

Digital media in refugees' everyday life and integration

A case study on the highly educated Syrian refugees in Scania

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Abstract

This thesis sets the goal to contribute to the field of diaspora studies from media and communication studies perspective by focusing on the neglected migrant group of highly educated refugees and their media use. This thesis aims to explore how highly educated refugees utilize digital media in their everyday life after their migration. It also investigates how digital media use enhances and undermines refugees' integration in a host country by taking into account their educational background and their localities.

In order to answer the research question, the highly educated Syrian refugees in Scania, who arrived in Sweden from 2011 onwards as a result of the ongoing conflict in Syria, were chosen as a case study. The study adopts a non-media centric and ethnography approach to examine how media consumption is positioned within everyday routines, local contexts, and social environments. Through qualitative semi-structured interviews and media ethnography of smartphones, the thesis explores how everyday life practices are enabled through digital media.

The findings illustrate that the highly educated Syrian refugees in Scania use media in their everyday life for family bonding, entertainment and gratification, and socialization, which are enabled through media affordances. By extending the focus to include the refugees' emotions, the thesis proposes a notion of *Affective affordances*, in which refugees' abilities to consume different kinds of media are linked to emotions concerning their forced migration experience. The thesis further demonstrates that digital media consumption supports, to some extent, different aspects of the integration process, such as reaching necessary information and learning the language. However, offline practices are still essential for the integration of refugees in their new locality.

Keywords: digital media, integration, diaspora studies, transnationalism, hybridity, migration, Syrian refugee crisis, affective affordances, Scania.

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1. Introduction

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), more than 6.7 million people were internally displaced within Syria by 2018 (UNHCR, 2018). Additionally, over 5.7 million people have fled the country, seeking refuge in neighboring countries and beyond (UNHCR, 2018). Around 2 million Syrians sought asylum in the EU since the beginning of the conflict in Syria in 2011 (Eurostat, 2012 - 2019) and more than 122,000 of them sought asylum in Sweden (Swedish Migration Agency 2011-2020). As of 2015, Syrians are the largest refugee group claiming asylum and obtaining protection status (skyddsbehövande) with an estimated number of 51,338 individuals, which is considered the highest in this decade. However, outside Europe, Turkey received the highest numbers of Syrian refugees since 2011 with an estimated number of 3.6 million Syrians registered by the Government of Turkey (UNHCR, 2020), ranking the first place of countries hosting Syrian refugees. Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt are also major states hosting Syrians in the region (UNHCR, 2020). Nonetheless, there are undocumented refugees in neighboring countries and Europe, which makes the total number of Syrian forced migrants until this day, unknown.

The crisis is a result of many challenges people face in Syria due to the tough living conditions under the war, such as lack of shelters under bad weather and different risks of infection from diseases (BBC News 2013; Amnesty International 2013). There are thousands of stories that have been reported by NGOs and news organizations on people in need in Syria, who are forced to be internally displaced or seek refuge in the neighboring countries. In 2014, *The Lancet* published a report stating that the estimated number of death cases in Syria is 5000 individuals each month, and that civilians constitute 35% of deaths (*The Lancet*, 2014). The estimated number mentioned includes only those who are being killed by conventional weapons. In addition to that, several diseases including polio were broadly spreading (Aylward & Alwan, 2014).

It was also widely reported that refugees within Syria and outside of it showed signs of severe mental health problems (Quosh et al., 2013), which is a typical result of a humanitarian crisis (George, 2010). Further documented issues that affected the lives of Syrian refugees are the high numbers of organized crimes and child fighters recruitment (Al Jazeera, 2013). Moreover, studies

recorded a high effect of the Syrian conflict on women refugees in specific, being victims of routinely practiced sexual violence (Quyang, 2013) in the form of forced marriage and prostitution in some cases (Asaf, 2017), which is suggested to be a result of the patriarchal society in Syria (ibid.:11).

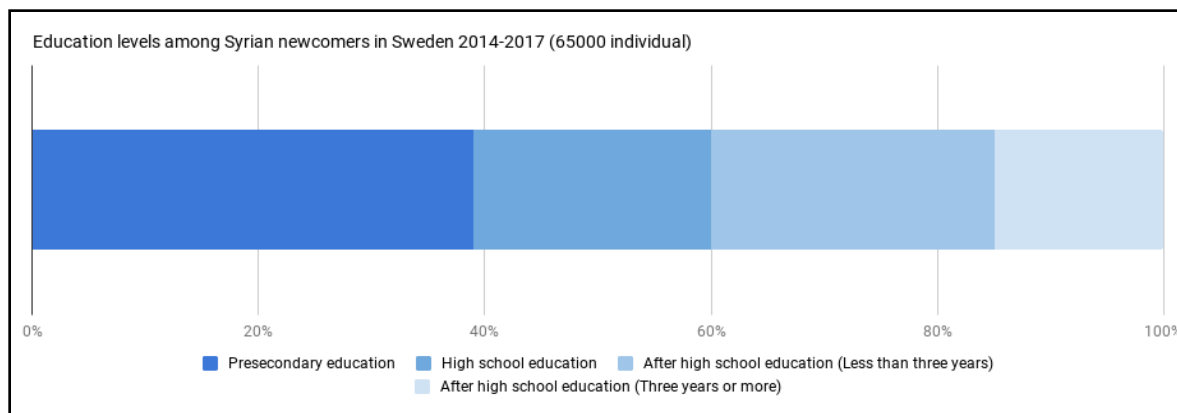
These conditions forced millions of Syrians to seek asylum in Turkey and take a beyond journey that includes routes over sea and land to reach safety in different countries in Europe. The high numbers of refugees crossing borders to arrive in Europe and the loss of many lives in the sea resulted in the EU-Turkey historical ‘one-for-one’ agreement in March 2016. The agreement states that for each irregular refugee sent back from Greece, EU Member states will admit one Syrian registered in a refugee camp in Turkey in exchange. Additionally, Turkey would receive 6 billion euros from the EU, and in return, control refugees and look after them. Recently in 2020, Turkey broke the deal when it opened its northern borders with Greece shortly after 33 Turkish soldiers were killed in Idlib province, as a way of leveraging European support for Turkey’s military operation in Syria and the burden of refugees that Turkey is facing (CNN, 2020).

The body of literature on media and migration is enormous and addresses various migrant groups, from asylum seekers to transnational knowledge workers. On the one hand, the majority of media and migration research on vulnerable migrants tends to focus on labor migrants -or guest workers- (Bonini 2011; Madianou & Miller 2013; Platt et al. 2016) and the low educated asylum seekers and refugees (Wilding and Gifford 2013; Leurs 2014; Smets 2018). On the other hand, research on the highly educated migrants mostly targets skilled expats (Polson 2015; Bork-Hüffer 2016) and professional migrants (Nessi & Bailey 2014; Kim 2016; Duru & Trenz 2017). Hence, this thesis aims to contribute to the neglected research area within media and migration studies by exploring highly educated refugees’ use of digital media.

In their study on Syrian refugees in the Netherlands and their digital resilience tactics, Udwan, Leurs, and Alencar (2020) present a sample of mostly highly educated Syrians aging between 18 and 39. They further acknowledge that this sample is not representative of the Syrian community in the Netherlands. This is the only study that explores highly educated Syrians and their digital media use in their lives after settlement beside Kaufmann’s (2018) study on Syrian refugees and

their smartphone in Vienna. Unintentionally, Kaufmann’s study explored a narrow sample, as only those young refugees ages between 18 and 25 participated. Thus, there is a need to explore how the highly educated Syrian refugees, of age ranging from 24 to 56 years old, consume media in their everyday life.

The highly educated Syrian refugees (those who proceeded their education after high school) do not represent the majority of the Syrians who migrated to Sweden. According to statistics from Arbetsförmedlingen¹ of Syrians who admitted to the establishment program offered by the Swedish government in 2014, 37% were highly educated. (SVT, 2015). Among those who migrated between 2014 and 2017, around 40% have had education after high school.



Source: Statistikmyndigheten SCB, 2019.

Furthermore, there is an absence of studies conducted in Sweden on Syrians’ media consumption in their everyday life. The only present study was conducted by Timmermans (2018) in Stockholm. However, the sample of his study varied in the time they have spent in Sweden from less than one year to over 30 years, overlooking the vital aspect of the migration experience and its effect on media consumption habits of newly arrived refugees. Therefore, this thesis contributes to research on Syrians in Sweden by focusing on the Syrian refugees in the context of forced migration.

Based on the literature review presented in the second chapter, media consumption habits of different kinds of migrants vary from a country to another. Even research focusing on refugees

¹ The Swedish Public Employment Service.

varies in its findings. This is because not only are host societies different from each other, but refugees also come from different backgrounds, which should be taken into account. Furthermore, diasporic communities are in themselves not homogenous, and the individualistic characters and backgrounds allow each study to conclude different findings.

Accordingly, this thesis aims to understand how highly educated Syrian refugees residing in Scania consume media in their everyday life, considering the Syrians' socio-cultural background and their material and affective affordances. In addition to that, the research aims to shed light on the role digital media plays in enhancing or undermining the integration of refugees without taking previous literature for granted, as integration policy in Sweden can be quite different from other European countries. Hereof, the thesis will focus on how Syrians, particularly those residing in Scania, perceive integration in Swedish multicultural context. Further, the most important goal of this research is to contribute to the scientific knowledge used to develop means of integration, such as the recent project *Integration med mobilen* which was based on researching migrants' mobile habits in relation to their linguistic integration, resulting in developing a mobile application *Minclusion* that fits the migrants' needs.

This thesis explores the following research questions:

- 1) How do highly educated Syrian refugees use digital media in their everyday life in Scania?
- 2) In what way does the use of digital media enhance or undermine the integration process of the highly educated Syrian refugees in Scania?

The thesis consists of five chapters. After a brief presentation of the Swedish migration policy, the second chapter will present the theoretical framework that the study adopts according to a literature review. The third chapter will introduce the methodologies and methods selected to answer the research questions. The fourth chapter will present the analysis and discussion. The thesis ends with a conclusion where the main findings are summarized, the research questions answered, and the contribution to the media and communication studies restated.

1.1 Migration context in Sweden: Swedish migration policy

There are several historical eras that shaped today's Swedish migration policy (Skodo, 2018). First, the *Guest Worker Era* (1950s-1970s), which began after World War II. As a consequence of the decentralized nature of migration policymaking and management, the Swedish state regarded guest workers as temporary migrants and expected that they would eventually return home. In the late 1960s, Sweden's economic expansion began to diminish, and the state was not in need of labor immigrants anymore. Hence, the economic crisis of the early 1970s and its consequences brought the guest worker era to an end (ibid.).

The state's hypothesis that guest workers would return home proved wrong, as these immigrants stayed, became citizens, and applied for family reunification visas. From there, large numbers of people continued immigrating to Sweden (Skodo, 2018). In this regard, the Swedish society became very diverse, including people from different backgrounds, EU and non-EU. Thereafter, the *Family Reunification Era* began. Since the 1970s, family reunification and refugees and humanitarian groups have become the two largest immigrant categories arriving in Sweden. By that time, Sweden became a humanitarian haven (ibid.), after receiving large numbers of resettled refugees and asylum seekers from mostly non-European countries, creating a high diversity and multiculturalism levels in the Swedish society.

In 1975, Sweden adopted a multiculturalism policy, "embracing ethnic and religious diversity and state support to safeguard minorities' identity and culture" (Skodo, 2018). Hence, the state's integration policy began to target individuals instead of groups, and focus on those individuals' integration needs such as employment. Although immigration rights were tied to integration achievements in early 2000, mandatory requirements have gone unenforced (ibid.). Debates on integration discussed issues like geographical and social segregation, Islamism, and Islamophobia (ibid.). Despite moving in a more restrictive direction, the Swedish integration policy continues to be among the most liberal in the world (Skodo, 2018).

In 2015, the *Refugee Crisis Era* started when high numbers of asylum seekers arrived in the European Union (EU) from across the Mediterranean or overland through Southeast Europe. The number of refugees coming from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan was gradually increasing since 2012.

Most of those who came from Syria were granted protection according to the *1989 Lucia Decision (Luciabeslutet)*, which states that only those asylum seekers who met Geneva Convention criteria would be granted protection. The high numbers of asylum seekers who arrived in Sweden in mid-2015 led to a dramatic shift in the Swedish migration policy, replacing the permanent residence permit to a temporary permit for 13 months with the ability to extend. This research takes this contextual background and explores the highly educated Syrian asylum seekers and refugees who migrated to Sweden as a result of the conflict in Syria that started in 2011, including participants with permanent permits, temporary permits, and one that has not been granted a permit yet.

