) This term communicates that since many of the immigrants coming to Europe are Muslim, if they are allowed to bring their culture and religion with them uncontested, they will completely replace European religions and cultures, as echoed in the fears Elena explained here. This fear and prejudice is called Islamophobia. In this narrative, Muslim immigrants are painted as villains, and non-Muslim “ethnic” Norwegians as victims. (What exactly is meant by “ethnic” Norwegians could be a study of its own. Its use seems to define it as *not* the “other” that enters Norway from elsewhere – *not* the Muslim, *not* the African, *not* the immigrant – and these distinctions of what the ethnic Norwegian is *not* often carry racialized and religious undertones.)

This fear not only speaks about one religion replacing another, it implies that Islamization will mean the replacement of wide ranges of societal values. As Eriksen (2013) argues, gender equality is usually a central concern of these debates, with the headscarf as a crucial symbolic representation of this debate. Concerns about Islamization often point to its use to argue that women are oppressed within Islam. Several other practices of “negative social control”, such as forced marriages and female circumcision, are also overwhelmingly associated with Islam and used to argue the necessity of resistance to it, even though these practices are not exclusive to Islam, and are practiced by other groups as well (Eriksen, 2013). Therefore, rejecting Islamization is framed at times as a feminist project. Here, we can see that this feminism is imperial – that is, it believes that there is one way to be “correctly” liberated and equal, that secular, modern western society has discovered this way, and that it is the job of western feminists to liberate Muslim women from their oppressive and patriarchal religion and culture (see Khader, 2018). As Piedalue and Rishi (2017) point out, one contribution of feminist decolonial theory has been to recognize personal and private spaces as important realms for observing imperial power, as we can see happening here, where a fear motivating integration initiatives is prevention of certain private cultural practices and norms.

This fear and Islamophobia therefore frame the existence of Muslim piety as inherently problematic, usually carrying undertones of gendered cultural imperialism. This fear is evidenced amongst the Norwegian population according to the *Integreringsbarometret* (a study that measured attitudes towards integration within the Norwegian population), which discovered that 45% of respondents said they were skeptical towards people of Muslim faith (Brekke, Fladmoe, & Wollebæk, 2020).

It is also quite interesting to note that one concern underpinning this fear is that non-Muslim Europeans will become a minority. Here, we might want to critically assess what the fear of being a minority can tell us about the treatment of minorities in Europe. Elena’s point about how democracy works is also very telling. The fear here is that minority groups’ rights are fewer and less protected in a representational democracy. What does this say about the infallible western democracy that we fetishize as the ultimate symbol of freedom, and teach unproblematically to newly arrived immigrants, such as through the lesson plans outlined earlier from Skills Norway (Kompetanse Norge, 2017)?

*Financial concerns of the welfare state*

The concern most consistently expressed throughout the interviews was the economic concerns of the welfare state. All respondents stated that this is a major concern motivating the effort towards integration of refugees. Since a welfare state like Norway operates through high employment and tax revenue, refugees' exclusion from economic opportunities and the labor market poses a threat to the efficiency of the welfare system. As Joseph reflected: "If they segregate, I think that will be a big problem, because if we integrate them they will come into jobs and they will have their own income. But if we don't integrate them, I think they will have problems [getting] income, and that will be an economic problem for us". Peter voiced this concern even more strongly: "economically, we will have a problem if not everyone is contributing, working, and paying their taxes. That will ruin our society".

These concerns seem to take place because of a Norwegian value that was stated through several interviews: that it is the responsibility of the state to ensure that people are taken care of. As participant Manuel commented, "the government is maybe afraid that they will keep letting people in, and that the state may have to take care of them economically, because the Norwegian state is obligated to take care of people".

Kofman (2005) explains that one result of this fear is neoliberal welfare states structuring what they refer to as a "managerial approach" to immigration and integration, the purpose of which is to "derive the greatest benefit from economic globalisation by selecting migrants on the basis of their utility to the economy and to apply, as far as possible, the same economic and political calculus and rationality to all forms of migration, including those derived from normative principles (family migration, asylum and refugees)" (Kofman, 2005, p. 455). This managerial approach leads to the structuring of integration initiatives that include differentiated programs and structures for immigrants and refugees, based on their ability to contribute economically to the welfare state in ways most similar to the Norwegian population, which we can see evidenced in the priorities of the *Integreringsloven* and its corresponding methods of success evaluation.

### *Reflections on Covid-19*

Interestingly, the few times that the respondents brought the Covid-19 pandemic, this was the question that prompted its discussion. After being asked about what fears exist for refugees not integrating quickly into Norwegian society, two respondents immediately reflected on the public opinion of the immigrant population during the pandemic. Sarah commented "especially now with the Corona situation, there are many people blaming on

immigrants because they didn't do this and they didn't do that". Victoria also highlighted this as a current concern of Norwegian society, that "we've seen a bit of this during the Corona period, when the level of sick people is much higher in parts of the immigrant population than in the Norwegian population". While Victoria didn't specify the roots of this difference, Sarah found the explanation for a greater infection rate and hesitancy for vaccination in the incompetencies and oversights of governmental institutions "the government took a long long time in order to provide this part of the population with good information. And without information you can't expect people to know what is right and what is wrong in this situation".

This concern shows how immigrants can be cast into one homogenous group, and are very easily given a problematic label. When discovering that the rate of infection is higher amongst immigrant groups than Norwegians, the most prominent narrative to emerge amongst Norwegian society is that there is something problematic about immigrants – that they don't know, or don't care about, how to be healthy. This is more common than the counternarrative that Sarah suggested, that investigated why this is by looking at the authorities responsible for ensuring that these populations get the information they need. Still, the reason this is seen as a fear of the general public is that this degree of difference between Norwegians and immigrants can lead to vulnerabilities within the general population as this pandemic spread, whereas if they were more "integrated", (which, here, seems to mean "similar to Norwegians",) the general public would be healthier and safer.

