

Information-Related Practices of Syrian Refugees Living in Scania, Sweden

Tareq Alfeel

Examensarbete (30 högskolepoäng) i biblioteks- och informationsvetenskap för
masterexamen inom ABM-masterprogrammet vid Lunds universitet.

Handledare: Jutta Haider

År: 2019

Title

Information-Related Practices of Syrian Refugees Living in Scania, Sweden

Abstract

This thesis explores the information-related needs and practices of Syrian refugees in Sweden as represented by six Syrians living in Scania County, Sweden, both during their journeys and after arrival in Sweden. The research adopts a qualitative approach through conducting semi-structured interviews in informal Arabic with Syrian refugees. The interviews were then thematically analyzed from the theoretical perspective of information practice theory. The study shows that the interviewees' information-related practices and needs during their journeys and in Sweden are heavily affected by the idea of survival. The research examines how the refugees' wish to survive guided their behaviors regarding information. This thesis shows also that the interviewees' families have affected these persons' roles regarding information and its mediation. (Mis)trust permeated through all of the interviewees' information-related activities and affected them in one way or another. Lastly, the thesis examines the change in usage of public libraries between Syria and Sweden and the interviewees perceptions of these libraries.

Keywords

Refugees, Syrians, Information Practices, Information Needs, Information Theory, Sweden, Skåne, Library, Theme Analysis, Survival, Family, Trust, Mistrust

Contents

Acknowledgment	4
1. Introduction.....	5
Outline	5
Immigrant or Refugee?	7
Syrian Refugees in Sweden	7
2. Methodology	8
Thematic Analysis	9
Credibility and Generalizability	10
Ethical Questions	10
Choice and the Recruitment Process	11
Interview Questions	12
Formal and Informal Arabic	12
The Interviews	13
Limitations of the Research	13
3. Theory	14
Information Practices	14
Trust.....	16
4. Related Research.....	17
Library Use and Integration	17
Refugees' Information Practices	19
5. Analysis	25
Survival	25
The Journey.....	25
Sweden.....	30
Family	31
Syria.....	31
The Journey.....	32
Trust and Mistrust.....	33
The Journey.....	33
Sweden.....	35
Public Libraries	38
Previous Usage.....	39
Current Usage	39
6. Conclusion.....	41
Further Research	43
Reference List.....	44
Appendix 1.....	48

Acknowledgment

I want first to thank my supervisor Jutta Haider for her support and guidance without which this thesis would not have seen light. I would like also to thank her for her insightful comments and questions which enriched my study and provided it with different perspectives. Furthermore, I would like to express my gratitude to the teaching staff at the ALM department at Lund University who provided us, students, with an unconventional and academically engaging learning experience. I would like also to thank all my study participants who agreed to sit with me and provide me with the necessary information this research needed. Last, but not least, I am very grateful to my family and friends who believed in me and supported me along the way.

1. Introduction

A man I knew came to Europe in 2014. This person could not speak or understand any language except Arabic. He walked, with a couple of his friends, through several countries to reach their European destinations. They had to walk through the woods at night, and, sometimes, they did not have internet connection. I asked him once, “how did you know where you should go?” He replied, “when we were in the woods, we found traces of human garbage and remains of fast food. Then, we knew that other people went by these roads, so we just followed the trail of garbage whenever it was possible.” When I heard this story, I became interested in knowing more about the information-related behaviors of refugees during their journeys of escape and if and how these behaviors have changed after arriving at their destination, which this research aims to explore.

This thesis examines the information-related needs and practices of Syrian refugees who live in Scania, Sweden, during their journeys and after arrival in Sweden. Six Syrian refugees have been interviewed. They were asked about their information-related behaviors during their journey from Syria and in Sweden to get a better idea about these behaviors within different contexts. The interviews have been thematically analyzed to find out if there were shared themes that governed these behaviors during the journeys and after arriving in Sweden. The themes found were related to survivability, family, (mis)trust, and use or lack of use of public libraries. The themes are discussed from the perspective of information practice theory.

This paper poses the following research questions:

- Which information activities can be discerned as relevant for Syrian refugees in Sweden, during their journey and after arrival? What shapes and governs these activities?
- How is trust (and mistrust) navigated in these activities and in relation to which larger practices?
- What role, if any, do they assign to public libraries in Syria and Sweden?

Outline

This thesis begins by providing a general introduction about the subjects of this study, namely Syrian refugees in Sweden, followed by an illustration of the meaning of the word refugee. Then, I explain my choice of the qualitative approach to conduct this research and the challenges that may face such an approach. I explain the ethical questions that have surrounded my study and how I have addressed them. Following that, I introduce the techniques used in the recruitment process, why they have been

used, and the problems that faced me at this stage. Then, I briefly explain the choice of the interview questions and the difference between formal and informal Arabic.

In chapter three, I talk about the practice theory and trust. I introduce some definitions of practices. I discuss the various aspects of a practice and how different authors highlight the importance of different aspects of practices. I also discuss some of the philosophical characteristics of trust and trustworthiness and how they are related to other social aspects.

In chapter four, I provide an overview of the relevant literature that has focused on refugees and their relations to information and libraries. The section on literature review is divided into two parts. The first part deals with literature written on the role of public libraries in the lives of refugees in the host countries, the refugees' perceptions and usage of public libraries, and how these libraries can better meet the needs of this group of users. In the second part, I review literature that examines the information-related needs and behaviors of refugees in general, not only Syrian, and in different parts of the world.

In chapter five, I discuss the results that I have found in relation to the information-related practices and needs of Syrian refugees, both while on their journeys and after arriving in Sweden. This section is divided into four main parts according to the themes that guide these practices and which were found during the thematic analysis process of the interviews. The first theme is "Survival." In this regard, I discuss the methods through which refugees received information, the types of information they received, its sources, the avoidance of information, and how all of this was important for the survival of the study participants during their journeys to Sweden. Then, I discuss how the theme of survival is still dominating many of the information-related practices of Syrian refugees and how the information avoidance mechanism is still at work even in Sweden.

The second theme in the analysis is "Family." In this section, I show how the family had an important role in the interviewees' lives in Syria and during their journeys. I also tackle how some of the study participants adopted new roles, which are information providers and information restrainers, during their journey in relation to their families. In the end, I show how the concept of family is still important for the interviewees even after they arrived in Sweden.

In the third section of the analysis, I approach the interviewees' patterns of trust or mistrust in different types and sources of information both on their journeys and in Sweden. This section is divided into two parts. The first one deals with the way (mis)trust is negotiated through the interviewees' information-related practices during their journeys and how despair affects these practices. The second part sheds light on different ways adopted by the interviewees to verify the credibility of the information they receive in Sweden. I also examine how the interviewees' mistrust in other people in their host country can affect larger practices like citizenship and democracy.

The final section in the analysis examines the roles of public libraries as information sources in the lives of my interviewees. Here, I compare between my interviewees'

perceptions of the public library in Syria and their perceptions of the public library and its role in Sweden.

In the conclusion, I summarize my discussion regarding the information-related needs and practices of Syrian refugees in Scania. The different aspects and subjects discussed under each theme are tied together and the important aspects of the interviewees' information-related practices are represented.

Immigrant or Refugee?

It is important here to distinguish between refugees and migrants. Refugees are those who have been forced to leave their countries for fear of being persecuted or of violence and conflict (United Nations Higher Commissioner for Refugees). In this paper, by refugees I refer to those people who have been forced to leave their lands and who have come to Sweden in search of shelter and protection under international laws. Hence, I exclude from my study immigrants or those who have come to Sweden willingly and have no fear of persecution or violence if they have decided to go back to their countries. It should be noted here that the concept "asylum seekers", which is used sometimes in Swedish, means those who have applied for asylum or refuge in Sweden but are still waiting for an answer, as the migration agency clarifies (Migrationsverket).

Syrian Refugees in Sweden

In 2011, the Syrian war erupted. Hundreds of thousands of people were forced out of their country and started their journeys to different lands in search of shelter or better life. Between the years 2011 and 2014, around 70000 Syrians came to Sweden in search of refuge. By 2017, Syrians were the biggest group of people born outside of Sweden that live in the country, exceeding by that the number of Finnish people who had been the largest minority group in Sweden since the 1940s (Sweden 2019). Between 2011 and 2017, 116869 Syrians applied for asylum in Sweden. However, Syrians are not the only Arabic-speaking refugees who have come to Sweden around this time. Many of the Palestinians who have lived in Syria have come to Sweden as well (Migrationsverket).

2. Methodology

For this research, I adopted a qualitative approach with semi structured interviews. While quantitative methods can be used to measure data to answer questions like “how many” and “how often”, qualitative approaches are not concerned with this. What is important for researchers adopting qualitative methods is to be able to show that these data or phenomena exist and how they work, and under which circumstances these occurrences take place (Ahrne and Svensson 2011, p. 12). Through interviews and thematic analysis, I attempt to understand how Syrian refugees interact with information and its sources and what shapes their interactions.

I would like to explain why I have not chosen a quantitative method for collecting and analyzing data in this research. Göran Ahrne and Peter Svensson explain in their book *Handbok I Kvalitativa Metoder* that by using a quantitative approach, we will not be able to reach all the individuals in a given society. They point out how it is hard to explain complicated social interactions using quantitative data. Such interactions are, for example, how and why different decisions are taken and how people learn to understand each other (2011, p. 14). These interactions are important to my research. For instance, I want to understand the reasons behind certain information-related behaviors of my research’s subjects during their journey to Sweden, how trust or the lack of it has affected these behaviors, and whether being parts of a minority group in their new country has influenced their information-related needs and practices.

I was able to interview my informants using Arabic, which is their mother tongue. This enabled me to better catch the different nuances used during the conversations, in contrast to someone with a different language background from that of the interviewees. Even though the interviews translated into English, my previous studies in the field of translation enabled me to choose the right words or expressions that convey my interviewees’ feelings and ideas. I kept, however, some of the words they used and translate them literally into English. Even though such words might sound unfamiliar to the English ear, they still convey some of the feelings and ideas the interviewees had during the interviews.

Moreover, having the same refugee background and having lived the same situation as my informants enabled me to better understand their experiences. This, with the different points of view and experiences that are gathered from different participants, gives a rich and nuanced picture of the society of Syrian refugees in Scania, their experiences and relation to information. This ability to look at different perspectives of social phenomena is what gives social sciences their richness (Ahrne and Svensson 2011, pp. 21).

A point worth mentioning here is that this shared experience between me, as a researcher, and many of my interviewees can be thought of as a hindrance to my impartiality. However, being aware of this fact, I try my best to avoid being biased to one interpretation or way of thinking and, rather, to give as full a picture of the situation as possible.

Thematic Analysis

A thematic analysis approach is adopted in analyzing the materials gathered by the interviews. Gery W. Ryan and H. Russell Bernard (2003) explain that “Themes come both from the data (an inductive approach) and from the investigator’s prior theoretical understanding of the phenomenon under study (an a priori approach)” (p. 88). According to Ryan and Bernard, “[t]he researcher’s experiences” and “the characteristics of the phenomenon being studied” are both sources of priori themes (2003, p. 88). Thus, the themes being discussed here are both coming from the data gathered during the interviews and, at the same time, are affected by the researcher’s own experiences and theoretical and subject interests.

Two important ways of deducing themes are discussed by Ryan and Bernard (2003) and these are adopted in this study. The first one is repetitions. As Ryan and Bernard explain, “The more the same concept occurs in a text, the more likely it is a theme” (Ryan & Bernard 2003, p. 89). In this regard, I considered the various interview transcriptions as one text, and the repetitions in them were the key aspect to provide the themes.