2. Literature review and theoretical framework

2.1 Diasporic communities and transnational audiences

In the 1950s, the minority discourse shifted after the flow of migrants to the European nation-states and North America, where they developed institutions, social action repertoire, and transnational linkages, challenging the perception of migration as an ultimate one-way process of moving on or of leaving behind (Clifford, 1997). In this respect, the concept of diaspora was first introduced and was significantly adopted in the study of human migration as a theoretical method (Tsagarousianou, 2020). Safran (1991) demonstrated that for a group to be defined as diasporic, several criteria are required, such as having a strong ethnic group consciousness and idealizing their putative ancestral home. In his definition, Safran mostly depended on the Jews as his ideal type. Clifford (1994) then won over Safran with his expansive definition of the term to include a consciousness of displacement and a phenomenon of multi-local attachment, which challenged Safran's criteria of a diaspora (Nagel, 2001). He further argued that it should be taken into consideration the contemporary discourse "that is traveling or hybridizing in new global conditions." (Clifford, 1994:306). However, almost a decade before Clifford, Shaeffer (1986) argued that diaspora as a concept should not be restricted to the Jewish dispersal, as new phenomena are likely to emerge in the future and qualify as diasporic.

Tölölyan (1996) discussed the difference between diaspora and dispersion, arguing that dispersion, or what Reis (2004) calls 'the classical diaspora', is associated with a population exile, spreading beyond their homeland (Tölölyan, 1996), in the form of mass migration and decolonization (Papastergiadis, 1998). On the other hand, diaspora is associated with a context where a transnational terrain is visible (Tölölyan, 1996), and agency is practiced (Tsagarousianou, 2020). The contemporary diaspora (Reis, 2004) takes into account issues of transnationalism and globalization, and makes, in its turn, a sense of the dispersion by "creating infrastructures for narration and action in transnational and translocal contexts" (Tsagarousianou, 2020: 11). Thus, diaspora communities can also be ethnic groups who migrate of their own free will for work (Madianou & Miller, 2012), study, or family reunification (Kasasa, 2001).

Diaspora started to be visible in theoretical debates in interdisciplinary fields such as media studies after the 1980s. These studies called for a reformation of the concept to include new dimensions of human mobility and connectivity (Gilroy 1993; Clifford 1997), as they were not addressed due to adopting existing conceptual frameworks based on specific historical connotations (Tsagarousianou, 2020).

Furthermore, Anderson (1991) stated that the sense of community between members of the diaspora, even if they never meet, is crucial for constituting a diaspora. Members of a diasporic community have a collective identity associated with a shared experience of originalities and the common homeland (Cohen, 1997). In this regard, members of a diaspora choose media channels to promote that shared identity and collective consciousness (ibid.:7) resulting in the constitution of a diasporic audience. Access to such content is vital for diasporic audiences for identity formation and community construction (Georgiou, 2005b:1920).

Several media studies focused on the relationship between migrants' media consumption and their cultural identities (Aksoy & Robins 2000; Timmermans 2018; Veronis, Tabler, and Ahmed 2018; Seto & Martin 2019). Engaging with media landscapes allows the migrants to create a place where they can think about their identities between places (Aksoy & Robins 2000; Seto & Martins 2019). The migrants' transnational identities are related to the media and media affordances in ways that the migrants' three orientations of media consumption: the homeland's media, the host country's media, and the global media result in their transnational identity formation (Seto & Martins, 2019). In their study of the Syrian refugee youth and their social media practices, Veronis, Tabler, and Ahmed (2018) describe social media as a virtual transcultural space, where cultural identity is likely to be renegotiated (Hall, 1992). Hereof, social media and ICTs become means for transculturalization, leading to identity hybridization through multiple cultures and diverse contacts (Vertovec 2001; Veronis, Tabler, and Ahmed 2018:96).

However, Timmermans (2018) illustrates that migrants mostly identify themselves with their homeland's media. His study on Syrians in Sweden demonstrates that migrants prefer the homeland's media or media that is as close to the homeland as possible (e.g. Arabic television channels) to reach quick and accurate culturally specific content and promote a strong sense of

belonging to the home (ibid.65). Additionally, western media outlets are described as foreign in the sense that they lack cultural proximity and are therefore distrusted (ibid.65).

It is not clear, however, that this conclusion applies to current conditions of the hybridity of the ‘connected migrant’ (Diminescu, 2008). The ethno-cultural connections of migrants to their homeland are subject to change, as their social referent shifts in the new host society, affecting thus their everyday practices and identities (Hall, 1993). Even though migrants consume ethnic-specific media, it only remains a rather very small part of the migrant population’s “media diet” (Athique, 2016: 93). This does not necessarily mean that it is related to their identities, but should rather be understood as a source of gratification and pleasure (ibid).

In his book *Transnational Audiences*, Athique (2016) argues that there is hardly any evidence of a similar viewing culture between members of a diaspora due to their migration. The revolutionized increase in the use of mobile digital technologies and the expanded access to various media platforms result in hybridity in media consumption habits. Hence, migrants select different media platforms and consume media content in which they have no ethnic investment. However, their choices are associated with personal preferences and connections and individually approved entertainment (ibid.).

Regarding migrants’ news media consumption, Christiansen (2004) argues that migrant populations critically consume media on a global level and extensively seek transnational news. This is a result of the lack of a particular media source that covers the migrants’ needs, as migrants are mostly interested in their homeland’s news, their locality’s news, and global news (ibid.). Christiansen also points out that language skills determine, to some extent, news consumption patterns. However, this thesis argues that language skills alone do not determine which media the transnational refugees prefer to consume. Trust issues of refugees to different new media platforms play a role, such as mistrusting the homeland’s media or the ethnic-media for political reasons.

2.2 The importance of locality in migration and mobility

In a revised and updated edition of their book *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*, Castles and Miller (2014) highlighted the link between global capital and its reformation and people's movement. According to Schiller & Çağlar (2008), scholars must recognize the locality and focus on "flows of capital and changing hierarchies of power" (ibid.:2) in order to grasp the context of settlement. Moreover, urban researchers have been studying contemporary restructuring of localities within global hierarchies of power, but the role migrants play in constituting places is absent in their research.

"Neither migration or urban studies has had much to say about the relationship of specific places to migrant experiences and identities and the way the different positioning of locality contributes to variations in migrant experience" (Schiller & Çağlar, 2008:2).

Furthermore, migration studies and urban studies have taken methodological nationalism as a main approach that studies social processes "as if they are contained within the borders of individual nation states" (Schiller & Çağlar, 2008:3).

"In this paradigm, migrants are intruders on the shared and homogenous cultural and social space contained within the borders of the nation-state in which they are settling" (Schiller & Çağlar, 2008:3).

This paper argues that a study can take the national border-state approach to understand some sides of migrants' practices. However, it is more important to understand the city as a locality of the migrant, which is not homogenous, and investigate the media practices related to being in this city to fully grasp how they perceive their practices and move about as transnational migrants.

The recent research on transnational formations, which takes into account migrants' transnational practices, spaces and ways of being, considers concepts like mobility and locality in its analysis (Dahinden, 2010). In her analysis, Dahinden (2010:51) demonstrates that transnational mobility and locality in the sending or/and receiving country generate transnational formations. The 'Transnational outsiders' formation includes characteristics similar to the highly educated Syrian refugees who came to Sweden after the movement in Syria in 2011. This type is characterized by low transnational mobility and low degree of local ties. Dahinden (2010) claims that this group of

transnational migrants lacks connection with their transnational families, and their networks consist mainly of co-ethnic relations. Nevertheless, this thesis argues that these formations should be renegotiated under the contemporary highly digitalized transnational migration. With the rapid growth in digital media and communication technologies, migrants interact with international and national networks in their locality, while keeping contact with their transnational families through various social media technologies that are easily accessed.

2.3 Media and migration

The following part includes a number of studies associated with issues of media and migration. Some studies used the term ‘migrant’, and others used the term ‘refugee’. This literature review kept the original terms used by authors when referring to a particular study for transparency matters. Although the term ‘migrant’ refers to the different kinds of migrants, including refugees, it can also be confusing when one thinks about other kinds of migrants like economic migrants. This thesis will use the term ‘refugee’ to refer to Syrians who migrated to Sweden during the ongoing conflict in Syria, as the UNHCR refers to a refugee as someone “who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group”.

It is important to mention that most Syrian asylum seekers arriving in Sweden are considered as people ‘in need of subsidiary protection’ and do not receive a ‘refugee’ status unless they claim their fear of persecution due to their religious or political beliefs, or their affiliation to a particular social group. Syrians who seek asylum for protection as civilians who were at serious risk of injury due to armed conflict or at risk of being subjected to inhumane degrading treatment receive a status of ‘in need of subsidiary protection’ instead.

2.3.1 Migrants' digitalities

The body of research on media and migration presents migrants and diasporic groups as persistent users of new media (Ponzanesi & Leurs, 2014), and they are even more skilled than the host country's population at the same level of instruction in using ICTs (Borkert et al., 2009).

Studies have found that migrants highly depend on mobile technologies and social media networks for information in their migration decision-making. Although many studies have focused on labor migrants, students, and family migrants (Dekker et al., 2016; Thulin & Vilhelmson, 2014), there is a growing interest by scholars to focus on asylum migrants (Gillespie et al. 2016; Zijlstra & Van Liempt 2017; Dekker et al. 2018). These studies demonstrate that smartphones and social media have become essential to contemporary asylum migrants (ibid.). These technologies, with navigation and translation features, allowed asylum migrants to be independent (Zijlstra & Van Liempt, 2017). Collyer (2007:674) refers to this phenomenon as "do-it-yourself migrants".

However, it is claimed that untrustworthy information spread on social media websites and the insecurity of personal information leads to potential threats to the asylum migrants' well-being (Wall et al., 2017). Thus, asylum migrants constantly try to maintain access to and evaluate the trustworthiness of information on social media during migration (Dekker et al., 2018). In this regard, information coming from known social ties and information from government authorities and NGOs are the most trusted (ibid.).

Scholars studying migrants' digitalities during and after their migration processes (Arnold & Görland, 2019) have argued that refugees' movements depend highly on their smartphone affordances. Their polymedia affordance practices go beyond texting and calling (Madianou, 2014) to include features like GPS, camera, and translation in diverse kinds of apps (Dekker et al., 2018). Additionally, mobile media usage patterns of refugees within a host country does not show significant differences compared to the majority of the society, and media usage of locals and refugees of the same age is more similar than comparing their usage according to the individual's background (Arnold & Görland, 2019).

In addition to that, social media and mobile technologies provide refugees with a sense of autonomy and empowerment during resettlement, as they communicate in and navigate a new environment

(Diminescu 2008, Veronis, Tabler, and Ahmed 2018). Today's migrants are described as the actors of a culture of bonds that they maintain while moving about (Diminescu, 2008). Through the extensive use of ICTs, this culture of bonds becomes evident and dynamic (ibid.:567). These bonds are the creator factor of mobility, and mobility of the migrant comes in three different forms: physical, imaginary, and virtual (ibid.:570). The contemporary 'connected' migrants, who are used to mobility, are able to continuously renew their bond with their homeland while establishing contacts in the host country's society (Diminescu, 2008). Thus, making their 'presence' less physical and more affective (ibid.).

Madianou and Miller (2012) highlighted the shift in media use from formal cultural organizations to extended family networks in their extensive study on the maintained transnational ties between Filipino migrants in the UK and their children back home. These transnational ties are certainly dependent on media technologies, in which their affordances shape migrants' long-distance interaction (ibid.). In their study, the two scholars present a theory on 'poly-media' in which transnational ties convert from symbolic to functional mediation. Furthermore, these ties are not restricted to labour migrants; but rather to any individual who seeks to expand their chances "of living a transnational life" (Athique, 2016). Madianou and Miller (2012) adopt a more individualised framework for exploring migrants' transnational practices and ties, focusing on the particular mediums individuals use among the various options and combinations of them. Thus, inviting scholars to consider diasporic audiences in the era of social media (Athique, 2016: 90). This thesis will use the concept of poly-media to understand how Syrian refugees maintain transnational ties with those whom they left behind and to investigate the reasons behind choosing particular media platforms for such connections.

Furthermore, refugees use social media to cope with their needs, such as obtaining social and emotional support through contacting their families and friends in the home country (Alencar, 2018). Research on asylum seekers illustrates that they invest in a rather big amount of the money that they receive from the host state to purchase an internet subscription, which helps them in staying connected to their families back home and to access information and communication in the host country (Pischetola & Sozzani, 2018).