### 6.2.5 Reflections on the *Integreringsloven*

#### *Reception selectivity*

One concern expressed by an interview subject was related to the distribution of refugees being in the hands of municipalities. According to the respondent, this creates the possibility for municipalities to be selective in their acceptance. The number of refugees a municipality is distributed – and consequently the amount of funding and support they receive from the government – depends on their level of success in integration work with the refugees that are placed there, measured by a quick achievement of the indicators discussed earlier. Special attention is paid to how many refugees within each municipality are either employed or enrolled in higher education after two years. Since the speed and ease at which refugees achieve these goals that are set for them is highly dependent on their background and the

skills they bring with them to Norway, it therefore becomes much more attractive for municipalities to accept refugees that come to Norway with high levels of education, job experience, and/or language proficiency (those considered “easily integratable”). This was the particular concern of respondent David, who works closely with refugee competency mapping: “It can create this kind of situation where municipalities are selecting refugees that are easy to get out successfully, [and] integrate with the definition of the government because then they will get more refugees and more money, I think it’s a very unfortunate way of designing integration”.

Here, we can observe the effects of how integration policy that responds first and foremost to the concerns of the welfare state creates not only a dismissal of assistance based on need, but also a process that exacerbates inequality. If equality is understood as sameness as explored above, then those with less perceived difference regarding education and work skills are prioritized as to reach this goal of equality faster. This also presents evidence of the Norwegian institutions framing acceptance and integration through the managerial approach discussed earlier.

### *Timeframe*

Throughout all of my interviews, the change in integration policy that was highlighted most prominently as a concern was the timeframe. In the *Introduksjonsloven* from 2003, refugees were guaranteed a minimum of two years of Norwegian classes and training to enter the work force or education. In the *Integreringsloven*, this time frame has been reduced significantly for most participants. Depending on refugees’ background, many participants are only guaranteed between three months to a maximum of two years for their program, while only refugees without secondary education are guaranteed more than two years. In addition, the number of required hours of Norwegian society classes has increased. While before the requirement was for refugees to complete 50 hours of classes in three years, the new law requires 75 hours of classes in one year, as respondent Peter explained.

Some respondents offered positive perspectives to this shortening time frame and increase in requirements, albeit with reservations about its applicability to all participants. Peter, who works on designing education plans for Norwegian language and society for refugees, felt that the increase in required hours was particularly positive. He explained that many topics covered in the Norwegian society course are new to many refugees such as family planning, abortion, and LGBTQ+ rights, and these topics can be difficult to discuss.

He emphasized that such topics cannot be taught in a straightforward, top-down format, where refugees are simply told “this is how it is in Norway” with no room for reflection and discussion. Therefore, from their experience, the increase in required hours from 50 to 75 is a positive move. This respondent believes school should be a safe place where refugees have the time and space to ask “why is it like that?” when it comes to cultural differences, and be able to work through those differences together with other refugees going through a similar process. A greater number of hours allocated to instruction allows more space for these kinds of conversations.

Although Peter was also concerned about the shortening time frame for integration program completion, he explained a predominant reasoning behind it: “others say that in today’s system the pressure is not enough, if you know that you have to get to a B1 level to get your permanent residency, maybe that will get people to invest more in getting to that level, if the pressure is higher”. Respondent Elena was perhaps the most positive to this shortening time frame, and their reasoning seemed to follow this same logic – that many refugees will put off learning if they have more time to complete the program, when in reality, they could learn the language quicker if they were forced to. This reasoning argues that a sense of urgency is needed to push refugees into dedicating more time and effort to their language learning, implying that that sense of urgency does not already exist amongst them. This effectively frames refugee motivation and effort as a problem that needs to be addressed through policy.

All other respondents expressed concern regarding this shortening time frame. Respondent Manuel, who works at a short-term asylum center, finds that, although some participants are highly motivated, the time and effort one can dedicate to language learning depends on other factors as well. He comments

*“I have met many people who are at our camp for just one week and they speak almost as good Norwegian as I do [...] But I can also see some, maybe for example parents, that don’t have that kind of time to just sit in their room and learn Norwegian. So I think [the timeframe] is good for some but not for everybody.”*

This highlights one way in which the shortening of the timeframe might overlook difference between refugees – that it does not take into account other obligations refugees might have, such as family.



Respondent Elisabeth, who oversees the operations of both the regular asylum center and the integration asylum center in their municipality, states that this timeframe seems impossible even for refugees coming with high education and work experience.

*“If you get a refugee that is university educated, we have six months plus six months to work with this person, so that he can get on a level of Norwegian so he can be in a job [...] and study further in university. [These people] are very interested and motivated, but 1 year... six months to one year to learn Norwegian on the level that the law says... never. Never. We can't... I don't understand how we can do that.”*

Respondents largely agreed that *quick* integration is an important factor in achieving the ideals of belonging and acceptance explored earlier. However, evidenced by the prevalence of concern about shortening the timeframe for integration programs, there seems to be a disconnect between how these goals are best accomplished according to the policy level mandates, and according to the lived experience of those working with integration at ground-level. This disconnect was felt by respondent Maria, who commented “It’s very clear that the integration law’s focus is to get people into work as quickly as possible. That’s the red thread through the whole thing [...] but it’s like they almost haven’t really thought about how this will apply in real life”.

### *Competency mapping*

Respondents spoke about to the new emphasis that the *Integreringsloven* puts on competency and difference mapping for newly arrived refugees, with varying opinions on what this emphasis succeeds in, and fails in covering. According to the law, the minimum requirements for what this mapping should cover is language skills, education, work experience or other relevant skills the refugee has. This seems to be in line with the understanding of integration as indicators of accomplishments that I explored earlier, where work, education, and language are the pre-defined skill categories the refugee is to build upon during their integration process.