The second way of establishing themes that Ryan and Bernard (2003) mention is missing data. As they show, study participants can avoid or not mention information for several reasons. For example, participants may not trust the researcher or may avoid talking about sensitive issues (Ryan & Bernard 2003, p. 93). These missing data were also important in my thematic analysis, especially regarding the issue of trust as will be shown later.

To analyze the interviews, I transcribed all the interviews and simultaneously translated them into English. Then, I read them and divided them into several sections. After that, the information in these texts was coded into different nodes by using the program Nvivo¹. Then, I searched for the repeated ideas and deduced from them the general themes.

¹ Nvivo is a program that helps researchers categorize various ideas into different “nodes” that represent codes. These codes can then be gathered to find various themes.

Credibility and Generalizability

Credibility and generalizability are two concepts that can be achieved in quantitative methods by using numbers. However, these two concepts can be approached differently using qualitative methods. Credibility can be shown by using transparency and respondent validation. Generalizability, on the other hand, does not have the same meaning it has in quantitative methodology. In a qualitative study, we can look if our findings can be transformed to include other people or research areas similar to those on whom or on which we have conducted our study. For example, through comparing a research's results with the results of other studies, we can see the similarities and differences. Then, if we find similarities between the results of two or three research cases which have similar research subjects or similar research landscapes, we can say that such results take a general tendency and can be expected to be found in other researches that focus on similar subjects or fields of research (Ahrne and Svensson 2011, p. 26-29). Jan Trost also discusses how we can achieve transparency through respondent validation, i.e. by sending the transcribed materials to the interviewees to judge these materials' credibility (Trost 2005, p. 114). Karin Widerberg shows as well how being transparent about our choices and interpretations as writers is a way of achieving credibility (Widerberg 2002, p. 18).

When it comes to my study, I tried to achieve transparency through detailed descriptions of my interviews. For example, I will mention the hardships that have faced me before or after conducting an interview and all the aspects that may have affected the results in any way. Furthermore, to support this paper's credibility, I sent these interviews after transcribing them to the participants to get their validations regarding what was written and to make sure it was what they meant. Unfortunately, two of the interviewees could not read English. Nevertheless, these two persons expressed their trust in my translation of what has been said.

I tried to approach generalizability by focusing on the similar traits between all the cases that I studied. For example, if the journey to Sweden has affected all my subjects in a similar way or if the anxiety accompanied with being new in a society has influenced the refugees' patterns of information needs and practices in a similar way, then it would be reasonable to say that such results have the potential to be generalized after more research in the future. Such results may become research question to other studies in the future.

Ethical Questions

Ahrne and Svensson stress the idea of ethics and participants' anonymity in scientific researches (2011, p. 30-31). In my thesis, I removed any clues that can hint to my interviewees' identities. My target group is people who may have gone through life threatening situations and who may have done things or have experienced things in the past which they want to leave in the past. During war or crisis situations and escape journeys, anything might happen. When such things are important to this research, I try to include them in the discussion. However, the anonymity of the participants is given the priority.

Information that leads directly or indirectly to the identities of the participants in this project has been removed. Gender-neutral pronouns, like they, their, s/he, have been used to avoid indirect identification of the interviewees' real or physical identities. The letters "IF" were used to indicate that a quotation is said by an informant. Names of specific places have also been anonymized or avoided whenever possible. All the participants in the study, have been informed about the nature and purpose of the study before conducting interviews with them. An agreement has been signed with them. This agreement states the purpose and nature of the study, how the interviewee's information will be handled, that participation in the study is voluntary and that the participant can stop or quit the interview whenever they want, even after the interviews have been conducted. All the participants have been informed in the agreement and verbally that this study will be confidential and will be dealt with confidentially. None of the interviewees is in a dependent relationship with the researcher. All of them have been given time to think and decide whether they want to participate or not, and it was left to them to decide on the time to conduct the interviews.

Another important issue that Ahrne and Svensson warn us to approach carefully is the power relation between the researcher and the research's subjects (2011, p.32). I have worked at a Swedish public library for some years, and during this time, I have come into contact with many of the Arabic-speaking people that live around the city of this library. Thus, my relationship with them was built on trust, since many of them used to ask me to help them in personal and sensitive questions, like social insurance papers or contacting authorities and translating for them different kinds of private questions. All of this was known to the participants in this study and other possible persons I contacted during the recruitment process. This made it easier for me to interview them. However, this does not exclude the fact that many of them had sensitive issues that they did not want to talk about, as will be shown later in the section about trust. As Ahrne and Svensson explain, I was in a powerful position when listening to those people's stories. I took this into consideration and assured them that everything they say will be confidential and will not be used to judge them or affect them in any way.

Choice and the Recruitment Process

Six persons participated as interviewees in this study. Two main conditions were set for the recruitment of the participants. First, they should speak Arabic. Second, they should have come to Sweden as refugees after the eruption of the war in Syria in 2011. The choice of the Syrian interviewees was based on a mixed approach of the *convenience sampling* and *snowball* techniques. First, I wanted to find people who could trust me and who were willing to share their stories with me. That is why I adopted the *convenience sampling* technique. As Oliver C. Robinson (2014) explains, "convenience sampling" is choosing the sample population in a study based on accessibility and ease. The first candidates that can be found and fulfill the recruitment's criteria are recruited. Robinson (2014) explains that this is not the best method to adopt in quantitative research because it is not random and cannot be said to represent the whole population (p. 32). On the other side, in qualitative research this method can be used if "... the sample universe [is defined] as demographically and geographically local and thus restricting generalisation to that local level, rather

than attempting decontextualised abstract claims” (Robinson 2014, p. 32). In my study, the target population includes Syrian refugees living in Scania, which is a demographically and geographically located population. This enhances the link between the sample and target population as Robinson explains (ibid. p. 32).

Second, I have also adopted the “snowball” technique to try to reach different people (Ahrne and Svensson 2011, p. 43). I decided not to reach these people through official channels like teachers or supervisors at the work office because this could affect their trust in me or in the research. Furthermore, these people came recently from a country where public organizations and their representatives were not to be trusted with sensitive information because it was thought they could reveal such information to other governmental organizations, like the police for instance.

It is important to mention here a problem that faced me during the recruitment process. In my search for interview participants, I tried to contact both men and women to get a deeper insight into the possible information-related practices that concerned the Syrian refugees. However, I could only find one female participant. I tried different channels to reach them, like libraries, friends, or acquaintances. Nevertheless, I could not succeed in this. This study is not quantitative, and its participants are not chosen as representatives of their sexes. Thus, even though finding female participants could have provided a richer understanding of the subject, not being to recruit more women was not considered an inhibiting factor to the study.

Interview Questions

The interviews in this research are semi-structured. The interviews’ questions were divided into categories. These can be more thoroughly reviewed in appendix 1. These questions were formulated to get information about: the informant’s background, including age and work or studies right now in Sweden, their work and situation in Syria; the journey they have made; their information-related behaviors and needs in their previous countries, during their journeys, and in Sweden; whether or not they have used the library previously; and whether they use the library in Sweden, and how and why. The aim of these questions, as has been explained earlier, is to obtain a better understanding of the informants’ previous and current information needs and practices and the position of the public library as an information source in these information-related practices.

As I outlined in the introduction, these questions are structured to give the reader a better picture of and understanding for Syrian refugees’ information-related needs and behaviors during their journeys and of how these are different from or similar to the refugees’ information needs and practices in Sweden.

Formal and Informal Arabic

Something worth mentioning here is that there are two versions of Arabic, the standard one that is used in the TV, books, and newspapers, and the informal Arabic that is used in everyday life. My interviews with the Syrian refugees have been held

in informal Arabic or by using the Syrian dialect. This has given my interviewees the opportunity to express themselves easily and without hesitation.

The Interviews

The interviews took place between late February 2019 and early March 2019. They were diverse in their lengths and lasted between 21 minutes and 1 hour and 20 minutes. Three of the interviews were held face-to-face. Two of them were conducted by phone calls, and the last one was held by using a Skype video call.

Limitations of the Research

In this section I present some of the limitations of this research. The topic of this thesis is already wide, and in trying to narrow it down, I excluded some aspects of the topic from the study. For example, my research focuses only on Syrian refugees. It does not take into consideration Arabs of other nationalities nor does it tackle the information-related activities of immigrants. Moreover, this thesis does not examine the information-related behavior of refugees of other nationalities who live in Sweden. Time and space limits prevented me from including any of these subjects in my research.

Only one woman participated in the interviews. Even though this does not affect the validity of my research, as I explained above, having more women interviewees would no doubt have added a deeper perspective into this thesis.

Finally, this research is qualitative. Thus, the study participants cannot be said to represent the whole population of Syrian refugees in Sweden or Europe, as discussed earlier. However, future research can build on the findings of my study to reach a greater degree of generalizability.

3. Theory

In the first part of this chapter, I generally introduce practice theory as discussed by several authors and how it can be used to approach information-related activities. Subsequently, the concepts of trust and trustworthiness are briefly explored based on Carolyn McLeod's (2015) introduction of this subject in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*

Information Practices

Theodore R. Schatzki (2001a) defines practices as “embodied, materially mediated arrays of human activity centrally organized around shared practical understanding” (p. 2). Later, he explains that “... a practice is a set of doings and sayings that is organized by a pool of understandings, a set of rules, and something I call a ‘teleoaffective structure’” (Schatzki 2001b, p. 50). According to Schatzki (2001b), the teleological determination is the end or intention for which one does something, and the element of affectivity determines what makes sense for a person to do in a particular situation to reach the intended end. Thus, the human and nonhuman, the body and the mind, ends, intentions, and activities are interwoven together like a web shared by practical understandings and this constitutes practices.

Andrew Cox (2012) explores the various definitions of practice according to several authors and the aspects these authors have emphasized in their definition of this concept. He cites Schatzki (2002) in defining practices as “... sets of things we do – tasks and bigger projects – that are linked to what are considered appropriate ends. These are further linked to accepted or expected emotional sets” (Cox 2012, p. 178). He then adds Reckwitz's (2002) point of view that knowledge is embedded in the practices, “[i]t is a reversal of the account that locates the spur of action in individualized motives. General understandings are general beliefs that find expression across many practices in how the activities are carried out ...” (Cox 2012, p.178).

Cox (2012) highlights how authors emphasized different aspects of the practice approach. First, he goes back to an earlier definition by Schatzki (1996) to show how a practice is a process that keeps evolving spatially and temporally (Cox 2012, p. 178). He explains further how practices are dynamic and keep changing. They are not “socially given,” and there is always a “variation in how people perform a practice” (ibid).

Second, the focus has shifted from considering action as driven rationally by the mind, or “the cognitive states” into looking on action as integrated in the bodily

activities and “skills and habits” (Cox 2016, p. 179). Thus, embodiment or the skilled body acquired importance in the practice study.

Third, materiality or man-made objects are important because “They have a role in shaping practices, because of the way they prefigure what can be done” (ibid). Thus, our human actions can be governed by the limitations of the material objects, but they can also be opened to all the possibilities these objects provide.

Fourth, and here there is some argument regarding this idea, Cox (2012) illustrates how some authors think of routine as an important element in practices. According to these authors, a practice is characterized by being done unconsciously and automatically without thinking, and “[t]his implies a link to the mundane and ‘everyday’” (Cox 2012, p. 179). However, other authors, including Schatzki (2002), “stresses that a practice can include unusual and infrequent activities and also new doings and sayings” (Cox 2012, p. 179). In a later paper, Cox (2013) shows that practices can change and evolve without necessarily having the routine aspect to them. He writes, “... practices are also open to change. Because a practice is a rather fluid complex of activities, material arrangements and social negotiations, it can evolve” (Cox 2013, p. 70). This means that “If a practice shapes what information is and how it is used, changes in the practice will reshape what counts as information” (ibid, p. 71). As a result of this, it can be said that information is in a dynamic state of change since practices are dynamic, as well. I agree with the idea that practices are dynamic and not restricted by routine because several of the elements of practices are subject to change.

