

Elizabeth D. Bristow

Becoming a "Foreigner" in Norway

The Experience of Policy-Based Civic Integration

Master's thesis in Social Anthropology

Supervisor: Anne Kathrine Larsen

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Department of Social Anthropology



Abstract

This Master's thesis explores the development of civic integration as policy and practice in Norway and how civic integration affects the everyday lives of immigrants. Through accounts from a local resource center for immigrants in Trondheim, this dissertation discusses the consequences of civic integration as a static and homogenizing national policy. Economic integration, language learning and civic knowledge are topics which civic integration explicitly focus on to improve immigrants' lives in Norway. However, these areas consist of dynamic structures and processes which civic integration as a policy cannot encompass. Simultaneously as the Norwegian nation-state proclaims immigrants as sufficiently integrated once they've met the criteria of civic integration policies, examples of immigrants' integration experiences demonstrate how their everyday lives are being shaped by disadvantages that Norwegian integration policies may be unintentionally contributing to. These disadvantages are related to civic integration's policy-based nature, which may overlook important aspects of integration as a social process. Therefore, this thesis highlights the demarcation of immigrants as "other" through civic integration policies which mainly focus on providing national knowledge. This knowledge is acquired in spaces predominantly inhabited by immigrants, leaving little room for integrating *with* natives. In doing so, civic integration pays little attention to the value of local knowledge and networks in Norwegian communities, which may be equally important for immigrants' feelings of belonging, and overall chances of integration.

Sammendrag

Denne masteravhandlingen utforsker utviklingen av samfunnsintegrering som et politisk tiltak i Norge. Gjennom beretningene til informanter fra feltstedet, et ressurscenter for innvandrere, diskuteres konsekvensene av integrasjon som et politisk tiltak. Konsekvensene som mange innvandrere kjenner i hverdagen, bunner blant annet i de negative virkningene av statiske og homogeniserende integreringstiltak. Økonomisk integrering, språkopplæring og samfunnskunnskap er de eksplisitte målene som integreringstiltakene hevder skal forbedre livssituasjonene til innvandrere. Disse temaene består derimot av dynamiske strukturer og prosesser som de statiske integreringstiltakene i Norge ikke kan ta i betraktning på en helhetlig måte. Samtidig som den Norske staten hevder at gjennomførelse av aktivitetene nedfelt i integreringstiltakene skal gjøre innvandrere integrert i samfunnet på en helhetlig måte, opplever mange innvandrere ulemper i hverdagen som kan ha vært forsterket av integreringstiltakene selv. Disse ulempene er relatert til integreringstiltakenes art, i den forstand at de er policy-basert, og ikke tar i betraktning de sosiale prosesser som inngår i integrering. Derfor vektlegger denne avhandlingen skillet som skapes mellom innvandrere som «de andre» og den norske majoriteten, gjennom integreringstiltakenes fokus på å kun legge til rette for nasjonal kunnskapstilegnelse. Denne tilegnelsen foregår i et rom som stort sett kun okkuperes av innvandrere, og dermed ikke legger til rette for å integreres sammen *med* innfødte. Ved å gjøre dette, ligger integreringstiltakene lite fokus på verdien av lokal tilhørighet, lokale nettverk og lokal kunnskap i norske samfunn. Denne verdien kan være minst like viktig for tilhørighet og suksess som ny-innvandret i norsk samfunn.

Foreword

Migration is a topic which I find absolutely enthralling. I believe, to understand migration and integration today means to understand the fluidity of boundaries and borders and to adapt in a manner that allows these borders to morph into mere lines on a map.

I am in awe and eternal gratitude to those who've helped me understand and adapt. To the participants and facilitators of my fieldwork, thank you. I am grateful for the time you have given me, for the many conversations we have shared and the knowledge you have gifted me. Your experiences and insights have enlightened me and allowed me to understand you, myself and this society we share in a new light. To my supervisor at NTNU, Anne Kathrine Larsen, thank you for your input. Lastly, to my peers on the Master's program – thank you for your critique, your perseverance and your unwavering academic and emotional support, it has been a true pleasure working beside you.

Without migration, I would not be here – not in Norway, not anywhere. My being is a result of migration and integration. A mix of ideas, languages, food, music and so many other things which allowed me to become. Therefore, I dedicate this paper to those who first introduced me to the topic. My family, inside and outside of Norway. To my father, Glenn, who taught me to embrace the cultures which I meet, to my mother, Anjele, who showed me how, and to my brother, Bronson, who taught me, at an early age, that embracing culture is never mutually exclusive with challenging it.

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1. Introduction

In this dissertation I discuss the implications of civic integration in the everyday lives of migrants in Norway. Based on a six-month fieldwork at a local resource center for integration of immigrants, I analyze the collected data and view it in light of existing theory on civic integration and immigration. I consider how immigrants' experiences are affected public discourse, policy and practices regarding integration. In other words, this is an analysis of migrants' experience of civic integration; the impact of national policies and societal expectations on the everyday lives of migrant individuals. As such this thesis considers problematic aspects of integration, a social process, in relation to civic integration as a national policy. The analysis considers some problematic aspects of civic integration raised by informants and discusses these aspects in light of existing anthropological and sociological research on these topics. The thesis follows problems that arise in areas of economic integration in relation to path dependency, as well as language acquisition and feelings of belonging in Norwegian society. This critical analysis of Norwegian civic integration policies and practices aims to highlight the power relations in play, and the subsequent inequalities that may arise from the demarcation of immigrants as "the others". Furthermore, I suggest that civic integration as a policy cannot fully encompass integration as a social process – this is highlighted by the fact the civic integration provides a static representation of what it means to be Norwegian, not taking into account the variations in expressions of "Norwegianess" nor the challenges that arise when this static representation is expected to be internalized by transnational individuals.

I argue that civic integration is an arena in which immigrants are incentivized to adopt cosmopolitan attitudes, in that they are encouraged acquire knowledge pertaining to Norwegian culture while maintaining their individual identities. However, since civic integration encompasses spaces mainly inhabited by immigrants, it provides integration in a very specific manner that may keep immigrants at arm's length both economically and socially. This is because the method of integration focuses on providing knowledge, which is perceived as lacking among immigrants upon arrival, mainly national, practical knowledge often directed towards labor market entry. This creates a rather instrumentalized form of integration which highlights the immigrant as foreign and pays little attention to immigrants' individual backgrounds, for instance their education acquired outside of Europe. Civic integration provides a space for immigrants to integrate with each other while acquiring basic national knowledge, but due to its' one-sided nature, by focusing solely on the activation of the

immigrants, it may risk enforcing the “foreigner” category and create greater gaps between immigrants and natives. Particularly since perceived sameness is a cultural factor of much consideration in Norwegian public discourse, the demarcation of immigrants as individuals lacking knowledge may perpetuate the category of the “foreigner”. This unintended discrimination is felt in the everyday lives of migrants through difficulty in procuring proficient language skills, employment which meets immigrants’ own ambitions and an overall sense of belonging. Paying attention to how certain aspects of civic integration may lead to unfavorable outcomes for migrants may contribute to a better understanding of what existing policies and practices are and how they affect both the individual immigrants and the host society as a whole.

In the remainder of this chapter I will provide insight into the immigration discourse in Norway and clarify some terms which use throughout this thesis. In chapter 2 I present the locus of my fieldwork, as well as the methods I’ve used. This chapter also discusses the ambivalent roles I had as a researcher, and how my own background has situated me within the field. Chapter 3 presents the development of civic integration as policy within Europe and takes a closer look at how civic integration in Norway is expressed and experienced. Chapter 4 discusses the creation of the “foreigner” as the “other” in relation to the native population. This chapter takes a closer look at the construction of native Norwegians who are typically described as a homogenous people. Bearing in mind that civic integration in Norway provides knowledge derived from generalized and homogenized representations of Norwegian culture, chapter 5 examines some central barriers which immigrants may face upon labor market entry. Chapter 6 discusses the value of language skills. Not limited to its value within civic integration, as language learning here is mainly highlighted in terms of labor market integration, this chapter also focuses on other potentials which my informants attach to language learning. Chapter 7 highlights some problems which arise when presenting the Norwegian nation as homogenous. Here some examples of diversity are expressed, with a particular focus on how diverse local communities within the nation have come to shape immigrants’ understanding of their own integration. Chapter 8 provides insight into the theoretical background of constructing a nation and how the nation is maintained and understood with respect to transnational identities. In particular, this chapter focuses on how transnational individuals, such as my informants, have been problematized within the framework of the nation and the resulting attempts of civic integration. Chapter 9 discusses anthropological contributions within this topic, particularly the development of cosmopolitan theories. It highlights the potential of academic perspectives to society and to policymaking which attempts to foster specific social change. Lastly, in the

concluding chapter, I summarize the different topics which Norwegian integration policy explicitly mentions as vital and highlight civic integration as a static policy cannot encompass the many factors that integration as a social process may include.

1.2 A Brief History of the Immigration Discourse in Norway

Before diving into the details of this thesis I wish to present a short history of the immigration discourse in Norway which may serve to provide information on the development of integration policies. The renowned Norwegian anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen (2016) has described the Norwegian immigration discourse in three main phases, highlighting the role of social scientists in the public discourse. The first phase, during the 1970's and early 1980's, is characterized by growing academic interest in immigrants' living conditions in Norway, and discrimination among minorities. Public interest in these topics remained limited until the late 80's and throughout the 90's (Hylland Eriksen, 2016, p. 100). However, it is relevant to mention that political questions regarding immigration were raised by the Progress Party in 1987, in which they expressed concerns about an increase in the number of asylum seekers, and claimed that the money used to settle the newcomers would be put to better use if spent on the elderly, the disabled and the sick in Norway (Brochmann & Hagelund, 2011, p. 17). The second phase of the immigration discourse is characterized by academic interest in culturally conflicting topics such as religious practices, and an increased involvement of the general public in the discourse. Hylland Eriksen underlines the growing public interest in such topics and characterizes the 90's as "the Cheerful Nineties" (Hylland Eriksen, 2016, pp.102-104), in which diverse academic perspectives were shared and engaged with among the Norwegian society, without necessarily politicizing nor polarizing the academic interests. This period also brought with it an increase of refugees from Sri Lanka, Bosnia and Somalia, and a portion of Norwegians started calling for the better integration of the newcomers, pointing to the perceived failure of so-called naïve policies up until this point.

The third and final phase in Hylland Eriksen's analysis began after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, which prompted global anxieties and gave way to Islamophobic attitudes which would come to color the Norwegian discourse in later years. This period is characterized by an increase in strong anti-immigration attitudes among Norwegians, perhaps demonstrated by the increase of votes for the anti-immigration Progress Party, making them the second largest in parliament at that point. Furthermore, this period saw a steady increase in immigration and a growing

disapproval of previous measures regarding integration. Hylland Eriksen also points out that this period shifted the public's view of social scientists input, from that of interest and curiosity to that of growing distrust. According to Hylland Eriksen some anthropologists, including himself, found that the space for academics in this public discourse, which was once engaging and lively, was now less fruitful (Hylland Eriksen, 2016, pp.104-116).

This development is important to keep in mind when reading this thesis because it highlights that integration policies and practices, like other policies and practices, are not created and altered in a vacuum. Rather they are both influenced by, and influence the overarching discourses regarding their respective topics, as well as being influenced by global events. An example of this is the establishment of new integration policies and practices in Europe during the early 2000's as a response to a perceived failure of earlier policies, or lack of specific policies. Rather importantly, a historic overview of the immigration discourse in Norway and elsewhere in Europe, shows a shift from less strict and articulated immigration policies to more rigid forms of integration and more accentuated problematization of topics related to immigrants (Brochmann & Hagelund, 2011, pp. 18-20). Failure of previous policies seems unlikely to be the only reason for the increased political focus on immigration and integration, as mentioned previously, the actual increase of migration also affected both the public discourse and Norwegian policy making in regard to immigration and integration. Furthermore, an awareness of the interconnectedness of policy and social processes can serve to highlight some of the barriers which immigrants face when attempting to integrate in Norwegian society – these barriers and their impact on the everyday lives of immigrants in Norway will be explored in the later chapters of this thesis.

1.3 Clarification of Central Terms

In the course of this dissertation, I use several terms that may be interpreted differently. I wish briefly to shed some light on some of these terms and the importance of their usage. Terms such as “host community” or “low-skilled” are used in this thesis, and a clarification of why I use these terms may contribute to a better understanding of my conclusions. Furthermore, I shall clarify some central issues when discussing terms such as “cultural difference” in relation to the nation-state and the global community.

Firstly, I wish to explain my usage of the word “host community”. Certainly, the term may allude to a perception of immigrants that may interpret them as guests in the “host country” –

and this representative of certain European perspectives on immigration. This is problematic not only because of an imprecise representation of migrants' positions in European societies but also because this perspective may lead to increased hostility between native individuals and migrant individuals. According to some social scientists, there exists a relatively widespread notion among Europeans that Muslim immigrants are merely "permanent guests" in the "host country" (Von-Burg, 2011, p.122). I do not wish to reinforce this perspective, but choose to include terms such as "host community" and "host country" due to the nature of civic integration, which I argue during of the course of this thesis, treats immigrants as individuals who must prove themselves in the eyes of the government and the native people, and simultaneously creates a homogenous representation of immigrants (and natives) through static representations and homogenizing practices of civic integration. I use the term, not as a statement of immigrants' position in society, rather as a reminder of the framework of language within which immigrants often find themselves.

Another term which has proved problematic to work with is the term "low-skilled" or "unskilled". In a latter chapter regarding economic integration this term is used often. Low-skilled workers are judged as such based on limited education, or lack of recognition of education, in that their occupations do not require higher education. This definition is not the only one to shape national perceptions of "low-skilled" or "unskilled" workers, as demonstrated in the UK, highly educated workers may find themselves in the "low-skilled" sector of employment due to the nature of their work (Morris, 2017). This term is problematic because it, with its unclear definitions, provides statistics relevant for policymaking and policy change. In the UK for instance, the decision to leave the EU has brought with it a redefinition of "skilled work" and restrictions on work migrants' rights which some have claimed will be detrimental for sectors such as healthcare, infrastructure, food production and provision (Triggle, 2020). At the time of writing this thesis, however, a new term has been introduced as relevant to the description of some of these sectors, namely, "essential" workers. Many people who find themselves in the description of "low-skilled" workers are also experiencing their very important work being officially defined as essential to society, and therefore their labor continues through a time of international and national lockdowns in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Pan-American Health Organization, 2020). Perhaps we will see a more nuanced definition of so-called "low-skilled" work in the future. Nevertheless, I use the term "low-skilled" because I write about economic, among other sources, with reference to a report by the OECD (Liebig, 2009), as the OECD is a major influence in economic policies, the use of this

term demonstrates how policymakers may contribute to the demarcation of many immigrants. Furthermore, this language reflects the constraints felt in the everyday lives of many individuals, and I do not wish to diminish implications of such language evident through policymaking, and the effect it has on individuals within the “immigrant” category.

In discussing immigration and integration, the concept of cultural difference in relation to space is unavoidable. As mentioned, the term “host-community” connotes an idea that certain people have a more natural link to a community than others, and this is an idea which is prevalent in European immigration policies as demonstrated by the perceived need to enculture immigrants through civic integration. Here, I wish to clarify the notion of culture as fixed within space, which is eloquently problematized in Gupta and Ferguson’s contribution in *Space, Power and Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology* (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997, pp. 33-51). Firstly, Gupta and Ferguson highlight that societies have historically been mapped out as if wholly separated from each other, by the virtue of borders. Furthermore, they highlight that this notion of separateness has allowed for an understanding of distinctive national cultures which are geographically rooted. However, Gupta and Ferguson point out that the interconnectedness of societies have always existed to some extent although perhaps more evidently so in post-colonial times marked by increased transnational mobility. This exemplifies the problem of presenting culture as fixed entities that individuals bring with them, particularly since migrants are such individuals whose existence highlights the “borders” of society – and whose lifestyles undermine the idea of the fixity of cultures and spaces. As such, migrants may demonstrate the links between “here” and “there”, expressing continuity and fluidity between cultures and spaces instead of discontinuities and static representations. Considering also that nation-states, among other factors, play an important role in defining spaces in relation to people, Gupta and Ferguson argue that cultural difference must be analyzed in the context of power relations within a global community which has always been spatially interconnected (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997, pp. 33-51). From Gupta and Ferguson’s contribution, I wish to highlight three points to keep in mind during this thesis. That culture is not a fixed entity that can be measured, that cultural difference must be understood in light of past and present power relations and that “native” culture encompasses vast variations, which in this context are imagined as homogenous within the framework of the nation-state. I use the term “native” to describe the majority of Norwegians who have not experienced civic integration as an explicit nor particularly influencing factor in their everyday lives, and whose relation to the nation-state is dependent on a sense of historical, ancestral and political belonging. Given that civic integration

is a result of state policy on immigration, one can assume that the content of civic integration is the means through which the state expects immigrants to become a part of this elusive native community.