Several respondents found this to be a very positive and helpful emphasis, that helps design fitting education and work plans, and allows refugees to rely on the experiences and competencies that they had before arriving in Norway. Joseph stated

*“when they come, we have to do this mapping. And I think we haven’t done this so well before. [...] I think we are working more closely and tighter up to this refugee, so we can get a relationship with them, and so we can find out what they want. [...] This law gives us some pressure to work closer with them in this way, and I like that.”*

Daniel also explained the positive impact competency mapping can have for building confidence and self-worth “I think that’s the important to see that value, that I [as the refugee] don’t need to be another Norwegian person, because I can use my own experience”. For these respondents, competency mapping is about more than just identifying categorical objectives for the refugee to accomplish, it is about centering the refugees’ own background as valuable, and meaningful.

### *Gender*

As a strategic move, questions outlined in my interview guide did not specifically address gender, and I only asked respondents for their perspectives on gendered issues within integration initiatives if the topic did not come up naturally within the conversation. This was in order to see if respondents mentioned gender themselves without being led to it, and to see what topics would prompt them to bring it up and how. Interestingly, all but one respondent brought up gendered issues in their responses in some way or another without being specifically directed to do so. This can reveal that gendered difference is a prevalent concern that is often observed within integration implementation, and that the *Integreringsloven* seems to carry with it certain gendered consequences.

Manuel commented that within Norwegian language classes at their short-term asylum facility, men were much more likely to participate. He commented “we can see that with women they are more shy, they don’t want to [participate]... well they want to I think... but maybe it’s a cultural thing, it depends on where they are from”. This comment shows that gendered difference can be visibly observed in the classroom, and may be rooted in culture. The phrasing of “well they want to I think” also suggests hidden gendered power relations. If women are wanting to participate, but are not, then some elusive powered force is succeeding in preventing them from doing so.

Elisabeth brought up gendered difference in mapping previous work experience for newly arrived refugees. She mentioned that the gendered labor that women often hold

responsibility for in the household is an important aspect to include within competency mapping and finding potential employment opportunities in Norway.

*“A lot of women say, ‘I have not been in school and I have not worked.’ But they have worked! They have been in a full program with the whole family. They have the children, the older generation, they have done a lot and they have experience for Norwegian jobs, where they could maybe serve in the restaurant, doing some jobs with education [...] or in the hospital.”*

It was interesting to hear that skills women largely gain in the private sphere of their lives were highlighted within competency mapping as potential gateways for their integration in the Norwegian labor market. In a sense, these skills were then treated as a means to an end, with the end being the all-important goal of employment.

One comment from respondent John was a particularly telling perspective about the intersection between gendered difference and cultural difference in “Norway” verses “elsewhere”. This respondent was especially vocal in unproblematically defining certain values as “Norwegian values”. One of these values was gender equality, defined as men and women being treated equally. Another value was work, and John explained that one’s employment is very closely tied to their identity in Norway. Sitting at the intersection of these two values, John explained that in practice, this means both men and women are expected to work in Norwegian society. He compared this value to other places, including other European countries:

*“We have experienced that colleagues in Europe are shocked that refugee women that participate in the Introduction program in Norway are expected to work after giving birth. They think we are harsh to the women. In Norway it’s expected that you will go back to work after at least one year. In Italy, the employment level among women is lower than in Norway, and the family pattern is different. In Norway, it is an objective that women have a high occupational participation, and this also applies to women who arrived in Norway as refugees. I think that the goal for women to have a high occupational participation is a good thing, and also including women who arrive in Norway as refugees. On the other hand, it is difficult for many female refugees to acquire the qualifications that Norwegian working life demands.”*

This respondent often referred to integration as a process of building a “better life” in Norway, and explained that this was one way to accomplish this. This approach to gender equality within integration objectives seems most closely aligned with the metaphor of “integration as equality” explored above, where equality is still understood as sameness to Norwegians.

Respondent Elena told an interesting story to illustrate how gendered difference is approached within the integration camp at which she works. In this camp, for a family consisting of a wife, husband, and children, one of the adults will be invited to begin Norwegian classes and training before the other, as one of them might need to stay home and care for the children. Elena explained that at this integration camp, they use an affirmative action approach towards addressing gendered difference by encouraging the women to begin Norwegian classes first. This approach can have varying impacts for the family, however. “I had one family before from Syria where the husband was [illiterate], he couldn’t read couldn’t write, and [...] she had master’s degree in philosophy. And she started the program first, but still it was her who had to go to kindergarten, go to school deliver children, and he was just home all the time.” In this situation, the woman did not successfully learn Norwegian, even after attending classes for quite some time. Feminist authors such as Moser (1989) have pointed to the gendered division of labor within both private and public spheres that can lead to the failure of programs aimed towards gender inequality if they do not take this division into account. If, within the private sphere of the family, it is seen as the woman’s role to care for the household roles like cooking, cleaning, and taking care of the children, then pursuing gender “equality” simply by strategically including women in spaces that are typically male dominated can lead to more stress and responsibilities for the woman, only adding another layer of responsibility to her labor, and exacerbating inequality. This seems to be the outcome of this affirmative action approach for this particular family.

### *Childcare*

Another topic that emerged repeatedly without prompting was that of childcare training as an aspect of integration work. The prevalence of this topic in the responses collected was somewhat of a surprise to me, as I had not planned to observe how this subject was brought up naturally, like I had with gender. However, it became clear throughout the interview process that childcare training was a central initiative outlined in the *Integreringsloven*.

As a part of their work responsibilities, respondent Susanne mentioned that she was designing programs to train municipalities to be certified in parenting advice and guidance for refugees. Here we see the creation of these programs seems to occur in a unilateral, top-down direction: beginning with the goals mandated by the *Integreringsloven*, then designed by the directorate for integration, and taught to the municipalities who work with distributing this advice downwards to the refugees themselves. It becomes clear here that the way in which parenting guidance is formulated is not an interactive process, but instead treated as a lesson to be taught and received.

“Children not being looked after properly” is a fear outlined by respondent David, when they account for the concerns of refugees not “successfully” integrating into Norwegian society. Therefore, as they explain, the *Integreringsloven* states that “they should learn about raising children in Norway, and childcare in Norway”.