Knowledge or knowing, according to Cox (2012), is integrated into practices. Doing a practice creates knowledge regarding the various aspects of this practice. Moreover, he sees this knowledge or knowing as “embodied and embedded in material objects” (Cox 2012, p. 180). He shows, furthermore, that knowing is “negotiated” every time we do or participate in the practice (ibid) and meaning and interpretation can change according to the context which means that our knowledge is “provisional” (ibid).

Cox (2013) illustrates some of the features of the practice approach in information science. He refers to “the social and the social identity,” where he shows that practices shape our identity, and participating in different practices constitutes the several aspects of our identities (Cox 2013). He adds that “the networks within which information is intensively shared is [*sic.*] shaped by the social network the practice creates” (ibid, p. 69). Thus, practices even contribute to the creation of our information society.

Pilerot, Hammarfelt, and Moring (2017), based on their review of literature on practice theory in LIS², come with the following definition:

... practices are conceived as situated sets of embodied activities grounded in time and space, and as reproductive of the social, which means that what is going on in practice contributes to maintain practice. Practices are, furthermore, socially recognized and named, and they constitute a ‘mode of ordering the world’ (i.e. they have the capacity of both enabling and constraining).

² Library and Information Science

Moreover they are entities where agency is distributed over human and non-human agents. (Gherardi 2006, p 35; passim)

(Pilerot, Hammarfelt, and Moring 2017)

Thus, according to practice theorists, practices are arrays of activities, dynamic, situated in time and space, have ends that govern their activities, can reshape information, and give equal importance to the body and the mind, and the human and nonhuman.

Trust

The literature on trust and distrust is considerable and lies mainly in the philosophical domain, which is outside the scope of this thesis. However, trust is one of the important themes that has emerged during the analysis process of this paper. Thus, it is good to shed some light on this concept. Carolyn McLeod (2015) discusses this concept and the literature related to it from different philosophical points of view. In her entry in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, she reviews the concepts of trust and trustworthiness and how they are handled in the literature of philosophy. McLeod tries to see what makes a trustee trustworthy, for example, and what makes a trustor trust another person. These could be external or internal factors relating to both the trustor and trustee. Furthermore, as McLeod argues, trust can be cultivated even though one cannot will himself/herself to trust others. The inability to will oneself to trust can be the result of traumas.

McLeod (2015) illustrates how trusting others entails a risk of being subjected to betrayal. Trust means that the trustor is optimistic that the trustee will do something for them, which makes the trustor “vulnerable” to betrayal. However, if we suspect people or their doings, then we do not truly trust them. She explains that “[r]eliance without the possibility of betrayal is not trust” (McLeod 2015). Furthermore, not being able to be optimistic about people’s capabilities renders trust impossible (ibid).

McLeod illustrates that trust, even when it is interpersonal or between two individuals, is subject to larger factors like social and political aspects. Socially, other virtues in society tend to strengthen trustworthiness. Politically, trust can be connected to the degree in which society can be labeled as democratic or not. Thus, trust thrives in democratic societies while it can be missing between individuals in other societies. For example, McLeod clarifies that it would be “irrational” for victims of oppression in an oppressive society to trust their oppressors (ibid).

McLeod shows that trust enables people to cooperate in groups to reach their common goals. Societies with high degree of trust between their individuals have “stronger economies and stronger social networks in general” (ibid). Thus, trust contributes to the development and well-being of society and is closely connected with democracy.

4. Related Research

In looking for research related to my study, I have limited my search to what has been discussed and written in this area during the last ten years. There are several reasons for that limitation. First, there has been an unprecedented surge of online services that have hugely changed the information landscapes of all people. Second, there has been a large increase in the number of refugees, especially those coming to Europe. Third, the study of information practices became more established as a theoretical approach in the field of information science between 2005 and 2009 as noted by Ola Pilerot, Björn Hammarfelt, and Camilla Moring (2017). The literature reviewed can roughly be grouped into two categories. The first one is research on how newcomers use the library and the library's role in the integration process in the host country. The second one is research on refugees' information-related activities and information needs in the world.

Library Use and Integration

The most recent research on the relationship between public libraries and people who have newly arrived in Sweden is Ola Pilerot's and Jenny Lindberg's (2018) "*Sen går jag hem när det stänger*" *En studie av nyanländas biblioteksanvändning*. Through interviews and field observations of eight newcomer-oriented program activities, Pilerot and Lindberg examine how refugees and immigrants who have arrived recently in Sweden use public libraries. The authors answer questions about how people who are new in Sweden use public libraries, what libraries mean for this group of people, and how the different library programs are connected to these persons' different life situations. Pilerot and Lindberg analyze their research results through four main theoretical concepts, which are participation, social capital, integration and reading. Of those, the notion social capital is especially relevant for my own study.

Pilerot and Lindberg (2018) draw on Putnam, Feldstein and Cohen (2003) and Putnam (2007) to explain that social capital is generated when an individual becomes part of a group or community where relationships are characterized by trust, shared norms and reciprocal benevolence. They differentiate between two types of social capital. The first one, which they call "bonding", is built on similarities between individuals and it strengthens the internal coherence of a community. However, this type can lead to antagonisms between different groups. It can also make it hard for people who do not belong to a community to be included in it or to feel as part of it. The other type, which they call "bridging", helps to connect people from different communities and, thus, to minimize antagonisms between groups of people (2018, p. 26).

Pilerot and Lindberg (2018) reach several conclusions. First, newcomers use the library thoroughly as a place along with its collections of different materials and try to benefit as much as possible of the staff and their knowledge. Second, the library emerges as an important place for establishing contact with society and with different people, which enhances both the integration process and the social capital. Third, in regard to integration, they find that the library helps those who have arrived recently in Sweden to develop their language and meet other people. Fourth, the aim of reading for newcomers is first and foremost language development. The importance of this research is that it has been conducted from the users' viewpoint. However, it is limited to only those who use the library and does not include non-users. The study focuses on the newcomers and the library and tries to explore the relationship between both of them (Pilerot and Lindberg 2018). Thus, other information sources are not included.

Another example is Miklo's (2015) "Biblioteket hjälper mig att komma in i samhället" which is a report on a study that was conducted on behalf of Regionbiblioteket Stockholm in 2015. The aim of this study was to identify how the library can develop its services to better meet the needs of its users who are asylum seekers. The study was conducted in the Stockholm region and was based on interviews with people who applied for asylum in Sweden as well as with librarians. In the study, Miklo analyzes how these asylum seekers use the library, how the librarians work for these users, how the library can function in a better way from the perspectives of the asylum seekers who use it, and how the library can be developed to better serve their needs according to the staff. Some of the conclusions this study has reached concerns the necessity of having more staff competent in the languages of newcomers, more standardization of the services and rules of the library translated into the newcomers' most common languages, and better ways to help the users develop their language. The importance of this study is that the authors have interviewed the user group and could identify some of their information needs. For example, many of the interviewees in the user-group, when asked about why they use the library, have expressed their needs of information about language, society, materials in their mother tongue, Sweden, work and housing. Some of them have even expressed a need for information that can help them cope with their stress. They have needed, for instance, information to clarify their situations, such as when and if they will receive residency and what will happen to their families in their homelands. Some of the interviewees have even wished to have some support through conversation about their life situations. Just as Pilerot's and Lindberg's (2018) study, this report focuses mainly on the relation between libraries and asylum seekers and how they perceive and use public libraries.

Kliv fram! Bibliotek, segregation och integration (2018) is a report written by Bjarne Stenquist on the integration process of newcomers in Sweden and how public libraries help in this process. Stenquist conducted interviews mainly with library staff. Regarding this thesis, some of the interesting points the report mentions are the different information needs of newcomers. Among the things these users ask for in public libraries is information about language, society, banks, and how to pay bills, for example (Stenquist 2018).

Beatrice Ericsson and Michael Nordeman (2011) examine in their master thesis "*Plötsligt var världen här*": *Bibliotek och integration i tre Stockholmsförorter* the role of the library in the integration process. The authors focus on how library workers and directors perceive this role on the one hand and how politicians in the municipality perceive it on the other hand and the discussion between these two parties regarding this question. Ericsson and Nordeman conducted interviews with library workers, directors, and politicians. As such, Ericsson and Nordeman approach their questions from the perspectives of the library, its staff, and local politicians rather than the perspective of library users (Ericsson & Nordeman 2011).

Emma Andersson (2018) tackles, also, the issue of integration and the role of public libraries in this process in her master thesis *Bibliotekariers uppfattningar om folkbiblioteket som en plats för integration av nyanlända barn och unga: En intervjustudie*. This time, the author focuses on how the library facilitates the integration process of children and youths who have arrived recently to Sweden, or who can be labeled newcomers. This study approaches its subject from the librarians' perspectives as well. Interviews were conducted with librarians to understand their ideas about the role of the library in the integration processes of children and youths and what the challenges and possibilities that face public libraries in this process are (Andersson 2018).

Another master thesis which, also, focuses on public libraries and integration is Molly Teleman's (2018) *Folkbiblioteken och de nyanlända: Integrationsarbete I praktiken*. In this work Teleman studies the conditions that affect libraries' work regarding the integration process of newcomers from the librarians' perspective. In her thesis, the author adopted a practice-theory approach to analyze the factors that govern librarians work with integration and tries to show the limitations and possibilities of this work. The study shows that libraries need more resources and coordination with other volunteers and public workshops to be able to provide services like "language cafés" and "IT-help" (Teleman 2018).

John Shepherd, Larissa Petrillo, and Allan Wilson (2018) have also studied how immigrants use a public library in Canada in their "Settling in: how newcomers use a public library". Just as the studies mentioned above, the authors here try to explore how newcomers in Canada use a public library and what such a place means to these users. The method adopted to get answers is distributing questionnaires to library visitors. The authors focus on the library as a place rather than as an information source. However, some of the answers given by the participants reveal some of their information-related activities. For instance, 72% go there to read, 31% to get help from the staff, 34% to use the computers, and 10% go there to do research. Some of those who use the computer do that to obtain information about continuing education or to look for news about their former countries. The limitation of this study is that it does not take into consideration non-users of the library.

Refugees' Information Practices

The volume of research on information related activities of refugees and immigrants of different nationalities and in different host countries is substantial (e.g. Aronsson

& Eliasson 1997, Cassells 2011, Fisher, Yefimova, & Yafi 2016, Fisher & Yafi 2018, Oğuz & Kurbanoglu 2013, Zimmerman 2018). That is why, in the following review, I focus on what is directly related to my area of interest even though all the literature written on this subject is interesting and can be connected to the subject of this study in one way or another. While the previous section reviewed literature written on the role of the library in the lives of newcomers, this section will present selected, recent research on the information needs and practices of asylum seekers, refugees, and immigrants in different parts of the world.

In their study “Exploring the everyday life information needs and the socio-cultural adaptation barriers of Syrian refugees in Scotland,” Konstantina Martzoukou and Simon Burnett (2018) focus on the information needs and practices of Syrian refugees in Scotland and the barriers and enablers for their information literacy practices. One of the important points the aforementioned study highlights is that the difference between the Syrian refugees’ earlier socio-cultural traditions and the new socio-cultural situation in which they find themselves can be a barrier to their information literacy and adaptation in general.