2. Fieldwork, Method & the Researcher's Perspective

From the end of March to the end of September 2019 I participated as a “volunteer” for a resource center for immigrants, in Trondheim, a city located in the middle of Norway. During this six-month period, I participated in and contributed to carrying out some of the activities that this resource center provided. In addition to participating in the activities I also conducted semi-structured interviews with some of the members of the courses. The resource center is one of several Norwegian offices for the international humanitarian group with which it shares its name. The office in Trondheim through which I carried out my fieldwork is specifically a resource center, their target group is, per their information booklet: “everyone who needs humanitarian assistance, especially immigrants”. A special focus is on refugees, asylum seekers and labor migrants from EES area as well as outside of this area. This focus is also reflected in the courses and activities provided at the center. Language courses and self-help groups regarding entering and maneuvering the Norwegian labor market were the main services which this center provided. This heavy focus on language and labor is explained by the center as key for participation in Norwegian society – where, in their own words, integration is heavily dependent on language skills and ability to acquire work.

The participants who attend the activities at the center have been referred to the center either by friends who are participating/volunteering, by other centers whose work is focused on integration, or have looked up civic services in Trondheim online. Participation is free, although one must sign up for the courses to secure one's place in the program. Each course consists of between ten to fifteen participants led by one or two volunteers per group. The structures of the courses are relatively open in the sense that volunteers can form the courses themselves, barring International English Language Testing System courses (which refers to the IELTS guidebook) and Norwegian courses where Norwegian language books are available and may be used as guidelines for the teachings. This open method has proved challenging for some of the volunteers as they do not know the level of knowledge they need to prepare for and must figure this out while working with the participants. This is mentioned here merely to underline the fact that the quality of the content varies from volunteer to volunteer – based on previous experiences, and to illustrate the dynamics of the resource center, not to mention that the course participants themselves could meet different standards of training depending on how the volunteers structure the courses. Some volunteers at the center were also participants of other courses and activities the center provided – for instance, the English course leader was also a participant of the Norwegian course in hopes of improving her Norwegian language skills. Most

of the volunteers at the center are individuals who have migrated to Norway in adulthood as well – during my fieldwork I only met three volunteers who were ethnic Norwegians, out of at least eighteen volunteers.

The topic which I explored during my fieldwork was “the experience of integration”. In preparing my project I looked at different centers in Trondheim which worked with integrating migrants. I initially contacted INN, the municipal center for integration which coordinates activities for immigrants (specifically refugees and asylum-seekers) going through the mandatory Norwegian Introduction program. Unfortunately, as INN was downsizing (according to one spokesperson, as a result of a lack of incoming refugees to Norway) I was referred elsewhere to resource centers which would have the capacity to take me on as a participating observer. Due to this, my focus then shifted from an arena which was aimed towards the integration of refugees and asylum-seekers to an arena which focused on migrants in general. The question remained the same; how do migrant individuals experience integration practices in Norway?

Through conversations and observations at the resource center it became clear that language requirements and ability to navigate the labor market were central to the experience of integration. There are several indicators as to why these factors are considered important. For one economic integration has historically been highlighted to better social integration among other things by facilitating practical language improvement and by encouraging economic independency. Also, in this Norwegian context, it is vital to underline the position of newly adapted civic integration practices which have become central for European migration policies and how such “contracts” between migrants and host countries have created a new understanding of the migrants’ obligations to their hosts. When meeting the requirements of civic integration policies in Norway, migrants are faced with not only a strict program for proving eligibility for citizenship (in form of mandatory courses for economic benefits), but also the, often, contradictory expectations from the host society.

Terms such as “freedom” and “equality” have been mentioned by many of my informants as trademarks of Norwegian culture. A genuine positivity is expressed when one is comparing elementary school culture between Norway and their native China, or when one is praising freedom of expression to wear whatever clothes one wishes, without the judgement of family and friends. However, simultaneously as Norwegian culture is put on a pedestal through the virtues of freedom and equality, many of the individuals I’ve interviewed still express a certain

longing. The informants have expressed that they have yet to acquire sufficient language skills and cultural knowledge, which they believe would fully grant them the freedoms they see as characteristic of Norwegian society. Through such expressions it becomes evident that despite believing that freedom to do and be anything is out there it is distanced from themselves through lack of language, network etc. Therefore, there exists a notion of not yet being equally free as the native population, rather my informants express an awareness of certain criteria that must be fulfilled before they themselves feel the freedoms they believe Norwegians have.

Examples of frustrations such as these will be presented during the length of this dissertation. I wish to underscore how these rigid, instrumentalized methods of civic integration are in fact enforcing and maintaining unequal structures, and through their employment allows Norwegian society to perpetuate the category “foreigner” – a category which we shall see has social, economic and otherwise practical consequences for those within it. I argue that the demarcation between who is Norwegian and who is foreign is facilitated by Norwegian civic integration practices due to the ways this integration is enculturating. This is not to say that migrants are not integrated – certainly there are relations that are established and maintained, such as at the resource center, however, it is integration into a very specific corner of Norwegian society – one that is not what the participants imagined it would be or agreed to, and which I argue is marginalizing, not only socially but very likely democratically as well. This thesis takes a critical look at civic integration policies and practices and discusses its implications through accounts of everyday experiences of the participants of my fieldwork.

2.2 Method

During my fieldwork I utilized three main methods of data collection. Firstly, the axiomatic anthropological method of participant observation. This method was especially valuable to my data collection because the locus of my fieldwork was at a center whose responsibility was to “activate” its participants, that is to give them the space and resources to actively work on, for instance, their language skills, or CV-building skills. Everything that went on at the resource center, from the way it was decorated with informative posters, to the small talks that went on before and after each course was potential trove of insight into the topic of integration. As an anthropology student attempting one’s first professional fieldwork it may be tempting to observe as much as possible in hopes of these observations bringing meaning to one’s project, but it should be mentioned that although participant observation strives to be objective it’s

results are in part based on the consciousness of the observer. The ethnographic gaze, observing meaningfully, is framed within past experiences and knowledge which the ethnographer inevitably brings into the field (Madden, 2017, pp. 96-100). Due to this, comparison soon became an implicit method which would prove to be very fruitful over time. The comparisons came implicitly at first, I noticed, when writing fieldnotes and commenting interview transcripts my notes were constantly contrasting the newfound data with implicit knowledge and experience of Trondheim and of those native to Norwegian culture.

Interviews were another main method used to collect data. This method allowed me to gain greater insight into the individual participants of the resource center. It was also a valuable method due to the diversity of the participants, coming from different places within and outside of Europe. Interviewing participants allowed comparisons to take form, expand and contract as I could observe similarities and differences between individual experiences and narratives. I conducted one-on-one semi-structured interviews with seven informants who had all moved to Norway permanently during the last five years. The interviews followed standard sets of questions making them structured, but I attempted to not limit my informants to these questions, following their streams of consciousness where I felt it appropriate. I participated in courses attended by these informants and held informal group interviews with them as well as other participants from the resource center. The group interviews were structured as workshops which were centered around specific topics, among others happiness, “Norwegianess”, and integration. The group interviews consisted of collecting definitions of the concepts at hand, as well as examples of experiences pertaining to these concepts. These definitions, examples and ideas were expressed through the collective construction of mind-maps, allowing for post-mapping discussions based on our findings. The mind-maps were created on a blackboard, and started with a word, for instance, “integration”, which would be circled on the center of the blackboard. Subsequently, participants would add words or sentences, related to their understanding of integration, to the blackboard and draw a line from these words to the center-word “integration”. In this way, participants could reflect over their own, and other participants’ connotations to the word “integration” and discuss similarities and differences in their understandings.

Lastly, all informants’ names have been changed so as to anonymize them. Specific information about the resource center has been withheld due to its identifiable character. Mainly, the name of the resource center and the specific nature of the overarching organization to which it belongs. This is because that information would undoubtedly make it possible to identify which

resource center I have observed, where it is located and the people who run it day-to-day. The center also has an online presence, among other things they use Facebook events to broadcast dates and places of specific activities. Revealing the center's name would then also risk revealing the participants of the courses, and potentially the participants of this fieldwork. I do not find the revelation of this information relevant for my thesis nor do I wish to risk my informants' privacy.

2.3 Doing Anthropology at Home

Before we dive into the details of civic integration in Norway, I wish to discuss briefly my position as an anthropologist "at home". The word "home" is problematic for several reasons. Firstly, "home" has several different connotations, and may be applied to different dimensions. For instance, I, as a American-Malaysian migrant who have spent my entire life in Norway, regard the nation-state as home. I am however not a Norwegian citizen, a detail which I don't pay much attention to personally as citizenship is an aspect of "home" which never had much meaning for me - naturally, given my lack of citizenship in my "home", but which many ethnic Norwegians value, evident in the surprised expressions whenever I mention I do not have a Norwegian passport. I should point out that this surprise is only expressed because I am explicitly asked where I am from, being an individual with brown skin – I've never seen my white Norwegian friends ask each other where they are from "originally", and I suspect that both looking foreign and being foreign on paper is a bit more foreign than they would expect from someone with a fluent Bergen dialect.

At a local level (sub-national), I regard the Western city Bergen as my home. This is where my childhood home is. It is where I've taken my elementary education, where I've established most of my longstanding relationships and where my dialect (in Norwegian) was formed. I also consider myself at home in a number of cities in Malaysia, where I'd find my way "home" based on the street names, as well as the small town of Skowhegan, Maine in the US. I've expanded my definition of home to include Trondheim where I moved to study and where I currently reside. During the past five years I've become "at home" also when I reside in Trondheim. My perception of home is perhaps quite similar to and influenced by multi-local author Taiye Selasi who eloquently pronounced the problematic aspects of asking a person with parents from at least two different countries, and who is raised and/or settled in a different country than where their parents were raised and/or settled. Selasi implored her followers to not

ask her where she was from – as there was no precise nor honest way of answering that question. It is a question based on an idea of sovereign statehood, an idea merely some 400 years old, an idea which Selasi claimed could not express human identity. Instead she told them to ask her where she was local, where her everyday experiences have unfolded, where her daily rituals and relationships were based (Selasi, 2014). Another relevant and reflective definition of home is anthropologist Raymond Madden’s definition which he wrote with regard to doing local anthropology.

From my perspective, *Home is familiar*. I know it very well, it is a geographical region within which streets, highways, back roads, houses, sheds and other buildings as well as landscape, are known. *Home is parochial*. It is a place that elicits an uncritical attachment. *Home is discrete*. I know where it starts and ends, in both geographical and social sense. I have it mapped out in my mind. *Home is habitual*. Old habits of speech, manners, attitudes and moods come back to me when I go home. One could say that my personality changes when I go home, or conversely, that I just become myself again (Madden, 2017, p. 45).

Madden’s definition, in my understanding, expands on the key point of Selasi’s definition, by explicitly defining the familiarity of the local. He mentions the geography, the boundaries both social and physical, the habits – the knowledge and emotions of homeplaces which plays out within one’s identity. Madden, however, seems to define home as a singular place, leaving out the very important perspective of those who are multi-local, or transnational, who consider home to be several places. This distinction is perhaps most apparent to me when considering the habituality of home. I do change, when moving between Malaysia and Norway, or even between Bergen and Trondheim, but I do not “become myself again”, I carry those habits I’ve acquired wherever I go and although it takes time to recalibrate between each change of p(l)ace it does not remove seemingly latent habits. Rather, I semi-subconsciously highlight certain habits, and downplay others, depending on where I am. Perhaps, it is the habit to oscillate the visibility of my habits, that makes me local and allows me to feel at home in all these places.

2.4 Ambivalent Roles

“Being home” is essential to highlight as a part of my experience in the field, because it was an issue that was reflected in the field. My position as a foreigner and as a Norwegian became important in the relations which were established. For instance, during English courses the Sinhalese course leader would turn to me for a translation of a word into Norwegian, as she was new to Norway and had yet to develop an extensive Norwegian vocabulary. For participants

who spoke Norwegian, or at least had a better grasp of the Norwegian language than English, I was the middleman. When discussing how living in Trondheim was different than the cities and countries that the course participants had previously lived in, participants treated me as if I was not local, looking at me as if to say “You know what I mean” – perhaps because I had been vocal about differences I experienced between Trondheim and Bergen or between Norway and Malaysia. One example which all of the participants agreed on was that Trondheim, and Norway in general was “boring” compared to many other countries. Participants expressed frustration over the fact that there was no shops or restaurants open at night, that everything was closed on Sundays, and that the streets were generally quiet during the day as well as at night. I myself did not feel that this applied to me, as I felt Trondheim was much more lively than Bergen due to the student life, yet I was referred to by a participant who had visited Kuala Lumpur – “KL had so much night life, it must be difficult for you here when there’s nothing to do at night”.

In addition to participants oscillating between treating me as a local and as a “foreigner”, I often felt the need to repeat my reasons for being at the resource center as several course leaders were confused on whether or not I belonged there and in which capacity I belonged there. I constantly found myself explaining that I spoke Norwegian and that I had been invited to join the courses as a student of anthropology, observing and collecting data, so as to not feel like I was eavesdropping. My ambivalent position may have given me a more trustworthy role among the participants at the resource center as some would treat me as a middleman between themselves and the administration and volunteers. Being understood as both foreign and local, as well as participant and volunteer at the resource center gave me insight into different dimensions of integration and allowed me to receive various types of responses both inclusive and exclusive in nature. I was referred to in the context of “we”, or “us foreigners” as well as “you Norwegians”. Albeit confusing, perhaps this oscillation was appropriate, as I am foreign of origin and citizenship. I could relate to issues such as voter’s rights (or lack thereof) or feelings of racial discrimination simultaneously as I am Norwegian in the sense of having internalized values, attitudes and knowledge prevalent and seemingly axiomatic to Norwegian culture. Therefore, I could not relate in the same way as the participants, to the conscious, activated process of acquiring these values. These ambivalent roles did however contribute to my understanding of some of the conflicting aspects of integration, as civic integration is aimed at transnational (or “multi-local”) individuals.

3. Civic Integration in Norway

To give an accurate context for the data which I have collected during observations and interviews in the field I will start with insight into Norwegian integration policies. This chapter will provide insight which should function as part of country-specific background information. It is the context within which the experiences of my interviewees have been expressed. I've already mentioned the purpose of the resource center which was the locus of my fieldwork, what I wish to do in this section is to highlight how such centers and activities aimed at integrating immigrants are connected to a larger scale of immigration- and integration policies in the Norwegian nation-state, and how these in turn are felt in the every-day lives of migrants. This chapter highlights how integration as a policy has developed. This development has been focused on the perceived failure of previous integration. As such, implementation in civic integration now are articulated as rights which immigrants have. This form of integration is presented as beneficial, because immigrants can claim their right to have civic training. However, as we will see, civic integration also focuses on the immigrants' duties to comply with the integration measures as a way to "prove" their loyalties. Furthermore, the manner of how civic integration is carried out may create the illusion that once one has completed civic integration in practice – one has "completed" the social process of integration. This illusion has consequences for immigrants' sense of belonging, particularly as some may discover that civic integration cannot solve certain aspects of discrimination felt in everyday life.

According to many social scientists working on the topic of migration and integration, policies in Europe have taken a turn, from multiculturalist or assimilationist national models of integration, which dominated pre-1990's, to a more "liberal" mode of integration which rests on civic integration. As such, much of the research regarding civic integration has concerned whether or not these policies are in fact liberal (Borevi, Jensen and Mouritsen, 2017, pp. 1-17; Fernandes, 2015, pp. 245-264; Joppke, 2007, pp. 1-22). Civic integration essentially shifts the discourse on migrants "from rights to duties" (Borevi, Jensen and Mouritsen, 2017, p.3). Meaning, where there were initially no, or minimal, strings attached to the acquirement of citizenship and long-term residency (and all rights that go with these statuses) there is now a number of criteria that need to be fulfilled for an applicant to be approved citizenship/permanent residency. These criteria range from mandatory language courses to citizenship tests which may inquire whether one has understood the host culture well enough to become a part of it etc. As mentioned, this is a trend which can be found generally in European migration policies, however, this "convergence" does not actually mean that policies are shaped and carried out

the same way within different European nations. Borevi, Jensen and Mouritsen (2017, p. 6) argue that one needs to take into account the specific histories and political dynamics within each country and how these affect the ideals of civic integration. Furthermore, some academics have argued that civic integration policies have been a politically strategic response to the European public's increasing anti-immigration concerns, as they do not necessarily find positive nor negative effects of civic integration on immigrants' sense of belonging. However, civic integration policies have proven rhetorically popular, particularly among people who express hostile attitudes towards immigration (Simonsen, 2017, p.16).

Specifically, in Norway, civic integration entails obligatory participation in the Norwegian introduction course for applicants coming from non-EEA countries who do not speak Norwegian. This introduction course consists of at least 300 of hours spent at Norwegian language and social science (civic training) courses (i.e. courses specifically about Norwegian society). Responsibility to make these courses available for participants is given to the host municipalities from the Norwegian state. Non-valid absence from the program could result in legal and economic sanctions (Liebig, 2009, pp. 26-27). This is especially interesting because civic integration, and the introduction program that came out of it, is defined as a liberal effort to empower participants to be self-sufficient in the new society. Before this civic integration policy was developed, similar courses were offered in some Norwegian municipalities, but the content and availability varied to a larger extent – and participation was not articulated as rights and obligations for the immigrant. Furthermore, the civic integration program was developed in 2004 as a response to growing criticism of migrant unemployment and subsequent welfare-dependency in Norway – in other words it was shaped out of a discourse which looked critically at previous integration measures. According to social scientist Ariana G. Fernandes the criticism also included the Norwegian government's "failure to communicate the host societies 'basic values' to new immigrants and refugees" (2015, p. 247). In addition to the introduction program civic integration in Norway also entails a variety of volunteer organizations which provide civic training and which immigrants are encouraged to participate in regardless of whether they are European or non-European. Participation in language courses at organizations, such as the resource center I conducted my fieldwork in, may count as part of the required 300 hours of training. Content of these organizations are therefore developed in cooperation with the municipality, to achieve the goals set out by the Norwegian government.