2.3.2 Non-media centric approach and everyday life in media studies

According to Leurs & Smets (2018), non media-centric approach in media studies “alerts us technologies can never be considered as inseparable from offline material, historical, socio-political contextual dynamics” (ibid.:8). Media scholars suggest that media studies should adopt a non-media centric approach, in which the use of media technologies is positioned within everyday routines, local contexts, and social environments (Morley 2009; Moores 2012; Krajina, Moores, and Morley 2014). In media and mobility, the way users engage with media reflects how they get around in media settings and environments, and thus constitute a sense of their mediated reality (Moores, 2012).

In particular, cross-disciplinary between media studies and anthropology provide means to understand human diversity and explain the contemporary social world (Pertierra, 2018). With the rise of the internet and digitally mediated communication, media consumption became taken-for-granted (Moores, 2012). Hence, media studies should shift from exploring how people interact in the digital world to focus more on how everyday life practices are enabled through digital technologies and infrastructures (Pertierra, 2018).

Furthermore, media practices within everyday life are like any other practice, which leads to certain behaviours that are subject to change according to the structure (Shove, Pantzar & Watson 2012). This structure can, at the same time, be created by people’s practices (ibid.).

In addition to that, Bourdieu (2010) highlights that taste -and it can be media taste- is able to define relations between social groups in a society. In this respect, refugees in a region with high diversity is a suitable study group to explore this ability.

Studies targeting transnational refugees and migrants have recently shifted to adopt a non-media-centric and ethnographic approach (Leurs 2017a; Smets 2018; Smets 2019). Such an approach is convenient when exploring both virtual and material modes of media use by refugees in a new society (Smets, 2018) and thus produce “richer accounts of the role of media in the everyday life of refugees” (ibid:114).

Accordingly, in order to investigate how highly educated Syrian refugees in Scania use digital media in their everyday life and the role the media plays in their integration, this thesis will adopt a non-media centric and ethnographic approach, to explore how digital media is used in the refugees' localities and social environments.

2.3.3 Place-making and sense of belonging

The development of communication has revolutionized the migrants' lives, as they became capable of staying 'present' despite their distance (Diminescu, 2008). Migrants experience mobility differently through communication practices, and "the construction of relational settlement" (ibid.:572). Furthermore, studies indicate that refugees utilize social media to create a space for transcultural coming-together and interconnectedness, as it provides the users with a virtual space for transcultural communication and learning that supports resettlement in a new society (Veronis, Tabler, and Ahmed, 2018.:91). These media environments become inhabited, as individuals use them in their daily routines (Moore & Metykova 2009, Plunkett 2011). Thus, everyday media routines are significant in the process of place-making (Moore & Metykova, 2009).

Media environments are not only inhabited by refugees; but also by professional expats (Polson, 2015) and the international migrants (Duru & Trenz, 2017). Practices on social media websites and networks, which are based on common interests between members of the international community in a host country, become place-making practices (Duru & Trenz, 2017). Additionally, international professional expats use different meetup platforms to socialize with people locally (Polson, 2015). These networks play an important role in constructing locality, but also mobility (Diminescu, 2008:573). Studies found that "through extended use of the sites across multiple locales, this international community expands to other global cities, creating a local sense of place that is digitally managed and mobile" (Polson, 2015:642-643). Thus, the subject of belonging has become more linked to modes of access (Diminescu, 2008:573). Finding a community online and meeting them offline in a globalized and deterritorialized context sheds light on the ability of places to extend across geographic space (Polson, 2015), and further emphasizes that "production of space can be a mobile process" (ibid.:643), and thus places themselves become mobile (ibid.).

Moreover, the conviviality patterns in the expats' everyday life and their place-making practices create a sense of belonging in their locality (Duru and Trenz, 2017). Their sense of belonging to a

local place is formed through exchanging and sharing information and knowledge about local socio-cultural events, and through building networks for professional purposes and for meeting those who share similar interests (ibid.), thus, allowing the participant to feel like a local (Polson, 2015). However, routine attendance is essential to “maintain that feeling of connection to a local, international community” (ibid.:639).

In recent discussions of the sense of belonging of professional transmigrants (Seto & Martin, 2019), it is suggested that different media engagements facilitate or hinder the sense of belonging. By engaging with the media, migrants can adopt a hybrid sense of belonging to the homeland, host country, and a series of other locations, physical and imagined (Seto & Martin, 2019:591).

This thesis does not disagree with these studies on digital place-making. However, it demonstrates that each migrant group is different from the other, and the place-making and sense of belonging of highly educated Syrian refugees in Scania are not developed like professional expats in Paris (Polson, 2015) or international migrants in Denmark (Duru & Trenz, 2017). Instead, highly educated Syrian refugees’ place-making is constituted by consuming different media content such as popular media, or by establishing relationships in their localities offline and through being in a multicultural environment where they feel familiar.

2.4 Integration

Scholars described *integration* as a fuzzy concept (Castles et al. 2002; Markusen 2003; Robinson 1998; Grillo 2007). Heckmann (2005) defines integration of migrants into the receiving society as “a long lasting process of inclusion and acceptance of migrants in the core institutions, relations and statuses of the receiving society. For the migrants, integration refers to a process of learning a new culture, an acquisition of rights, access to positions and statuses, a building of personal relations to members of the receiving society and a formation of feelings and belonging and identification towards the immigration society” (Heckmann, 2005:18).

Moreover, the process of integration is divided into four basic forms: 1) Structural integration which deals with the acquisition of rights and status within the core institutions of the host society: employment, housing, education, health services, political and citizenship rights; 2) Cultural integration (or acculturation) which includes the cognitive, behavioural and attitudinal change of immigrants and their descendants in conformity to the norms of the host society; 3) Interactive integration which deals with social intercourse, friendship, marriage and membership of various organizations; 4) Identificational integration which concerns feelings of belonging, and expressed in terms of allegiance to ethnic, regional, local and national identity (Heckmann, 2005:15-17). However, some dimensions are conditional for other dimensions' success, such as the required core elements of cultural integration, and particularly communicative competences, for interactive integration (ibid.:17).

According to King & Skeldon (2010), Heckmann's definition of integration is a mainstream view and implies the expective normative condition. However, Castles et al. (2002) view integration from a deconstructionist perspective, suggesting that integration is a very content term, and can be interpreted and defined in a variety of ways (King & Skeldon, 2010). Moreover, integration is a two-way process in which both the newcomers and the host country have to adapt for it to succeed (Castles et al., 2002:113). Most importantly, integration in a democracy implies that new members of society obtain legal and political rights to become equal partners (ibid.:113). Integration, in a multicultural society, may be viewed as a process whereby the whole population obtains civil, social, political, human, and cultural rights, thus creating greater equality (ibid.:113).

Consistent with this approach, minority groups in a host society are accepted to maintain their cultural and social identities, as the right to cultural choices is substantial to democracy (ibid.:113). The process by which migrant groups adjust to different cultures is defined as acculturation (ibid.:113). In acculturation's context, integration is understood as a process by which individuals and groups maintain their cultural identity while actively participating in the larger societal framework (Berry, 1980). Thus, Castles et al. (2002) claim that exploring the process of integration deals with issues such as identity and belonging.

Unlike Heckmann (2005), who only acknowledges the hegemonic role of the society, Castles et al. (2002) introduce the question: ‘Integration into what?’, stating that integration can be into an existing ethnic minority, a local community, a social group, or a national society (ibid.:114). Host societies are not homogenous but rather structured and arranged in diverse ways (King and Skeldon, 2010). In this regard, Castles et al. (2002) argue that there cannot be just one form of integration in a society that holds different cultures, religions, classes, and social behaviours (ibid.:14).

Furthermore, Ager and Strang (2008) used a different approach to understand what constitutes successful integration. They stated that integration should instead be defined as a multidimensional process, going beyond a two-way conception and supporting an alternative perspective on the relationships established between newcomers and host communities in which all newcomers, individuals, institutions, and the society play a role. Recognition that integration is always ongoing is a key point in this relationship, and the notion of an ‘integrated society’ is indeed hard to be conceived, as the integration process requires continuous efforts from all sides (Phillimore, 2011). In an alternative formulation, integration aspects within a society is categorized as: Foundation (rights and citizenship), facilitators (Language and cultural knowledge, and stability), Social connection (social bridges, social bonds, and social links), and finally markers and means (employment, housing, education) (Ager & Strang, 2008). Moreover, categories in this formulation function respectively, resulting in a successful integration (ibid.).

By building on the complexity of integration, this thesis will take a bottom-up approach (Harding, 2008) and investigate how Syrian refugees in Scania perceive integration, allowing them to define how a person integrates and which means are used to support one’s integration. In addition to that, the thesis will explore the role of digital media in the process of integration.

2.5 Integration and media

Several studies demonstrate that the use of information and communication technologies can assist the integration process (Bobeth et al., 2013; Borkert, Cingolani, & Premazzi, 2009). More recent

studies are shifting from focusing on the role of ICTs in the integration process to investigate the role digital media and social media plays in this process (Alencar 2018; Timmermans 2018; Pischetola & Sozzani, 2018; Alencar & Tsagkroni 2019; Mitra, Evansluong, and Diedrich 2019; Tufan & Olendzki 2019). In this regard, it has been suggested that how an individual perceives integration in a host country is reflected in his/her practices on social media (Alencar 2018; Tufan & Olendzki 2019).

In host countries where migration policies support newcomers, and the host society shows positive attitudes toward refugees, social media is utilized by refugees to learn the language and bridge with members of the new society (Alencar, 2018). Thus, refugees experience integration at a local level as their perspective on integration is related to the migration policies in the host country (ibid.) In other cases, where refugees face difficulties in integrating into host countries that do not provide orientational help to newcomers, many-to-many communication is particularly important, as refugees generate content, share experiences, and find support from fellow refugees and other non-governmental organizations through different social media networking sites (Tufan & Olendzki, 2019). Thus, bringing solutions to the refugees' problems regarding their integration without the necessity to reach out to the local government (ibid.). In such cases, connections are built on these platforms with locals who are members of these online communities for helping purposes (ibid.).

Moreover, social media networking sites are utilized by refugees to connect and socialize with the host country's citizens (Alencar & Tsagkroni 2019; Veronis, Tabler, and Ahmed 2018) as a way to reduce isolation (Alencar & Tsagkroni, 2019), as well as to improve intercultural contacts between natives and refugee migrants (Alencar, 2018). A study by Veronis, Tabler, and Ahmed (2018) on the Syrian refugee youth in Canada indicates that social media allow the refugees to build their networks virtually before face-to-face practices, as they could access information, learn about the new society, and share and exchange with Canadians through bridging cultural and linguistic divides. However, studies targeting adult migrants with different backgrounds in Sweden (Mitra, Evansluong, and Diedrich, 2019), refugees in Turkey (Tufan & Olendzki, 2019) and asylum seekers in Italy (Pischetola & Sozzani, 2018), argue that social media do not break barriers into the host country's society. Alternately, personal motivation and social support are essential factors for digital and social inclusion (Pischetola & Sozzani, 2018: 260).

Social media is simultaneously utilized to keep contact with families and friends back home to overcome feelings of separation and receive emotional support (Alencar, 2018). Castles (2000) argues that these transnational ties reduce immigrants' chances of integration in a host country. However, this idea was later challenged by Vertovec (2001), who emphasized the lack of theory on a relation between integration and the maintenance of transnational ties:

“.. The field of transnational migration is not yet very well theorised in relation to preceding concepts and policies surrounding assimilation, acculturation, cultural pluralism, integration, political inclusion and multiculturalism” (Vertovec, 2001:577).

In terms of reaching the needed information in the new host country, studies indicate that asylum seekers (Pischetola & Sozzani 2018) and refugees (Alencar, 2018) rely on offline social connections and local organizations to obtain reliable and accurate information about the host country's labor market and education system. Social media sites are considered as an untrustworthy source for such information. However, information can still be obtained through social media, but only by contacting those locals from the same nationality or geographical area (Pischetola & Sozzani 2018). Additionally, social media is useful for reading about other refugees' experiences in the host society, which helps avoid breaking rules and regulations (Leurs 2017a; Alencar & Tsagkroni 2019).