Another important point the authors mention is the dialectical nature of the refugees’ information literacy process. Martzoukou and Burnett argue that the nature of this process is not limited to one situation or “context \...\ but may be seen as a set of interconnected transforming experiences within converging contexts that are influential upon each other” (Martzoukou & Burnett 2018, p. 1109). Thus, the experiences this group of people have gone through affect their current information landscapes. This idea is important for my research in relation to information practices and the study of how past information practices have affected the refugees’ current information practices in Sweden. For instance, some of the interviewees in Martzoukou’s and Burnett’s study had certain experiences regarding health-related information in their home countries and certain expectation of their new country’s health system. When these information experiences and expectations did not correspond with their new reality, the refugees became distrustful of the entire health system in Scotland (Martzoukou & Burnett 2018).

The authors also find that the information needs and the health issues of Syrian families are different from each other. These families have gone through various experiences and have different expectations from each other. Furthermore, their levels of education vary. This requires different kinds of support for different persons (ibid. p. 1117). The study shows that these people have progressed differently in their language learning and integration processes. Moreover, it shows that these persons “... did not always have similar points of reference (beyond experiencing the war and having the same country of origin)” (ibid. p. 1118). In my opinion, this is important because it highlights the fact that even though literature approaches them as a homogeneous group, refugees are, actually, individuals who have gone through unique experiences and have different needs from each other.

Language is one of the main barriers the refugees face, as Martzoukou and Burnett (2018) show. Language is needed in order to communicate and engage with the society and get into the job market. This can enable refugees to have a sense of normality in their everyday life (ibid. p. 1124). Martzoukou and Burnett (ibid.)

mention that their interviewees feel a kind of dissatisfaction. The difficult situations these people went through made them eager to achieve a “sense of normality” in their new life. However, the authors explain, language stood as a barrier between them and achieving their goal (ibid.).

Martzoukou and Burnett argue that the new information landscapes in which the refugees find themselves can be overwhelming and can cause an information load that will be hard to digest and understand. This may have an impact on the refugees’ health and their integration processes. Furthermore, the host societies require a speedy integration of these persons while those who are integrating need to go through a long and slow process in order to adapt to their new situation, as the authors demonstrate (ibid. p. 1127).

“Immigrants’ information experiences: an informed social inclusion framework”, by Paola Beretta, Elham Sayyad Abdi and Christine Bruce (2018), is a recent review of literature that tackled the issue of immigrants’ information experiences. According to the authors, immigrants have specified information needs, depend on social networks and the internet as sources of information, and face many barriers to information access. Just as the previous study, Beretta *et al.* (2018) stress the idea, based on their reviews, that immigrants’ traditions and experiences should be taken into consideration when attempting to facilitate their integration processes from an information perspective. For example, textual-based information may not be the best way to reach immigrants and refugees and other “social” and “cultural” aspects while dealing with information should be taken into consideration.

A related interesting research is Katja Kaufmann’s “Navigating a new life: Syrian refugees and their smartphones in Vienna” (2018). Here, Kaufmann studies the importance and use of smartphones in the life of Syrian refugees in Vienna, Austria. The importance of this study is that it takes into consideration the digital aspects of the refugees’ experiences. The author recognizes four main usages of smartphones by refugees. First, these persons use their mobile phones to get oriented with the geographical landscape in which they find themselves. Thus, in cases of lack of language and knowledge about the local area, smartphones can play an empowering role in the lives of refugees through providing them with information about their local area in a comfortable way (Kaufmann 2018).

Second, refugees use these devices to learn the language of the host country. Kaufmann acknowledges the effort of the other immigrants who contribute with free content related to language learning on the internet (Kaufmann 2018, p. 891). I think that, taken from the perspective of practice theory, we can extend this idea to include those contributors as an important part of the refugees’ information practices of learning a language.

Third, mobile devices were used by the participants to access different kinds of information. For example, they could follow the latest news of their home country and stay up to date in relation to what is happening around them in their new city, in this case Vienna.

Finally, the interviewees in Kaufmann's study used the apps in their mobile telephones to keep connected to their families in other parts of the world. This has attributed the devices with an emotional dimension, according to Kaufmann. Receiving information about the well-being of the family members all the time was very important to the refugees (Kaufmann 218).

I think Kaufmann's (2018) study did not take into consideration an important factor in understanding the relationship between refugees' lives and their digital devices, and that is language. Kaufmann conducted her interviews in English to erase the language barriers the interviewees faced. However, those who can speak and read English can easily understand what different apps are for and can easily search the internet for applications that can help them in their daily life or their journeys. Nonetheless, a large number of refugees cannot speak or read English. In my opinion, this can affect their understanding of mobile information and even their information practices in relation to digital devices.

Denice Adkins, Heather Moulaison Sandy, and Jorge Derpic (2017) examine in their study "Information Sources of Latin American Immigrants in the Rural Midwest in the Trump Era" the different sources on which Latino immigrants rely to receive their information. University extension departments, religious places, women's groups, schools, and Spanish-speaking media are among the information sources this group of immigrants use. Latin American grocery stores are also spaces of informal information sharing between the Latino Americans. Furthermore, those who work in these stores are generally trusted by unauthorized immigrants. Unlike these stores, libraries are not, as the research shows, an information provider for these persons, and they are not considered a trustable place for Latin American unauthorized immigrants. The study, also, shows that feelings of fear and lack of confidence are barriers that prevent unauthorized immigrants from accessing the information they need (Adkins et al. 2017).

Katherine van der Linden (2014) shows in her study "New Immigrants' Perceptions and awareness of Public Library Services" that, even though they did not participate in most of the programs designed for immigrants and found the library's multilingual materials insufficient, the interviewees still shared an appreciation and admiration for public libraries. This can be contrasted with Adkins's et al. (2017) study where unauthorized immigrants were found to lack trust in public libraries. Nonetheless, some of van der Linden's interviewees expressed their feelings of being "overwhelmed" when they first visited the library and even felt helpless (van der Linden 2014, p. 70).

Olubukola Oduntan (2017) studies the informational needs of refugees and how that affects their integration process. She points out that in information studies contexts determine the concepts to be used. Then, she shows how lack of self-sufficiency and the inability to integrate are actually information problems. Oduntan shows that "... the problem is not a lack of information, but rather of the inadequacy/inappropriateness of information ..." (2017, p. 66). Since the refugees' situation determine their needs, the author advocates an investigation of information needs based on individual experiences to "... eliminate the limitation of individual needs findings" (Ibid.). I think this focus on individual experiences complements

Martzoukou's and Burnett's (2018) study mentioned above in showing that considering refugees as individuals with needs different from each other, rather than a homogenous group, is crucial for providing the appropriate information that can make the integration processes easier for refugees.

In his "Trust and the role of the public library in the integration of refugees: The case of a Northern Norwegian city", Andreas Vårheim (2014) studies the effect of public libraries on social capital³ and social trust. By "generalized social trust", he means "trust in strangers" (2014, p. 64). The study was conducted on refugees who are students of a compulsory introductory program where introducing the library is part of the program. Vårheim finds that current students in the program trust the library and its users, but former students had lower trust levels. However, generalized trust in society outside the library remained low (Vårheim 2014).

Annemaree Lloyd, Mary Anne Kennan, Kim M. Thompson and Asim Qayyum (2013) study the inclusion and exclusion of refugees in Australia from an information practice perspective. The authors show how information poverty, or the inability to recognize and access "viable" information sources, can lead to social exclusion (Lloyd et al. 2013, p. 140). They argue that to enable access to such information sources, information service providers need to convey information in non-textual formats as well as textual formats. Lloyd *et al.* (2013) talk about the "information disjuncture" as a cause for social exclusion. "Information disjuncture" is when individuals realize that their previous information practices and experiences are different and inadequate in their new contexts (*ibid.*, p. 122). Thus, refugees need to suspend previous information practices in order to access and benefit from the information sources of their new setting (*ibid.*, p. 123). Later, Lloyd (2017) uses the term "fractured" to emphasize this disjunction. She talks about fractured landscapes where refugees experience this discrepancy between what they already know and their new information landscapes.

Lloyd *et al.* (2013) and Qayyum, Thompson, Kennan, and Lloyd (2014) talk about three phases of resettlement. These phases are "transitioning", "settling in," and "being settled." As the authors show, these phases of resettlement are characterized by different information practices. In the first phase, the refugee relies heavily on information provided by others, like case workers. In the "settling in" stage, refugees begin to identify their information need and can access and use different kinds of information without help from others. In the last phase, refugees begin to share their information with others (Lloyd *et al.* 2013, Qayyum *et al.* 2014).

Annemaree Lloyd (2017) discusses in her paper the difference between the information needs of refugees and immigrants and how the refugees' forced displacement and their journeys to different countries affect their information behavior. She asks, furthermore, to pay more attention to how these people adapt to their new information landscapes taking into consideration their previous information practices and how this affects their lives. She shows that their experiences of displacement add another dimension of difficulty to the perplexity of their

³ Social capital is briefly explained on page 15.

information situation. Lloyd (2017) discusses also the concept of “liminality” or “liminal zones” and relates it to information practices (ibid, p. 40). According to Lloyd, this concept can be used to focus research on information practices related to the transitioning phase through which refugees move from their previous established landscapes to their new information landscapes (Lloyd 2017).

In conclusion, the literature reviewed for this study can be divided into two groups. The first one examines how newcomers use the library and its services, how the library reaches these persons, and what the library does to assist newcomers in their integration processes. The second group examines the information needs and practices of refugees and immigrants in different host countries and how these affect the newcomers’ life, inclusion in or exclusion from society. Furthermore, the literature shows the difference between immigrants’ and refugees’ information practices and needs and calls for looking at these persons’ experiences individually when discussing their information needs. However, one of the limitations which many of these studies share concerns language. Most of them were not carried out using the refugees’ languages. I suggest if interviews were conducted using the interviewees’ language, the researchers would reach a better understanding of the refugees’ and immigrants’ information needs and experiences.

5. Analysis

This chapter presents a discussion of the different themes that have been created during the analysis process. It is divided into four main sections representing these themes. They are Survival, Family, Trust and Mistrust, and Public Libraries. Under each theme, I present the relevant information-related activities of the interviewees during one stage, for example the journey. Then, I move to examine the same activities or similar ones during another stage, for instance in Sweden.

Survival

The Journey

All the interviewees talked about survival as their basic need during their journeys. Thus, their information-related activities were all related to being able to survive. As one of the interviewees describes it:

IF: Any person who came in such a way or who was escaping cared only about one thing, and that is to arrive. S/he didn't think about anything because your brain focuses all its power on the psychological pressure. It doesn't think about anything else. It just needs to get rid of this suffering.

The information the participants engaged with can be divided into three categories. First, the interviewees sought information to help them get out of their situations. Second, they received information on how to avoid danger. Third, they, unintentionally, stumbled upon information, which may or may not have been true, on possible types of danger that were lurking in the way.

Active Searching

In the first category, refugees actively searched for information that could enable them to reach the safe shore. Several examples of these very existential information needs came up during the interviews. For instance, one interview participant was concerned about where to find their most basic needs, “actually, I was interested in knowing where I can eat and rest in a good place because it was really tiring.” Later on, the same person adds to these needs the need for water, “Water. Because sometimes you are cut off of clean water, so you should find a river or a watercourse.”

Another person expresses some of their needs during the journey as relating to “[t]he road's news [situation]. When I was in Greece [I wanted to] know what the next step

is. How is the next the road? I mean.” Another instance is when a participant says that they would like to know about the road, “How is the road? How will we go? What is happening with the people?” This need of knowing about the road ahead has been expressed by several interviewees.