Respondent Joseph works with the implementation of curricula that includes this childrearing aspect, but has a slightly different perspective for what it is meant to achieve, due to their position as a teacher. He reflected that many refugees can be afraid of the child protection services in Norway, and that a goal of these classes is to help families understand that these services exist to support families and work together with them. This respondent also points out that encouraging parents’ involvement in their children’s education in Norway can also help with their own education, as approaches to education can be different than what they are used to. (Joseph elaborates that education in Norway aims to create critical engagement with subjects, not just teaching information in a top-down manner that measures success by students’ ability to repeat what they are told.) A focus on involvement in childrearing in a “Norwegian way” can encourage this kind of mutual learning. This respondent also expressed a desire for these classes to resist a top-down instructional style that disregards the parents’ own perspectives “we try to do it in a way that we are not talking down to their own culture and their own religion, it’s not that way, but we are talking about how we do it in *Norway*, and try to teach them about that and try to find the middle”.

#### *Political parties’ role*

Four respondents were quick to discuss the role of political parties when asked their opinion on the *Integreringsloven*. As Sarah noted: “You have to consider that the law is made by the progressive party, which is the non-immigrant-friendly party”. When emphasizing this, respondents seemed to communicate a sense of perceived powerlessness regarding policy

creation. As Fangen and Vaage (2018) note, and as I explained in my background section, the Norwegian Progress Party gained much popularity (and consequently their spot in Norwegian parliament) by presenting immigration as a problem during a time where anxieties about the cultural difference of “outsiders” coming to Norway were growing. The Progress Party can accomplish a lot when it comes to adjusting immigration policies due to an overwhelming consensus within the party that strict migration control is crucial (Fangen & Vaage, 2018). Therefore, compromising with other parties or adapting a less hard-lined politics regarding immigration risks splitting within the party, and a decrease in support from voters.

Integration policy in Norway is the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, and since this ministry is currently lead by the Progress Party, policy is greatly affected by these motivations that the party has to maintain their strict stance on immigration, and continue to present it as a *problem* to be *solved*. The power to create policy lies in the hands of these elected officials, and the power to influence their decisions lies in the hands of the constituencies they rely on for support. When it comes to the legal world, it is hard to see how refugees, and especially asylum seekers who do not have voting rights, can influence decision made within policy creation. There is effectively a separation between those that these policies effects most, and those with the greatest power to influence and decide policy.

### 6.2.6 How Should We “Do” Integration?

Finally, in addition to mapping out different ways respondents understood what integration is, this study also asked if they had any opinions on how integration *should* be done. This was to see how the understandings and perspectives on integration are put into practice, and how respondents feel integration is best achieved. This section explores some approaches found throughout conversations.

#### *To teach a man to integrate - assistance vs. duty-based approaches*

A major classification between different approaches towards integration, especially amongst different countries in Europe, can be what Thomas referred to as a “judicial vs. assistance-based” approach. A recurring debate in integration literature is the debate concerning to what extent we should assist refugees, and to what extent we should provide them with the knowledge and frameworks to assist themselves. Thomas explained the difference between these two approaches this way:

*“In northern Europe [...] you get more judicial or rights and duties-based integration. While if you go to the south in Europe, you will get a more assistance based approach. [There], people are people are going to speak more in the organization that they will do anything to help you to integrate, while in Northern Europe it’s more profiling what you need in order to integrate yourself into the society.”*

This approach seems to invoke parallels to the logic of “to teach a man to fish”.

This was especially reflected upon in Hagelund’s paper *Why it is bad to be kind. Educating Refugees to Life in a Welfare State: a case study from Norway* (Hagelund, 2005). In this paper, Hagelund makes the argument that integration programs are more successful when refugees are challenged to exercise problem-solving on their own, without solutions being given to them. Hagelund criticizes a phenomena within Norwegian society that she calls “snillisme”, which is a grammatical nominalization of the Norwegian word *snill* or kind. She argues that kindism as a phenomenon and tendency, though fueled by good intentions, can replace essential processes of learning independence and self-sufficiency. One quote from this paper struck me as particularly telling, where Hagelund reports on an interaction between a social worker and a refugee. The refugee had an appointment with authorities, and asked the social worker what he should do about his children during his appointment. The social worker began to explain that he will need to find someone to watch them, but then bit his tongue and instead asked “what do you think *you* should do to solve this problem?” The refugee then reflected and replied that he would contact his brother to see if he can watch the children. The social worker responded, nodding his head in approval, “I know that you can sort these things out yourself. You don’t need me to explain to you how to do it” (Hagelund, 2005, p. 477).

Vastly different attitudes can inform this duty-based approach. Hagelund explains that rejecting this *snillisme* is a way to center *empowerment*. She argues that more assistance-based approaches treat refugees like clueless children who cannot fend for themselves, and therefore need to be shown the way by the Norwegian authorities that know better. In contrast, duty-based approaches center the refugees’ own capabilities and problem-solving abilities, and aim to strengthen their social resilience. If they are always looking to Norwegian society to tell them what to do, they are at the mercy of if, and how, Norwegians help them. This perspective was also voiced by a few of my research respondents, like Thomas and Elena, who stated that it is important for refugees’ self-image and confidence to be able to do things themselves without having to rely on Norwegians for help.

However, when analyzing the story Hagelund tells about the refugee and the social worker, there seems to be a very thin line separating the duty-based approach from paternalistic tendencies that Arat-Koç (2020) outlined. In this scenario, the social worker had a solution that could help the refugee, but strategically withheld this idea from them in somewhat of a test or exercise to see if the refugee could arrive at that idea themselves, similar to the way a parent might teach a lesson to a child. While Hagelund argues that this approach resists paternalistic tendencies, it essentially creates a teacher-student power relation between the refugee and the other. This seems to reinforce the imperialist idea that refugees arriving to Norway need to be coached and taught about the “correct” way to think, live, and solve problems. It is not unreasonable to think that this refugee may very well have asked the same question if he was still in his home country talking to a friend. Even Norwegians could very well ask each other “what should I do about my kids”? when they have a meeting they must attend. Asking for advice isn’t necessarily symptomatic of being a refugee in a new country, it could just be a normal conversational question that anyone could ask anyone – but because this was a refugee asking a Norwegian, it automatically became a “teaching moment”.