Several studies focused on the language learning part of the integration process by exploring how migrants utilize mobile technologies to learn the host country's language (Lindström et al. 2017; Bradley et al. 2017). For example, Lindström et al. (2017) combined qualitative and quantitative methods to collect data on the available technologies that provide language learning features and to explore the consumption habits and preferences of the Arabic-speaking migrants in Sweden. The study illustrates that even though most of the available learning training apps are reliable sources that cover the linguistic needs for learning the Swedish language, migrants still primarily use websites and apps with translation and vocabulary features that cover “solving immediate communication needs rather than for systematic language training” (ibid.:44). The weak relation to migrants' needs in their settlement, such as work and education, is reflected in the low use of these ‘language training’ apps, which leads to a lack of motivation to learn (ibid.:44). Thus, the

study suggests considering the newly arrived migrants' characteristics and needs to ensure usability of mobile technologies.

Timmermans's (2018) study on Syrians' integration in Sweden in relation to media consumption indicates that immigrants interact with the host country's media for the purpose of information but not for the purpose of using it in the process of acculturation and integration. Instead, attempts at integration and assimilation by immigrants occur offline (ibid.). What is critical here is that the process of obtaining the needed information is separated from the process of integration, which becomes problematic in ways that this information is, in fact, crucial in the process of integration. Obtaining information is a part of obtaining one's rights and entering the labor market and the educational system in the host country (Dekker & Engbersen 2014; Alencar 2018). In this regard, scholars highlighted that relevant information is sometimes hard to obtain due to the limitations of social media use by governmental actors (Alencar & Tsagkroni, 2019).

To investigate the role digital media play in the participants' integration, this thesis will adopt Heckmann's (2005) dimensions of integration and examine how the participants use digital media to support or undermine the different aspects of integration. In compliance with the theoretical framework of this thesis, concepts of locality, hybridity, and affordances will be taken into account. In addition to that, the characteristics of the sample will be considered as well.

2.6 Research on Syrian refugees in Sweden in media studies

There is numerous research on Syrian refugees and their media consumption in Europe (Kaufmann 2018; Dekker et al. 2018; Yonus 2020; Udwan, Leurs, and Alencar 2020), but only one study was conducted in Sweden (Timmermans, 2018). Thus, this study contributes to the research on Syrians in Sweden, taking into account migration and integration policies in the respective country. Additionally, Syrians are only a part of the diverse sample in research conducted in Sweden (Mitra, Evansluong, and Diedrich, 2019) and even in those studies in which the sample is Arabic-speaking (Bradley et al. 2017; Lindström et al., 2017), which does not take into account the Syrians' socio-cultural background and the effects of the migration experience in relation to their media habits.

While the only study on Syrians in Sweden (Timmermans, 2018) deals with concepts like identity and belonging, this thesis aims to extend the focus to include the notion of affect, an aspect that Alinjad and Olivieri (2020) called out to fill a gap in media and migration studies. Different scholars have suggested that migration phenomena cannot be properly studied without exploring the migrants' emotional and affective experiences as an essential part of their migration experiences and social life (Baldassar 2008; Skrbis 2008). Additionally, media scholars who specialize in studies around migrants and refugees have explored the role of emotions in migration processes in relation to connectivity (Leurs 2014; Madianou 2016) and disconnectivity (Wittebron, 2014).

Recently, Smets (2019) added to the research on forced migration, affect, and media by including other types of media practices, such as the consumption of different images and texts. He further urges media and communication scholars to continue the needed in-depth localized research in order to understand the relationship between media consumption and affect in the context of forced migration. In this regard, this thesis introduces the concept of *affective affordances*, which refers to the affective ability to consume certain kinds of media, to examine how these affordances influence the Syrian refugees' media consumption habits in their everyday life in Sweden.

3. Methods and Methodology

3.1 Methodology

Merriam-Webster's dictionary (2009) defines a case study as "An intensive analysis of an individual unit (as a person or community) stressing developmental factors in relation to environment.". This definition was favored by Flyvbjerg (2001), who argues that in studying humans and learning about their everyday life, concrete contextualization becomes crucial, as context-independent theory is untested and therefore, its usefulness in research is not certain (ibid.). Choosing a case study is a suitable methodology and a solid base to produce situated and reliable knowledge that is close to lived realities (ibid.). By closely exploring the subject of study, and in this case focusing on Syrian refugees and their media use in a certain environment, the case study approach is able to contribute to and develop theories. For a case study to not be predictive and to focus on gaining a standpoint (Harding, 2008), qualitative research methods like combining ethnography and qualitative interviews (Smets, 2013) shall be a sufficient methodology to study everyday life practices of refugees from a bottom-up approach (Harding, 2008).

According to Flyvbjerg (2001), the researcher's skills and experiences play a main role in the interpretation of the empirical material, as for the researcher, the closeness of the case study to real-life situations helps in the development of a nuanced view of reality (ibid.72). This does not mean that choosing a specific case study by the researcher has a doubtful scientific value, nor that it generates pre-existing interpretations. However, it emphasizes that the researcher is like any other human, sees the world from a specific frame and produces knowledge according to their view (Fay, 1996). The fact that the author herself is a Syrian refugee residing in Scania and have been through similar stages in the migration journey like her study participants, puts her in a position where she can combine her experiences and knowledge, and the use of theories to deeply grasp the value of the media in refugees' everyday life.

3.2 The sample

This study targets the highly educated Syrian refugees and asylum seekers in the Scania region in Sweden. Additionally, it only focuses on those Syrians who arrived in Sweden after the movement in Syria in 2011, in other words, during the last nine years. Moreover, the study chooses to focus only on those who arrived in Sweden as asylum seekers and have been granted or will be granted protection status. Moreover, the study tried to balance between both genders; but was able to conduct interviews with four males and eight females.

The participants of the study were approached using a snowballing method. According to Seale (2012), snowballing is considered a practical way to approach people, as questions about migration and integration in new host societies can be sensitive, and their media habits can certainly be personal, which makes it difficult to approach potential participants randomly (Kaufmann, 2018).

In addition to that, the researcher's position as a Syrian refugee in Sweden influenced the acceptance of her to share personal information and trust her with their perspectives. In this regard, some of the participants were individuals whom she met at Swedish courses for newcomers and others recruited through Facebook groups formed of Syrian and Arab communities in Sweden. Consequently, ages of the twelve individuals who participated in the study ranged from 24 to 56 years old, arriving in Sweden between 2012 to 2017, and residing in different cities in the Scania region (10 in Malmö, 1 in Helsingborg, and 1 in Staffanstorps). All the participants have been granted residence permits except one of them, who arrived in Sweden in 2017. Nine of them have been granted permanent residence permits, and two have been granted temporary ones. Three of the participants are high school graduates and are currently completing their bachelor studies, two did not have the chance to finish their bachelor studies before migration and are now preparing to complete them or start over, and seven have university degrees. Only two participants are job seekers, and the rest have jobs or in higher education (Figure 1).

Name	Gender	Age	Civil status	Year of arrival	Educational background	Occupation	Interview length	Date of interview	Residence permit type
Rima	Female	41	Married	2015	Bachelor degree in English literature	Student Assistant	02:03:07	19/2/2020	Permanent
Sami	Male	29	Single	2014	High school graduate	Student (Bachelor in Medicine) /Halftime Social worker	01:16:00	01/3/2020	Permanent
Karim	Male	24	Single	2015	High school graduate	Student (Bachelor in Primary Education)/ Intern	01:54:57	04/3/2020	Temporary
Omar	Male	40	Divorced	2017	Bachelor degree in Mechanical Engineering	Grocery worker	01:20:46	05/3/2020	Not granted
Heba	Female	43	Married	2012	Unfinished bachelor degree in English literature	Student at Komvux ²	37:22	07/3/2020	Permanent
Jala	Female	43	Married	2015	Bachelor degree in Economy	Research assistant	02:17:30	10/3/2020	Permanent
Miral	Female	35	Married	2012	Bachelor degree in English literature	Studiehandledare (student counselor) at SFI ³ school	01:31:37	10/3/2020	Permanent
Layla	Female	25	Single	2015	Highschool graduate	Student (Bachelor in Physics)	01:50:43	12/3/2020	Temporary
Amira	Female	24	Single	2014	Bachelor degree in Human Rights	Social worker	01:24:21	13/3/2020	Permanent
Lama	Female	56	Single	2012	Bachelor in English literature	Student at Komvux /Jobseeker	02:18:00	15/3/2020	Permanent

² Komvux refers to Kommun vuxenutbildning, which means Municipal adult education.

³ SFI refers to Svenska för invandrare, which means Swedish for migrants.

Rand	Female	35	Single	2014	Unfinished bachelor degree in Law	Jobseeker	01:43:17	19/3/2020	Permanent
Fady	Male	37	Married	2013	Bachelor degree in Human science	Entrepreneur	01:19:21	20/3/2020	Permanent

Figure 1: Demographics of sample. All names have been changed.

The interviews were conducted in different places. Some of the interviews took place at the participants' homes if they agreed to it, and some were conducted at different places in the city like libraries, coffeeshops, and even the researcher's home. 9 of the 12 interviews were conducted face-to-face, and the last three were conducted through Facebook Messenger as video calls. The researcher acknowledges the importance of face-to-face interviews in qualitative studies, and particularly when using ethnographic methods. However, during this phase of the study, the World Health Organization declared the worldwide outbreak of the coronavirus a pandemic⁴, with Europe becoming the epicenter of the global pandemic. For the safety of both the participants and the researcher, a decision to complete the rest of the interviews online was taken after recommendations from the university⁵. Participants in face-to-face interviews signed consent forms, and oral consents were voice-recorded for the interviews conducted online⁶.

3.3 Media ethnography

In a digitally enabled world, the choice of ethnography fits researching everyday practices in a digital context (Pertierra, 2018). Digital ethnography methods minimize the difference between online and offline practices (ibid.), and place people's engagement with the media within everyday lived experiences (Pertierra 2018; Shrøder 2003). In media-integrated societies, media become material objects, able to constitute people's everyday life experiences and sense making, a reason why many scholars choose ethnography in media studies (Shrøder, 2003).

⁴ On March 11th, 2020, WHO declared the coronavirus outbreak a pandemic.

⁵ The supervisor of the thesis recommended keeping the interviews online for safety issues.

⁶ See Appendix 1 for Consent form.

Furthermore, media ethnography does not require previous knowledge or links to the cultural setting, and the researcher is thus able to choose a familiar cultural setting or an unfamiliar one (Shrøder, 2003). What is crucial in using media ethnography is that the researcher must position him/herself as a stranger, which sometimes can be challenging, especially when the researcher has the same background or characteristics of the studied group (ibid.), which is the case of this thesis. As demonstrated by Tufte (2000), the media ethnographer deals with basic epistemological issues related to boundaries like locality and culture. The researcher of this study, fortunately, did not face major issues related to such boundaries, due to her background as a Syrian refugee who has resided in Scania since 2015.

Studying people's media use requires more than interviews and surveys (Shrøder, 2003). The researcher has to apply a processual research design to the study to map how people experience everyday life practices around different media (Shrøder, 2003). In this regard, media ethnography does include more or less structured interviews, and the oral exchanges are only a part of the final results of the study (Tufte, 2000). Since the study explores how refugees utilize media in their everyday life in their localities and for integration purposes in the host country, it is hard to distinguish the mediated and non-mediated activities of the refugees as they are intertwined. In this regard, media ethnography that involve less structured qualitative interviews become a valid method for this study (ibid.).

Moreover, the aim of using ethnography in scientific research is to understand 'the native's point of view' (Malinowski, 1992). This thesis investigates, in its turn, refugees' perspective on their everyday life experiences in their localities, and explores how they perceive integration in the host country. Furthermore, media ethnography allows the researchers to choose their knowledge interests (Shrøder, 2003), where they can focus on the uses of media and how it is integrated into people's daily lives, or to include analyses of media material which is the media content these people consume (ibid.). Additionally, media ethnography does not focus on a particular medium in its investigation, but rather focuses on one group and explores how this group interacts with the media (ibid.). This way, the researcher can obtain a "holistic and nuanced understanding" (ibid.:73) of the participants' sense-making processes (ibid.).

“Ethnography is a particular research perspective that is characterized by an epistemological commitment of explicit and holistic interpretation from a bottom-up perspective” (Shrøder, 2003: 64).

According to Hine (2015), the internet is indeed *embedded* and *embodied* in our *everyday* life practices. However, applying the internet as a methodological means and as an object of study becomes problematic in researching topics which are not directly related to media (Shrøder, 2003), such as transnational migration and integration. While this thesis does look at how refugees utilize digital media in their everyday life in the host country, yet, it takes a more holistic approach in studying the role of the media in refugees’ everyday life after their migration, instead of focusing only on the virtual part. In this regard, the study adopts Jørgensen’s (2016) media go-along method, which allows the researcher and the participant “to navigate and talk about media in that they have sensorial access together and simultaneously” (ibid.:39).