The new form of policy-based civic integration that developed during the early 2000's in Norway rested on the idea that individuals should be made independent of the state, and that

the policies at work should function as empowering for the individual. However, several social scientists have argued how this idea of integration, which takes the form of a contractual agreement between the host country and the immigrant is in fact illiberal (Joppke, 2007, pp. 1-22; Fernandes, 2015, pp. 245-264). Despite the sense of autonomy one may feel upon participation in the Norwegian introduction program, through being allowed to tailor the program in cooperation with one's case-worker, Fernandes argues that these liberating elements are overshadowed by the fact that participation is mandatory – economic sanctions and legal issues that may arise are therefore the display of unequal power relations between host society and immigrant. She also points out that the liberating factors of civic integration may very well have the opposite effect and be disempowering due to the focus on individuals' responsibilities and how it effectively ignores structural barriers that may prevent immigrants from entering certain arenas in the society. "To promote empowerment within such a framework is, to a large extent, to disguise the power dynamics embedded in the programs" (Fernandes, 2015, p. 260). This information is relevant as we move forward because most of the participants at the resource center I observed, had either completed or were in the process of completing their mandatory introduction courses, and the resource center functioned for them as one of the municipality's efforts to provide the necessary tools for their independency in Norwegian society. Although they were well on their way to be regarded as integrated by the Norwegian government, they themselves did not feel that the civic knowledge acquired was sufficient to make them integrated in society.

Before introducing participants of civic integration and their perspectives, we will take a brief look at academic discourses of civic integration. As expressed in the previous paragraphs there is a tendency to focus on how civic integration is different from previous modes of migration settlement policies, such as assimilation or other expressions that view integration as a social process, which have now been perceived as either ineffective or insufficient in their effort to integrate immigrants. A large academic focus during the last two decades has been on what civic integration is in general terms, how this is or isn't aligned with liberal ideas and to what extent there exists policy convergence on a continental level (Adamson, Triadafilopoulos, & Zolberg, 2011, pp. 843-859; Fernandes, 2015, pp. 245-264; Joppke, 2007, pp. 1-22). This is particularly important to keep in mind as we venture into civic integration at a local level. With much of the research focused on the definition of civic integration, the specific practice of it locally has not been granted the same amount of attention. Consequently, the academic discourse on civic integration has little effect on actual policymaking as its discussions remain

outside of the specific successes or lack thereof within civic integration situated in specific societies, and rather remain within semantics. That is to say, the discourse mainly remains in a philosophical area which discusses the meaning of liberal values in Europe, and to which extent these definitions are reflected in civic integration policies as a whole – it does not focus much on the effects of specific implementations of civic integration and on whether or not these are successful, nor establish how “successful” civic integration is measured (Garibay & De Cuyper, 2018, pp. 15-24). Some special attention has however been paid to Scandinavia, on account of their welfare systems’ exceptional position in Europe and their cultural similarities despite rather different approaches to civic integration – in terms of how restrictive or open their policies may be (Borevi, Jensen, & Mouritsen, 2017, pp. 1-17; Breidahl, 2017, pp. 1-19).

A central problem that this special focus, on what civic integration is at a semantic level, poses is the lack of research on what is considered effective civic integration. There seems to lack clarity in which methods, instruments and standards exist in European integration efforts, both at international and national levels, which prevent policies from being truly evidence based. It has been suggested that a systematic approach to the processes involving integration, and *how* and *why* they function as they do would be beneficial to policymakers and to the overall success of the integration of immigrants to Europe (Garibay & De Cuyper, 2018, p.21). In this thesis, I attempt to shed light over Norwegian civic integrational policies and practices specifically and how these play out in the lives of immigrants whom have participated in my fieldwork in Trondheim. The critique of these policies and practices is not meant as a disapproval of their effects, rather it reflects certain areas where problematic aspects of civic integration are felt in the everyday lives of its participants, and reminds that integration, as policy and practice, is a dynamic topic which requires not only attention to integration as policy, but also attention to integration as a social process.

3.2 Marwan

I first met Marwan at an English language café hosted by the resource center. He is a Syrian man in his mid-twenties who forcibly migrated to Norway as a result of the war in Syria. He’d decided to join the English café because he was told, by his employers and teachers, that he needed to improve his English skills. At this time, I was given the responsibility to create the content for the language café. I decided to hold a workshop on the topic of “integration”. During the workshop it became increasingly clear that Marwan had extensive knowledge of

Trondheim. He had vast knowledge of different activities that were provided by various organizations in the city as well as knowledge of how one as a migrant could access these activities. For instance, Marwan told the group that hiking was an important factor in the daily lives of Norwegians. Knowing that many of the participants of the language café had newly arrived in Trondheim he also provided information on where to find hiking equipment which one could rent for free. Through my observations Marwan had presented himself as an “integrated” individual, in the sense that he had mastered the Norwegian language well enough to make himself clearly understood (and with a local dialect at that) and that he had a job. He was also one of few individuals present at the café who was vocal about his criticism of Norwegian integration practices. When talking about the importance of being employed he said

“Yes, they want us to get a job because they think we are lazy, but when we try to get a job no one is hiring us, and then if we do get employed, they’re jealous – they say we’ve stolen their jobs”.

Once these words were uttered several others in the group chimed in, one giving the example of cleaning ladies as a job that was “saved for immigrants” which Norwegians would not covet. These sentiments illustrate an important paradox which many non-Western immigrants are faced with when integrating into Norwegian society. Many non-Western migrants are not only expected to, but often limited to working in unskilled work, such as cleaning, public transport and hotel personnel, and higher educated non-Western migrants often struggle to find employment which suits their level of education (Gullestad, 2002b).

I decided to talk to Marwan one on one, as it was clear to me that he not only had a lot of information about the integration policies in Norway, but also had experienced it first-hand during his five-year stay in the country. When I asked Marwan, during the break, if he would be up for an interview about his experiences; he told me he’d be delighted, “But before that you should watch my documentary”. Evidently, Marwan had chronicled his experience of coming to Norway and his first two years in the country in a documentary which was produced by a media-student he met through another language café, and picked up by NRK, a state-owned national television and radio broadcasting company in Norway. After watching the documentary, I contacted Marwan and we agreed on a time and place to meet for an interview. As I arrived at the café we’d agreed on in downtown Trondheim, I asked Marwan how he was doing. He smiled and answered, “not so good, Elizabeth. I need to find a new job”. I asked him what had happened to his previous job to which he responded that his boss had told him he had no possibility of moving upward in the company due to his poor English skills. “I’ve applied to over 75 jobs, been to over 25 interviews. I’m tired” he continued. I asked him if he had an idea

of what it was his potential employers were looking for, to which he chuckled. He had experienced so many different responses, which led him to believe that it was just his energetic personality which employers struggled with. According to Marwan, he had yet to hear constructive criticism from those who rejected his applications, rather they provided many vague formulations which made it hard for him to understand what he needed to improve.

His words expressed frustration, but his attitude expressed patience. He told me he just had to continue trying, even though it was getting more tiresome for every time his job application was rejected.

On his experience of learning the Norwegian language he said it was fun, hard and painful. Marwan had little trust that the introduction program helped newcomers gain equal access to Norwegian society as he believed the program itself was falsely hopeful of how migrants would meet the Norwegian labor market. In fact, he believed that those who relied fully on the advice and lessons from the introduction-phase would not successfully find a job nor learn the language. Instead, he underscored the value of a social network to enter the labor market. “Network is what fixes your job situation. Not experience, not education or background. You need to know the right people” he said.

He continued to explain how the introduction program and the Norwegian Labor and Welfare Administration (NAV) were a part of “the package” of becoming a foreigner in Norway. It is the typical route which is expected that non-EU migrants in Norway take, and as Marwan expresses it is also a vital part of the demarcation between those who’ve newly arrived and those who’ve “always” been here. Through his accounts it is evident that Marwan expresses a desire to distance himself from so-called “crutches” or “scams” which he believes gives immigrants a false sense of hope while simultaneously herding them into the perpetual category of “immigrant” or “refugee”. Interestingly, Marwan’s his experiences of integration stand in stark contrast to the aims of civic integration, the empowering of the migrant individual, although Fernandes (2015, pp. 245-264) points out that this aim tends to be overshadowed by the uneven power relations at play.

4. Becoming Norwegian & Becoming Foreign

In this section I will discuss the liminal position which newcomers experience in their introduction to Norwegian society. As my fieldwork was carried out at a resource center for immigrants in Trondheim I have been introduced to structured practices and narratives which the immigrant faces from the host community as well as their reactions to these practices and narratives. I will present some concrete factors which have been highlighted as keys for finding one's position in a new society, through conversations at the resource center. In addition to examining these specific key factors, I will also discuss the intangible factors which have been expressed. These seemingly intangible factors have been expressed through frustration and confusion regarding why one is still «on the outside» when one has fulfilled the requirements of the aforementioned key factors.

The ability to acquire language skills, work and civic knowledge are explicit, tangible factors which hold a significant position in Norwegian integration policy. These are the explicit aims which the Norwegian government has established as vital to cultural integration, and through which an immigrant becomes a vital participant of Norwegian society. This is for instance reflected in the narrative of the resource center as most of its courses are directed towards either language acquisition or providing consultation and training in how to tackle the Norwegian job market. These factors are not only prevalent in the Norwegian host narrative, such as Gullestad (2002a, pp. 89-93) has underlined, but also hold a valuable position among the individuals who immigrate to Norwegian societies. In my conversations with participants at the resource center, language has been highlighted as the first priority and as a gateway to parts of Norwegian society to which the participants feel they have yet to be introduced. It is evident that these are factors which are established in the host community which the individual newcomers have understood, accepted and currently working towards achieving. I will explore these aims individually in the coming chapters. For now, however, I will focus on those factors which are experienced as intangible by some of the individuals participating in the structured integrational processes provided by the host community.

A certain *je ne sais quoi* is experienced by some of the participants who have achieved a desired level of language skills and who have acquired a job in Norwegian society. In a workshop I held at the resource center, as part of the English language café activities, I asked the participants what they associated with the word “integration”. In response I was given a whole lot of activities, foods, clothes, and social commentary which the participants associated with

“Norwegianness”. One participant responded that in her attempt to learn more about Norwegian culture she was attending private courses where a Norwegian acquaintance of hers was teaching her about Christianity as she felt it held a central position in Norwegian culture. Activities such as cultural events held by the city (food markets, festivals, concerts), hiking and berry-picking were the type of arenas which the participants believed were fruitful ways to get in touch with Norwegians. When I asked if this is how they would go about meeting Norwegians one participant promptly responded, “Get them drunk first!” and everyone laughed. This participant, a male in his late twenties from Syria, took it upon himself to explain to the others how Norwegian social life changed when alcohol was involved.

This participant, Marwan, had lived in Trøndelag for five years now and seemed confident in his knowledge of Norwegians. I asked him if he felt that this knowledge helped him in getting to know more Norwegians. His response was that despite knowing how to talk to Norwegians about soccer, having a job and good level of Norwegian language he still felt as though he was distanced from Norwegians. He shook his head and laughed “I don’t know what it is they need from me”. Interestingly, Marwan, who had been vocal about his criticism of Norwegian social life from the beginning of the workshop, was in my perspective most alike Norwegians – at least in terms of the explicit expectations we as a nation have towards newcomers. He had vast knowledge about the local culture such as hiking practices, he participated in watching soccer matches with colleagues and not only mastered the Norwegian language, but also had developed a local Trønder dialect. He pointed out that even though he started to sound like a Norwegian he was still on the outside, “It’s not the language, because I have the language and I have a job. It’s something else, I don’t know what”.

It is this intangible strangeness that I wish to explore in this section as these seemingly obscured factors are felt as a hinder in the integration of individuals such as Marwan. Attempts at making explicit these otherwise obscure hinders have been made by Norwegian anthropologist Marianne Gullestad in her book *Det Norske: Sett med nye øyne* (2002a), which literally translates to “The Norwegian: Seen with new eyes”. Gullestad points out, throughout her book, that this intangible distance also exists between ethnic Norwegians and individuals who consider themselves Norwegian (through citizenship, being born and raised in Norway and speaking Norwegian as well as any ethnic Norwegian) but feel as though they are not treated as such by ethnic Norwegians. She continues to analyze Norwegian culture and, in this analysis, points to several ambiguous expressions, from Norwegian politicians and laymen alike, which reinforce the framework of the ambiguous language used to speak about integration of

immigrants. It is imperative that these narratives are included in this thesis to underline the existence of the category “foreigner” in Norway and to make explicit that this simplified, static category encompasses vast variations of individuals with entirely different backgrounds, experiences, and abilities, and through its application forces all of these different backgrounds into one type of person which is categorically distinct from that which is “Norwegian”.

An honest attempt at understanding inclusion and integration cannot be made without acknowledging the liminality which follows an immigrant in a new society. Through this analysis I wish to demonstrate how standardized integration practices (as observed at the resource center) is a policy-based method of integration. Through this method migrants are a-historicized simultaneously as they embody visible differences that elicit differentialized treatment within the Norwegian society and are felt in the every-day lives of migrants. Through highlighting integration practices which depend on pre-existing, racialized and politicized categories of the “foreigner” (Ahmed, 2000, pp. 19-55, 95-113) in Norway I attempt to shed light on the inconsistencies of so-called liberal European migration discourse and illustrate how these expressions can be interpreted as cultural fundamentalism which only accepts those of its new countrymen who fit into the scheme of liberal ideas – effectively excluding individuals who come from places which, through European hegemonic narrative, are deemed “illiberal” (Adamson, Triadafilopoulos & Zolberg, 2011, pp. 844-845). By investigating the underlying assumptions and prejudices that individuals are met with in their integration to Norwegian society I attempt to make explicit some of those seemingly intangible factors felt in relation to belonging to Norwegian society. First, I will discuss the creation of the “foreigner” category in opposition to the native “Norwegian”.

4.2 The Norwegian Familiar vs. the Foreign Stranger

Gullestad’s (2002b, pp. 45-63) assessment of “Norwegianess” brings up the question of how the concept of culture has developed in Norway, and consequently how cultural diversity is understood and played out. Central to Gullestad’s analysis is the concept of egalitarianism (2002b, pp. 45-63). The word “likhet” is a term used to describe the egalitarian nature of the Norwegian culture. “Likhet” is a term used for both equality and sameness, the undistinguishable written word cloaks the difference of meanings, making “likhetstankegang”, the mindset of equality/sameness, difficult to decipher. In fact, Gullestad points to the mixed usage of “likhet” and its meanings as a means of sustaining the “foreigner” category (2002b,

pp. 46-47). The foreigner can be equal, in an egalitarian sense, they can have the same rights and services as the native, but can they be same? And if those who practice an imagined sameness are privileged, through their sameness, can those who are different really be equal? Sameness, Gullestad points out, relies on historical similarities such as historical claims to kinship and places. Egalitarianism in Norway is therefore closely related to the idea of sameness, an “imagined sameness” (Gullestad, 2002a, pp.79-119; Gullestad, 2002b, pp. 46-47). Similarly, anthropologist Marit Melhuus (1999, pp. 69-70) distinguishes between two concepts of culture vital to the nation building processes in Norwegian history and are important for the development of the discourse of culture in Norway today. The first concept is based on the acquisition of culture, tied to the enlightenment project. This is for instance cultivating through education. The second concept, which Melhuus suggests may have given rise to feelings of suspicion towards foreigners, is rooted in heritage and national belonging, in the lifestyles of the Norwegian. This concept makes culture an implicit factor, something which one is born with and cannot be taught (Melhuus, 1999, p. 70).

What is perhaps most problematic with the ambiguous nature of Gullestads “likhet” and Melhuus’ concepts of culture, is that the different concepts pertaining to the same words often are used together, in an oscillating manner. In that way, those aspects of Norwegian culture which are obtainable become obscured by those aspects which are seemingly innate. It is perhaps this sense of *je ne sais quoi* which is demarking the foreigner from the native and perpetuating the concept of “the foreigner” as something other and as something permanently separated from “the native”. The existence of the foreign allows for the imagination of a collective native. It draws boundaries around that which is native, effectively separating it from that which is foreign, or strange (Bauman, 1990, pp. 143-169). This separation requires a recognition of the stranger in the first place (Ahmed, 2000, pp. 21-37). The native is the “us” which is familiar and safe, while the foreigner encompasses the strange “them” which is unfamiliar and thereby potentially dangerous. By prescribing our own ideas of strangeness onto the foreigner Ahmed suggests that we cut the foreigner off from their background, a-historicizing them and recreating them in our terms. Ahmed builds upon and expands on George Simmel’s concept of “the stranger” (Simmel, 1971/1908, pp. 143-149) who defined the stranger as simultaneously near and remote. The stranger comes today and stays tomorrow. Simmel explains that those elements which are recognized in the stranger, are the vague commonalities shared between the stranger and the familiar, for instance recognizing that the stranger, like oneself is human, or in this case that the stranger is, like oneself, a part of the society. Simmel

argues that the recognition of what they have in common, the overarching and highly general similarities, produces a particular focus on that which they do not have in common.