Which approach treats refugees like children needing to be shown the way, and which one actually centers their needs respectfully? This seems to be a very difficult question to answer, as both approaches can, in their own way, be thinly veiled paternalistic imperialism depending on the beliefs of every individual engaging in it. On the other hand, both approaches also have their ways of centering the needs of the refugee – either by aiming to *empower* them through one approach, or by unconditionally lending a hand when they say they are in need through the other. This is an example of how societal attitudes can effect the way we treat refugees, even within the same frameworks. Perhaps we need to break out of the oppositional binary of seeing these two approaches as mutually exclusive options, and adjust our responses in a situation-by-situation manner, based on what the refugee outlines as their own desires.

#### *Which comes first, the certainty or the integration?*

For many asylum seekers coming to Norway, the process of migration is one of great uncertainty. Even when arriving, the uncertainty persists as asylum seekers can spend years in asylum centers, waiting to hear if they have been granted refugee status, and a right to stay in the country. However, uncertainty doesn’t necessarily come to an end once they receive



refugee status. This is especially true if the refugee has family members who are either back in their home country, in refugee camps in other countries, or awaiting their own answers for residency status in Norway. One topic discussed within literature existing on integration, which emerged a few times throughout the interview process, was the impact that this uncertainty has on the experience and success of integration for the refugee.

One argument is that regardless of certainty of legal status, or if the asylum seekers' official enrollment in integration programs has begun, processes of inclusion or exclusion commence immediately. Strang & Ager (2010) point out "people do not safely wait 'in limbo' until a host nation decides whether or not to accept them — the processes of integration or alienation inexorably begin" (Strang & Ager, 2010, p. 596). Following this argument, there is no sense in waiting until certainty is established to begin working with asylum seekers on their path to integration. In fact, waiting to begin this work can essentially trap the refugee in a dooming space, where a lack of inclusion in purposeful activity can have detrimental effects for their mental health and motivation.

Daniel was very concerned about this, as he observed this happening at the asylum center where he works:

*"They were waiting, they were getting sick because of waiting, and they were turning the day and night upside down, sleeping in the whole day and waking up at night, and they get that soldier sickness. Which was no good. And then after 2 years maybe they get a positive answer, and then they were destroyed. 'I don't want to go to school, I want to sleep.' I saw it - I saw so many people messed up because of that waiting time. So it's a very good idea to have something to do."*

(Note that the respondent pointed to their head when stating "they were getting sick", indicating that he was referring to a psychological sickness.) Daniel therefore argues that it is important to begin mapping out possibilities and engaging in language learning with the refugee immediately, even if they are not sure that they, or their family members, will stay in Norway. Then, in the worst-case scenario according to Daniel, even if they are sent home, they have learned some Norwegian and job seeking skills, which does no harm, and could even help them when they return home. The alternative would be much worse: that in their time of waiting, they are excluded and ignored, and lose motivation to pursue a "better life" in Norway.

However, Strang & Ager (2010) also explore a contradictory argument. For many refugees, families and social networks create a foundation of valuable social capital that is imperative during times of migration and change. When this foundation isn't settled, and especially when refugees are coping with uncertainty around the safety and security of others (such as family members) who are a part of that foundation, achieving "integration" in a host society becomes a secondary concern. Through their field work interviewing refugees in Malta, for example, Strang & Ager discovered that "many refugees in Malta were very distressed because they were unsure of the fate of their family members, and made it clear that they could not begin to think about integration until they knew that their families were safe" (Strang & Ager, 2010, p. 596). Interview respondent Gabriel's response seemed more aligned with this perspective, and he noted:

*"We see many people who have just been settled... they cannot concentrate on the language learning, they cannot be involved in the society because they have a wife or they have a child that they haven't seen in 5 years because they are stuck in some, or in a refugee camp, and their lives are in danger. So that element has to be in place first."*

How do we negotiate these two concerns? In the *Integreringsloven*, asylum seekers awaiting a decision on their asylum status are *obligated* to attend language courses, unless their application is going through priority processing, or they live in a primary reception center or short-term center. This seems to respond to Daniel's concern that asylum seekers will lose motivation with nothing to do, and must therefore be made to participate in programs that help them look towards the future. However, it seems difficult to assess which approach to prioritize. Waiting for certainty to be established may lead to refugees trapped and not allowed to engage in meaningful activity, yet forcing them to participate may be setting them up to fail as they may not be able to accomplish the indicators of success when their priorities lie elsewhere.

*Towards more wholistic measurements*

Respondent Elisabeth used the term *Hverdagsintegrering*, or, everyday integration, to communicate how they wish to see integration work done. For this respondent, incorporating programs that facilitate inclusion in spaces such as sports and leisure activities would lead to a more complete integration process. This means that integration monitoring would also include aspects of the refugees' private life and free time. *Hverdagsintegrering* is a concept that appears in the text *How to Measure Integration* discussed earlier, as a focus area of the Norwegian integration strategy for 2019-2022, and its purpose is that "Immigrants shall experience an increase in belonging and participation in societal life" (Proba, 2019, p. 17).

Three respondents also expressed that integration initiatives and monitoring needed to include overviews of refugees' physical and mental health, expressing a wish to more heavily center the metaphor of integration as subjective well-being. Maria was concerned that measurements of integration fail to include an overview of refugee health, stating: "I think it should be almost a mandatory part of following up the refugees, at least in the beginning, that they get a bit of extra follow-up on health-related issues" (mentioning in particular that these health-related issues should also include a mental health aspect).

These focuses seemed to be not about unsettling how integration is seen in general, but about including more categories into the currently established frameworks of achievable indications to create a more wholistic integration experience.