Another example of active seeking of information that all of the interviewees talked about was seeking help to cross the borders, and only smugglers could provide such kind of assistance. The participants in the interviews were all academics or studying at the university before going out of Syria. They were not accustomed to dealing with people smugglers. However, the interviewees’ dire situation has forced them to search for such people to help them reach safety. When I asked about the ways the interview participants reached these smugglers, there have been two main answers. First, people used to go to specific places to find these people, as one of the interviewees explains:

IF: In Turkey, there was a square, I don’t remember its name, but it was in [anonymized place]. Smugglers used to be there. You go there, and you will find them sitting in the cafés, so you make a deal with them. In Greece, the same thing. There was this street [anonymized place]. They were also used to be there.

Second, refugees could contact those smugglers by telephone after taking their numbers from people they met there, as one interviewee says, “it was telephone numbers. People gave to each other. For example, when we go there, we find people who tell us ‘someone gave me this number or this number.’” According to this interview participant, you can find these people at “the hotel, for example. You could see people in the streets, and they were apparent.” Among these people that the interview participant talks about are other refugees who would provide each other with such information.

Google maps and other digital maps were used by the interview participants to know the road itself, not only about it. One person mentions that “[i]n this journey you don’t know where you are. For instance, when we arrived in Italy, we arrived by boat. You couldn’t in any way know where you are. That is why you should look for your place on the map.” Another one says that “[w]e had a person or two who knew in GPS. They were always trying to find us a road that is away from others on GPS.” Nearly all the interviewees mentioned they have used GPS and digital maps, whether with or without internet connection, to know the way they should take to reach their destination.

Incidental Information Encounters

All the above mentioned are examples of information that refugees actively searched for during their journeys and the methods adopted to have this information, but the interview participants also received information unintentionally. The types of unintentional information refugees got were also about the road or how to avoid danger on the road. For example, one interviewee narrates about their journey and says, “it was horrifying. There were bandits on the road. And we used to hear about bandits.” Unintentional information, like talking about bandits lurking on the way, cannot be dismissed by refugees because of its gravity and the possible effects it has

on their lives. The following quote also demonstrates how refugees met these kinds of information and how it affected their choices:

IF: I didn't walk into Hungary because it was really hard to enter Hungary, and from every 100 persons who entered Hungary, only one person could escape.

TQ: How did you know?

IF: Because I saw many people in Serbia, specifically, in the hotel in which I sat. Every day around 20 or 30 persons came back to the hotel. 'we were in Hungary and they expelled us' or 'we were 20 persons, 10 could escape and we got caught' and such things.

The same interviewee explains that, after hearing this, s/he hired a man who has a car to get them to the borders of Austria, so that no one would catch them.

One of the interview participants didn't receive unintentional information in their journey because they traveled alone with some other persons, not in large groups like some of the other interviewees did. However, this did not come without a cost. By traveling in a small group, this interviewee got isolated from potential sources of unintentional information such the ones mentioned above. Later this interview participant explains how they faced a gang of criminals on the road.

A female interviewee adds something really important regarding unintentional information she heard. She narrates how in her journey she brought with her what she called "white weapons" like pepper spray and an electricity taser for fear of sexual violence. When asked whether she brought these things just for fear of the smuggler, the interviewee responded:

IF: In Turkey, when they see that you are a lone girl, you become weakened from the other sides. I mean, they think of you as lacking strength and such. So, you become forced to buy such things.

TQ: Was it you who felt that?

IF: I didn't feel that so much, but the girls whom I met were sexually exploited. Those who were alone.

Her exposure to unintentional information from other female refugees made her more cautious. However, none of the other five male interviewees mentioned his fear regarding this aspect. Maybe this has to do with the fact that it is culturally prohibited for men to talk of such a fear, or maybe this has to do with lack of sufficient information regarding all the possible dangers that may face these people on the road. This can be an example of the taboos that J. David Johnson (2009) talked about. David Johnson argues that taboos are "... things that societies agree should not be known by their members because they threaten their underlying premises" (ibid, p. 601). He places "taboos" in his mapping of ignorance and human information behavior as the most purposefully avoided kinds of information (ibid, p. 600). That none of the male interviewees have mentioned anything about the fear of sexual violence during their journeys could be thought of as an instance of purposeful avoidance of such a sensitive topic.

Rumors

This last point can also be connected to the third category that I will discuss here, namely unintentional reception of information that may or may not be true. This is best described with the following example. An interviewee narrates what happened when they wanted to take the boat from Greece to Italy, and they say:

IF: When it is time to go, you will not have the choice to go back. Even if you want to go back, those who are taking you out will not let you do that. So, you have to choose between death by their hands or death by the sea, which will also give you the opportunity to arrive [safe].

TQ: Were there threats of death if you wanted to go back? Or did you think so?

IF: That was what people used to say, but it didn't happen in front of me that someone wanted to go back, and they wouldn't allow him/her.

This kind of information may be labeled as “rumors.” However, in this situation the interviewee preferred to believe this rumor rather than take a risk that may cost him/her dearly.

Avoiding Information

All of the previously mentioned quotes are examples on which kind of information the interviewee got and how. However, another theme popped up during the interviews, which is avoidance of information. When answering the questions regarding their interests during their journeys, one interviewee said:

IF: I'll tell you something. Any human being, when it comes to his/her life, s/he will not think about anything else in his/her life. We didn't even think about the medical aspect. So, imagine which degree you have reached. If something happened, I wouldn't know what to do or there was no one to help me.

In this example, the interview participant chose to shut out all other kinds of information which they consider irrelevant to their journey of survival. This can be contrasted with what another interviewee said when answering the same question:

IF: We followed a lot the news about the laws of asylum in Europe and how they had been changing during that period. I still remember that when I arrived in Greece, Denmark had changed its laws of residency from permanent residency to temporary conditional residency. Germany began to ignore Italy's and Hungary's fingerprints. Those were the news we followed a lot.

However, this same interviewee considered such information of crucial importance for their future, safety, or security as a human being:

IF: Safety as a place without struggle, war, or crisis or whatever, safety in relation to the future. Since one is starting his/her life from zero, s/he should be sure that the place s/he is going to will be suitable for him/her. S/he should know that s/he can integrate with it and that it will be his/her future. It may never change again.

Thus, even though this interview participant looked for other kinds of information than those regarding the road, it was all related to survival, even if it is survival in the

future. However, s/he did not mention being interested in other types of information during the journey.

Case, Andrews, Johnson, and Allard (2005) discuss the concept of information avoidance and show that self-efficacy is an important factor in deciding whether to seek or avoid information. By “self-efficacy” the authors mean “... [people’s] own ability to carry out effective responses...” to “threatening messages”, for instance (Case *et al.* 2005, p. 355). “Self-efficacy” also means “... people’s degree of control over events...” (ibid. p. 358). They show that “if people do not believe that knowing more about a topic will allow them to effect a change, then they are not likely to seek information” (ibid. p. 358). Moreover, the authors illustrate that sometimes people avoid knowing because they do not want to be in the position of making hard choices because of their knowledge, like what happens in some cases of illness (ibid.).

J. David Johnson (2009) also highlights the concept of self-efficacy in discussing information avoidance. He adds another factor in choosing what to know, and that is the effort factor. He shows that people tend not to exert great effort in knowing things because this means less disappointment and less responsibility and guilt as a result for their choices.

Case *et al.* and David Johnson show, also, that in order for people to seek information, they should know they are ignorant first, and the information needed should be “salient” (2005, p. 358, 2009, p.598). However, in the case of the refugees in my study I would like to add the factor of time. During their journey, the refugees may have avoided information because of their feelings of helplessness in that situation, or lack of self-efficacy. They may have been ignorant of other information needs they may have had. However, they definitely did not have the time during their journeys to try to analyze these needs. During such tiring journeys as the ones they describe, time becomes a decisive factor, which many refugees do not have, in selecting what kinds of information to seek or avoid. Self-efficacy, effort, and lack of time all contributed to limit the refugees’ abilities to analyze their information needs and to seek new information.

Sources of Information

In the examples listed above, and in many other examples mentioned during the interviews, people were the main source of information for the interviewees. Case *et al.* (2005) say that “what information seekers are concerned about is the content of the information, not the channel through which it arrives. However, people have a strong preference for information that comes directly from other people” (358). This does not accord with the cases of the refugees in this study. Some of the interviewees evaluated the information they received based on the source from which it came. For instance, one interview participant once read news on a Facebook group that the country they were heading to had deployed ten thousand soldiers along the borders. The interviewee chose not to believe this because they thought that the one who published it lived in another country and, thus, could not know what was happening along the borders where the interviewee was staying. Furthermore, the interview participant stated that s/he doubted this information because it was not an official TV channel that published it. This shows how the source of information was really

important for the asylum seekers during their journeys. This can, also, be considered an avoidance of further information since, if it was true, it would have been very hard to deal with. Thus, the interviewee chose to dismiss it as nonsensical and not to look for further information.

Sweden

In Sweden, all the interview participants were interested in getting information about the situation in Syria and about the laws in Sweden. These could be general laws, migration laws, work laws or laws regarding students. The interviewees also showed interest in knowing about and following Swedish politics. Two of the interviewees explained that they were not interested in other kinds of information. For instance, one of them said the following, “more than politics, laws, and the social situation? Of course there is nothing that interests me.” This person actually stated that other kinds of information that may have been interesting for him/her could be known from reading about the laws. However, during the interview, this interview participant stated their interest in reading novels, especially Arabic ones. Nonetheless, they did not seem to consider novels as a type of information sources, and neither did they mention sources for finding out about which novels to read. Another interviewee was only interested in news, laws, and how to learn the Swedish language. This interviewee did not mention being interested in other types of information. Here, we can see the avoidance mechanism at work again. This time, these two interview participants avoid other kinds of information, namely, the ones that are not related to their situation as refugees in a new land, for example, cultural information.

Nonetheless, unlike their situations during their journeys, this time, almost all of the interviewees have explicitly stated their usage of various information sources to know as much as they can about what they are concerned with. For example, one interviewee is a student and is interested in CSN⁴ and the different regulations regarding student aid. When they were asked about how they gathered information regarding this, they said:

IF: I entered myself into CSN [website] and began searching. I saw that this was the easiest way. Ya, so I gathered this information, but still when I asked people, they told me that people are taking more because if someone is over 25 years old or under 26 years old [this differs]. I couldn't find this information on CSN website, so I tried to inquire. I called them. He talked with me a bit and it looked like it differs between people according to points. Then, the phone call disconnected. The other thing is that /.../ I wanted to apply for a study support called “studiestart stöd” but I didn't know I should be unemployed. When I contacted CSN, they told me you should have been unemployed for six months, so I couldn't get that.

This interview participant actively seeks information from different sources. Furthermore, when s/he encountered a rumor that may affect their financial situation, and thus their ability to continue their studies, s/he searched through other information channels to make sure of it.

⁴ The Swedish Board of Student Finance (Swedish: Centrala studiestödsnämnden, CSN), is a Swedish government agency under the Ministry of Education and Research. It is in charge of administration of all matters regarding student aid in Sweden (Wikipedia).

Their constant attempts to get information about the laws and Swedish politics reveal the interviewees' sense of being in danger. This feeling resembles to an extent the same feelings they had during their escape to safety and can best be exemplified by the words of the following two interviewees. The first one worked in the legal and juridical field in Syria. S/he uses Facebook to follow the groups of the far-right and extreme far-right parties in Sweden. S/he explains that s/he tries to find and understand the laws that allow these parties to exist and "the text they have depended on to create the party. This can be boring for many people, but I feel this is security [for me]." During the interview, this interview participant expresses their fear of how these parties may affect his/her life.

Another interviewee says that s/he follows the news on the situation in Syria and Swedish news. Regarding Sweden, s/he tries to know about "[p]olitical news like the elections, for example, news about migration, the crimes happening in Sweden, the new laws that are changing." This person continues and says, "I fear a lot changing the laws in Sweden." Even the interviewee quoted earlier in the "avoiding information" section considers knowing about these things as a kind of "safety."