Furthermore, using this method, the researcher is able to witness the process of access and the process following the entering of the media service, which will allow him/her to produce empirical material (ibid.). From that point, the participants can navigate freely, giving verbal and visual tours as oriented by the researcher, and talking about different platforms that they prefer to use and reasons why they choose them due to the open, flexible, and thematic question guide. Media go-along was conducted on the participants’ smartphones, which will be thoroughly discussed in the next section.

3.4 Ethnography of smartphones

Smartphones are proved to be an essential part of the refugees’ migration journey (Gillespie et al. 2018; Kaufmann 2016) and their everyday life in the new host country (Kaufmann, 2018). It is the main tool to stay connected to families and friends (Chib et al., 2013), as well as to move about in the new environment (Wall et al., 2017). Scholars demonstrate that using smartphones as a method in media and migration studies is particularly considered as means to get closer to the everyday life practices of migrants (Leurs & Prabhakar, 2018), and thus is it a promising methodology for research on refugees’ media practices in their new host countries (Kaufmann, 2020).

The characteristics of the smartphones such as their continuous connection to the internet and their size which is easier than other devices during mobility (Kaufmann, 2020), as well as allowing users to customize their devices (Horst & Hjorth, 2013) make them very interesting social science research tools (Kaufmann, 2020). The importance of smartphones as a method is reflected in its allowance of more meaningful ways to collect data, as they function as means of knowledge production, which enables the participants to co-produce the data (ibid). This way, the study takes a bottom-up approach, giving the power to the participants by allowing them to represent their realities and select the information they want to share (Stanfield, 1999).

According to Kaufmann (2020), an objective data collection in media and migration studies is problematic as it disregards knowledge production as a site of power struggles towards vulnerable groups. Additionally, it lacks meaning-making in research, which does not fit a complex phenomenon like migration and refugees' experiences. Thus, participants become experts in their everyday lives by the help of smartphones, as they turn to their smartphones to remember some information and practices (ibid).

During my meetings with the participants, they were asked to show me their phones and which apps they use, which features they prefer and why they prefer them⁷. Some participants were surprised by what I asked, and they wondered if I wanted to look at their conversations as well. While navigating through the available apps on their smartphones, the participants automatically started to explain how they use each app in their everyday life, leaving out some of the apps that they don't use anymore, and in some cases even deleting them during the interview. As the apps were diverse, I asked the participants to explain to me how they use the app and how they knew about it. Through these questions, I was able to collect data on their sources of information, their interests, and their mobile practices, which helped me formulate the refugees' "narratives of identity, affectivity, rights and literacies" (Leurs, 2017a: 685). Scholars like Kutscher and Kreß (2018) used similar methods to research the use of digital media of unaccompanied refugee minors in Germany.

⁷ See Appendix 5 for a view on the navigation on smartphones during the interviews.

In addition to that, participants were asked to talk about the social media networks they use to socialize online, and whom they socialize with on each of these networking sites or apps. This allowed me to understand how they manage their social life online, between their transnational families and friends whom they left behind and their acquaintances in Sweden. While many apps needed updates and notifications appeared on the screen while navigating through the apps, distraction during the interview was caused. However, the smartphones allowed the participants to reflect more on different apps and even tell some stories they experienced related to using each app, such as the Happy cow app and how the participant found vegan restaurants in the new city through the app.

3.5 Qualitative interviews

Interviews are considered to be the most common method in migration studies (Feyduk & Zentai, 2018), however, with the rapid increase of digital media and ICTs use by migrants, interviews are becoming a part of a multi-method design in media and migration studies, allowing researchers to obtain a whole picture (Smets, 2019). This thesis explores how refugees use digital media in their everyday life in their host country, and investigates the role digital media plays in their integration process. As Seale (2012) believed, the flexibility in the qualitative interviewing method helps to meet different key ideas in a topic. It assists the interviewer in accessing the interviewee's emotions and sensitivity and allows him/her to express themselves comfortably. Moreover, with this method, the researcher is able to obtain a level of depth and intricacy that will help collect more empirical data during the coding and analysis processes (Seale, 2012: 210-211). Therefore, qualitative interviewing as a method allows interviewees to acknowledge the value of media as a resource in everyday life according to them. One-to-one semi-structured interviews shall be a suitable technique to approach such information from the participants, alongside ethnography.

The flexibility of qualitative interviews allowed the participants to answer some of the questions from the interview guideline before they were asked, enabling them to select the aspects they want to highlight. This allowed the researcher to elicit matters related to the refugees, whether in their media preferences or the new society they live in.

A pilot interview was conducted using a potential interview guide⁸; however, it was realized that questions on integration misguided the interviewee; hence the pilot interview was disregarded, and the interview guide was revised. The revised interview guide⁹ was divided into four themes: the first one is ‘migration background’ where participants were asked to talk about their migration journey, their company, and the reasons behind their migration. Starting the interview with these questions enabled the participants to open up about their personal lives, sometimes even extending to talk about others who migrated with them. During this part of the interview, the conversation got a little bit sensitive, as some were hesitating about telling the whole story behind their migration. In addition to that, the participant who still has not been granted a permit decided to resume recording the interview twice to explain his situation off the record.

Regarding some of their answers about the migration procedures and experiences, I was constantly asking them to elaborate more on their answers, as I, as a researcher, have a similar background, which they sometimes highlighted in their answers, positioning me as someone who knows all the details. Being an insider researcher helped with issues of access to participants, as some of them told me that they would participate because they are trying to help others from the Syrian community in Scania. In addition to that, my position as an insider researcher supported the conversations, as I was familiar with most of the media they consume, especially the programs which are broadcasted in Arabic or the old Syrian series they like. This helped me further in the analysis part, when I explored the media they consume, why they are attached to it, and how they feel about it.

The effects of the insider researcher’s presence in the research process can be further utilized to collect data by focusing on the participants’ reactions and language usage, as well as the discrepancies in participants’ views and even the non-response (Schuman, 1982). For instance, some of the participants were not comfortable in talking about their migration journey even though I informed them that the interviews would only be used for data collection for this thesis. This might be because of trust issues, as some of them might have migrated illegally.

⁸ See Appendix 2 for pilot interview guide.

⁹ See Appendix 3 for revised interview guide.

In addition to that, the effect of the insider researcher on the studied group does not necessarily have to mean that the validity of the findings will be restricted (ibid.:18), yet, they can be as informative as with the presence of an outside researcher. In this regard, my position helped me in accessing their emotions and their struggles, as most of them shared personal issues with me and talked freely about the hard times and the depression they have been through. Furthermore, the researcher is an insider, and participants' behaviours change according to this context, which can become an aspect of the analysis (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995:19). For example, many participants were comfortable in comparing Syrians to other migrant groups, and others criticized Syrians in a direct way, which they might not have done with an outsider researcher.

Being an insider researcher is also related to the researcher's reflexivity on the data (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). With the aspect of reflexivity in social research, the researcher's socio-historical background, which includes values and interests, shape the orientation of the research (ibid.). Reflexivity is indeed a "significant feature" (ibid.:17) in social research, which according to Hammersley & Atkinson (1995) does not undermine the "researchers' commitment to realism" (ibid:17), as long as the aim of the research remains the production of knowledge which will eventually bring about change. Thus, the researcher is always responsible for critically treating hypothetical patterns and for drawing theoretical conclusions and explicit interpretations. In this regard, even though being an insider researcher allowed me to be greatly connected with my interviewees and helped me in understanding their points of view, I had to take a step back during the analytical part of the research¹⁰, to be able to keep the balance and analytically engage with the data. This allowed me to make sense of the data and the theories and make meaning of the interviews.

Moreover, the researcher's position is an essential issue in recognizing matters that can be common to insider researchers and surprising to outsider researchers (Pertierra, 2018:11). In this regard, it becomes important to consider what is a strange subject and what is not, and Shrøder emphasized this point:

¹⁰ See Appendix 10 for reflective ethnographic diary.

“It involves processes of destrangement (making the unknown known) as well as estrangement (making the known unknown). To manoeuvre within this terrain of familiarity and unfamiliarity involves tact, common sense and a capacity for continuous reflexivity” (Shröder, 2003:176).

It is also important to mention that the reflexivity is dealt with during all stages of an ethnographic study; from the research design to the data collection and finally to analysis and conclusions (ibid.). Through this process, the researcher shall be attentive not to apply any perspectives to avoid chaos (ibid.).

The second part of the interview guide focused on the participants’ media practices and habits in everyday life. Participants talked about their use of different media devices and choices, as well as why they prefer to consume certain content and in certain languages. While talking about consuming the news, the conversation became sensitive to them as they talked about their perspectives on Syrian news and the current situation in Syria.

The third part concentrated on the value of media in different aspects of the participants’ lives, such as their social, practical, and personal lives. During this part, they talked about their social life transnationally and locally, online and offline, as well as the apps and features they use to keep their connections. Furthermore, the participants were asked to navigate their smartphones together with the researcher to get a complete picture, which made them elaborate more on their daily routines and allowed them to remember some aspects that were not mentioned before.

The fourth and last part positioned the participant as refugees in their locality. They were asked questions related to the city where they reside, their lives in Sweden, the integration experience, and their perspectives on Syrians and other refugees and how they are viewed in the new host country, Sweden. After finishing all the questions and stopping the recording, the researcher carried out a friendly conversation with the participants about their families’ situations, current activities, and further projects.

The interviews were conducted alongside the process of writing the literature review, allowing the empirical data to guide the theoretical framework of the study. After conducting half of the

interviews, visible patterns were focused on to enrich the collected data and distinguish the differences.

Furthermore, each interview allowed the researcher to find ways to access the next interviewees' personal values and understandings (Seale, 2012: 369). That way, new data was added to the next interview guideline to gain more from the next participant (Seale, 2012: 369). The length of the interviews ranged between 37 minutes to 2 hours and 18 minutes, with one hour and 40 minutes as the average length of an interview.

All the interviews were conducted in Arabic, and they included linguistic codes such as popular Syrian metaphors and quotes from the Quran. According to Kuckartz (2013), knowledge of the language is essential for understanding a text. The answers and stories the participants provided during interviews were packed with linguistic and cultural codes that can be difficult for the interviewees to express using other languages for the interviews. Understanding these codes requires previous knowledge in the Syrian culture and language and knowledge in the Islamic religion. Despite that, the researcher avoided positioning herself as a similar person to the participants when she asked questions about their migration experiences and their media preferences.

Furthermore, phrases like: integration, Swedes, Syrian/Arab community, and Syrian/Arab media were avoided in the questions not to orient their answers. This issue was highlighted by Athique (2016), stating that the association between migrants' media habits and their identities in qualitative studies is highly problematic. With this methodology, diasporic audiences speak only about their ethnicity.

“Racial profiling inevitably places a particular characterization upon their responses, even where there is much variation in habits and responses”. (Athique, 2016: 94).

3.6 Approaching qualitative texts

‘Paper and pencil’ coding is the closest strategy to the heart of the researcher of this study. Through this strategy, the researcher is able to interact physically with the data (Bazeley, 2013), which allows her to have a sense of understanding of the whole picture as she surrounds herself with the data. However, the quantity and the length of the qualitative interviews’ transcripts lead to a reconsideration of using the paper and pencil strategy. Additionally, during difficult times, such as the current pandemic, strategies that affect the environment are replaced with more environment-friendly ones. In this regard, and inspired by the digitalization of many sectors around the world under this pandemic, coding was done on the digital version of transcripts through placing ‘comments’ as codes on the text (ibid.), using *Google Docs*¹¹. Nonetheless, pens and papers were constantly used beside the digital coding process to situate ideas and similarities between the twelve interviews.

After that, generated codes were moved to a *Google Sheets* file (ibid.), devoting a sheet for each interview’s codes list, and this file was the codebook that was used throughout the whole analysis process. Transcripts and codes were revised to ensure covering all the essential codes and to reduce the richness of the information (Kuckartz, 2013) by eliminating irrelevant codes (Bazeley, 2013:150). At that point, it became challenging to generate categories and subcategories using the digital sheets. Thus, the lists of codes were printed for the researcher to be able to sort and place similar codes together into different categories¹², which resulted in renaming the categories according to the codes they carry. Six themes emerged¹³: Taste, Affordance, Media use for life in Sweden, Media use for integration, Social life, Syrian refugees and their locality.

The six themes were used to draw mind maps¹⁴, allowing arguments to emerge and to be linked (ibid.). The codebook and the literature review were constantly revisited during this phase in order to connect ideas, allowing the analysis to be designed to answer the research questions (Kuckartz, 2013).