### 6.2.7 Reflections on History

It was also interesting to observe that seemingly contradictory perspectives of integration throughout history emerged through the interviews. When tracing policy change over the past few decades, I explored how immigration policy in general has changed in a more restrictive manner in Norway, and legally, integration has changed from being more of an option, to a *duty* of the immigrant. It was interesting then to hear that respondent Marte had a completely different perspective on this history, when she commented:

*"The migrants coming to Norway in the 80s, they used the word assimilation much more, and I think they also were expected to like... 'don't speak your language anymore, you have to be like us.' And I know that to some part that also exists today, but I think more and more people are acknowledging that you bring with you your resources, and you bring with you some kind of knowledge that will be relevant here, and we are interested. Not everyone*

*says that, but more and more people are actually saying that we need it, and it's enriches our culture and our society."*

This seems to tell a different story than the one accounted for in the reading of history on this topic. This does not mean, however, that one of these accounts must be incorrect. What this finding shows is that the subjective experiences of acceptance and integration have been lived differently by different individuals, and that one homogenic discourse of policy change throughout history cannot possibly reveal all there is to tell about the development of integration in Norway. Later in the same interview, Marte reflected that although this has been her interpretation of the attitudes approaching difference in Norway, others have communicated different experiences: "However, I have also been told by refugees that if I had come today I would not feel as welcome as I did in the 90s, because before we weren't that many, and people wanted to help. Today people don't want to help, they say we are too many". This finding can be useful because it provides an opportunity to create counternarratives to the hegemonic story of Norway's one-directional transition from a society that accepts difference, to one that aims to erase it.

## 7.0 Discussion

In this section, I reflect back on the findings presented throughout the background, textual analysis, and interview process, and consider how these findings compare, interact, and complement each other.

When analyzing the effects of the discourse of a “once homogenous Norwegian society”, as Wodak theorizes, (2009) this discourse creates a national identity rooted in sameness and consistency. Therefore, the very existence of difference and change is cast as a problematic threat to this identity – villainizing those symbolically embodying difference. However, even though this is the main hegemonic discourse that was “won” perceptions of history, this study has discovered that it is not complete, as participants also reflected on Norwegian society as multifaceted and ever changing, even giving different accounts of history.

The worry within a Norwegian society that is afraid to become a minority, for fear of how they will then be treated in the political system if this happens, is also worth discussing. Analyzing this fear can encourage us to locate unjust aspects of how minorities are treated, and provide insight into how our own society needs to change. This can help to unsettle the view of Norwegian society and culture and unproblematic and worthy of protecting from change at all costs. A decolonial approach especially helps to do this, as it encourages those of us in the global north to assess how our institutions can create inequalities and injustices for minorities, instead of focusing on how minorities can better fit into an unjust system. It puts the responsibility on Norway to change, instead of the current predominant approach that puts this responsibility on immigrants alone.

When reflecting on the metaphors for integration discovered during my research, it is important to consider how they may overlap or influence each other, and in what ways they might be incompatible. The red thread throughout all of the metaphors seemed to be the extent to which integration is seen as a process of change within the refugee, and within Norwegian society. The two-way street metaphor, for example, requires all actors involved to be flexible and change due to the influence of others, while the indications of achievements metaphor does not expect any change within Norwegian society.

It was also discovered through the interviews that integration cannot be categorized as one of these metaphors alone – for example, Elena spoke about how factors such as self-worth and optimism for the future (fitting the metaphor of integration as subjective emotional experiences) are fundamental for refugees to accomplish goals of language learning and work training (fitting the metaphor of integration as indications of accomplishments).

However, some aspects of these metaphors can be difficult to reconcile if we wish to combine them. If we are to construct subjective frameworks to evaluate emotional well-being defined by refugees themselves, then we may have to let go of seeing integration as equality and sameness to Norwegians (for example, if due to a refugee mother's own cultural values of family structure, she would be happiest staying at home with her children after giving birth, instead of returning to work at a similar rate than Norwegian women do.) This would require measuring happiness on a case-to-case basis, and not using statistics comparing entire groups to measure success.

Finally, when assessing the prioritizations involved in each metaphor of integration, I reflected on the extent to which each metaphor expressed processes of assimilation. I also reflected on if, and how, each metaphor related to the words and phrases outlined in the *Integreringsloven* and corresponding texts. Based on this exercise, I see that the metaphors that most closely align with assimilationist objectives (such as integration as indications of accomplishments, and integration as equality), are also those most closely related to how integration is expressed within current policy.

One of the main findings from this project was the gap that seems to exist between the focuses of the *Integreringsloven* and corresponding evaluations, and the desires of those I spoke with. Behind policy creation lies political parties elected for their anti-immigration platform, bound to act aligned with the wishes of the constituencies that elect them, who are informed by the fears discussed before. At ground-level however, at least in this thesis, I found quite different motivations for involvement in integration work – ones founded in a desire to facilitate a better experience for the refugees themselves from humanitarian ideals of help and good will. These actors did not necessarily see difference as problematic in itself. They expressed a desire for an integration policy that focuses more on the physical and emotional well-being of the refugee, and responds more reflexively to their particular needs. Here, the way that difference is conceptualized by actors, and whether its conceptualization renders it problematic or as an opportunity in itself, shapes the way we approach people symbolizing this difference. I argue that this is why a gap seems to exist between policy and the lived experience of actors at ground-level within integration work.

This study also discovered ways in which the current design and implementation of integration initiatives can lead to exacerbating inequalities amongst refugees. This was revealed when discussing the effects of municipalities' selectivity in their acceptance of refugees, and when assessing how the shortening timeframe for introduction program completion may more negatively affect those who have other responsibilities, such as families

to take care of. Acceptance selectivity was traced back to Norway employing a managerial approach to immigration and integration, and the failure to account for gendered labor and caring for family resulted from integration initiatives being rendered technical. I therefore argue that the evidenced trend of exacerbating inequalities stems from the following tendencies I found throughout my research: managerial approaches, rendering technical, and prioritizing unlocated knowledge.

I also recognize a general trend connecting these tendencies. Managerial approaches, rendering technical, and prioritizing unlocated knowledge all have in common the tactic of defining problems in ways that are measurable and addressable according to tools, methods, and conceptualizations already prevalent in the modernist, neoliberal nation state, and the academia and research institutions of this state.