In “Modernity and Ambivalence”, sociologist, Zygmunt Bauman (1990, pp. 143-169), argues that the ambivalence produced by the stranger is a mark of, and a prerequisite for modernity, modern cultures – including specifically, the emergence and persistence of nation states. His opening statement, “There are friends and enemies. And there are *strangers* [sic]” (Bauman, 1990, p. 143) already gives the reader the eerie impression that the stranger is someone who does not belong within the boundaries which they find themselves in. Bauman explains that friends and enemies are oppositions, and as such they know each other in knowing what they stand for themselves, and what they oppose which is embodied by the enemy. Their reflection of each other therefore constitutes a certain co-ordination and structure. They are essential to each other because their co-existence defines them respectively. The stranger, however, does not belong within this dichotomic relationship. Instead, the stranger represents a danger towards the comfortable social order of knowing who your friends and enemies are. The stranger can be – and until further contact is, both a friend and an enemy. Immigrants are representative of this “stranger” category as they are not mere tourists who will eventually return to their homes, instead the immigrants have arrived at their new home.

Referencing Barth’s boundaries, Bauman, explains that territorial and functional separations are created to mitigate and diminish hermeneutic problems that may arise from boundary-crossing. However, given that boundary-crossing is “difficult to avoid” hermeneutic problems “are likely to persist as a permanent ‘grey area’ surrounding the familiar world of everyday life” (Bauman, 1990, p. 147). According to Bauman (1990, pp. 146-148), institutional separation, which exists as a mediator of the possibility of hermeneutic problems (and by extension a possibility of problems of difference), reinforces the very unfamiliarity it was meant to familiarize. The very concept of integration presupposes that the immigrant who comes from without must somehow find their position within the new society. Civic integration, as we will see in the next chapter, is recognizing the stranger and attempting to incentivize the stranger to become a familiar – a friend. I argue that this mode of integration is demarcating immigrants due to the very specific responsibilities placed solely on the immigrants, and not for instance on the native “friends” with which the immigrants are encouraged to integrate. In this way, the form of civic integration observed in Norway today may be reinforcing the very segregating tendencies which it was created to diminish, producing the “foreigner” as a category perpetually

paralleled to Norwegians. As civic integration mainly addresses the activation of immigrants, it does not take into account other factors in integration as a social process.

Civic integration aims to provide cultural knowledge relevant to the successful integration of immigrants in a specific manner. However, as we will see in the next chapters, it is a mode of integration which is occupied with providing what I call “national knowledge”, that is general and rudimentary representations of the average Norwegian and of Norwegian culture. A “how-to” guide into mainly the Norwegian language and labor market. It does not necessarily take into consideration the local variations of culture, which exists and is re-created through the interaction of local individuals’ everyday lives. As civic integration is carried out in a variety of resource centers it is to a large degree cut-off from the everyday lives of native Norwegians, creating a separation of space. What civic integration aims to be a shared space, one society where diverse individuals co-operate for social and economic benefits, may risk becoming two respective spaces; one space where newly arrived immigrants carry out their everyday lives and one space where “the rest” of society is already situated. It is the duty of the immigrant to participate in civic integration in order to prove their place in society, and this happens through a number of activities that the majority of Norwegians are exempt from by virtue of an imagined sameness. This mode of integration is discontinuous with the lifestyles of Norwegians since it includes very little overlapping between Norwegians and the immigrants who wish to be integrated into Norwegian society. It is a process which risks perpetuating myth of the sameness of the natives contra the inescapable distinctiveness of the foreigner.

5. Labor Market Integration

Marwan's experiences in the previous chapter articulate some problems which civic integration assume to solve but may in reality not be able to tackle. Perhaps because of the current hinders to his professional life, Marwan has focused especially on how he has struggled to gain employment in Norway. He mentions, for instance, the problem of language as key for labor market entry. Even though he considers himself fluent in the Norwegian language he still experiences difficulty in obtaining a job. Although language skills are important for labor market entry, language may not necessarily have any direct effect on an immigrant's earnings in Norway, most probably because the level of language proficiency needed for labor market entry is in itself high, in other words language proficiency does not affect earnings because proficiency is a prerequisite for labor market entry in Norway, according to Hayfron (2001, p. 1978). As this suggests, and as demonstrated by the aims of Norwegian civic integration, language proficiency is vital for labor market entry and the necessity for language training is strong in terms of gaining economic independence through labor market integration. However, according to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's report "Jobs for immigrants: Labour market integration in Norway" (Liebig, 2009) language deficiency is not the only hinder in labor market entry. There are some structural barriers for immigrants which have been highlighted in Norwegian labor market integration such as the role of informal networks as means of job acquisition for natives (and the lack of these networks for immigrants), lack of research regarding discrimination from employers and the so-called "lock-in" effects of civic integration combined with the welfare state's out-of-work benefits (in relation to economic assistance both during the civic integration program and after completion if one has yet to be employed) which can result in delayed labor market entry. In this chapter I examine these factors. Furthermore, I explore some factors in the labor market which may have a discriminatory effect on individuals who have transnational backgrounds.

I will share some accounts from the field, in which informants have expressed concerns directly linked to these structural barriers. It is important to keep in mind that the OECD report which, along with my informants, is the empirical basis on which the discussion in this chapter takes place, is framed within the one-sided focus on economic independence and are not necessarily concerned with other aspects of the social process of integration i.e. otherwise cultural factors in integration such as migrants' feelings of belonging to new a society (Garibay & De Cuyper, 2018, p. 20). Economic integration is one fraction of integration as a whole, vital to social integration in Scandinavia. The OECD (Liebig, 2009) research and subsequent report is a

relevant source in this section because it is the product of one of the largest organizations which measure economic policy efficiency and suggest changes to policymaking on an international level. Therefore, it is safe to assume that civic integration policies in Europe are influenced by, if not in part based on, the information compiled in these reports. Through accounts from informants we will see how structural barriers which among others have been highlighted by the OECD are understood on an everyday basis. In addition to the everyday effects of these barriers, findings suggest that more research on certain topics such as discrimination in the labor market is sorely needed for a holistic understanding of labor market entry barriers and for developing potential solutions.

5.2 The Norwegian Model – Civic Integration as Immigrants’ First Job

The Norwegian form of civic integration addresses certain aspects of the structural barriers which immigrants meet through introducing language training, civic knowledge and training in how to enter the Norwegian labor market. The “civic turn” which started in the 1990’s has heavily focused on the *activation* of migrants for their entry to the labor market. For humanitarian immigrants (refugees granted stay and/or citizenship in Norway) this is being done through a contract-like relationship between the Norwegian state and the migrant, in which the migrant is obligated to fulfill the criteria of a certain number of hours of training in language and civic courses in order to receive economic benefits (Breidahl, 2017, pp. 1-19; Joppke, 2007, pp. 1-22). Resource centers which help immigrants in their integration efforts are centered around these principles of “activation”, in other words they adhere to the civic integration ideals of migrants becoming active citizens through the migrants’ own efforts to participate. These centers are being used by both humanitarian migrants, as well as labor migrants and family-reunification migrants, therefore it is not only refugees who are met with “activation” mentality, albeit they are the only ones who are obligated to be active.

As mentioned in the first chapter of this dissertation, the “activation” of immigrants through civic integration, which was implemented in 2004, is a response to the perceived failure of earlier integration practices, observed by the high rates of welfare dependency, particularly among non-EU immigrants. One may be tempted to view these policy changes as economic instrumentalism, however, economic independence is a vital component to the overall integration of immigrants, and the value of “the worker” is particularly pronounced in Scandinavian societies (Breidahl, 2017, pp. 5-6). Concerns of welfare-dependency, not always

expressed in a detailed manner, may lead certain people to abuse this argument as a basis for why immigration policy should be even stricter, and may even give rise to some racist rhetoric, however, it is vital that welfare-dependency was made an explicit concern because increasing migration without reference to this issue may put a strain on the host-society, as well as strains on international economies (Collier, 2013, pp.11-26). Through civic integration, the Norwegian state wishes to move away from welfare-dependency, rather it provides economic incentives for humanitarian migrants to activate themselves and participate in the labor market, which is not only important for gaining economic independency, but also for being accepted as a member of society, furthering social cohesion as well. "... Active participation in the labour market is of crucial importance for being accepted as an equal, full-fledged member of society" (Breidahl, 2017, p. 6). The introduction program through which these aims and incentives are realized can therefore be viewed as the first job which a humanitarian migrant has in Norwegian society (Liebig, 2009, p. 55). I would also extend this point of view to non-humanitarian migrants, to some extent, as they are also met with the same expectations of being a "full-fledged member" of society through labor, by the host society. It is however important to mention that these migrants are participating in courses presumably outside of their "work-time" as they do not receive the same benefits for participations as humanitarian migrants. The different immigrant categories have in common the labor-related expectations of the host society and therefore need to prove their societal loyalties through demonstrating their activity, if not for anything other than being socially accepted. Breidahl explains these expectations as such:

It is not enough to prove sufficient language qualifications, pass tests, and demonstrate a commitment to liberal-democratic principles to be considered a 'good' citizen and a 'full' member of society. Newcomers must consistently demonstrate that they are active citizens and that they are also in the *process* of becoming 'productive' citizens. The Scandinavian countries are therefore also actively involved in preparing activation programmes – a s a right as well as a duty - whereby the state has been involved in the preparing these people for the labour market. We are therefore dealing with developed, extensive, state-sponsored integration programmes of a magnitude that is unique within the European context and beyond and where the welfare state institutions are largely involved in the daily lives of newcomers. Several European countries have to some extent taken steps to institutionalize the idea that integration of immigrants is a 'state affair' (Breidahl, 2017, pp. 13-14).

There are some factors concerning the demarcation of foreigners through civic integration which I wish to highlight, in reference to Karen Breidahl's (2017) research. If activation of migrants is concerned with the social aspect of host acceptance (in addition to economic concerns) then it quickly becomes an instrumentalized method through which foreigners "prove their worth" – which stands in contrast to the native population as they are socially tethered and

accepted through other factors, not limited to whether they are employed, that is, they are implemented in society through factors such as kinship ties and innate understandings and expressions of Norwegian culture. Furthermore, the “institutionalization” of integration becomes a somewhat standardized national mode of integration, albeit implemented at local level, the content of the integration remains largely at a national level. This may create a basis of knowledge among immigrants which is more or less restricted to the national sphere (e.g. work practices in Norway, generalized social facts about Norwegians, standard language courses; in this case standard Eastern dialect and written language etc.), which risks leaving the social ties to the local community rather scarce. The path-dependent methods of integration in Norway therefore becomes a demarcation between “us”, who do not explicitly follow any state-sponsored path, and “them” who are taught Norwegian culture and societal values through a standardized “path” (i.e. civic integration measures) as opposed to experiencing them directly in everyday life. Immigrants are, through civic integration, being conditioned in a specific manner which aims to provide them with a national framework of knowledge, but this knowledge is being delivered in a setting which is separate from the native population. In other words, the implicit cultural knowledge of for instance how to enter the labor market, which natives gain through their experiences and networks are instead being taught to foreigners explicitly through courses. The “learning by doing” method which natives use implicitly, cannot be used in the same way by foreigners due to the nature of civic integration. This demarcation is seen and felt by participants of civic integration and may not always be interpreted as encouraging.

In conversation with one participant, Marwan, who had been through the introduction program and was currently participating in English courses at the resource center I was told that the introduction program was a scam, which gave immigrants the impression that if they just followed the path laid out for them they would eventually be employed and economically independent soon after their completion of the program.

People think you don't have any opinions just because you can't express them yet. I do not like the introduction program – it's just a scam (translated from the Norwegian word 'lureri'). They tell you that you will receive enough money to buy cars and things to make you equal in society, and that everything will turn out well. But this is just a scamming period. They tell you once you've learned Norwegian you should be able to get a job – but it's never that easy. Here I am, Norwegian skills haven't helped me that much! It's the networks that gets jobs here in Norway, if you don't have a network you're out. The people I know who are doing good are those who went out and made a network while they were in the introduction program. If you wait to finish the introduction program before you go out and look for a job,

then you are trapped. You go straight to NAV and you crash. You won't get a job. I think the Norwegian lessons I got at the resource center was so much better than the mandatory lessons I got through the Introduction program. - Marwan

Marwan's account of experiencing the introduction program expresses several points which are important to keep in mind when studying the effects of civic integration. Firstly, his dislike of the Norwegian Labor and Welfare Administration (NAV) can be understood in light of the concerns regarding welfare dependency. However, where the Norwegian state implemented civic integration as an effort to combat this, Marwan still believes that the path-dependent model makes it difficult for himself and many of his friends to enter the labor market, and that it inevitably leads to "crashing at NAV", becoming dependent on out-of-work benefits before one has even experienced the Norwegian labor market. In fact, the OECD highlights precisely this issue pointing to the nature of the introduction program, being a full-time "job" it leaves little time for immigrants to go out and look for jobs themselves – a problem they call the "lock-in" effects of the introduction program. In explaining short-term effects of the program, they said "...Those migrants who dropped at some stage out of the programme to get into employment had also a higher probability to be in employment after the end of the introduction phase" (Liebig, 2009, p.55).

What is problematic about path-dependency in this sense is that it cuts off the migrant from engaging in society other than through their "path". For instance, for several of the migrants whom I met at the resource center – their daily adult education and the courses which they attended in the evening accounted for most of their day. According to one elderly woman, Norma, from the Democratic Republic of Congo, her schedule was filled to the point where any time she had after her courses was spent either shopping groceries or taking care of her grandchildren. When I met Norma, she was applying for jobs in the tourism sector, where she believed she was most likely to succeed with her French language skills. Norma's day would usually be filled with four to six hours of language and civic courses through the adult education program she was enrolled in, and then after a break she would go to the resource center for an additional two to four hours of language training. On her busiest day of the week, Tuesday, she could be out of her home by 8am, and back home by 8pm. This leaves her very little time to do anything other than that which is laid out for her in her "path". If she found a job it would have to replace the education she was receiving now. Path-dependent models may be beneficial, but

in this case the path is clearly separated from the lifestyles of natives, possibly making the gap between the migrant and the native wider.

5.3 Networks, Mentors and Internships

In the previous subchapter Marwan mentions networks as central in the acquisition of jobs. This may in fact be a major structural barrier which many immigrants and their offspring struggle to overcome. According to the OECD, social networks and subsequent informal recruitment have such a dominant position in labor market entry that they present challenges for both immigrants and their children (Liebig, 2009, p. 65). This is not due to the lack of a network, rather due to the type of networks immigrants may have. Many immigrants may have large networks, but which are centered around people from their own ethnic communities, thus immigrants may miss out on the exchange of information and experiences in the native communities which may explicitly and implicitly provide valuable knowledge of labor entry specific to Norwegian society. This is related to another important barrier for immigrants wishing to enter the labor market namely, the knowledge of how the Norwegian labor market functions.

This involves knowledge about how to draft CVs and letters of introduction, to identify appropriate job opportunities, and how to respond and react in recruitment interviews. This can be a problem for immigrants who came from countries where practices and norms, both procedural and cultural, may be different (Liebig, 2009, p. 65).

Civic integration in Norway does respond to these concerns directly as integration policy and subsequent training is concerned with minimizing this gap between migrants and natives through civic courses, often expressed through, but not limited to, labor market entry courses. Again, a central difference here is that the civic courses may only provide knowledge of national norms and practices, but may not be adapted to the local situations, thus the local ties between job applicants and employers from the same region (and therefore the same, if not similar, local culture) may be missing among immigrants. Not to mention that the responsibility to integrate newcomers is given to the municipalities from the state. Although policies today reflect a more convergent method of integration across Norwegian municipalities than previous policies (Brochmann & Hagelund, 2011, p. 19), there are still variations in the quality of the content of such courses and training.

One suggested possible solution to this problem is mentorship (Liebig, 2009, p. 65). The central issue concerning the immigrants' acquisition of "national" knowledge alone is that information

about how to become self-sufficient in Norway is being taught in a context which more or less only concerns foreigners. Contact with the native population and their implicit knowledge of how to work the system is scarce. At the resource center which I observed, I only met three ethnic Norwegians who were volunteers, out of approximately eighteen volunteers whom I had observed, and they were volunteers for the women's crafting workshop and the Norwegian language café (both of which are informal and where content is created by the volunteers themselves). This is relevant because the information about labor market entry provided for immigrants may then be a standard "package" of information which such resource centers provide, which are what I choose to call the "national knowledge". This may be provided to the participants by immigrant volunteers which themselves may not be employed or have extensive knowledge of the labor market system – rather they may repeat the knowledge which was provided for them by the resource center (which adheres to state aims) – again, restricted to national culture. Diverse practices of integration across Norwegian municipalities was an important reason for establishing new integration policies in Norway in the early 2000's. These new policies would centralize the integration measures, serving to ensure quality training for all non-EU immigrants regardless of where they were settled in Norway. This centralization of integration measures is expressed among other things through the creation of the introduction program. Any migrants from outside of the EU now had the right to be integrated through a personalized two-year program. What is problematic, however, is that this program mainly adheres to the national aims of integration, namely; successful entry in the Norwegian labor market, sufficient language skills and general civic knowledge (Brochmann & Hagelund, 2011, p. 19). This demarcation is, as mentioned, an explicit structural barrier for immigrants and mentorship by the native population may have a positive effect in minimalizing this issue. According to the OECD there is some evidence that supports the idea of native mentorship as "a rather effective tool for integrating immigrants into the labour market" (Liebig, 2009, p.66). A native mentor would be able to provide basic information on how to enter the labor market, for instance by helping immigrants understand procedures and norms regarding the labor market. They would also be able to introduce the immigrant to their own network thereby expanding the immigrant's network to involve more of the native population. There are some efforts in these areas, but according to the OECD, they are limited in their reach and could be formalized and expanded to better achieve the social (and economic) integration of foreigners (Liebig, 2009, p. 66).