¹¹ See Appendix 6 for examples of coding process.

¹² See Appendix 7 for the process of generating sub-categories and categories.

¹³ See Appendix 8 for coding scheme.

¹⁴ See Appendix 9 for mind maps.

4. Analysis

The following chapter will discuss the six themes listed in the previous chapter, combined into two sections. The first section will discuss how Syrian refugee participants utilize digital media as an integral part of their everyday life in Scania. The second section will focus on exploring the participants' media habits in relation to their integration, to understand how these habits enhance or undermine the integration process. By acknowledging that everyday media consumption cannot be separated from media consumption for integration and social inclusion, the two parts will be separated for the sake of answering the two research questions.

4.1 Everyday use of media

The highly educated Syrian refugees in Scania show a wide range of every media use, including media consumption for family bonding, news consumption, entertainment, and socialization. This chapter will discuss all the patterns of the participants' everyday digital media consumption.

4.1.1 Family bonding

Migration plays a central role in Syrian refugee's media choices and habits. From their migration stories and how their life used to be in Syria and other host countries, change in media consumption patterns becomes visible. This is because of factors like the change of the structure, environment, and daily routines (Shove, Pantzar and Watson, 2012), as well as media affordances and digital affordances in the host country. The structure of the participants' everyday life before their migration included an essential element of the Syrian socio-cultural life, which is the 'family'. The 'family' in the Syrian dialect means the bigger part of the family, including grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins (Rabo, 2008). The existence of these family members plays a role in the Syrian individual's life as they can help to look after children in the family, exchange tasks, and be sources of cultural education for the children in the family.

Regarding this matter, Syrian mothers in Sweden are experiencing a significant change in their social life in Sweden. Throughout my conversation with three of the participants who are mothers

to young children, they expressed how this issue takes so much from their social life and ‘me-time’. The three participants are all working-mothers, and they have two or more small children. For them, the lack of time spent with other family members means that they have to find other activities for their children. The three mothers Rima, Jala, and Miral search online on platforms for activities for kids such as *Kul i Malmö*¹⁵. While attending such activities, mothers are responsible for driving the kids and staying with them until they finish.

This, in turn, does not leave time for them to socialize in their localities nor the energy to have strong transnational ties with family and friends. Instead, they utilize different kinds of media to replace the missing education and “cultural heritage” (Jala, 43, working mother of two) that the children ‘usually’ get from their relatives. Rima and Jala do so by watching shows in Arabic with the children, where they can explore the Arabic language and the Prophets’ stories together. Jala adopted a further way to teach her kids three languages by watching shows on Netflix and watching every three episodes in a different language. For Miral (35, working mother of three), she lets her younger child watch videogamer YouTubers as they improve his English language skills while watching them.

Members of the Syrian family consume media together; they like to spend time together watching educational programs or different movies. Sometimes, Jala and her children watch an educational program or a documentary together and discuss it.

“I know what the events are in this program, for example, I would be cooking and they would be watching, so there will be some stuff that I can discuss with them on and we can start a conversation”

(Jala, 43, working mother of two).

Heba (43, Female, Married, and mother of four) and her husband and children choose educational programs in Arabic from YouTube and watch it together on the TV. Moreover, Miral (35, Female, Married, Student counselor) has a ritual of watching a movie on Fridays after work with the whole family (husband and three children). Hence, media are tools that bring members of the family

¹⁵ Kulimalmo.se is a municipal website that presents available activities which young children are allowed to attend all year round for free.

together (Chambers, 2016) when they have a busy schedule between work and school in their everyday life in Sweden.

4.1.2 News consumption

Regarding the consumption of news media, most of the participants showed interest in consuming national and transnational news. Corresponding with Christiansen's (2004) argument that access to news depends on the language skills of the migrants, some of the Syrian refugee participants rely mainly on international news channels such as BBC, CBC, and World News. However, others adhere to consuming news from Arab news channels such as Aljazeera and Alarabiya, which not only cover news from the Arab region; but international news as well (ibid.). Choosing international news channels is indeed related to the participants' English language skills (ibid.); however, it is also related to their personal preferences as those who choose international news channels, view Arab news channels as non-transparent.

“I go on Facebook or google CNN or CBC news channels that are foreign so I try to find the news in English because it might have more transparency ... On Alarabiya you see that they have a source and they lean towards one side more than the other and this news is not objective and also Aljazeera would also select the news with some personal issues but the CNN, you would take the news like it is, they are not against or they are not with it, and also CBC the same thing” (Jala, 43, Female).

Furthermore, the personal preference determines as well the channels chosen to consume national news. Even though Arabic-speaking news sources that cover news on a national level are available, such as Alkompis¹⁶digital platform, the majority of the participants do not prefer to follow them. They explained that such platforms use exaggerated expressions in their writings, and thus viewed as untrustworthy. Instead, they turn to different Swedish news channels such as the digital platforms of Sydsvenska, Aftonbladet, Expressen (Tabloid/Rightist/Pro-migrant), and SVT Nyheter (Public television). According to the participants, these Swedish national platforms do not cover adequate news on their homeland Syria and the Arab region. Thus, the participants deal with “the lack of a single news source that covers their varied needs in two ways: they use more time to

¹⁶ An Arabic-speaking Swedish news agency targeting migrants in Sweden.

obtain news, and they choose from several news sources” (Christiansen, 2004:196). The exposure to multiple sources of news makes transnational refugees more cosmopolitan than the sedentary national audiences (Robins and Aksoy, 2001).

This pattern is considered a reasonable practice of migrant communities and should not be linked to poor integration (Christiansen, 2004:195). Another reason for the participants’ hybrid news consumption is that sometimes they can be critical towards some of the representations of migrants in the national news. For instance, some participants explained that the news media represent migrants in groups in Sweden as trouble-makers and unwilling to integrate. For them, Swedish news channels do not specify a nationality when they present news linked to migrants, which leads to generalizations on all individuals with a migration background. However, news that particularly targets Syrians is mostly positive. For instance, the participants talked about different news stories on how Syrians are integrating into the Swedish society. One common news story that the participants mentioned was a news story representing statistics showing the high number of students from a Syrian background in the Swedish universities in the past year.

Moreover, unlike Christiansen’s (2004) findings from his study on news media consumption habits of immigrants in Denmark, Syrian refugees in Scania showed no difference in their Swedish news consumption habits according to their gender. The majority of the participants speak and understand Swedish very well, regardless of gender or age, which allows them to have more options for news consumption (ibid.).

However, news agencies are not the only sources that Syrian refugees like to follow for news. According to Bennett et al. (2010), news consumption patterns are shifting to social media networks rather than main-stream journalism. Only two of the participants follow news from unofficial sources such as Facebook pages that are administered by locals in Syria. In the case of Amira (24, Female, Single), she prefers to read news from sources that use informal language, a language that ‘you and I use’. This way, she can reach detailed news that official news agencies do not cover, and read the news in the view of the local source. Thus, the boundary between journalism and non-journalism becomes more blurred with a decline in accuracy, balance, and transparency. (Dahlgren, 2013).

Such sources are also preferred by Sami (29, Male, Single). He acknowledges that Facebook pages publishing news from local groups in his city, Aleppo, can be biased. The pages he follows provide detailed news about Aleppo's local situation, and it has a similar political opinion to his. For that reason, he perceives their news as 'realistic'. In this regard, Dahlgren (2013) argued that this blending of news on such platforms, along with commentary, makes journalism more de-centered, dialogical, and participatory. Moreover, the rise in 'opinion journalism' occurs "by the increased deployment of journalistic modes for advocacy purposes" (ibid.). Even though both participants acknowledge that such sources are closer to them and more informal in the way they deliver news to their audiences, Amira and Sami still choose to read this news passively without engaging in sharing and commenting on these posts.

Additionally, participants consume the news on different kinds of platforms, and this depends on their taste and time. For instance, Heba (43, Female, Married) prefers to follow these channels through Facebook because she can do it while navigating and checking other pages. In contrast, Karim (24, Male, Student) prefers to only listen to the recorded news on BBC online platforms or its radio. Moreover, Omar (40, Male, Divorced) prefers to follow channels like Aljazeera and Alarabiya on Instagram, where he can follow the news in the form of short videos. He prefers Instagram because there, he can go through all the posts that he missed on his feed, something that is difficult to do using Facebook.

Corresponding with several studies on migrants' news media consumption (Christiansen 2004; Gillespie 1995; Weibull and Wadbring 1998), the majority of the Syrian refugee participants seek news on a global level, in which they read news about their homeland, their host country, and other different parts of the world.

4.1.3 Hybridity

The changes in the structure and the environment (Shove, Pantzar and Watson, 2012) encourage the Syrian refugees to consume media on a global level. Participants mentioned various media content they like to consume from diverse media channels and platforms. Among frequent choices

were: series with crime and drama genres, documentaries, Arabic political satire, and educational programs. Moreover, just like what Athique (2016) argued in his discussion on diasporic audiences, all participants consume diverse media according to subjects they are interested in and for personal entertainment, such as National Geographic (Layla, Fady) and Al-Daheeh¹⁷ (Sami, Amira). This pattern agrees with the hybridity character of the ‘connected migrant’ which Diminescu (2008) critically addressed in her writings.

Such hybridity patterns of media consumption are considered logical, as audiences around the world “are increasingly engaging with a pluralized media environment that favours transnational flows and niche content”. (Athique, 2016:82). The findings of this study critically disagree with Timmerman’s (2018) argument on how diasporas, specifically Syrians in Sweden, rely on their homeland’s media and ethnic-linked media in their media consumption habits. As a matter of fact, their media consumption involves “a lot of media in which they have no ethnic investment” (Athique, 2016:83).

Media consumption choices are related as well to their educational background or occupation (Athique, 2016) instead of being related to their ethnicity (Timmermans, 2018). For instance, Sami (29, Male, Medical student) follows different YouTube shows and podcasts which discuss different kinds of illnesses and surgical operations. While Omar (40, Male, former television industry worker), who has been working in the television production field for many years before his migration, watches an average of three Hollywood movies a week.

It is important to state that most of the consumed media is related to their media affordances in the host country. In Syria, the participants used to rely on cable television and other satellites, but here, they prefer to choose what, when, and where they want to consume media. The limited internet in Syria did not allow the participants to consume what they wanted; for instance, Karim (24, Male, Student) talked about how the internet was so slow that he could not watch anything on Youtube. Additionally, the government’s control over different websites and the surveillance on social media networks made it impossible for one to choose their own choices freely.

¹⁷ An Egyptian scientific YouTube show that presents scientific knowledge in a funny way

In this regard, the participants showed different interests in smartphone applications. The participants have started using these applications after they migrated to Sweden. Among the common applications are online shopping applications like Zalando and H&M, travel and transport applications like Skyscanner, SJ¹⁸, and DB¹⁹, as well as applications that provide current offers in different stores like ICA application, Lidl application, City gross application, and Prisjakt²⁰. In addition to that, their smartphones carry religious applications such as Quran, Muslim Pro, and Qibla, choosing them as they comply with prayer times in Scandinavia/Sweden.

4.1.4 Affective affordances

Affordances do not always have to be material to change media consumption habits. The consumption of some media content is affected by what this thesis refers to as *affective affordances*, which are related to one's experience of forced migration. What was usual for them to consume in their everyday life before migration is now a complicated process. These media contents affect them in a way that, according to the participants, leave them depressed for days, which in turn influence their everyday life in the host country. Some of the participants expressed their inability to consume media that were once a part of their routine. Jala (43, Female, Married) expressed that in her feeling of 'disgust' when she tries to listen to Arabic songs now. It is incredibly hard for her to see things and listen to the same lyrics as they were before she experienced the struggle of forced migration.

Like her, Lama (56, Female, Single) also feels 'spiritually powerless' to listen to Arabic music and watch any series or movies. For her, it is very difficult to live a 'normal life' after her experiences during the revolution in Syria and her forced migration to Sweden. Additionally, being in Sweden for a longer time than other refugees does not determine one's affective affordances to consume particular kinds of media. For instance, Lama migrated to Sweden in early 2012; and despite being the participant that has spent the longest time away from the struggle in Syria, she is still unable to consume any popular media. In this regard, affective affordance to consume different kinds of

¹⁸ The government-owned passenger train operator in Sweden.

¹⁹ A German railway company which operates throughout Europe.

²⁰ An application to compare prices of products in different stores in Sweden.

media is only related to the ability of each individual to overcome the trauma of the conflict in Syria and the experience of forced migration.