## 8.0 Conclusions

The complexity and interconnectedness of integration links it to a seemingly endless repertoire of issues. Unfortunately, due to both standard and situational limitations of this project, some topics mentioned during interviews, such as the role the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) plays, or how conversations surrounding Islamization shifted after the right-wing extremist terror attacks of 2011, had to be excluded. Though a prioritization of findings that were core for my research questions was necessary for this project, investigating further topics such as these seems crucial to contribute to a more wholistic mapping of the concept of integration and difference reconciliation between Norwegian society and immigrants.

In addition, it is important to note that although concepts from decolonial theory informed my analysis when interpreting findings, the research design and methods were anything but decolonial. In reality, they followed the same unilateral progression of modernist data collection that dominates Euro-American academia. Approaching this research topic with alternative research methods could help to paint a more elaborate and representational picture.

As interviews only lasted around an hour, it is also important to note the likelihood that I was not exposed to the entire picture of how respondents see integration. For example, just because a respondent emphasized a certain metaphor for integration most, doesn't mean that is their only preferred metaphor. Similarly, just because a respondent did not mention a certain metaphor, does not mean they would disagree with it. It could very well be that all respondents would agree with the two-way street metaphor, for example, although only those with an immigrant backgrounds themselves mentioned it.

Finally, in addition to topics that were mentioned in interviews or in the texts but not included in this thesis, there were also certain topics common within integration literature that did not come up at all during data collection, such as the debate surrounding questioning of the validity of refugees (are they really refugees? Do they really need our help?). While this demonstrates which topics might be most crucial and which ones might hold a peripheral position to the others, it is another way that the picture painted in this thesis could be incomplete.

However, reflecting on our research questions shows what this project actually did discover. Several ways of understanding integration have been revealed, and through analyzing them it was clear that integration is not understood by a singular definition, but in various ways that interact with and shape each other. Different problematizations behind each



metaphor have been discussed, as well as the power that each metaphor may be shaped by or perpetrate, and the expectations they put on the refugee and the Norwegian society, if any. Major debates about how integration is done, including normative arguments for why it *should* be done certain ways, have also been presented, and it is clear that simply “selecting” between debated approaches is difficult, and that instead we may need to create new approaches and frameworks altogether. Some of the fears and motivations that may contribute to the gap felt between policy and practice have been discussed, and it became clear that a central distinction between these motivations is how actors theorize difference.

I presented counter evidence to the homogenizing discourse of a one-directional history of integration development in Norway that has “won” common perception. I believe that this shows it is not only possible to experience history in various ways, but that those different experiences provide an opportunity for establishing counternarratives, and unsettling the fears and motivations founded in the common homogenic discourse explored above. As narratives and fears, such as Islamization, seem to persist in this case despite statistical evidence, counternarratives could be a tool for creating a discourse that instead understands Norway as ever-changing and heterogenous, unsettling the foundation of these fears of “others” that effectively “change” this society.

I also argue that, based on my findings, defining integration as unilateral adoption of Norwegian language and culture the way it is expressed in the law is, effectively, an assimilationist approach. The discursive shift, therefore, from *Introduksjonsloven* to *Integreringsloven*, is nominal only. This does not mean I feel that all changes within the law are negative or inconsequential. It was clear to me, for example, throughout the interview process, that the new guidelines for competency mapping are an improvement for designing programs, and help challenge the colonial perception of refugees as one group of an oriental “other” – huddled masses moving from the periphery to the core. However, the shifts explored within the new law did not seem, to me, to reconstruct the fundamental goals of *what* integration programs should aim to accomplish – they only reiterated how these goals are to be accomplished quicker than ever before. This resulted in the tendencies of rendering technical, managerial approaches, and prioritizing unlocated knowledge in integration measurement discussed above. Therefore, I argue that the *Integreringsloven*, despite its positive aspects, does not adequately resist assimilationist approaches to difference reconciliation between the “Norwegian society” and the “other”.

For suggestions for further development of integration initiatives for refugees, besides the discursive work that needs to be done to center and promote counternarratives as explained above, I believe that frameworks should be developed to identify and monitor not only inequalities existent amongst refugees, but also processes that exacerbate these inequalities. These frameworks need to assess how integration treated as equality can lead to unequal situations when missing the justice-oriented aspect of equity. They need to incorporate a gendered lens to assess how gendered division of labor can shape the integration experience differently for refugees of different genders. They also need to identify processes that effectively prioritize those who need *less* help, such as municipalities' motivations to select more easily "integratable" refugees.

Most importantly of all, these frameworks need to be founded in the desires and subjectivities of refugees themselves. Norwegians cannot theorize *for* refugees how gender operates within their own home. Nor can they decide what a justice approach to combatting ghettoization or Islamophobia would look like. For these frameworks to be developed by Norwegian society would be to perpetrate the paternalistic tendency of the Norwegian society "teaching" the refugee how their culture and norms should change, and what degree of change would lead to a "better life" *for* them.

Therefore, further research on this subject *must* center the perspective of refugees. It must do so in a way that does not limit the identification and exploration of problems to ways that fit into pre-defined, modernist theorizations, but in ways that best map the complexities and even contradictions of refugee experiences of integration. To counter paternalistic, hierarchical power relations discovered in integration approaches above, what this mapping should look like *must* be up to the refugee themselves.

A question may still remain: why do this? So what if refugees are forced to assimilate to Norwegian values and ways? As respondent Marte commented when I asked her these questions in my interview with her, "it depends on what kind of state or country you want to be I guess". My desire is for those in the global north to look inwards and ask ourselves what *kind* of society we want to construct. We have a choice: we can create policy and programs that respond to difference as a problem to be fixed within the "other", or we can engage in the uprooting and unsettling work necessary to center the perspectives and needs of those seeking refuge here, and reconstruct our societal web together with them.