What is appearing to become a key factor in early labor market integration is the relations between immigrants and native Norwegians. Mentorship, which the OECD suggests, is one possibility, another may be increasing the availability of internships specifically for immigrants. A problematic aspect of this kind of activity may be that if it is not a part of the civic integration practices in one's location, and one finds internships or jobs during one's integration period one may opt out of civic integration courses and instead focus solely on one's new job/internship. As the OECD mentioned, leaving the integration program early in favor of a job opportunity is often beneficial to immigrants (Liebig, 2009, p. 55). Miriam, an informant I met at the resource center did in fact experience this. For the three months that I and her were participating in the same English course she was constantly looking for job opportunities, mentorships or internships within the field of fashion, from which she has extensive experience before migrating to Norway. Miriam had generally been frustrated with the civic integration model, not explicitly, but through being rather inactive in the courses and complaining that it took time out of her day to come and learn English, when she rather should be looking for a job. During the summer of 2019 Miriam found an internship with a seamstress in the city, and when she started, she did not come back to the resource center. In dialogue with her via text message, she apologized claiming she no longer had time to participate in the volunteer course.

This illustrates the issue of civic integration as a day job – taking time away from possibly creating relevant networks and experiences with the native population. What's more, is that it puts one's own networks and efforts to integrate with the native population outside of the realm of standard civic integration practices or at least in the background, instead of civic integration being an arena where natives and immigrants can establish networks. In this way, the state-sponsored package of information may simultaneously be a static demarcation between the natives and the newcomers in that it contains general knowledge of economic and social integration lacking specifics, as well as it may be a dynamic hinder to the actual establishment of relations between natives and newcomers due to the nature of civic integration, and it's time consuming tendency. As Miriam demonstrated, one might find it necessary to prioritize finding employment above extensive language and civic training, as one may lack the time to combine all three. One problematic aspect of this may be that migrants may find their way into employment, but may not have developed the necessary skills to improve their position once they have entered the labor market, making them vulnerable to be "stuck" in low-skilled employment – a tendency which Gullestad (2002b, p. 47) and others have underlined.

5.4 Discrimination in the Labor Market

In conversation with Marwan, whom I met at the resource center, I was told that despite his many job applications, and interviews he still struggled to find an employer.

I've applied to approximately 75 positions, and already attended 25 interviews – they've all replied positively, but I still don't get the job. I've had employers applaud me for my energy and positivity while still saying that they are looking for someone a bit different, someone calmer or with better English skills. Sometimes I think my energetic personality can be a bit off-putting for Norwegians who are generally much calmer and more quiet than I am – I've been looking into jobs at the municipality where I can help other refugees, it's not actually what I want to do – but it seems that's where I'd have the best chance

- Marwan

Marwan, initially wanting to become a pilot, had to change his ambitions when the Syrian war made it impossible for him to achieve his goals in his homeland. Now, he has been in Norway for five years and finally finished his mandatory civic and language courses, and his elementary education which he had to retake because his previous education was not recognized in Norway. Marwan's struggle to find employment has had detrimental consequences for his ambitions, as well as for his mental health. What Marwan said was most confusing about his labor market entry in Norway is that he believes he has both personal and professional qualities which employers seek, yet they refuse to employ him. Instead he is now focused on looking for a job within the municipality's offices for refugees. As he mentions in the excerpt above this area is not really where he would like to work, but it is where he assumes he is most likely to find a job. He assumes that employers do not see his professional experience as valuable and therefore moves on to an arena where his personal experience as a refugee might be seen as valuable, especially because he speaks Norwegian fluently, albeit with an accent, and may function among other things as a translator for the municipality. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon that immigrants' ambitions are forced to shift upon meeting the Norwegian labor market due to factors outside of the immigrant's control.

Firstly, there exists a lack of recognition of educational background of non-European immigrants (Liebig, 2009, pp. 33-35) which renders them "low-skilled" workers in comparison with high educated natives who are considered "high-skilled". Marwan for example, who expected to continue his higher education had to re-do his elementary and secondary education upon arrival, postponing his plans for at least two years given that he passed all his classes. Once

rendered low-skilled it is even more difficult to thrive in the Norwegian labor market as low-skilled migrants compete with native low-skilled workers whom may be considered more skilled than low-skilled migrants, due to their native language skills. In addition, low-skilled occupation in Norway is rather scarce in comparison with other OECD countries, leaving job opportunities limited (Liebig, 2009, pp. 45-47). These obstacles may be co-factors in why many immigrants in Norway work in unskilled or low-skilled occupations. According to Gullestad, immigrants tend to be employed in occupations “Norwegians no longer want” (2002b, p. 47), she points out that even immigrants with recognized higher education struggle to find high-skilled employment. This is an issue which was pointed out to me during a workshop I held at the resource center. In this discussion about employment Marwan pointed out that he feels that Norwegian society views him as either “lazy” or “out to steal others’ jobs”, another participant of the workshop agreed, pointing out that this was a tendency all over Europe. The discussion turned towards jobs which were “saved for us [immigrants]”, in which several participants started listing up jobs they were most likely to get, jobs that were particularly pronounced in this setting were cleaning personnel and public transport personnel, which is in accordance with Gullestad’s own analysis of “jobs saved for immigrants” (2002b, p. 47). This workshop consisted of people from several different countries, with different backgrounds, however they all seemed to be in agreement of the likelihood of their places of employment.

In addition to the disadvantage of low-skilled employment of immigrants with high-skilled experience there is a possibility of discrimination as a factor in immigrants labor market entry in Norway. Certainly, most of the informants who participated in the workshop mentioned in the previous paragraph believed that they were being discriminated against when discussing the probability of them ending up in a “job saved for immigrants”. What is perhaps most pressing when considering discrimination as a factor in labor market entry is that the OECD points to lacking research of discrimination in Norway as a reason it is difficult to pinpoint discrimination in the labor market (Liebig, 2009, pp. 66-69). In several other OECD countries there have been experimental tests to evaluate whether discrimination in the labor market need be paid more attention to. These tests consist of submissions of job applications from fictitious candidates with the same qualifications, but different sounding names (European names vs. non-European). In six of the eight countries so far tested, these tests demonstrated a significant prevalence of discrimination among employers, including Denmark and Sweden. At the point of the OECD’s research Norway had yet to participate in such tests, although the OECD recommended it.

The absence of experimental studies regarding discrimination is particularly unfortunate since testing has often revealed a much larger incidence of discrimination than is generally perceived. In the other OECD countries under review, persons with an immigrant-sounding name have to write up to three times as many applications to get an invitation to a job interview as persons without a migration background with the same education (see OECD 2008c) [*sic.*]. A monitoring of discrimination would thus raise awareness of the issue. (Liebig, 2009, p. 68)

Given the lack of adequate research it may be impossible to evaluate the effect of discrimination on migrants' labor market experiences. This could potentially be an invisible barrier, in that lacking research means it is not taken into account when making policies, which individuals may experience in everyday life. Without discrimination being an explicit barrier, it may leave individuals without any means of challenging discriminatory behavior in the labor market. The OECD mentions that research on the topic tends to bring existing discrimination into light, that is one of several reasons why research on discrimination in the labor market could bring positive changes not only to immigrant individuals, but to society as a whole – by potentially making labor market integration more attainable (Liebig, 2009, p. 68).

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, academic discussions on civic integration have strongly focused on *what* civic integration is, rather than on *how and why* it is as it is (Garibay & De Cuyper, 2018, p. 21). Being a fairly new mode of integration in the 2000s, this was understandable, however acknowledging that policies and practices today, which have come out of this mode, may not be efficient or no longer prove relevant in living up to the aims of the overarching integration policies should also be paid greater attention to. Networking in relation to the native population, being one of the factors which have been explicitly pointed out as lacking, or not available to all immigrants may be one aspect which, if paid greater attention to in policy-making could help recalibrate integration measures to achieve the goals which they are created to meet. Garibay & De Cuyper (2018, pp. 15-24) underline the relevance of such evidence-based attention in integration policy-making, and point out that so far, European integration measures do not have sufficient explicit targets and measures making it difficult to evaluate whether existing measures are in fact efficient – or even what it means that a measure is efficient. This is an important observation because, as we've seen, economic integration is vital for one's overarching social integration into Norwegian society – both for the immigrant and for the receiving society.

Structural disadvantages may disappear into the background if the contents of civic integration are not looked upon critically and continuously discussed. Given that civic integration may be

considered an immigrant's first job, or at the least take up enough time of the immigrants first years in Norway to feel that way it is important that the knowledge and tools provided within this mode of integration are aligned with the expectations they will meet upon labor market entry. A lack of attention to *how* civic integration attempts to enculture migrants risks creating a greater demarcation between immigrants and natives – and may lead to immigrants feeling deceived by the Norwegian state, possibly delaying feelings of belonging as well as achievements of independency through labor market integration. In writing this section it is not my aim to provide solutions to issues concerning labor market integration, rather to point out that the policymaking would benefit from evidence-based reviews. Integration as a static policy may not tackle or even register the development of structural barriers and may in fact widen these barriers by not addressing them. Therefore, my aim has been to highlight the dynamics of integration, and how this needs to be reflected in policymaking and practices within civic integration, in general, but certainly also with specific attention to the economic sphere of labor market entry and integration. As economic independency is an explicit aim for civic integration in Norway, such a perspective may benefit the society as a whole, as well as provide means for individuals to both feel a part of and accepted by the majority of Norwegian society.

6. How Language is Key for Integration

As mentioned in the introduction of the previous chapter immigrants in Norway are expected to have proficient knowledge of the Norwegian language for labor market entry to be possible. Language has been highlighted as key for economic integration, both at state level and at local levels such as at the resource center at which my fieldwork was conducted. Take for instance this excerpt from the Norwegian government's goals for integration,

It is each individual's responsibility to take advantage of the opportunities provided by Norwegian society. Meanwhile, the government is working on many fronts to enable immigrants to use their resources and contribute to society. One of the most important aims is to get more women with an immigrant background into the labour market (The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, 2015, p.3).

The introduction to the document in itself ties integration to the success of job acquisition. After the introduction section, the document moves on to the 4 main topics: employment, education, living conditions and participation in society. Each of these sections, except participation in society, mentions employment or low-income as a condition for poor results explicitly, and speak of language-skills only in relation to the future possibility of higher education and subsequent job acquisition. Participation in society is in reference to political and volunteered participation in organization in Norway. This heavy focus on labor market entry sets the stage for language learning when arriving as an immigrant to Norway. The policies and practices surrounding language learning affect the type of language which is learned.

But what is a language? Depending on the answer to this question, it is possible to develop different language education programmes rooted in different policies. The way language education programmes are developed reflects – usually implicitly – how policy makers and educators might answer this question (Dell'Olio, 2019, p. 56).

In this chapter I will present some issues with language learning in civic integration, and how it shapes a very specific form of Norwegian language learning which may not benefit neither the immigrants nor the Norwegian society in the long run. The implications of learning a new language within the context of entering the labor market, clearly and necessarily different from how natives learn and shape their language and culture, may delay feelings of belonging due to the lack of a holistic approach to language learning. This means that this form of language learning may not take into account how language furthers one's social position in society, one's desires for higher education or high-skilled employment, or chances for establishing networks

with the native population. If civic integration does not take into account these factors it may further the distance between natives and immigrants, perpetuating the myth of homogeneity within the native population and clearly demarcating immigrants which in turn may perpetuate their perception as strangers in Norwegian society.

6.2 “Sufficient Language Skills”

On discussing the effects of English language learning in the USA through training centers for immigrants, Doris Warriner (2007), highlights that the centers’ practices, which in turn reflect national and local policies, emphasizing job preparation as key during the language learning process. This is similar to Norwegian civic integrational language training, which we’ve seen also heavily emphasizes labor market entry as contingent on proficient language skills. Warriner argues that this focus on acquiring language skills with the implicit and/or explicit focus on entry-level job acquisition creates emphasis on short-term goals at the expense of immigrants’ long-term goals, preventing them from “authentic language learning, economic self-sufficiency, and social mobility” (Warriner, 2007, p. 355).

Rather than work to incorporate newcomers into our economies and communities, institutions and organizations like this one serve to prepare them for minimum-wage, entry-level jobs that provide incomes insufficient for paying bills and that provide few possibilities for long-term social advancement, economic stability, or educational opportunity. It is simply not true that English-language proficiency – particularly as measured by test scores or credentials – automatically results in improved opportunities (educational and social), increased economic stability, or long-term social mobility (Warriner, 2007, p. 355).

There are definitely some central differences in Warriner’s research on language training in the USA and my own in Norway – most importantly that the economic pressures pertaining to for instance education or medical insurance are not as articulated in Norway due to the welfare system. However, as we saw in the previous chapter fear of increasing welfare-dependency was a key motivation for the shift to civic integration, and even then, the experiences of my informants and as well as research from other scholars point to the fact that immigrants in Norway often tend to acquire low-skilled jobs, even when academically and professionally overqualified, and if they don’t find work they may be cornered into depending on out-of-work assistance from NAV. Warriner points to this language barrier as not only detrimental to long-term labor market activity for immigrants, but also to their social standing. She is especially critical of language training in such a “quick fix” manner and argues that a long-term method

for in-depth language learning would be much more beneficial to both immigrants and their receiving societies (Warriner, 2007, p. 356).

6.3 Language as Empowerment

Lack of language, or “sufficient” language skills has been pointed out as highly problematic by several of the participants of my fieldwork. One participant, Wendy, pointed out “Without language we are illiterate in this society”, another informant, Miriam, said “I can’t do anything without language. If I can speak it, I can do anything. But this language is a big problem for me, it takes long time to be good at it”. Through accounts such as these it is evident that language is crucial to the empowerment of immigrants in Norway. Without it immigrants may feel, like my informants, that even though Norway may offer more opportunities than previously available for them, these opportunities are out of reach due to their lack of sufficient language skills. As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, a standard course or test of language skills provided by civic integration practices may not be beneficial enough for an individual for them to feel or be empowered enough to overcome the barriers which may be hindering them from feeling successful. Furthermore, as my observations took place within an NGO setting, it was evident that the standards of the different language courses varied depending on the volunteers’ ability to teach the language.

According to scholar of modern language studies Francesca Dell’Olio (2019), language is perpetually changing and exists differently within each individual. In other words, the speaker is also in part a meaning-maker. The speaker, positioned specifically in society, speaks words from their point of view, from their hermeneutic perception of the language. Language therefore becomes contextual, and one must consider the social and cultural implications of language use for language learning to be efficient in integrating.

Individuals are born in societies and in languages, meaning that a language pre-exists a single individual, whilst the interaction between individuals, communities and languages has the power to change and modify them: in talking about languages we cannot avoid considering the politics of identities (Dell’Olio, 2019, p. 57).

This is important to take into account when discussing language learning for immigrants because it then means that the context within which they learn language may not only affect how their lives play out, but also how they themselves may affect cultures and societies which

they are a part of. The context of their language learning may represent the limits of their power, in the sense that if their language is limited, they may also have a limited reach within Norwegian society – this is reflected in Warriner’s (2007) point of view in the previous section. At this point I find it relevant to briefly reiterate Marwan’s account of experiencing the Introduction program upon arriving in Norway; “People think you don’t have any opinions just because you can’t express them yet”. This statement seems rather effective in underlining the value of language for empowerment, and for demonstrating to what extent immigrants may feel they make themselves understood and affect their surroundings. On the other hand, if one has access to areas in which one can communicate, observe and learn with natives in Norwegian culture, outside of the structures of civic integration, one may find that language has the ability to endow oneself with not only words necessary to meaning-making, but also how these words already are shaped in local culture, the cultural codes of one’s surroundings.