In the case of Miral (35, Female, Married), it is impossible to choose and follow any Syrian series randomly like she used to do. Many of the new broadcasted Syrian series include stories related to the war in Syria, where she finds her struggles mirrored. For her, watching a new Syrian series is a risky action that can lead to dangers on her mental health. She remembered how, one time, she randomly turned on a Syrian series and ended up watching scenes that reminded her of the drones dropped by the Syrian regime on her city, Homs, which left her depressed for a week.

In the case of Karim, he is unable to watch Syrian series and Japanese anime after his migration as a result of the separation from the group of friends whom he used to watch the series with back in Syria. For him, the consumption of those series was a collective ritual, and with separation, the ritual disappears.

“We used to watch it together. They stopped watching and I stopped watching because there is nothing to share with someone. Like: oh did you see what happened in this episode and so.. You know. Unfortunately” (Karim, 24, Male, Student).

Migration eliminated mediated rituals and traditions that Syrians were used to before their migration. Unlike Karim, Miral (35, Female, Married) and Rima (41, Female, Married) were able to re-practice these traditions after a few years of their settlement in Sweden. During the holy month of Ramadan²¹, Miral and Rima watch Arabic series as a tradition. They purchased a yearly subscription of Arabic channels just last year to maintain this tradition in their Ramadan experience.

“I felt like we lost this tradition since we came to Sweden..so we had a small tv, and now we bought a bigger one, this small television goes with us to the kitchen. We sit and watch some series while breaking our fast, to maintain the tradition” (Miral, 35, Female, Married).

²¹ A month when Muslims fast from daybreak to sunset.

For Rand (35, Female, Single), maintaining this tradition is possible through using different apps that stream the newest Arabic series on her iPad. This way, she is able to experience traditional Ramadan's ambiance. Such practices have been defined as cultural consumption practices by Athique (2016), in which he argued, just as Miral and Rima, that they are a "mechanism for ethno-cultural maintenance" (ibid.:82).

However, emotional affordances are not only related to popular media but also include the ability to consume news about Syria. Six out of the twelve participants follow news about Syria regularly, while the others expressed disinterest in knowing about the situation in the homeland. As stated by Sontag (2003), avoiding images of suffering is a consequence of the feeling that nothing could be done. This is precisely how Miral (35, Female, Married), Rima (41, Female, Married), and Rand (35, Female, Single) used to feel when they used to watch news about Syria and the ongoing conflict. The feeling of helplessness puts them in a position of sorrow that negatively affects their 'psychological state'. As a result, it becomes harder for them to proceed normally in their everyday life with such a psychological state.

"I started to feel like I am sad without a reason, like what happened? I just find myself very upset and depressed, so, the news, how beneficial is it? I don't feel like I am benefiting from it except that I am being sad, I used to write on Facebook so much, on Syria and so.. But then I stopped. I felt like I was wasting my health on nothing. I will not do anything at the end. Someone you love, or people you care about, and you are not able to help them. You feel like you are a handicap, you can't do anything, just burning my nerves" (Miral, 35, Female, Married).

In the case of Layla (25, Female, Student), she was very forward with her answer about Syrian news consumption.

Oussayma: No, I don't.

Interviewer: And why is that?

Layla: I don't care anymore, If we want to be honest.

She then explained that news left her in a terrible condition in which she was extremely sad, and this affected her health. Sontag (2003) emphasized that avoiding news that simply makes us feel bad becomes normal in such situations, and especially that we live in a modern life where

superfluidity of things exists to invite us to pay attention and be interested in other kinds of media easily. Karim tries as well to avoid news about the conflict in Syria; however, his situation in Sweden forces him to learn about the situation in Syria. His chance to renew his temporary residence permit is currently at risk, as the temporary protection status he received depends on the situation in Syria, and he does not wish to go back.

“In general yes, I am interested, but I don't like to get into details. And I check every once in a while, to know the effects.. To know how the situation there will affect people who are living here ... for example, I have an army service.. Permits...” (Karim, 24, Male, Student).

Nonetheless, media that reminds them of their life in Syria is consumed to cope with stress and longing. It can be content that is originally Syrian like old Syrian series (Smets, 2018). For instance, Miral (35, Female, Married) watches old comedian Syrian Series *Maraya* on Youtube with her husband in the evening to relieve her work stress. Omar (40, Male, Divorced) also re-watches the old Damascene series *Ayyam Shameyye*²² on Youtube every once in a while when he longs for his life in the Damascene neighborhoods. Additionally, it can also be content that reminds them of experiences they used to have in Syria (Tuan 1997; Hill 2018), such as the sound of rain dropping on the trees in the countryside of Homs city. Karim googles phrases like ‘rain sound’ or ‘Chiminee fire’ and plays the videos for relaxing.

“Winter reminds me of Syria, this... the rain is dropping on berries, you listen to its sound ... Sometimes the cheminee, you know, you listen to how it is burning, it is there on the screen.” (Karim, 24, Male, Single).

Thus, traditional meanings of home are challenged by cause of migration, and it can be stretched beyond physical space and even original popular culture (Chambers, 2016).

Such media consumption practices correspond with Athique’s (2016:81) statement, that ethnic media is only a relatively small part of the migrants’ populations’ media diet. Moreover, the fact that Syria refugees consume Syrian media like old Syrian series or ethnic media like Arabic series

²² A historical Damascene drama series that represents the Damascene lifestyle in the early 20th century.

in Ramadan should not define their media use and thus their social and cultural identification (ibid.:83). Such practices can instead be understood as a need for gratification, in which media content is chosen for the sake of pleasure (ibid.:82).

4.1.5 Transnational ties maintenance and socialization in Sweden

Forced migration results in losing a way of life that was once thought of as complete. One of the things that Syrian refugee participants painfully left behind is their families and friends. Presently, they utilize different communication technologies and social media applications to maintain their transnational ties (Madianou & Miller, 2012). With the variety of options that one can use and combine, the transnational communication practices are customized according to the refugees' taste and the transnational affordances of the other side (transnational families and friends). The most common applications that Syrian refugees use to keep in touch with their transnational relationships are Whatsapp and Messenger, as they are the most common worldwide²³ and include all the features necessary for transnational communication.

However, further choices are considered because, as Madianou & Miller (2012) assert, transnational ties are certainly dependent on media technologies, in which their affordances shape migrants' long-distance interactions, and this is the case on the limited affordances of those who are in Syria. For instance, most of those who are in regular contact with people in Syria use IMO and BOTIM applications (free video and voice calling and instant messaging applications), as they work well in Syria. To keep their communication, they constantly find alternative applications that function well in Syria, as most of them stop functioning after a while. This is related to the limited internet in Syria and the control of the Syrian regime. Through IMO and BOTIM, they are able to audio call and video call each other, and Whatsapp and Messenger are sometimes used for these purposes as well. Generally, Whatsapp and Messenger are utilized for daily transnational communication with families in Syria and other parts of the world, where they create family-groups or only-siblings-groups and friends-groups to ease the communication with everyone.

²³ According to Statista 2020, Whatsapp and Messenger are the most used social media application for communication around the world.

Nevertheless, other applications like Instagram are also a part of the daily social media consumption of Syrian refugees. Instead of texting or calling on Whatsapp and Messenger, Layla and Rand prefer to use Instagram to follow what their transnational friends are up to. Through the 'stories' feature on Instagram, they engage with their transnational friends' everyday life. They post different aspects from their everyday life; for instance, Layla likes to post things from her daily life routine to show her friends how it is like to be living in Sweden. Even if she posted something that is not important, she keeps it in her 'story' because it will be deleted after 24 hours.

"I also have my friends in Qatar .. and in Vienna .. so I like to show them my daily life, you know, so yeah so I think I am very active in the stories" (Layla, 25, Female Single).

Rand likes to watch the stories her relatives and friends post on Instagram, where she can know about their routines, as well as exchanging with them how her routine is by filming parts of her day. Her relatives and friends are spread in Syria, Turkey, Spain, and different parts of Sweden.

"... You feel like they are seeing you and you are seeing them so you watch their stories and what they are doing and how they film their daily lives so you know what is happening with them so you feel like you are closer" (Rand, 35, Female, Single).

This way, they can still be 'present' in their friends' life despite their distance, and their presence becomes affective rather than physical (Diminescu, 2008). However, the other participants who use Instagram do not utilize it for communication; but rather to follow pages that post things that they are interested in such as sports (Sami, 29, Male), News (Omar, 40, Male) and Turkish drama series (Heba,43, Female). Some participants showed no interest in Instagram, as navigating and only looking at photos does not make sense to them.

Furthermore, the regularity of the participants' transnational communication with their families and friends vary. For example, Amira (24, Female, Single) communicates daily with her cousin who resides in Saudi Arabia. This habit was not adopted in Sweden, but rather an old habit since she was in Syria. Other participants like Miral 35, Female, Married), Sami (29, Male, Single), and Karim (24, Male, Single), communicate with their transnational families every other day or every three days. Sometimes, the participants' busy lifestyle in Sweden does not allow them to

communicate with their families regularly. Their working day or school day ends at five in the evening, and then they have to commute home and spend some time with their families in Sweden or do other tasks like studying or cooking and cleaning.

While 11 of the participants cherish their maintained transnational ties, one of the participants considers it a burden. For Jala, her attempt to maintain those ties failed as she moved to Sweden. Communicating with her transnational family members who migrated to Turkey and other neighboring countries to Syria, or those who were displaced within Syria, leads to a condition of 'stress of communication'. Hence, transnational communication leaves her depressed. In her new life, it is difficult to find a mutual matter to talk about with her transnational relatives, and sharing her "better" life conditions with those family and friends who live in more troublesome conditions makes her feel bad.

"There is nothing to talk about and communicate with each other ... just be: we are tired, and so on and if she hears that I am sad she will be also sad ... I would be sad for them because, for example, if my kids have nice clothes their kids don't have and my kids are learning two languages but her daughter is not and even the relatives who are in a camp ... four or five families living together" (Jala, 43, Female, Married).

Additionally, Jala feels that even her closest relatives, like her mother and aunt, are now strangers to her. As she lives in a different environment from theirs, and because they do not have information on the governmental system and lifestyle in Sweden, it does not make sense to ask for advice from them or to complain about what worries her. She believes that they will not be able to comprehend the whole situation.

Thus, unlike Madianou and Miller's study, not all participants of this study aim to "maximize the potential of living a transnational life" (Athique, 2016:78). Although media affordances are certainly essential for maintaining transnational connections (Madianou & Miller, 2012), nonetheless, affective affordances play a role in whether the individual is emotionally able to carry through transnational communications with their transnational ties.

Furthermore, these transnational ties are not linked to the integration in the host country by the participants. Just as Vertovec (2001) claims, there is no clear evidence that theorizes the link between maintaining transnational ties and integration. However, this study speculates that while maintaining transnational ties does not directly affect the integration of Syrian refugees as a process, it still affects their conditions favourably by helping them in relieving stress and social exclusion, or unfavourably by leading them to feel overwhelmed by the communication, as it reminds them of the past and their struggles.

Moreover, Syrian refugees use social media as well to communicate with people in their locality. They prefer to use Messenger to contact their friends and acquaintances from different nationalities in Sweden, and use Whatsapp mostly to contact their family members in Sweden or abroad, and their transnational friends.

“We have a group of me and just my sisters and group for the family which includes my aunts and uncles and all of them we are gathered in this group and for example my friends but I don't give my Whatsapp just to anyone so all of them are very close people to me” (Rand, 35, Female).

However, this is not the case for all the participants. For example, Karim (24, Male, Single) only uses Messenger to contact locals and transnationals. He dislikes the different features in social media applications like stories and status. For him, communication should be simple, and he only uses Messenger because he can contact everyone through it. Thus, media affordances are certainly essential, but personal taste applies as well.

Even though all the participants use different social media to communicate with their social circles, the majority of them, however, prefer to be passive on social media networking sites like Facebook and Instagram. Those who prefer to stay passive are not interested in sharing content or commenting with their opinions. However, they spend time on social media sites in their free time to navigate and read/watch different things on their favorite pages.

Most of the participants dislike to be members of Facebook groups of Syrian or Arab community in Sweden. For them, such groups are unbeneficial in their content, because they only contain negativity about the new life in Sweden or silly things like complaints about personal matters

within a member's personal life. The latter issue is especially problematic to Jala (43, Female, Married), and she describes this issue as a 'misfortune'. She told me about surprising stories that she reads on Facebook groups for females in Scania and Malmö. She detests how many Arabs use these groups to get social support and advice from others on personal matters. Like Jala, the majority of the participants believe that Arab communities in Scania inefficiently use Facebook groups, which leads them to reconsider their relationships with Arab communities in Sweden. This issue in Syrian refugee's social circles will be further discussed in the next section 'Digital integration'.