Even though the refugees have reached Sweden safe and sound, their information needs show that they are still afraid and that they are still adopting the mentality of people being on the run. This is one reason that makes some of them focus only on one type of information and shut out other "irrelevant" information, just like what they did during their journeys. This can, also, affect their feelings of trust towards their surroundings and the people around them, which will be further explored in a later section in this thesis.

Family

One of the themes that came up in all of the interviews and whose importance was expressed by all of the interviewees is that of the family. However, to understand the importance of the family-related information activities of the refugees during their journeys and while in Sweden, it is important to shed light on these activities during the interviewees' life in Syria.

Syria

In Syria, the familial relations were and are strong in the sense that a family member's presence and interaction with the other family members all of the time is of great importance. For instance, when an interviewee was asked about the way in which they got social information, s/he answered the following:

IF: all people ask about the others always, be it friends or the family, they gather always and tell each other what is happening with them or with other people. You are living with the social news. You need not request it, and this is what is missing here.

Another interviewee narrated the same thing when they were asked about whether or not they were interested in their relatives' news and how they got to know about them. S/he says:

IF: Of course. We used to stay in contact. It is true that we had to work, but after work people must go and visit their relatives. For example, one used to visit a lot the family, which are the grandfather and grandmother. Always, every week, the family should gather and meet. One hears news.

Still, a third interview participant explained, “I will not say I was interested in the crisis and war in Syria. I just followed the information to be assured that my family was ok.” This person explains in the interview that s/he was tired of the news about the war in Syria and that is why they tried to block such kinds of information. However, when such information could affect their family, getting assured about the family took priority over avoidance of disturbing information.

The Journey

This interest in being in touch with the family did not change during the journey. I will quote here three interviewees. However, it is important to keep in mind that all of the interviewees expressed the importance of communicating with their families during their journeys. First, one interviewee was engaged in defending people’s civil rights against one of the fighting sides in Syria. S/he became wanted and, thus, escaped from the country. S/he was afraid that when they would come after him/her and not find him/her, they would instead take the interviewee’s sibling. S/he states that “[my] only care was that my sibling would go out before things got worse.” When asked if s/he had other interests during the journey, they responded, “Principally, I was only interested in my family.” This accords with what Case *et al.* (2005) say about information in relation to anxiety and uncertainty, “[s]o acquiring information is to be desired not merely for its instrumental value (i.e., ‘doing something’ about a potential threat), but also for its emotional value (e.g., feeling assured that the threat is not imminent)” (p. 355). This, also, confirms what has been discussed earlier regarding the refugees’ avoidance of other information during their journeys because this type of information helped in the refugee’s emotional survival.

Another interview participant narrates how they were caught while they were trying to cross the borders between two countries and were put in prison. When I asked him/her about whether they got any information in prison and how, this person answered, “[i]n this prison, we had an hour every day where we could use the computers in the prison. I used them to contact my family on Facebook, and I told them that I was in prison.” This person knew s/he would get out of prison but did not know when. However, the only thing s/he cared about was to contact their family.

The same thing happened with the third interviewee, but in a different context:

TQ: What were the things that you were interested in knowing in this journey? Beside finding the people who would get you across the borders?

IF: To communicate with your family, for example. To assure them that you are alive. This was the biggest struggle. In each of my first two attempts [to get into Greece], I told my family that I wanted to go to Greece. However, when I saw how afraid they were every time, I didn’t tell them the third time. So, when I arrived, I just told them “ok, now I am in Greece.” So, you want to

communicate with your family, the one you are engaged to, or your partner. That was the most one was interested in.

This interviewee could see how afraid their family was every time s/he told them that s/he was about to take the boat into Greece. That is why s/he abstained from telling them about this the third time. In these last two quotes, the interviewees were not receivers of information. They were rather information providers, or restrainers as in the last example.

Most of the interviewees said they are still contacting their families, even after they arrived in Sweden. Four of them mentioned this in the interviews, and one interview participant mentioned this after the interview. The methods in which these people contact their families are all internet services, like WhatsApp and Facebook messenger. Kaufmann's (2018) paper, mentioned earlier in the literature review section, shows also how important it is for the refugees in her study to stay in contact with their family. She demonstrates how this is an emotionally empowering act for both the individual in Vienna and their family in other countries. Just like the interviewees in my study, the persons in Kaufmann's study were also dependent on online and mobile communication services to stay in contact with their families. Mansour's (2018) study of Syrian refugees in Egypt stresses the same idea, as well.

Thus, family was and is still important in the information practices of the refugees while they were in Syria, during their journeys, and in Sweden. In Syria, family provided the interview participants with social and other types of information. However, during the journey it was refugees who provided their families with information or restrained this information from them. Contacting the family was also emotionally important for the refugees during their journey and helped them focus on their survival.

Trust and Mistrust

The nature of the subject of this thesis necessitated the inquiry about the interview participants' trust in various information sources and their trust in other human beings and what they say in different contexts. I will divide this section into two parts. The first one will handle the question of trust during the journey which the refugees took to come to Sweden. The second part will discuss trust and mistrust patterns regarding information sources and human beings here in Sweden.

The Journey

The interviewees expressed their mistrust in the information they received during their journeys and which was related to it in one way or another. For example, one interview participant narrates about how people they met on the road used to inform them about the safety of different train stations and whether or not there was police at them. These people spoke Arabic. When I asked whether the interviewee believed them, s/he said, "Sometimes yes and sometimes no. One couldn't distinguish the right from the wrong, or what could possibly happen or not happen. At the end a person becomes desperate." I asked him/her, then, about whether s/he trusted the people smuggler. S/he answered:

IF: Actually, no. That is why we divided ourselves into two groups. One group stayed behind because they didn't have the money to go with us and the other group went with the smuggler. The first group saved our money with them so that when we reached our destination, we called them and told them to give the money to the smuggler.

It is interesting here that even though this interviewee was suspicious about what other people said and distrusted the smuggler, still they entrusted their money to other people who were not their relatives or friends.

Another interview participant recounts how, before leaving one of the countries and starting his/her journey, they tried to get as much information as possible about the situation on the road, what may happen to them, and what to do:

IF: When I decided to go out, I contacted people who had actually arrived in Sweden. /.../ Then, I kept asking and inquiring until I reached people who actually had arrived and who were really trusted. I mean whatever they told me I knew [it was true].

TQ: How did you know they were trustworthy?

IF: Through people whom I trust. I contacted them and asked them about the road, and they explained to me everything. I intended to get out, afterwards.

This person describes afterwards how s/he had a friend who accompanied him/her and who introduced him/her to the people smuggler. When I asked him/her if that made them trust this person, they answered:

IF: Of course, because my friend is coming with me. It's not like he sent me alone to this man. What will befall him will befall me.

TQ: Didn't you ask yourself how your friend could trust this man?

IF: I asked him more than once, and he assured me that "we will not give him any money until we arrive." We kept our money with us, and in Greece we paid for him through another person.

This person continues with their story and tells me of another incident in which they resorted to a people smuggler to get them across the borders between two countries. I asked the interviewee, again, if they trusted this man. S/he answered, "Actually I didn't know him, and I took the risk because I didn't have any other choice. I was forced to do that." Again, we can see here the feelings of despair the refugee had and how they took priority over trust/mistrust and how this was negotiated as an informational issue. The same thing happened with the interviewee quoted at the beginning of this section.

The same notions of (mis)trust and despair could be discerned in what the next interviewee says in the following quote:

TQ: Weren't you afraid in Turkey, of this smuggler?

IF: Yes, of course, but, at the end, the person will just have to take the risk. There should be the spirit of adventure.

TQ: Was it the same thing in Greece? Or were you a little bit more assured since someone had given you his name?

IF: I was more assured, especially since it was by plane.

This person explained that s/he got their information about the people smuggler in Turkey from people whom s/he did not know while, in Greece, s/he received such information from people s/he knew and some of them were even family. When s/he was asked whether s/he doubted those people in Turkey, those who guided him/her to the people smuggler, this interview participant answered, “Yes, of course, [I doubted them] but still I went.”

A fourth interviewee expresses their distrust in the people smuggler and, still, stresses how s/he discarded their feelings in order to survive:

TQ: How could you know that this smuggler can be trusted?

IF: You cannot know

TQ: And you still went with him

IF: This is part of the risk that you are taking in order to arrive to safety. You were forced to do this. Many people had been deceived and lied on.

When this interview participant was asked about how s/he could distinguish between trustworthy and untrustworthy news, s/he explained that they contacted people they knew “... because you want to make sure whether the information is true or not,” as s/he put it.

Thus, we can see that the interview participants could not really trust neither information nor people whom they did not know during their journeys. It, also, seems like the credibility of the information was connected to that of the persons who provided it. If the interviewees knew the persons who provided the information and found them trustworthy, they also trusted their information, to some extent at least. Again, this does not agree with what Case *et al.* (2005) say about how people are more concerned with the information content than the channels through which it is delivered (p. 358). Furthermore, it seems that feelings of despair took priority over mistrust in others. The refugees simply suppressed their (mis)trust in information and people when they were faced with situations in which they had no choice.

Sweden

This section is divided into two parts. In the first one, I discuss the interviewees’ trust or mistrust regarding the credibility of different sources of information. In the second part, I examine the interview participants’ trust or mistrust in other people here in Sweden.

As was illustrated earlier, the types of information that are interesting for the interviewees in Sweden are mostly related to politics and news, and the general

tendency among these persons is not to believe everything they read or hear immediately. The interviewees follow different routes in evaluating the credibility of the news they get. First, they check the information through different channels, and then they check it in the official sources. For example, when asked about whether they trust the news on Facebook, one interview participant answered:

IF: No, it is generally when you read the news in several pages, then you can doubt that it is true. Then, you see if they have brought the news from a trusted page, like a Swedish page that belongs to the government or something. Then, I can be sure that the thing is true. Otherwise, there are many fake news that are published.

TQ: Do you mean like, when you see such a piece of news, that you go to the Swedish page or do you check if they are providing the link?

IF: Exactly. I check if the link is there, and I check from several pages to see if what is being said is true or not, if the news really interests me.

When this person was asked if s/he trusts all the news in Swedish, they answered, “No, of course not. But if the page is documented, like having the extension ‘.se’, and it belongs to the government, then it is absolutely trusted.” Thus, if there were no official links provided to the news, this interviewee evaluates the credibility of what s/he reads based on the number of sources in which the piece of news appears.

The second route followed to check the credibility of the news is experience. For instance, one of the interview participants said they follow “Alkompis”⁵ page on Facebook to stay updated regarding news and politics in Sweden. This person says, “In my opinion, you can say that ‘Alkompis’ has around 90% credibility in news.” Then, I asked them about how they can know this. S/he answered:

IF: At first, I wasn’t sure they had credibility. But, for instance, in 2016, when the law about temporary residency came out, they published the news and made interviews with officials at the migration agency and said that is what is going to happen. Later, everything they said happened. From this, I knew they had credibility.

When it comes to information that may affect them or their lives directly, this person mentions that they go to official websites to check if the news they heard were true or not, “[i]f I want to know about something in relation to migration, for example, I go to the migration’s page, the official page. They have things in Arabic.”

Another interview participant also has stated that they first get their information through Facebook, and, then, they check it on other websites, which is the third route of getting information. When this interviewee has been asked about how they get to know about details regarding CSN, since they are also students, s/he has answered:

IF: Most of the time, I use the internet and Google. I think Google is the biggest way because people information is always wrong. Google is also sometimes wrong, but what isn’t wrong is the main website for what you are looking for. For example, if you search for CSN, then there must be a website for CSN. So, you can enter and read the information.