6.4 Learning Codes Through Language Learning

Several times during my interviews and conversations with informants it has been pointed out that many of them feel that they are not ready to fully position themselves in Norwegian culture because they lack the “codes” to the culture. In an interview with Miriam, we discussed how she was faring socially, and whether she felt she had established friendships in Norway, outside of the arenas of civic integration (adult education program and volunteer education at resource centers). Her response is translated from Norwegian, as we oscillated between Norwegian and English so that she could be as precise as possible,

I need to understand how people think. What are the rules that exist in this society, what is small-talk and what is allowed to talk about. I don’t want to ask stupid questions. This takes a long time to learn. Maybe in a few years I’ll have some good Norwegian friends, but right now I can’t understand or speak – how can become friends then? – Miriam

A similar sentiment was expressed by Janet, who had moved to Norway from England 4 months prior to our interview,

I don’t know anyone who doesn’t want to learn “Norsk”, but it’s a bit closed, not a very chatty culture here. I know there are things like codes in the culture – but I’m not sure which are important, or even what they are yet – Janet

Both of these accounts express a desire to learn “Norsk” (Norwegian), and a belief that it would help them decode the local culture and thereby allow them to take a bigger part in their new society. This is to say that the cultural information provided to them at the resource center, or otherwise through their civic integration would not suffice to integrate them locally as it was merely an aggregate expression of Norwegian culture, presented in a rather homogenizing manner. The “national knowledge” which they acquired through their civic training did not encompass all which one may learn through experiencing the native culture firsthand. This is a problem which is central to civic integration (Mosher, 2015, pp. 24-25). Anthropologist Rhiannon Mosher (2015) conducted ethnographic research at a language coaching project in the Netherlands. This project consisted of native Dutch individuals who were coaches for newly arrived immigrants. Mosher found that this form of language learning allowed for a two-way communication of culture and of the cultural needs of both the native coach and the immigrant language learner. One of Mosher’s informants, a volunteer coach said that her motivation for joining the project was “...helping strangers, so that they are no longer strangers” (2015, p. 23).

For Mosher, closing the “stranger” gap was most effective when integration happened in arena where both natives and immigrants could communicate (Mosher, 2015, pp. 20-30). In other words, an arena where both the coach and the immigrant were interacting through language, effectively learning and changing their own perceptions of language and meaning. Mosher highlighted the fact that many coaches whom she spoke with expressed a critical view of civic integration, believing that it did not provide sufficient experiences for the newly arrived immigrants to really be able to integrate into society.

Civic integration courses did not offer immigrants a “way in” to creating connections with their native Dutch neighbours or other members of mainstream society. Drawing together her past experience as a high school teacher with her experiences as a language coach, Susanne (in her late twenties) commented that integration into Dutch society is often much easier for immigrant children than their parents. In part, this is because youth do not face the same structural barriers to integration. Since these children are enrolled in the Dutch educational system, they learn to speak Dutch and are exposed to many aspects of Dutch society that their parents might not have learned about or experienced. Formal civic integration courses were unable to match the everyday processes of civil enculturation that immigrant and Dutch youth underwent together in the public education system (Mosher, 2015, p. 25).

Again, what seems to be of key concern in this excerpt is that cross-cultural communication between the many variations of natives and the many variations of immigrant individuals is

needed for successful and holistic integration into society. Civic integration alone, being relatively separated from the native community, can only serve as an instrument towards a certain end – after that end is met civic integration cannot provide the necessary tools for further integration into society. In being presented as the only necessity for successful integration, it may leave immigrants feeling cheated once they realize that it did not succeed, as in the case of Marwan, who expressed that he experienced parts of civic integration as a “scam”.

In light of Mosher’s (2015) findings it seems that engaging with natives when integrating may be a successful method to pick up cultural codes that may be difficult to observe from a distance. Two immigrant individuals, Emma and Thomas, whom I interviewed who were finishing up their high-school education demonstrated how this up-close relation between themselves and natives allowed them to understand Norwegian culture, appreciate and use their understanding to better their position. This was mentioned specifically in relation to how they observed their Norwegian classmates’ communication with their teachers. Emma and Thomas were interviewed together, so I’ll present their accounts in the context of their dialogue. Emma said “The students don’t answer the teacher, even though they know the answer. They’re really quiet. I’m a bit different in that sense” Thomas expanded on this “yeah, and they talk to the teacher without any formal titles, or sit with their feet on their desk. This one time a classmate whistled at a teacher and I was like ‘oh sh*t’, but he didn’t get in trouble”. Emma and Thomas believed that this freedom of speech was nice, but that it could be a “a bit much sometimes”. Emma said that she felt it was nice in the sense that one could talk back to the teacher, and challenge their evaluations, something she would never do when she was in her native Syria. Finishing their high school education alongside native speakers allowed Emma and Thomas to improve their language, acquire a better sense of the local dialect, but it also allowed them to evaluate their own behaviors and change them if they felt it was necessary for their overall sense of well-being.

This is perhaps in contrast to the experiences of Miriam and Janet, who were not yet actively in communication with natives and therefore felt that their understanding of Norwegian culture was lacking the sufficient knowledge to truly integrate them socially. However, the resource center did provide a space for them as immigrants to come together and learn. Janet, who taught English in one of the courses provided at the center, participated in Norwegian courses and language cafés, as well as instigated several informal meetings between herself and the participants of her English course who wished to practice Norwegian, outside of the center.

These meetings were mainly gatherings where we would take walks in the city, attend food markets and visit cultural sites. The participants would try to speak to each other in Norwegian, and sometimes tried to engage others', for instance, the vendors at the food market by asking them questions about their products. If they did not know the correct words to ask questions, they would turn to me for guidance. Mainly, the language training at these informal meetings provided room for the participating individuals to use what they had learned between themselves, in a relaxed manner. Though it perhaps would not immediately have an impact on their social standing in Norwegian society in general, it definitely created a space for these individuals to exchange their experiences of integration, motivate each other and establish friendships between themselves, a small community of immigrants who were experiencing some similar challenges.

Learning language in specific contexts therefore bestows on individuals different means for communication with their new communities. It can expand or limit their reach as participants in society, either giving them access or excluding them from parts of society which natives are otherwise engaged in. In the context of civic integration alone, one may not feel that one has learned enough to truly feel a sense of belonging – it may in fact delay this feeling because it takes extra time to become active in society other than within civic integration arenas. This is important because the very empowerment to change one's position in society is linked to how one learns the native language, and how language learning is considered in policy making and in practices of integration, civic or otherwise. Attention to how language learning produces different results may contribute to diminishing social and economic barriers which immigrants face. This attention would not only benefit the individual immigrant but also the society in which the immigrant is integrating, allowing for new experiences and understanding for and of both immigrants and natives. This may result in expanding the language to include the modifications which come out of these interactions. This in turn will allow for a better understanding of a diverse culture which has a tendency to be represented as rather homogenous, especially in the context of civic integration, in spite of vast local variations.

7. The Myth of a Homogenous Norway

In the beginning of this thesis I mention that many immigrants struggle to feel included in Norwegian society even though they may have already fulfilled the “criteria” which is presented to them as having a good grasp of the Norwegian language and having a job. The sense of “je ne sais quoi” emerges, leading to frustration and confusion as to why one is not yet socially integrated. One important point to make when discussing this is the contradictory yet important position of “sameness” in Norway. As Gullestad (2002b, pp. 46-47) points out it may give the illusion that Norwegians are homogenous, thereby making it difficult for immigrants to be integrated into society. This contradictory idea does in one sense make it harder for migrants because they are the very opposite of “sameness”, they do not come from this country, lack kinship ties that are important to Norwegians and do not speak the language of the natives upon arrival. However, as we will see, through the accounts of immigrants, Norway is not as homogenous as it may seem at first glance. In this section we will look at immigrants’ sense of belonging in terms of location (small town versus big city) and language (standard dialect versus local dialect). Among other things it becomes evident that although the reality of Norwegian culture is diverse, the integrational practices which immigrants are met with within civic integration may contribute to perpetuating the myth of homogeneity. When the migrants’ real-life experiences are contradictory to this myth, they are stuck with a framework of integration which they themselves feel is inadequate in its aim to produce a sense of belonging.

7.2 Small Town vs. Big City: Narratives from the Field

Several of the individuals I spoke with during my fieldwork had first settled in smaller towns upon arriving in Norway and have migrated to Trondheim from the smaller towns as a result of a desire to fit in better, to expand language skills and for better job opportunities. According to Marko Valenta (2007, pp. 284-306) there is uncertainty in the academic milieu whether social integration of immigrants in small towns is beneficial or detrimental to their experience of belonging. Valenta argues that different migrant groups experience small town belonging differently, based on whether the host community recognizes their cultures as compatible with their own, or deem them incompatible resulting in the migrants “outsiderness” and struggle to access different social arenas of Norwegian society.

7.3 Emma (and Thomas)

Towards the end of my fieldwork I got to know Emma, a participant of the English language café. Emma is a Syrian youth, 19 years old who had lived in Norway just over a year when I met her. Emma and I decided to meet downtown for a coffee. I'd only just started asking her about her arrival in Norway when a man loomed over our table. "Hey!" he looked straight at Emma, and then at me. I greeted him, still confused as to whether he and Emma knew each other or if this was just a random person greeting us. He asked what we were doing, and I explained that we were working on a project about integration, at this point Emma chimed in "Do you know each other?". "No", we both replied. "Oh, well, this is Elizabeth, my friend, and this is Thomas – we go to the same school". Emma and Thomas explained that they were in the same grade, but different classes. Thomas, a Polish man in his early 20's proceeded to join us as Emma gestured for him to sit. I was surprised at this random encounter, and at how easily they both communicated despite not knowing each other particularly well. It certainly wasn't a typical Norwegian encounter, I thought. In my experience the threshold for sitting next to someone you *almost* know was higher than that for sitting next to someone you didn't know at all. I asked Emma if we should just enjoy our coffees and conversations and save the interview for later, and she replied that they were both foreigners – "maybe we should just include Thomas".

Emma began to talk about her arrival in Norway.

At first it was Europe, you know? It was all new and exciting. It was exciting and hard, especially at the asylum center. For example, I had never seen an African man in my life and now I was living with Africans. There were many different cultures to get to know. After the initial excitement wore off, it slowly began to become boring. Even though it was easier to get in touch with people in the small town where I first was placed (small town outside of Trondheim), I like the city better. There I was a 'guest student', and I was treated as such, but here and now I am just a student. I think people take better care of foreigners in big cities – there is more variation, it is easier to not stand out. - Emma

Thomas added,

I agree. When I first came to Norway I was living in a small town on the West coast. I was taken out of class (elementary level) to learn Norwegian – and the focus was mostly on communication, not grammar, so now that I know fully how to communicate in Norwegian, I feel a bit left behind. Maybe I will learn the grammar over time, but sometimes I think maybe it's too late. If, hypothetically, I were to send my future children for Norwegian courses I wouldn't live in a small town, as I know they didn't welcome me very well. In big cities there are other attitudes. In the small town it was obvious that Norwegians stuck

with Norwegians, and foreigners stuck with foreigners. Here (Trondheim) you can hang out with whoever you want and it's not really noteworthy. - Thomas

Both Emma and Thomas focus heavily on the negative aspects of their small town experiences. It is relevant to point out that being from Syria and Poland, respectively, gives them a disadvantage in the social scheme of things as immigrants from both these countries are often subject to stereotypical treatment in Norway, and when placed in a small town, as opposed to a more diverse big city, their individual differences are much more visible for the native population, and they risk being deemed incompatible by Norwegian small town natives. According to Marko Valenta (2007, pp. 285-287), data suggests that immigrants from Western countries feel much more welcome in small towns than for instance Eastern refugees. He also points out that small towns, often thought of as idyllic social environments, are areas where "everyone knows everyone" which allows for stronger feelings of inclusion and exclusion. Standing out in such an environment could make it difficult to find inclusiveness because a non-Western individual would embody the very differences which otherwise are not seen/mingled with among the majority. That is to say that a non-Western immigrant is *recognized* as a stranger when encountering the native population, as a body which does not fit in (Ahmed, 2000, pp. 21-37). For instance, being a dark-skinned newcomer in a place which is predominantly inhabited by a light-skinned population means inevitably facing the scrutiny which comes with the recognition of one's strangeness. As Thomas and Emma explain, in the big city one can hang out with whomever one chooses, be whoever one chooses, and still not stand out.

This is not to say that individuals from non-Western countries cannot succeed in small towns, rather it identifies some key factors that make integration in a big city different from integration in small towns. It is relevant because it could elicit different strategies from the migrant. For instance, to abandon the cultural ties to one's origins and assimilate into Norwegian culture may be a relevant and necessary question to pose oneself in a small town if one wishes to feel included, whereas in a big city this may not be a concern at all, or at least not to the same extent. Another informant, Marwan, has expressed similar sentiments to that of Emma and Thomas, when speaking of his move from a small town to Trondheim.

When I first moved to the town I thought it would be good because I thought it would be easier to be accepted in a small town, that the people were nicer and it would be easier to integrate. But now that I live here I don't think that anymore. I see more openness, more cultures – it's easier to make friends faster here in the city – my social life is definitely better. I moved because the small town wasn't very interesting for me, most of the people are older, I've called it a "pensioners' place" because most of my friends were elderly. – Marwan

For Marwan, it was not necessarily a lack of positive experiences, or his ethnic differences that prompted his move to the big city, as he points out that he did in fact have a sizeable social network in the small town - he had Norwegian friends. Rather, it was the evident awareness that he, in his age-group, did not belong to this place predominantly inhabited by elderly Norwegians. He was aware that his placement in the small town was precisely that, a placement, not a choice made from interest or proximity to good opportunities. One can assume, had Marwan been born and bred in Norway, he would never have settled in this small town. Being a refugee was the key factor in his placement, a placement which overshadowed everything about Marwan other than his status as a refugee. Moving to the big city allowed him to express other parts of himself, for instance creating a social network with his peers and indulging in activities meant for his age-group. Although Marwan chose to move away from this small town his experiences there have contributed to his feelings of belonging.

When I talk to people, mostly, I say that I am from Meldal – when I want to convey that I *am* Norwegian. But it depends on the situation, on which route my life has taken at that moment. If I feel I am being treated unfairly at work then I am definitely Norwegian – because I know my rights, and I know that I can legitimately claim to be treated the same as others. - Marwan

Despite not feeling like he belonged in the small town, Marwan continues to tell people who ask him where he is from that he is from there. Interestingly, this may be beneficial to him here Norway precisely because of the relevance of kinship and small town relations among Norwegians. These are factors which Norwegian anthropologists such as Gullestad (2002a, pp. 79-119) and Melhuus (1999, p. 70) point out as relevant for being perceived as a Norwegian. Obviously, being a young Syrian migrant, Marwan doesn't have historical kinship ties to the small town in which he was first settled but having created a network with the native population and learned the way of life in a Norwegian small town may contribute to a form of symbolic kinship. Through his relationships in this small town he has experienced the lifestyles of some Norwegian grandparents, even though they were not his grandparents, I suggest this knowledge of their lifestyles is a contact point between him and ethnic Norwegians. It is representative of the everyday interactions which integrate individuals locally, an aspect which civic integration cannot reach. An example of this, is his dialect. Marwan, having learned Norwegian from his small town elderly neighbors has a distinct local Trønder dialect, which may underscore his position in Trondheim – he is not, like many of his peers, just a student from a random place in Norway who has moved here simply for academic purposes before returning to their hometown, instead, his dialect gives away the fact that he is *from* this county. As linguists Blom and Gumperz put it, “By identifying as a dialect speaker both at home and abroad, a member

symbolizes pride in his community and in the distinctness of its contribution to society at large” (Blom & Gumperz, 2000, p. 113). For this reason, Marwan’s dialect may contribute to cementing his local identity and elicit acceptance from the local community.

These narratives illustrate real every-day concerns for migrants in big cities and small towns. They also serve to illustrate the different experiences migrants may have – and on which factors these depend, be it ethnic compatibility, age or opportunity. They highlight the heterogeneity that can be found within Norway, and within the Norwegian population itself. These experiences show that immigrants do detect relevant differences between Norwegian people who live in rural and urban areas and orient their own lives based on this knowledge. The issue of Norway’s heterogenous nature is one of vital importance to the social integration of immigrants – especially since the native population tends to perpetuate a myth of homogeneity which in turn presents barriers for immigrants who wish to become a part of Norwegian society (Gullestad, 2002a, pp. 67-70). In the next section we will take a closer look at the myth of homogeneity in Norway in relation to the diverse dialect landscape of Norway.

7.4 The Relevance of Local Identity

At one point during my fieldwork I was invited to host a Norwegian language course, covering basic vocabulary and grammar for a group of immigrant women. Not five minutes into the course I am interrupted by the manager of the resource center, “I’m sorry, Elizabeth, I totally forgot you were from Bergen. Do you mind speaking slowly or trying to switch to standard dialect?” he asked me. Having a very distinctive dialect and never paying much attention to practicing the “standard dialect” (Eastern Norwegian dialect) I replied that I would speak slower and informed the participants of the course that they should stop me if they do not understand what is being said. “I have a Bergen dialect, so it may be difficult to pick up some of the things I say, I’m sorry” I told them. At this point several of the women start to discuss something in Arabic. I asked one of them what the issue was, she replied “I don’t think you should slow down. If we don’t understand you, we will stop you and ask you to repeat what you said” she answered. I looked at them questioningly, one of the women seemed almost frustrated as she said “We only ever learnt the standard Eastern dialect. But everyone here has a different dialect, we barely understand the Trønder dialect, and when other dialects are introduced, we have no idea what is being said”. Once again I felt inclined to apologize, saying that this was an inconvenience of the dialect-landscape of Norway. “No, we need more people like you. People

with dialects that we will hear and have to understand when we are out shopping, or on the bus – we don't need to know the perfect grammar of the Eastern dialect if we cannot understand what is being spoken in the cities we are living in” the woman replied.