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## 10.0 Appendices

### 10.1 Information Letter for Potential Respondents

#### **Short Summary of Thesis Project:**

Upon arrival in Norway, refugees are expected to integrate into Norwegian society as quickly as possible. The Norwegian government has expressed this expectation in its policies and online publications. “Integration” is considered to be a compromise between the resettlement approaches of assimilation and multiculturalism. Organizations working to resettle refugees in Norway are expected to follow the goals and norms of this integration approach. In practice, what does this mean for the objectives of these organizations? How do they understand “integration”, and what does this understanding entail in practice for them?

#### **Central Questions:**

- What do resettlement organizations understand by “integration”? Who defines what this approach entails?
- What norms and expectations are taught to refugees arriving in Norway, and how?
- How does this approach consider cultural difference and subjective experiences of refugees?
- According to these organizations, what are markers of “successful integration”?
- What challenges arise when approaching resettlement through a framework of integration?

#### **Objectives and practical information for Interviews:**

- Conversations with actors involved with defining and carrying out projects aimed towards the integration of refugees in Norwegian society
- Semi-structured interviews conducted via online platforms such as Zoom discussing the questions listed above
- Information gathered will be analyzed and presented (anonymously) in a masters thesis written for the Department of Landscape and Society at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences

#### **Concerning information recording and storage:**

NSD (Norsk Senter for Forskningsdata) has been notified about this project, and data collection and storage will follow security protocols from NSD.

Information from interviews will be presented anonymously. The researcher will not reveal your name, or the specific organization/department you work for.

Interview participants will also be asked if they consent to the interview being recorded.

If consent is given:

- Audio recordings will be made of the interview
- Recordings will be stored on the researcher’s personal, password protected laptop, which only they have access to. Recordings will not be stored on any kind of shared database, such as Cloud storage.

- The recorded audio will be used in the final thesis, and may be summarized or quoted directly.
- Audio recordings will be permanently deleted from the researcher's computer after the final thesis project is handed in.

If consent is not given:

- No audio recordings will be made, and the researcher will only take hand written notes about things that are said.
- No direct quotes from the interview will be made in the final thesis.
- Any hand written notes from the researcher will be destroyed after the final thesis project is handed in.

## 10.2 Interview Guide

### Introduction

- Researcher explains who they are, what they study, and why they are conducting this interview
- Researcher asks if the respondent has any questions before the interview begins
- Researcher explains the use of audio recording for referencing purposes, and asks for consent for the conversation to be recorded

### Interview

#### Part I – Who are they

- Where are you from, and what is your educational/professional background?
- What does your place of employment work with?
- What is your specific job?
- What motivated you to do this kind of work?

#### Part II – Concept mapping

- Explain: although “official” definitions exist for these terms, I am interested in hearing how you would define them in your own words, to make sure we are on the same page for this interview
- Immigrant
- Refugee
- Integration
- Assimilation
- Multiculturalism

#### Part III – Questions about how things are

- Do you have anything you consider to be markers of “successful” integration? What specific signs would you look for to tell if someone has “successfully” integrated?
- Why is it important to encourage integration? What does successful integration mean for the individual refugee? What about society at large?
- What do you think would happen if refugees in general do not integrate? What are the implications for them, and for society at large?
- Regarding the new *Integreringsloven*, how does your organization interact with this law? Are you bound to work by it? Are you in a position to influence it?
- What are your thoughts about this new law? Things you like, things you are critical towards?

#### Part IV – Questions about ideals and wishes



- Is there anything you wish your organization did towards the goal of integration that you don't currently do? Something else you wish you would include, improve, or get rid of regarding your work towards integration?
- Is there any change you wish to see regarding how integration work is understood and approached in general?

#### Part V – Wrapping up

- Is there anything else you would like to add that we did not discuss?
- Can you think of any other persons or organizations that might be relevant for me to speak with?

#### After the Interview

- Researcher thanks the respondent for their time, and explains how and when the final thesis will be published

## 10.3 Translations

The following is an explanation of how words, phrases, and sentences that were originally presented to the researcher in Norwegian were interpreted and translated into English in the writing of this thesis. This list only includes words and phrases that were included in this thesis as direct quotes. All translation was done by the researcher herself.

**Fylkeskommune** - County

**Kommune** - Municipality

**Introduksjonsloven** – The Introduction Law

**Lov om introduksjonsordning og norskopplæring for nyankomne innvandrere** – The Law Concerning the Introduction Scheme and Norwegian Training for Newly Arrived Immigrants

**Integreringsloven** – The Integration Law

**Lov om integrering gjennom opplæring, utdanning og arbeid** - The Law Concerning Integration through Training, Education, and Work

**Indikatorer for Integrering** – Indications for Integration

**Hvordan måle integrering?** – How to measure integration

**Retten og plikten** – (The) right and duty

**Formålet med loven er at innvandrere tidlig integreres i det norske samfunnet og blir økonomisk selvstendige** – The purpose of this law is for immigrants to be integrated early into the Norwegian society, and become economically independent

**Kommunen avgjør innholdet i integreringsplanen dersom det er uenighet mellom kommunen og den enkelte** - The municipality decides the contents of the integration plan in the case of disagreement between the municipality and the individual

**Kommunens plikter gjelder ikke overfor personer som har avbrutt eller avvist deltagelse i opplæring i mottak, introduksjonsprogram eller opplæring i norsk og samfunnskunnskap** - The municipality's duties do not apply for people who have stopped or refused participation in lessons in the asylum center, introduction program, or in Norwegian and society classes

**Planen skal vurderes jevnlig og ved vesentlig endring i deltagerens livssituasjon** - The plan shall be evaluated regularly, and in the case of significant changes in the participant's life.

**Deltagere i introduksjonsprogram har rett til introduksjonsstønad** - Participants in the introduction program have a right to an introduction stipend.

**Introduksjonsstønad** er på årsbasis lik to ganger folketrygdens grunnbeløp - The Introduction stipend is twice the amount of the yearly minimum public welfare support

**Sykdom eller andre tvingende velferdsgrunner** - Illness or other unavoidable welfare reasons

**Innvandrere skal oppleve økt tilhørighet og deltakelse i samfunnslivet** - Immigrants shall experience an increase in belonging and participation in societal life