⁵ A Swedish news service that publish in Arabic in Sweden

Here again, we see lack of trust in what people say and the attempt to confirm the information from official sources. However, this same person, when asked about whether they adopt the same methods in getting information about Syria, stated:

IF: There are still people whom I know from the opposition to the regime in the country. There are people from the regime whom I still know. Those are news from normal people. Also, it is possible news from the news that tv and newspapers publish, that indescribable news, you know, that have nothing important. No one tells the truth except the social media, which is Facebook. People write their pain, Tareq.

The difference between these two situations mentioned by this interviewee is that, in the second example, the interviewee does not trust what the media says about Syria and prefers to receive such information from people directly. In the first quote, on the other hand, s/he actually trusts official Swedish information sources and prefers to get their information from these sources rather than from people who may have confusing information, especially if such information is about Sweden or may directly affect their ways of life in Sweden in one way or another.

In all these examples, the reader can see that the interview participants trust and actually seek information from official Swedish sources of information, especially if this information has an impact on their lives in Sweden. However, they are hesitant to trust other channels of information. Nonetheless, this is not the case when it comes to information about Syria, as we see in the last quote. This can be attributed to the lack of trusted sources of information that could provide credible news about the situation in Syria, which makes the last interviewee mentioned resort to what people say on social media to look for the information they want.

Here, I will discuss the interviewees' trust in other people in Sweden. This discussion is based on what happened before or after the interviews and even on what happened during the recruitment process for this study. This type of information is missing from the transcriptions. What is discussed here reveals much regarding the refugees' trust patterns as information providers. During the process of recruiting participants for this study, my interview participants and I had to negotiate a trust relationship around the information they were going to share with me. Not everybody I contacted was comfortable with the situation.

First, one of the possible volunteers expressed their consent to participate in my study after I explained to them what this thesis will be about and its purpose. S/he, then, asked me to send them the interview guide to read it so they can be ready. After sending the questions, I contacted this person to set a date for the interview. However, their answer was that they cannot participate in this study because it requires from them sharing information that they consider sensitive and are not ready to share with others. Even though when I contacted this person, I explained the confidentiality principle and the different research-related ethical codes under which I am obliged to work.

Second, one of the interview participants expressed their wish not to go deep into politics during the interview and their fear of doing so. This happened even after I

assured them that this study would be handled confidentially and that their names would be anonymized.

Third, during the recruitment process, I sent an agreement to the interview participant to sign, as mentioned above in the methodology section. I asked the participants to sign that paper and stressed that fact that it will not be published. However, two interviewees were doubtful and hesitant to sign the paper. One of them even expressed their fear and objection at first. At the end, and after assuring them for several times, they agreed to sign it. They also expressed their approval verbally at the beginning of the interviews. All these incidents reveal much about the refugee's trust patterns as information providers.

Furthermore, the importance of trust in other people is crucial in these persons' practices of Swedish citizenship. As mentioned earlier, McLeod (2015) stresses the importance of trust in democratic societies and how such societies encourage trust among their individuals. Moreover, trust between individuals in a society strengthens this society's economy and social relationships. This can be contrasted, for instance, with oppressive societies where trust in others is low (McLeod 2015).

Vårheim (2014), who studies the effect of public library use on general trust among refugees in Norway, mentions also that levels of general trust are low among refugees. Even those who use public libraries and trust their users, tend not to trust people outside the building of the library. He also stresses the importance of trust in building social capitals in societies.

Nonetheless, it is important to remember here that we are talking about refugees who escaped war and life-threatening situations both in their countries and during their journeys to Sweden. McLeod mentions that it is reasonable for people who went through trauma to question who they can trust, if ever to trust anyone again. She explains, "thus, the question, 'Ought I to trust?' is particularly pertinent (though not restricted) to a somewhat odd mix of people that includes victims of infidelity, abuse, or the like, as well as foreign immigrants and travelers." (McLeod 2015).

To summarize this section, when it comes to information about Sweden, the interview participants showed their mistrust in different information sources that were not official. Many of them stressed the fact that they resorted to official Swedish websites and other official sources to verify the truthfulness of the information they received. When it came to information about their home country, one interviewee mentioned their mistrust in what conventional media said and, instead, put their trust in what people wrote on social media. When the refugees took the role of the information providers, they showed their mistrust in other people, which can be understandable if we take into consideration the various difficult situations these people went through before coming to Sweden.

Public Libraries

Part of this study is done to explore the role of the public library as an information source for Syrian refugees in Scania and their perceptions of it as such. To get a better idea of how the persons use the library in Sweden, I will first mention briefly how

they used it and thought of it in their home country. The topic of the refugees' library usage was an interesting question for me during the first stages of this research. However, during the interviews, and the analysis process, this did not emerge as clearly as the other themes. I think this in itself can be meaningful because it highlights the role of public libraries, or its absence, in these people's lives

Previous Usage

Four of the interviewees stated that they never used the public libraries in Syria. One of them said that they preferred to buy the books they want to read because s/he like to keep what s/he had read and because s/he likes to underline and comment on the books. Another interview participant said that s/he did not have a reading habit at all even though s/he stated previously that s/he read the newspapers s/he got at work while in Syria.

One of the remaining two interviewees said that s/he used the national public library in Syria (Al-Assad National Library) only two times. These two times were related to study or academic purposes. When asked why they did not go to the library, the response was:

IF: Why? Because we have only one library, whose name is Al-Assad library, which all people know, and which you are not allowed to take any book from. Because if you want to borrow any book, you need to make legal procedures as if you are taking a bank loan. The books were not rich [in information]. We had many books prohibited. For example, the religion books are specified [in number and quality]. You cannot take religion books.

Obviously, the library did not trust its patrons with its material, nor did it give them the possibility to browse different titles.

Only one interview participant mentioned that they used the public library in Syria. S/he used it when s/he was in high school to sit there and study with their friends. S/he mentioned also that this library arranged some language and computer courses, but s/he did not enroll in any of them even though they sounded good. This person cannot remember, however, whether these courses were free or paid.

Current Usage

In Sweden, most of the interviewees said they use public libraries. These persons use it to borrow books. However, all of them think the materials in these libraries should be improved both in quality and quantity. One of the interview participants, for example, thinks that learning books are not suitable for them. Furthermore, s/he thinks that some of the materials are really old and does not meet the current learning needs of refugees. As examples of such materials, this person talks about books in Arabic, about books on learning Swedish, and about books that would help them enter the job market.

Another interviewee who uses the library when they do not find what they are looking for on the internet thinks that public libraries need to have better materials that discuss the current situations of refugees and their countries. S/he expresses their wish to see such materials in different languages. This person's main concern is that

libraries should provide new materials that help Swedish citizens get a better idea regarding refugees and the situation in their homelands.

One person mentions that s/he visited the public library only once, and that s/he did not find anything interesting. This person mentions that when it comes to different books, s/he buys them outside of Sweden, like when visiting another country or by asking someone to buy the books for them because, as s/he says, it is cheaper this way.

In short, there is a considerable change in the interviewees' attitudes towards and usage of public libraries between their homelands and Sweden. This is part of the information-related practices of these persons. In Syria, libraries were not thought of as a possible or valid source of information. This is reasonable since public libraries did not really trust their users and had limited materials. This has changed after coming to Sweden. Even though the interviewees consider Swedish public libraries need to get better in some respects, their suggestions reveal their interest in public libraries as an information source.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, I studied the most important information-related practices of Syrian refugees in Sweden, represented by six Syrians living in Scania county, Sweden, both during their journeys and after arrival in Sweden. Here, I summarize the discussion and the findings of this paper based on the theoretical approach of information practices and taken from a thematic analysis perspective. This chapter answers the research questions posed at the beginning of this paper. At the end, I also list some of the questions that can be subjects for further research in the future.

- *Which information activities can be discerned as relevant for Syrian refugees in Sweden, during their journey and after arrival? What shapes and governs these activities?*

First, the interviews show that one of the prominent factors that has shaped the Syrian refugees' information-related behavior is survival. During their journeys, the interviewees were in constant search for safety, be it an essential and physical safety, like finding water or avoiding danger, or an emotional and psychological one, like knowing what may happen to them in one land or another. The interviewees shared their mistrust in the information sources they encountered during their journeys, and, based on that, they decided many of the next steps to be taken.

During their journey, the participants received information through two main ways. First, they actively sought information. Second, they encountered information. Some of this information was rumor. However, some of these persons decided to believe these rumors and follow the least risky path according to what they heard.

Avoiding information was also an important part of this journey. The refugees avoided information that was not related to their situation on the road or to their safety. Possible causes for such an avoidance can be their feelings of lack of self-efficacy, their preference not to invest much effort in something that may fail, and lack of time.

Other people were the main sources of information for the interviewees during their journeys. However, who to trust more exactly and who not to was subject to complicated deliberations. Many of my interview participants expressed their hesitation in believing what they heard if it did not come from trusted people. This shows that during the journeys the source of information was something more important than the information itself and that they cannot be separated from each other.

In Sweden, the theme of survival also dominates the types of information the interviewees sought. For example, they all want to know about the situation in Syria

and the laws and politics in Sweden. Many of them search for this information to see how it can affect their lives. However, unlike the situation on their journeys, the study participants began diversifying their sources of information after coming to Sweden.

Family and being in touch with the family influenced the interviewees' information-related practices as well. In Syria, family was important to these people. For instance, daily or weekly contact with many family members provided a source of social information for the interview participants. However, during the journeys the refugees became the information providers for their families, and, in some cases, information restrainers from their families.

- *How is trust (and mistrust) navigated in these activities and in relation to which larger practices?*

(Mis)trust characterized the information-related practices of all the interviewees. During their journeys, they trusted neither people whom they did not know nor the information these people provided. This had implications for their behavior regarding what they wanted to do. However, feelings of despair neutralized the effects of mistrust in information sources. When desperate, the refugees did not care about the trustworthiness or credibility of the information sources. They just wanted to survive.

In Sweden, the interviewees express their trust in Swedish official information sources. Many of them show their lack of trust in other sources of information. The interview participants follow different ways to evaluate the credibility of the information they receive. Some of them go to the official sources if possible. Some others depend on their experiences with the information sources. Still others google the information they want and try to get to official websites. However, when it comes to information about Syria and the situation there, it looks like social media was the preferred channel of information among some of my interviewees.

Most of the interviewees, and even the ones I contacted, but who did not participate in this study, expressed their lack of trust in other people, even if they came from the same country and shared the same experiences. This lack of trust in other people can affect larger practices like citizenship and the social integration. However, these feelings of mistrust can be justifiable when talking about people who went through traumatic experiences.

- *What role, if any, do they assign to public libraries in Syria and Sweden?*

In the first stages of this project, I wanted to explore the role of public libraries in the lives of Syrian refugees. However, nothing much was mentioned about this subject except that there was a change in the usage of public libraries between Syria and Sweden. Almost none of the interviewees used public libraries in Syria. Lack of trust was one reason for that. In Sweden, many of them use public libraries in one way or another. However, most of the study participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the available media and wished that these libraries could provide more relevant books for them. Not mentioning the library as a source of information or not considering it as such is an interesting area that future research may focus on instead of just interviewing those who use the library and who are satisfied with it.

Further Research

In this short section I suggest some topics that are potentially interesting for future research based on the findings of my study. First, I think that more research should be carried out on how refugees dealt with information about possible dangers of sexual violence during their journeys. Especially interesting is to see how male refugees have dealt with such information.

Secondly, it would also be worthwhile to elucidate in future research how women with refugee background dealt with different kinds of information during their journeys, in their home countries, and in their host countries.

Thirdly, as mentioned above, not considering the library as a source of information by some refugees can be an interesting subject for future research.