This episode opened my eyes to an issue that I imagine many immigrants struggle with, in Norway. Given the position of the Eastern dialect, being widely spoken on television, and often equated to one of two written languages (Nynorsk and Bokmål/Riksmål), “Riksmål” literally translates to “the speech of the nation” it is easy to imagine that most Norwegians understand this dialect – and that it is the dialect which most immigrants learn (keep in mind that this dialect also corresponds to the oldest, and up until this point most used of the two written forms of Norwegian) when they arrive to Norway. This standard spoken language (here on out referred to as SSL) is not an officially recognized spoken language (Sandøy, 2011, pp. 119-126), rather it is an unofficial tendency and the importance of its position can be exemplified by Norwegian children's tendency to switch to this unofficial SSL during theatrical play. Being an unofficial SSL, not recognized by the state, there is no formal framework for this spoken language, rather it is a language which is equated to or at least close to South-Eastern/ Eastern dialects in Norway, often heard on TV and thought of as prestigious, delocalized and modern (Mæhlum, 2007, pp. 44-67). The albeit somewhat ambivalent, yet important position of dialects in Norway can be highlighted by a school law created in 1878 which explains that elementary and secondary school teachers should teach in the local dialect of their pupils, and that pupils should not only be allowed, but encouraged to speak their local dialect (Sandøy, 2011, pp. 119-126). At the same time as Norwegian SSL represents certain historical connotations of modernity and prestige, dialects simultaneously have an important position among Norwegians today and are used frequently, either regardless of context (anytime, anywhere and to anyone), or are codified into contexts by for instance switching from dialect to SSL in a formal setting, at work etc. (Røyneland, 2009, pp. 7-30). This is particularly important because it underlines the fact that Norwegians today are actively choosing whether and when to speak their dialects (Mæhlum, 2007, pp. 44-67). This necessarily means that they have a repertoire of dialects (including SSL) to speak from – something which, according to the women in the Norwegian language café, they as foreigners are lacking. Given the time-consuming nature of civic integration, it is safe to assume that the time spent learning Norwegian in classes outweighed the time spent speaking to Norwegians on the street and picking up the more colloquial forms of the language. The importance of this dialect repertoire in identity-making and maintaining among Norwegians, coupled with the desire of the women in the language café to understand the local

dialects better, and the example of Marwan's sense of belonging in the previous section, leads me to argue that knowledge of Norwegian locality, its importance to ethnic Norwegians, exemplified among other things by the local dialect of where one has migrated could have a vital impact on one's sense of belonging. This impact may be vital both internally as an individual (for instance in the simple sense that one understands the dialect of the local community), and externally as how one is perceived (included or excluded) by the rest of society. Based on my interviews and interactions during my fieldwork in which all of the migrants were learning to write Bokmål and consequently most of them learning to speak SSL – this national form of speaking in local contexts, or the lack of ability to choose a more local form of speaking may be yet a demarcation between that which is accepted as Norwegian and that which is foreign. Therefore, the importance of locality in Norway, be it expressed through dialect or other aspects of local culture, may be especially beneficial knowledge when attempting a sense of belonging to a Norwegian community.

7.5 Reidun and Amina

In the beginning of my fieldwork I was invited to join the women's crafts group, which was led by an elderly Norwegian woman, Reidun. This class was meant to be a platform in which immigrant women could practice their language skills, while also being a form of creative outlet. During my time in her crafting class, Reidun taught us how to knit and crochet potholders. The group consisted of seven women who were native speakers of Arabic and two women who were native speakers of Spanish. The language skills among the participants varied vastly, and some participants were rather quiet throughout the course. However, the nature of the course made it so that almost all the participants had learned how to ask Reidun for help when they struggled with their projects. There was a tendency that the women who spoke the same languages would quickly start speaking to each other in those respective languages, making the Norwegian language practice rather limited. However, Reidun would often insert herself in the conversation by asking if she could be included and by doing this often enough, she learned a lot about the women she was tutoring.

One day, not long before the Norwegian constitution day, Reidun came in with her traditional Norwegian dress, known as the "bunad". She was quite worried about a stain she had created on the lower part of her skirt. Through the course of the crafting class Reidun had learned that one of the Arabic women, Amina, was a seamstress. Amina was, within her in the class, the one

who spoke Norwegian best, and often translated for the other Arabic speaking women if they had trouble articulating their problems regarding their crafting projects. Reidun asked Amina if she knew any tricks of the trade on how to remove stains from woolen fabric. As Amina examined the skirt, Reidun explained to the backstory of her bunad, that the pattern of the dress signaled where her family was from. After examining the skirt, Amina shook her head and said it would be quite difficult as the stain had been sitting for a while. Amina then struggled to articulate her next suggestion. She first pointed to the skirt and proceeded to fold the bottom up so far that the stain was no longer visible, signaling that perhaps Reidun should consider shortening the skirt. She then offered to do the alterations herself. Reidun giggled and shook her head. “We cannot shorten the skirt, the bunad is meant to be long!” she said. Amina nodded understandingly and shrugged as she looked at the skirt again. After discussing back and forth on what would be appropriate looks for the bunad, the two women agreed that Amina could create pleats in the skirt, effectively hiding the stained area without removing any fabric. At the end of the day, Reidun and Amina exchanged contact information and hugged goodbye before Amina took the bunad home with her to complete the alterations.

This example expresses how an everyday cross-cultural experience can create relationships that are beneficial to those involved. For Reidun, this experience meant that she could fix her beloved bunad without having to pay a very expensive fee at a Norwegian company that mended bunads, whose services, in Reidun’s own words, were highly overpriced. Amina, on the other hand, could earn some money while helping a friend, as Reidun had mentioned that she would pay for Amina’s service. Furthermore, the example highlights how the informal relations that were established in this setting allowed for Amina to use her years of experience within her profession, without the hinders that the formal labor market would ensure. The value of the local network is underscored in this example. In addition, it shows that the national knowledge that immigrants learn in their introduction to the country need not overshadow the experiences and education they bring with them to Norway, when it comes to establishing new relationships with other locals.

This chapter illustrates how local ties may contribute to feelings of belonging in a way that civic integration does not necessarily pay much attention to. In other words, learning with locals may be just as fruitful if not more so, than simply learning about the nation through standardized civic courses. The local space allows for important cross-cultural communication as it is where individuals carry out their everyday lives. Be it language or lifestyle, local knowledge and

networks may be an important factor in the social process of integration, which civic integration as a national policy cannot replicate nor replace.

8. The Nation-State & the “Foreigner”

Although the desire for local knowledge and local relations may precede the desire for national knowledge for some immigrants, civic integration is, at this point in time, a form of national integration which not only encompasses national knowledge, but which is also mandated at a state level. The relevance of the nation-state in Norwegian integration processes today are therefore important to consider when discussing integration. The nation-state is also important because it is within this imagined community which immigrants are integrated. As Benedict Anderson (2006, pp. 5-6) defines the nation, it is an imagined community which is both sovereign and limited. The nation's limits are the boundaries which separates it from other nations. Integration therefore must take into account the mechanisms which allow individuals to imagine themselves as part of a greater community, a community which they contribute to maintaining through, for instance paying taxes and thereby contributing to the national economy. In this sense, civic integration provides knowledge, broadly speaking, of how to achieve a form of symbolic membership in a community. However, as demonstrated throughout this thesis, the process of this knowledge acquisition may in itself produce an unintended form of “othering” – creating the others, within the nation.

8.2 The Immigrant as the Object of National Concern

Through the course of this thesis the focus has been on the implications of civic integration on the individual immigrants' everyday lives. Examples of issues pertaining to sustainable and independent economic integration, language acquisition and belonging have been presented in light of problems that the participating individuals have experienced. These examples illustrate the relationship between the immigrant individual on one hand, and the Norwegian state on the other. The role of state has been far more important in civic integration than previous integration measures that were less focused on the “activation” of immigrants. In fact, civic integration's inherent governmentalist nature expresses how immigration and integration has increasingly become construed as a problem of national concern, an issue which requires policy changes at state level. In effect this makes immigrant individuals objects of national concern (Silverstein, 2005, p. 364).

If one follows Benedict Anderson's definition of the nation-state, then the nationalization of immigrants through means of civic integration becomes a method in which immigrants are

accepted as equal within the nation's boundaries; they are encultured so that they can imagine themselves a part of the Norwegian community, and so that others in the community can imagine the newcomers as part of their community. For instance, learning the national anthem as a part of civic courses – which occurred at least once during my time at the research center, should theoretically allow immigrant individuals to feel a connection to others whom they share Norwegian society with. National anthems are a way in which one connects to others in society – whom one may never meet yet feel linked to through the simultaneous singing of the same anthem. Since, imagining a community (the nation) happens through language, through the telling of national histories and the singing of national anthems it allows for the integration of newcomers, since language acquisition is not something that relies on one's biological heritage nor necessarily on the historical ties to the community (Anderson, 2006, p. 145). This is one way by which we can determine that integration in national terms is not only possible, but happens frequently, and is aided through civic integration measures. However, what has been the main concern during this dissertation is not whether immigrant individuals are integrated into the Norwegian community, rather how they are integrated in a way that separates them from native individuals within the nation. When integration has become a matter of national concern, these demarcations between migrants and natives then become structural forms of discrimination, even though they may be unintended.

8.3 Discrimination – the Paradox of Civic Integration

When I first began outlining my fieldwork, I contacted a young Syrian man, Amir, whom I'd met through a local NGO in Trondheim. I contacted Amir because I knew he had been a part of the introduction program, and that he had actively participated in resource centers for immigrants, hoping he could enlighten me on a topic which I had little previous experience with. At the beginning of the interview I explained to him I was interested in researching the topic of integration in Norway. Before I could get any further explanation in, the young man was shaking his head, holding his hands up to stop me from speaking any further. "What do you mean by integration? Do you mean when they try to make us into Norwegians, or do you mean when we learn about Norwegian culture and Norwegians learn about our culture – like integration actually should be?". Amir explained that he was very sceptic to the term "integration" because in his experience, it was not at all what he initially thought it meant. He had experienced various forms of demeaning attitudes, among those he told me of, was one

example in which his teacher explained to his class how to brush their teeth. “That’s how little some Norwegians think of us, that we don’t even know how to take care of ourselves because we come from a foreign culture”, he said. What struck me most was not the blatant racism demonstrated by Amir’s example, unfortunately, as we all know, there exists individuals with such attitudes. However, what was vital in this exchange was the fact the Amir had experienced this racist attitude from a teacher – especially since it was expressed during a civic course for immigrants. It was not just an individual expressing negative attitudes towards another individual’s background – it was an individual in a position of power, a gatekeeper to Norwegian society, who expressed this sentiment while in his role as a teacher. In discussing structural discrimination, gatekeepers such as teachers and politicians are important because their actions contribute to determining the life chances of migrants (Burns, 2008, p. 153).

Amir’s example expresses what anthropologist Tom R. Burns (2008) calls institutional agnetic discrimination – in which gatekeepers, individuals with positions of power who affect the lives of those over which they exert power, act in a discriminatory manner. Burn presents two forms of institutional discrimination, one being the abovementioned example, and another, structural discrimination. According to Burns, structural discrimination “...entails the automatic operation of rules and procedures – including informal ways of doing things – in ways that disadvantage migrant groups” (Burns, 2008, pp.152-153). In this thesis, these forms of discrimination have been highlighted in all three areas of integration, language, labor and civic knowledge, but are perhaps particularly pronounced within labor market integration. For instance, through the requirement of language proficiency for labor market entry. According to Burns, “Institutionalized categorizations and stereotypes define the migrant as ‘the other’” (Burns, 2008, p. 153), and can be identified by certain key mechanisms. Among those key mechanisms, Burns mentions the tendency to judge non-national experience within a hierarchy. In Norway, this form of discrimination pertains to individuals who’ve acquired education and work experience outside of Europe, who struggle to have their professional background recognized as valid, while Europeans who migrate to Norway do not face the same constraints within the labor market. Furthermore, the demand for proficient language skills is also mentioned as a form of institutional discrimination. For instance, when language proficiency has no effect on one’s ability to do a job, it is still often used to exclude those who lack proficiency – as it is often equated with incompatibility with the work environment (Burns, 2008, p. 165). Also considering the importance of dialects to Norwegians, one can argue that a lack of focus on local language skills may also inhibit immigrants position in society, both

economically and socially. These examples demonstrate how certain structured integrational measures, albeit well intended, do not contribute to the goal they set out to achieve (e.g. facilitating labor market entry and social cohesion through a sense of belonging). Furthermore, the consequences of a structural discrimination may contribute to a rise in racial prejudices and stereotypes from the dominant population. For instance, as immigrants are typically overrepresented as benefit-recipients in welfare states – public disapproval often contains racial prejudices. In addition to the stigma attached to immigrants’ overrepresentation within this category, there also exists a tendency to view welfare recipients in general, with the exception of pensioners, as second-class citizens (Lockwood, 1996, pp. 538-539).

Racial prejudices and stereotypes arising from structural discrimination demonstrate that immigrants’ diverse and everchanging cultures are perceived as fixed expressions of ‘otherness’. In relation to the nation-state “uprooted” peoples, people who demonstrate transnational mobility, historically a characteristic imposed upon for instance Jewish and Roma people, have been construed as a threat to the nation in that their loyalties may lie elsewhere (Silverstein, 2005, pp. 364-366). Today, with the interconnectedness of people across the world, civic integration may be interpreted as an attempt to nationalize newcomers so that they feel a sense of belonging to the nation to which they migrate, and a loyalty to its people. However, if civic integration does in fact strengthen the very barriers it was created to diminish, unintentionally or not, it is not upholding its end of the bargain. That is to say, if the contract between the immigrant and the nation is built on the false premise that they will undoubtedly be treated as equal to natives, it could understandably weaken feelings of belonging. This particularly important because civic integration has explicitly problematized immigrants’ identities at a national level, which in turn may be felt in the everyday lives of immigrants through both unintended and intended forms of discrimination in society. If integration brings with it rights for immigrants, equal to the rights of natives, then it also brings the need to recognize the individual immigrant’s identity. For newly arrived immigrants, the imagined community they integrate into may not encompass their loyalties entirely. Transnational relations exemplify this issue. Immigrants have experiences and relationships acquired outside of Norway. These ties are not severed merely by acquiring civic knowledge of Norway and feeling a sense of belonging. For instance, in many of the conversations I had with my informants they compared their new lifestyles to that of their countries of origin, or countries they had previously lived in. Past experiences from outside of Norway have in fact allowed them to reflect over their current situations. In all our conversations, those experiences and ties

to different communities outside of Norway have not once been presented as a hinder in acquiring a sense of belonging in Norway. This does not mean that civic integration policies actively set out to assimilate immigrants so that they become “Norwegians” and leave behind other cultural traits their identities encompass. Rather, there may be some aspects of immigration, such as transnational ties, foreign education and experience, cultural background which are not sufficiently considered within the framework of civic integration. In this way, civic integration may produce forms of structural discrimination in which migrants may be perceived as a-historicized and homogenized by the majority population. This may lead to real barriers felt in their everyday lives. It is in this lack of recognition and in the highlighting of immigrants’ collective ‘otherness’ that their individual lives are demarcated from the everyday lives of Norwegians in ways that have practical consequences for them as individuals, and for the Norwegian society in general.

8.4 Integration and Transnational Identities

Central to the discussion of the integration of immigrants in Norway, is that civic integration is a policy-based approach to including newcomers into the nation. As the government’s means of managing the cohesion of its community (Erdal & Oeppen, 2013, p. 869), civic integration provides essentialized representations of Norwegian culture, expecting immigrants to internalize these representations through various civic courses. The representation of Norwegian culture takes on an essentialist character because civic integration provides a static representation of culture, not considering that culture in itself is everchanging and cannot truly be defined as a static entity. As demonstrated throughout this chapter national policies for integration may not take into account the challenges which arise when attempting to nationalize transnational individuals, particularly if the aim of civic integration is to foster national loyalty which does not make room for transnational expressions of loyalty. This may lead to the tempting notion that integration and transnationalism are mutually exclusive – however, if one considers integration not simply as a policy but also as social process one will find that this perceived dichotomy is unwarranted. In fact, one may find that there exists a visible interaction between migrants’ integration and their transnational identities (Erdal & Oeppen, 2013, pp. 875-878). As a social process, immigrant individuals whom I encountered at the resource center demonstrated integration through for instance the establishment of new relations between themselves and other immigrant participants, as well as with the native volunteers, albeit to a lesser degree as there were far fewer native volunteers than immigrant volunteers. Furthermore,

some individuals integrated into sub-communities consisting of immigrants from the same or similar countries – such as Thomas expressed about his experience in a Norwegian small town community.

If viewed as a social process instead of merely national policy, integration may provide room for both the acquirement of new Norwegian identities and the maintenance of identities which emerged before the individual's migration and allow for demonstrations of the interaction of these identities. Here, I am reminded of an example provided by one of my informants, Janet. At the end of my fieldwork I asked Janet whether she felt she had learned any of the “cultural codes” she sought after. Janet laughed and explained that although she still did not feel as though she had fully found her place in Norwegian society, she had picked up a few clues from observing Norwegians, as well as from discussing these observations with the friends she made at the resource center. She told me that she had recently had a visitor from England, whom she took to different sights in Trondheim. When using public transport, her friend had started talking to the people who were sitting next to them.

I was so embarrassed! I had already told her that people here don't small talk with strangers when using public transportation, like they do in England. I was so uncomfortable, and I could tell that the Norwegian woman who she'd began speaking to also found it strange - Janet

What is interesting here, is not whether or not Janet's friend was in fact “in violation” of an essentialized, yet popular conception of Norwegians on the bus, rather that Janet felt that this knowledge allowed her to help her friend become more “native”. Furthermore, the acknowledgement of Janet's embarrassment demonstrated her desire to be seen as a local, despite engaging in her transnationality by speaking English to her friend.

This example demonstrates the interaction between transnationalism and integration in a very direct sense. Simply put, Janet's transnational identity is not in question as it was expressed through direct communication between her “Englishness” and her increasing “Norwegianess”. This incident required her to use her ties to, and subsequent knowledge of, several cultures encompassed within her identity. Other examples of the interaction between transnationalism and integration can be found through, for instance, the act of sending remittances across countries. Sending remittance requires the immigrant's capacity and desire to do so. The capacity to send remittance relies on the economic integration of the immigrant, and the desire to do so relies on the transnational ties between the immigrant and the recipient of the remittance. Furthermore, transnationalism may be expressed through the simple act of communication between individuals residing in different nations (Carling & Hoelscher, 2013,

p. 954). These examples illustrate that the relationship between integration and transnationalism need not be as problematic as national, policy-based civic integration may indicate – the process of integration is one far more complex than that which is represented in such policies.

Still, the desire of the Norwegian state, to give migrants a structured means to become a part of the nation is not to be dismissed. The value of national identity has been an arena of great interest to social scientist, with a sense of belonging and meaning argued as central values gained by individuals who envision themselves a part of the nation (Hanauer, 2011, pp. 201-202). To paraphrase Benedict Anderson, the community is imagined – it does not mean it is imaginary (Anderson, 2006, pp. 6-7). What is problematic with civic integration is the newcomers are faced with a policy which claims integration is fulfilled when the number of hours of civic training is achieved. The process of integration, however, is multifaceted, particularly with respect to transnational identities. It is also relevant that the individual identities and fulfillment of individual ambitions are increasingly important within the post-modern world, for instance demonstrated by the transnational interconnectedness provided by the internet. All individuals, whether immigrants or otherwise, are increasingly aware of their connections outside of the nation. As such, individuals need not attach a sense of belonging or meaning to the nation.

The ramifications of these changes are the elevation of the centrality of the individual and the individual's diversified life. It is the individual that is bombarded by a mass of personalized and disembodied information. This supermodern individual does not position him- or herself through the external narrative of national identity situated within defined territories as suggested by modernist conceptions or postmodern identity politics. This individual finds meaning through self-construction and belonging through attachment on the professional and personal levels of networks of interaction mediated in many cases through literacy and technology (Hanauer, 2011, p. 213).

This perspective of individuals' relation to the nation in today's "supermodern" world highlights the demarcation that arises when civic integration posits the need for immigrants to imagine themselves within the Norwegian nation through state-mandated means. As a policy, it assumes that the national knowledge it provides equates to national sentiments that natives may have. Furthermore, although the imagined community exists and examples of social processes which integrate immigrant individuals into this community are visible, civic integration, as a policy-based means of proving immigrants' integration, does not take into account the balancing act (Erdal & Oeppen, 2013, p. 879) which transnational individuals engage in when integrating into the Norwegian community. The balancing act migrants

experience may not only apply to their identities as both Norwegian and transnational, but also to how they balance between the rather static policy of civic integration and the dynamics of the social process of integration. Lastly, the characteristics of today's world, with the interconnectedness provided by, among other things, the internet and the increased mobility of individuals should indicate that also native Norwegians express variations of transnational identities. The problematization of transnational identities through the need for civic integration thus underscores the myth of a homogenous native population. Simultaneously, it demarcates migrants as the homogenous "others" whose transnational identities pose a greater threat to the nation, then for instance the transnationalism displayed within the native population.

9. Anthropological Contribution to Social Challenges: Past, Present & Potential

The topic of integration is part of a larger international discourse of immigration today and anthropological contributions to the topic stand in an ambiguous position. Where anthropology has traditionally observed and re-articulated exotic cultures and customs by virtue of cultural relativism, post-Cold War conditions have brought to light power structures and injustices on such a scale that anthropologists no longer can avoid the ethical problems connected to a purely relativistic approach, and must increasingly pay attention to how the interconnectedness of the world produces change. In the wake of recent waves of migration even greater emphasis has been placed on universal principles such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The anthropological discussion can therefore not simply remain in the realms of whether universalism or relativism are axiomatic to the discipline but must come to terms with the everyday realities which humans experience, and through which we interact – the many worlds we live in, and the interconnectedness of these worlds (Hylland Eriksen, 2017, p. 1147). Cosmopolitanism has grown into an articulated approach to the question of human diversity, and it has brought with it a need to re-address the existence of engaged anthropology.

9.2 Cosmopolitan Ideas: In Theory and Practice

The rapidly increasing interconnectedness of the world has given rise to cosmopolitanism as an approach to cultural diversity. It is concerned with the reconciliation of difference through the possibility of dialogue, it concerns the particular in relation to the universal and vice versa (Hylland Eriksen, 2017, p. 1148). One may be tempted to perceive its emergence and relevance as a modern issue, but cosmopolitan ideas can be traced back to ancient philosophers such as Diogenes the Cynic and the stoic, Marcus Aurelius. A popular definition of cosmopolitanism, which is often used as a point of departure from which social scientist today build on, is that of Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant in his *Perpetual Peace* first published in 1795 (Carbrera, 2011).

Kant envisioned “...civilized encounters across cultural boundaries which nevertheless continued to exist” (Hylland Eriksen, 2017, p. 1148). For Kant, the path to peace was paved with potential dialogue between different cultures. It did not guarantee a shared understanding or a mutual agreement of values, but it made room for dialogues which explained one’s point

of view – this could result in agreement, in disagreement – but above all it should result in the expression of various perspectives of potentially opposing values and cultures, allowing for greater understanding across borders, yet not committing individuals or individual entities to unwanted change. This was for Kant a necessary mode of peaceful co-existing because of the finite boundaries of Earth, the common ownership of this Earth among all humans, and the inevitable close proximity of humans who inhabit it (Kant, 2003/1795, pp. 15-16).

In terms of migration in his time, and still relevant today, Kant articulated the right of the individual cosmopolitan “alien” to not be treated as an enemy upon arriving in a new country. Based on the common ownership of Earth, and the interconnectedness of the world, which in turn produced unequal power relations, Kant believed that nations needed to express hospitality towards aliens insofar that the newcomers behaved peacefully.

Because a (narrower or wider) community widely prevails among the Earth’s peoples, a transgression of rights in *one* place in the world is felt *everywhere*; consequently the idea of cosmopolitan rights is not fantastic and exaggerated, but rather an amendment to the unwritten code of national and international rights, necessary to the public rights of men in general (Kant, 2003/1795, p.18)

Today, with the existence of human rights and increasing cross-continental migration the need for civilized encounters and the protection of individuals’ rights is a central topic in national and international discourses. Cosmopolitanism has become a key idea and social integration in itself is an attempt at facilitating the individual’s right to migrate. What is becoming evident is that civic integration in Europe today heavily addresses the immigrant’s need to adapt a cosmopolitan mindset but does not make as much an attempt at including cosmopolitan perspectives into the mainstream. This has been demonstrated in Norway, through the tendency to represent national heritage as monolithic and unchanging, despite having a diverse culture both historically including but not limited to various Saami heritage, and contemporarily through recent decades of strong migration flows (Osler & Lybaek, 2014, pp. 556-557; Gullestad, 2002a, pp. 67-70). Despite the traditional reluctance to engage in political discussions, the increased interconnectedness of the world makes it clear that anthropology can no longer take a passive, “neutral” stance in discussions of cultural encounters as these discussions result in establishing or maintaining power structures (Hylland Eriksen, 2017, pp. 1145-1146). Migration is one such topic where policies and practices are visibly maintaining and changing power relations. With the increasing interconnectedness of the world and the free flows of information across borders it is difficult to avoid the observation of inequality. Thus,

traditional notions of neutrality in anthropological discussions may in themselves risk downplaying the everyday displays of injustice.

9.3 Engaged Anthropology: Taking a Stance

Historically, anthropological “meddling” has been intensely criticized and discouraged. The appliance of anthropology does carry with it an enormous responsibility. Concerns of the researcher’s ability to maintain an “objective” outlook when aligning themselves with the groups they study has been one of the “academic” reasons that engaged anthropology has been looked upon critically (Fuller, 1999, p. 221). A strict adherence to principles of cultural relativism has also been a culprit in imploring anthropologists to “mind their own business” when faced with cases of oppression and social injustice (Hylland Eriksen, 2017, p. 1145). Ethical concerns within the discipline have mainly been focused on the researcher’s ability to maintain objectivity and do no harm – however, when faced with the realization that individuals around the world are, despite their various expressions of diverse cultures, enmeshed in the same interconnected economic, political and social systems, avoiding topics pertaining to the social injustices which may be expressed wherever, is reinforcing the narrative of the oppressing power structures (Hylland Eriksen, 2017, pp. 1145-1146).

Engaged anthropology is a somewhat disputed term, but in its broader definition it may be outlined in three main themes; firstly, the possibility of the researcher to work in partnership with members of the communities they study, secondly, the researchers ability to make their results accessible for the public, and thirdly, the desire to research areas in which one can contribute to policy-change (Bringa & Bendixsen, 2016, p. 7). Although these ideas may seem contradictory to traditional anthropological aims and methods which strive to keep a certain distance between the researcher and the community they study, it is important to keep in mind that anthropology has always been situated within the world which it attempts to describe, the researcher is positioned subjectively despite striving for objectivity. Certainly, today when the engagement of anthropologists in social inequality issues is nearly unavoidable, an awareness of the researcher’s multiple positions and roles is important to highlight. This awareness creates a space for academic concerns, ethical concerns and the researcher’s potential as an agent of social change to exist simultaneously without taking away from the “academic” value of the research (Fuller, 1999, pp. 222-223). As such the problematic aspects of an unavoidably partial researcher (and subsequent partial research) are addressed, potentially challenged, and not

dismissed merely because the research sheds lights on structures which are uncomfortable to challenge. Anthropologists can be important assets to matters of public concern and can contribute to public discourse by providing evidence-based perspectives on social issues – in Norway, anthropologists do in fact find themselves in positions where they are called upon to share their insights (Bringa & Bendixsen, 2016, pp. 11-13).

“So, what are you going to do when you’re done writing your thesis?” was a question I was asked while interviewing a participant at the resource center where my fieldwork was conducted. I answered that I would continue with further education or employment in academia or perhaps start to look for full-time employment outside of academia all together, as a grad-student, I felt these were my alternatives. “But with what you’ve figured out. What are you going to do with your answers?” the participant prodded. I realized that the distance I felt between academia and its applications was much greater than what my informant imagined. Or perhaps it was I who had imagined a greater distance than really existed? Anthropology is a field which often can be closely related to topics of social inequality and injustice, but the discipline is also heavily weighed by theory which may sometimes feel irrelevant to the topics we wish to study. Finding our way into the public debate, or channels for policy-change may not be easy – but scholars have pointed out that anthropologists in Scandinavia have an exceptional position in this regard. Anthropologists are contacted by journalists, by various NGO’s and governmental branches to provide insight into specific topics, for instance in the arena of immigration and integration (Bringa & Bendixsen, 2016, pp. 11-13). Simultaneously, we find ourselves in a polarized political time and place where researchers of topics such as immigration and minority issues are being ostracized, called “traitors” and may find it fruitful to temporarily move away from such topics due to the inability to maintain a public discussion, nevertheless anthropological perspectives have a potential to create and contribute to spaces for vibrant public discourse (Hylland Eriksen, 2016, pp. 116-117).

Anthropology has to some extent always been engaged, although historically the discipline has had a tendency to prioritize academic values of objectivity and distance to subjects as opposed to acknowledging the inevitable situatedness of the researcher. Today, as highlighted by cosmopolitanism, the interconnectedness of individuals experiences and histories to an economic, social and cultural order makes it clear that anthropologists may feel inclined take an explicit stance in their work. This overt positioning of the researcher, and their actions, takes place to avoid passively taking the stance which reinforces whatever power structures which may be oppressing the communities, or marginalized members of the communities which

anthropologists study. Engaged anthropology may not only be a form of anthropology of social injustice, but may also entail evaluating the applications for anthropology, for instance through publicly sharing one's findings so as to stimulate a public discourse or affect policy-changes in society. Although anthropologists risk becoming unpopular in the sense that they may advocate for perspectives which upset the mainstream the discipline remains an important arena for the study of social justice and cross-cultural communication.

10. Conclusion

Civic integration policies arose as a response to a lack of concrete measures, and the perceived failure of Norwegian integration of immigrants up until the early 2000's. Up until this point, multiculturalist ideas of different cultures living side by side within the same nation may have been understood as rather unproblematic. However, as immigration to Europe increased and anti-immigration sentiments arose integration became problematized as a matter of national concern across Europe. Consequently, civic integration policy was developed as a method through which immigrants' integration could be measured. However, the only tangible similarity between European nations' approach to integration remained within the construction of integration as a policy-based tactic. This tactic highlights the immigrant's right and duty to actively learn the culture of the host country. Consequently, measuring and comparing different forms of civic integration may be unproductive as the standards of measurement vary from nation to nation depending to the criteria attached to integration. In Norway, civic integration entails a certain number of hours of training within three central areas. These areas are labor market training, language training and civic training. Due to Norwegian civic integration's focus on national knowledge, much of the training across all three areas may be understood as attempts to provide sufficient skills to be able to enter the labor market. However, the labor market itself may operate with discriminatory criteria which civic integration does not pay much attention to, examples such as lack of network or racism have been mentioned in this thesis. Therefore, many immigrants who experience civic integration may feel that it does not in fact uphold its end of the bargain.

As a policy which relies heavily on the activation of immigrants, civic integration requires a lot of immigrants' time during their first years in Norway. This time is spent learning basic knowledge pertaining to the Norwegian nation, within a context which is mainly inhabited by immigrants themselves. Consequently, immigrants who have newly arrived spend much of their time with other immigrants – this does provide integration in the sense that immigrants learn about Norwegian culture and establish relationships to those they learn alongside with. Many acquire a sense of belonging to new communities of the people who they meet during their civic integration. However, since these communities are often consisting of other immigrants, many may feel that they ostracized by the majority population – particularly in small towns where their identities are visibly different. Furthermore, the language training which civic integration provides may be sufficient for communicating in Norwegian, but it may prove insufficient to

meet the explicit and implicit language criteria of for instance the labor market. Some immigrants also claim that it is insufficient in day to day communication as Norwegians have a repertoire of dialects which both demonstrate their identities and their suitability with Norwegian culture. Immigrants who learn standard Norwegian dialects may not have the same repertoire to express their identities and therefore may struggle to make themselves understood or understand others.

What I've attempted to outline in this thesis is how the topics which civic integration policy deem as necessary for newcomers to internalize, may be much larger and more dynamic than 300 hours' worth of standardized training can achieve. This creates several problems for the actual social process of integration. Firstly, it may create a distrust and consequently a delayed sense of belonging as immigrants in reality are not granted the privileges which civic integration promises them. Secondly, the static nature of Norwegian civic integration, both in the simplification of dynamic topics pertaining to integration and the static representation of Norwegian culture, may result in homogenizing immigrants. This homogenization is not aligned with the myth of a homogenous Norway, in that it doesn't make immigrants more like Norwegian (nor is this the explicit aim of integration). Rather, it homogenizes immigrants by deeming them all in need of state mandated assistance. For instance, in that immigrants educated outside of Europe are regarded as needing the same type of assistance as immigrants who have no higher education. Not recognizing the individuality of immigrants may further construct the idea of immigrants as perpetually foreign, or perpetual strangers in Norwegian society. In a time and place where individual identity is becoming more and more visible and valued, the homogenizing practices of civic integration may be detrimental to its own ambitions. As civic integration attempts to integrate newcomers into the nation, with equal rights and privileges, the focus of this thesis has been on how these attempts may produce contradicting changes. As these policies may unintentionally create greater barriers between immigrants and others in the Norwegian society, the immigration and integration discourse may benefit from critical perspectives.

It has not been my ambition, nor is it my place, to dismiss Norwegian civic integration as a method of integration. Rather, I have attempted to highlight some issues with the current policies and practices of civic integration in Norway which may contribute to the demarcation of immigrants as foreign. Immigration and integration have been of increasing interest to social sciences in a time where transnational communication is unprecedented. Much of the focus in this area today, has been on how the interconnectedness of the world shapes and changes

societies and cultures. As opposed to earlier ideas of clear-cut borders between cultures living side by side, cosmopolitan theories have risen as an alternative, in which the potential communication and interdependence between societies and cultures have been highlighted. This thesis has attempted to outline civic integration in Norway and subsequent problems which may arise when treating a social process such as integration of transnational individuals within the national framework of civic integration. Particularly with respect to immigrants' human rights to migrate, and rights within the nation as equal members, this thesis discusses certain injustices which may unintentionally be produced through static national policies and practices. If civic integration is an attempt at making immigrants independent and equal within the nation this focus is warranted. As dynamic and everchanging as integration processes can be, it seems relevant to pay attention to how these processes are attempted within national policies and what consequences may follow for those individuals subject to these policies.

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