Fourth, further research should examine whether Swedish organizations, like public libraries, take into consideration the issue of lack of trust when dealing with refugees and how they do that.

Finally, it is of great importance to examine how trust, or lack of it, on the part of refugees can shape other larger social practices. Does trust/mistrust affect only those concerned with it? Or does this have implications for society as a whole?

Reference List

- Adkins, D., Sandy, H. M. & Derpic, J. (2017). Information Sources of Latin American Immigrants in the Rural Midwest in the Trump Era. *Library Quarterly*, 87(3), pp. 243–256. doi: 10.1086/692301.
- Ahrne, G. and Svensson, P. (2011) *Handbok i kvalitativa metoder*. Malmö : Liber, 2011 (Egypten).
- Andersson, E. (2018). *Bibliotekariers uppfattningar om folkbiblioteket som en plats för integration av nyanlända barn och unga: En intervjustudie*. Master, Faculty of Librarianship, Information, Education and IT. Borås: Högskolan i Borås. URN: [urn:nbn:se:hb:diva-14647](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:se:hb:diva-14647)
- Aronsson, B. & Eliasson, M. (1997). *Det mångkulturella biblioteket: En studie av invandrades biblioteksvanor vid Biskopsgårdens bibliotek i Göteborg*. Master, Institutionen Biblioteks- och informationsvetenskap. Borås: Högskolan i Borås. URN: [urn:nbn:se:hb:diva-115](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:se:hb:diva-115)
- Beretta, P., Sayyad Abdi, E. & Bruce, C. (2018). Immigrants' information experiences: an informed social inclusion framework. *Journal of the Australian Library & Information Association*, 67(4), pp. 373–393. doi: 10.1080/24750158.2018.1531677.
- Case, D. O., Andrews, J. E., Johnson, J. D., & Allard, S. L. (2005). Avoiding versus seeking: the relationship of information seeking to avoidance, blunting, coping, dissonance, and related concepts. *Journal of the Medical Library Association: JMLA*, 93(3), 353.
- Cassells, A. (2011). *Online behaviours, offline implications: A window into the use of the Internet for health among immigrant women in Malmo*. Master, Department of Communication and Media. Lund: Lunds universitet.
- Cox, A. M. (2012). An exploration of the practice approach and its place in information science. *Journal of Information Science*, 38(2), pp. 176–188. doi: 10.1177/0165551511435881.
- Cox, A. M. (2013). Information in social practice: A practice approach to understanding information activities in personal photography. *Journal of Information Science*, 39(1), pp. 61–72. doi: 10.1177/0165551512469767.
- David Johnson, J. (2009). An impressionistic mapping of information behavior with special attention to contexts, rationality, and ignorance. *Information Processing and Management*, 45(5), 593–604. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ipm.2009.04.005>.
- Ericsson, B. & Nordeman, M. (2011). *“Plötsligt var världen här”*: Bibliotek och integration i tre Stockholmsförorter. Master, Institutionen för ABM. Uppsala: Uppsala universitet. URN: [urn:nbn:se:uu:diva-154688](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:se:uu:diva-154688)
- Fisher, K.E., Yefimova, K. & Yafi, E. (2016). Future's Butterflies: Co-Designing ICT Wayfaring Technology with Refugee Syrian Youth. In *Proceedings of*

- The 15th International Conference on Interaction Design and Children* (pp. 25-36). ACM. Doi: 10.1145/2930674.2930701
- Fisher, K.E. & Yafi, E. (2018). Syrian Youth in Za'atari Refugee Camp as ICT Wayfarers: An Exploratory Study Using LEGO and Storytelling. In *Proceedings of the 1st ACM SIGCAS Conference on Computing and Sustainable Societies* (p. 32). ACM. DOI:10.1145/3209811.3209873
- Gherardi, S. (2006). *Organizational knowledge: the texture of workplace learning*. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell.
- Kaufmann, K. (2018). Navigating a new life: Syrian refugees and their smartphones in Vienna. *Information, Communication & Society*, 21(6), pp. 882–898. doi: 10.1080/1369118X.2018.1437205.
- Lloyd, A., Kennan, M.A., Thompson, K.M. & Qayyum, A. (2013). Connecting with new information landscapes: information literacy practices of refugees. *Journal of Documentation*, (1), p. 121. doi: 10.1108/00220411311295351.
- Lloyd, A. (2017). Researching fractured (information) landscapes: Implications for library and information science researchers undertaking research with refugees and forced migration studies. *Journal of Documentation*, 73(1), pp.35-47, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JD-03-2016-0032>
- Mansour, E. (2018). Profiling information needs and behaviour of Syrian refugees displaced to Egypt: An exploratory study. *Information and Learning Science*, 119(3/4), pp. 161-182.
- Martzoukou, K. & Burnett, S. (2018). Exploring the everyday life information needs and the socio-cultural adaptation barriers of Syrian refugees in Scotland, *Journal of Documentation*, 74(5), pp. 1104–1132. doi: 10.1108/JD-10-2017-0142.
- McLeod, C. (2015). Trust. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2015/entries/trust/>.
- Migrationsverket. Asylsökande till Sverige under 2000-2018. <https://www.migrationsverket.se/download/18.4a5a58d51602d141cf41003/1515076326490/Asyls%C3%B6kande%20till%20Sverige%202000-2017.pdf> [2019-01-08]
- Migrationsverket. (2015). *Ordförklaringar*. <https://www.migrationsverket.se/Om-Migrationsverket/Ordforklaringar.html> [2019-02-24]
- Miklo. (2015). "Biblioteket hjälper mig att komma in i samhället". [Available at <http://regionbiblioteket.se/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/miklorapportBibliotekethjalperdigslutver2.pdf>] [2019-02-24]
- Oduntan, O. (2017). Doctoral Student Research Video Competition: Information Behavior of Refugees: Viewing Refugee Integration Through an Information Science Lens. *Bulletin of the Association for Information Science & Technology*, 43(3), pp. 63–69. doi: 10.1002/bul2.2017.1720430320.
- Oğuz, E.S. & Kurbanoğlu, S. (2013) Strengthening Social Inclusion in Multicultural Societies Through Information Literacy. *Bilgi Dünyası*, 14(2), pp. 270-290.

- Pilerot, O. & Lindberg, J. (2018). "Sen går jag hem när det stänger": En studie av nyanländas biblioteksanvändning. Länsbibliotek Uppsala. URN: urn:nbn:se:hb:diva-15456
- Pilerot, O, Hammarfelt, B & Moring, C (2017). The many faces of practice theory in library and information studies. *Information Research*, 22(1), CoLIS paper 1602. Retrieved from <http://InformationR.net/ir/22-1/colis/colis1602.html> (Archived by WebCite® at <http://www.webcitation.org/6oJcNV0JJ>)
- Putnam, R. D. (2007). E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and Community in the Twenty-first Century The 2006 Johan Skytte Prize Lecture. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 30(2), pp. 137–174. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9477.2007.00176.x.
- Putnam, R.D., Feldstein, L.M. & Cohen, D. (2003). *Better together: restoring the American community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Qayyum, M.A., Thompson, K. M., Kennan, M. A., & Lloyd, A. (2014). The provision and sharing of information between service providers and settling refugees. *Information Research*, 19(2) paper 616. [Available at <http://InformationR.net/ir/19-2/paper616.html>]
- Reckwitz, A. (2002) Toward a Theory of Social Practices: A Development in Culturalist Theorizing. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 5(2), pp. 243-263. doi: 10.1177/13684310222225432.
- Robinson, O. (2014). Sampling in Interview-Based Qualitative Research: A Theoretical and Practical Guide. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 11(1), pp. 25–41. doi: 10.1080/14780887.2013.801543.
- Ryan, G. W., & Bernard, H. R. (2003). Techniques to Identify Themes. *Field Methods*, 15(1), 85–109. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X02239569>
- Schatzki, T. R. (1996). *Social practices*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schatzki, T. R. (2001a). Introduction: Practice Theory. In Schatzki, T. R., Knorr-Cetina, K. & Savigny, E. V. (eds.), *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*. Routledge. pp. 1-14.
- Schatzki, T. R. (2001b). Practice Mind-ed Orders. In Schatzki, T. R., Knorr-Cetina, K. & Savigny, E. V. (eds.), *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory*. Routledge. pp. 42-55.
- Schatzki, T. R. (2002). *The site of the social*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Shepherd, J., Petrillo, L. & Wilson, A. (2018). Settling in: how newcomers use a public library. *Library Management*, 39(8), pp. 583–596. doi: 10.1108/LM-01-2018-0001.
- Stenquist, B. (2018). *Kliv fram! Bibliotek, segregation och integration*. Available at: https://nationellbiblioteksstrategi.blogg.kb.se/files/2018/05/Kliv_fram_webb.pdf
- Sweden (2019). Sweden and Migration. <https://sweden.se/migration/#2015> [2019-01-08]
- Teleman, M. (2018). *Folkbiblioteken och de nyanlända: Integrationsarbete i praktiken*. Master, Faculty of Librarianship, Information, Education and IT. Borås: Högskolan i Borås. URN: <urn:nbn:se:hb:diva-14193>
- Trost, J (2005). *Kvalitativa intervjuer*. 3. ed. Lund: Studentlitteratur.
- van der Linden, K., Bartlett, J. and Beheshti, J. (2014). New Immigrants' Perceptions and Awareness of Public Library Services. *Canadian Journal of*

Information & Library Sciences, 38(2), pp. 65–79. doi:
10.1353/ils.2014.0008.

United Nations Higher Commissioner for Refugees. <https://www.unhcr.org/asylum-and-migration.html> [2019-01-08]

Vårheim, A. (2014). Trust and the role of the public library in the integration of refugees: The case of a Northern Norwegian city. *Journal of Librarianship & Information Science*, 46(1), pp. 62–69. doi:
10.1177/0961000614523636.

Widerberg, Karin (2002). *Kvalitativ forskning i praktiken*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Zimmerman, M. S. (2018). Information horizons mapping to assess the health literacy of refugee and immigrant women in the USA. *Information Research*, 23(4), pp. 1–21. Available at:

[http://ludwig.lub.lu.se/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com.ludwig.lub.lu.se/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lih&AN=133569224&site=eds-live&scope=site](http://ludwig.lub.lu.se/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/ludwig.lub.lu.se/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lih&AN=133569224&site=eds-live&scope=site) (Accessed: 24 February 2019).

Appendix 1

Interview guide

An introduction about the research and its context

This interview will be confidential, and your name will be anonymized. No information will hint at your identity. The research is academic. I will record and then transcribe this conversation to use for the research's purposes.

Do you agree to continue with interview now after you have been informed about the purpose of this research? Can I record the conversation?

Background information

How old are you?

When did you come to Sweden?

What do you do in Sweden? Study, work ... etc.

What did you do in your country or other countries before coming to Sweden?

How do you assess your Swedish? And standard Arabic?

Information practices and needs in homeland

What were you interested in knowing in your home country?

How did you get to know about that? How did you know about what is happening in relation to this?

How did news reach you? E.g. laws, health issues, politics, war, ...?

The journey

Can you tell me how you came to Sweden?

What were you interested in knowing during your journey? How did you get to know about such things?

Did you go somewhere to know about what interested you or to know what you should do?

Information needs and practices in Sweden

What is interesting for you to know here in Sweden?

How do you get to know about such things? Or where do you go or whom do you speak with to know about such things?

Who tells you about what is happening in general? Or how do you know about that?

Library usage

Did you go to or use the library in your homeland? Why?

Do you use public libraries in Sweden? Why?

What do you think of public libraries there?

In your opinion, how can public libraries in Sweden be better? What can the public library do to make you happy?

(Some questions may sound weird to the English ear, and that is because they will be asked in informal Arabic)