Nonetheless, such groups can also be a source of emotional support (Alencar & Tsagkroni, 2019) for some Syrian refugees, even if they stayed passive. For instance, Karim is a member of an Arabic Facebook group called 'the temporary permit'. There, people write about their experiences with renewing their temporary residence permits in Sweden. Navigating through the posts of this group, Karim receives emotional support and feels like others are going through a similar struggle.

“...I read in the comments, people with the same situation and writing about it, If there is a solution or to apply in a specific way, or a tip for example ... like someone did this and it worked and someone did this and did not work.. Or just to get emotional support, because all of them are in this situation” (Karim, 24, Male, Single).

Thus, in their everyday life in Scania, Syrian refugee participants use digital media to cope with the new life after their migration and the trauma, to adapt to the new structure, and for transnational communication. After exploring their wide range of everyday media use, in the next section, I investigate the role of digital media in supporting or undermining the participants' integration process.

4.2 Digital integration

One cannot determine whether digital media use supports newcomers' integration or impedes it without exploring the details of their everyday life concerning their media consumption. This is

because, as was thoroughly mentioned before, integration is a complex process divided into different dimensions (Heckmann 2005).

According to Heckmann (2005), integration is divided into four dimensions: 1) Structural integration which includes the acquisition of rights and status such as employment, housing, education, political and citizenship rights; 2) Cultural integration (or acculturation) which includes the cognitive, behavioural and attitudinal change of immigrants and their descendants in conformity to the norms of the host society including the language; 3) Interactive integration which deals with social intercourse, friendship, and membership of various organizations; 4) Identificational integration which concerns feelings of belonging, and expressed in terms of allegiance to ethnic, regional, local and national identification (Heckmann, 2005:15-17).

In his study, Heckmann (2005) demonstrates that integration dimensions depend on each other in ways that structural integration only occurs if the immigrant performs particular learning and socialization processes. Likewise, core elements of cultural integration, and particularly communicative competences such as language, are essential for successful interactive integration. Nonetheless, he emphasizes the difference of the integration process from a person to another and from a host society to another. Thus, integration “is not a linear, curvilinear or in any other pattern “necessarily” progressing process leading to a certain outcome. The process may have very different outcomes” (ibid.:18).

Accordingly, this section moves forward and contributes to Heckmann’s (2005) categorization of integration to explore how highly educated Syrian refugees in Scania use digital media in their integration process.

4.2.1 Digital media use for structural integration

An essential matter to newcomers in a host country is obtaining the needed information for settlement. Because Syrian refugees were forced to migrate, the majority of the information on the Swedish system and lifestyle was obtained after they arrived in Sweden. As integration is an incessant process (Phillimore, 2011), Syrian refugees are in a continuous search for information.

In their study on refugees' integration in the Netherlands and the use of digital media and the circulation of information, Alencar and Tsagkroni (2019) highlighted the issue of the fragmented and dense provision of information that refugees need for their settlement. Handling such complex online platforms requires high navigation skills (Kaufmann, 2018) as well as the ability to comprehend how these social support networks function with each other (Fisher, 2018).

In addition to that, several studies illustrated that social media can facilitate the acquisition of all kinds of information (Alencar 2018; Kaufmann 2018; Leurs 2017a). Even though some of the participants collect information from social media, most of them rely on the Swedish authorities' online platforms such as Migrationsverket.se (Migration Agency's website) and Forsakringskassan.se (Social Insurance Agency's website) to obtain necessary information. Swedish official platforms like these do include information in many languages like Arabic and English; however, the available information in these languages is limited, and not enough to complete a process, such as filling forms which are only available in Swedish. Regarding this matter, the participants manage to navigate, search, and obtain the information that they need on these online platforms. In addition to that, they are well-informed about the different cases for each individual, which is why sometimes they contact the authorities via email or telephone to reach specific information.

The participants' ability to handle such matters is related to their level of education and communication skills. Most of them have vast knowledge in English and Swedish language (Van Heelsum, 2017), which allows them to reach information from governmental platforms easily. Hence, language -which is a part of the culture- plays a fundamental role in reaching information in the host country (Heckmann, 2005).

Furthermore, by navigating through their smartphones, it became evident that the Syrian refugee participants are well-informed about the different applications which offer governmental services digitally. All participants have applications like [Skatteverket](http://Skatteverket.se) (Swedish Tax Agency), [Mina Sidor](http://MinaSidor.se) ([Forsakringskassan](http://Forsakringskassan.se) - Swedish Social Insurance Agency) on their smartphones.

Similar to the findings in Alencar & Tsagkroni's study (2019), some of the participants use social media to voluntarily help other Syrian refugees with their experiences. For instance, Fady (37, Male, Entrepreneur) distributes his phone number in different Whatsapp groups for the Syrian community in Malmö to provide advice to others. In fact, his business is centered on matching and recruiting newcomers into the labor market. In the case of Rand (35, Female, Jobseeker), she also does not hesitate to provide help to other Syrians that contact her through Facebook Messenger to ask her for help in Swedish language courses homework or other information to access education programs.

Layla (25, Female, Student) utilizes groups on social media as well to receive and provide help in homework for different courses like math and physics, which many people in her age study to apply for high education in Swedish universities. In the case of Lama (56, Female, Jobseeker, former travel agent), she utilizes social media like Whatsapp and Facebook Messenger to help other Syrian refugees in booking flights and managing their lives outside of Syria. She helps others with such matters because she only has limited knowledge of the system in Sweden. In addition to that, she even asks Syrians whom she meets in the grocery store or at the bus station to reach out to her if they need any help.

Moreover, some participants demonstrated that they sometimes reach out to others to obtain information about less serious things, such as finding places for different activities. For instance, Miral (35, Female, Student counselor) asks her friends and colleagues about suitable activities for her children, and Layla (25, Female, Student) asks her friends for tips on the best applications to find vegan restaurants in Malmö and Copenhagen. However, Heba prefers to find such information on her own. She explained how she always uses *Google Maps*' spatial orientation feature to navigate the potential area where she and her family will move, relying on the technology for information.

“I directly open the map and check the area and what's in it, in the image, and it lets you walk on the streets and around the area, and check what is close to it. I am the kind of person who looks after things myself and I don't ask about them, I can find it myself” (Heba, 43, Female, Komvux Student).

Like her, generally, all the participants are self-reliant in finding information about important matters such as migration and education by utilizing digital media platforms, and sometimes reaching to other people for help in less important matters like everyday life activities and school homework.

4.2.2 Digital media use for cultural integration

In discussion with the participants on their digital media use in their everyday life, the language was an essential aspect. Even though almost all the participants carry several applications for learning the Swedish language on their smartphones, such as *Språkplay* and *Duo lingo*, the majority of them passed this stage of learning the language and reached a stage where they consume different popular media and educational programs in Swedish. However, they still regularly use applications like *Google translate* and *Translate* in their everyday life.

According to the Syrian refugee participants, learning the Swedish language is not only considered as learning the host country's language; but rather a key to understanding the Swedish culture. Thus, language is necessary for one to be able to deal with the new environment and system (Jordan 2004 cited in Bradley et al. 2017). For instance, Miral (35, Female, mother of three), Rima (41, Female, mother of two) and Jala (43, Female, mother of two) highlighted the importance of the language in following their children's studies and in contacting their schools and the parents of their children's classmates. For Layla, language is an essential tool for learning about the host society's traditions and norms through communicating and socializing with them.

“The language is very important because if one did not learn the language, they can't know anything, it will even stop them from going to some occasions where they can learn about these traditions and norms”

(Layla, 25, Female, Single).

Besides utilizing different applications on their smartphones for language knowledge, some participants pointed out that they like to use the Swedish subtitle feature while watching different Swedish series on SVT Play (Video on-demand service offered by Sveriges Television) and TV4 (Swedish TV channel and video on-demand service), to train their listening skills as well as vocabulary skills.

However, the participants highlighted that learning about Swedish culture and society's traditions and norms does not occur by watching different series and movies. Instead, it requires continuous face-to-face social participation. For instance, Layla forces herself to participate in different kinds of events to learn how people in the host society treat each other in different situations. However, she is only able to do that with her Swedish language skills.

“Sometimes, I don't care to enjoy it, I don't feel like I belong in their parties ... but I like to push myself out of my comfort zone even if I am not enjoying it but I must try, you know” (Layla, 25, Female, Student).

Hence, digital media plays a role in supporting Syrian refugees' cultural integration (Heckmann, 2005); however, this influence is limited to only supporting them with learning the language. Unlike refugees in the Netherlands who utilize social media to establish social bridges with the local Dutch community and acquire knowledge of the Dutch culture through these bridges (Alencar & Tsagkroni, 2019), the refugee participants in Scania do not communicate with locals on social media to obtain knowledge of the culture, traditions, and norms. Instead, they expressed that face-to-face participation and offline social practices are required for one to be able to learn about Swedish culture.

Some participants believe that migrants should change their attitudes and their habits in order to fit in and successfully integrate. This point was highlighted by Heckmann (2005), emphasizing that the willingness of the migrant is fundamental for acculturation. For instance, Layla (25, Female, Single) pointed out that garbage sorting is an important practice in Swedish culture, and she believes newcomers should learn about such cultural behaviors. Together with her brother, they could read about the sorting system on different Swedish websites. Likewise, Jala (43, Female, Married) illustrated that there are small cultural codes that migrants should learn in order to obtain social inclusion. For example, migrants in Sweden should take care of their gardens because it is appreciated in Swedish society. In addition to that, cultural codes enable interaction with the host society in ways that learning about the important things to them allows the person to start conversations and establish networks. For instance, Jala illustrated 'asking about the weather' as an easy way to start a conversation with Swedes, because their culture regards the issue of weather.

Therefore, consistent with Heckmann's (2005) argument on the link between the four dimensions of integration, interaction and social inclusion within the host society are enabled through cultural knowledge.

4.2.3 Digital media use for interactive integration

In terms of digital media use for interactive integration (Heckmann, 2005), the empirical data indicates that Syrian refugee participants do not rely on social media networking sites to establish relationships in their localities. Even Sami (29, Male, Single) and Karim (24, Male, Single) who tried the dating application *Tinder*, found it an invalid source to meet someone. Instead, participants establish relationships in the host country face-to-face, in places like SFI schools, universities, or workplaces. However, participants pointed out that they utilize social media like Whatsapp and Facebook Messenger to check on their local friends as well as to plan gatherings with them.

Some of the participants highlighted that the difference between the structure of the Syrian home and the Swedish home influences the way they socialize in their localities, in which Syrian and Arab socio-cultural traditions are also hard to practice (Ragette, 2003).

“..I can't receive them at my home, the home here in Europe is considered for accommodation only, not for a social life, I can't receive anyone, if I want to meet someone, I will meet them out. In our country, it is different ... We have a guest room for guests, if someone came..” (Omar, 40, Male, Divorced).

“... I cannot do my duty as an Arabic person if you didn't at least tell me that you are coming, not before a month like Swedes, no.. just before one hour ... we don't have a guest room so if you come you will sit in the living room.. you can call me just before one day that I want to come and visit you, or you are on the way and you can pass by, these are the things that you can learn from the Swedes but .. you cannot just delete the Arabic hospitality from your life and if you deleted it ... you would lose a social value which is the hospitality..” (Jala, 43, Female, Married).

This issue was also visible when participants were asked if the interviews could be conducted at their homes. Some participants preferred to meet for the interview outside, such as at a coffee shop

or a library. Additionally, the two interviews which were conducted at the homes of the participants took place in rooms where the interview was constantly interrupted. For instance, the interview with Rima (41, Female, Married) took place in her living room where her two young children were playing video games on the TV screen, and the interview with Layla (25, Female, Single) took place in the small bedroom that she shares with her sister, as her family members were sitting in the living room.

Additionally, the majority of the participants expressed that they do not prefer to spend much time to communicate with their acquaintances on social media, and most of them prefer as well to stay passive on these social platforms. Such a pattern comes as a result of the busy schedule in their everyday life in Sweden. In some cases, like Sami (29, Male, Student, and social worker), the busy lifestyle affects him in a way that he does not prefer to interact with new people anymore. Likewise, Karim (24, Male, Student, and intern) stays passive on social media. In fact, he has deleted most social media applications from his phone -like Instagram, Snapchat, and Facebook- months ago, as he gets distracted by them during his busy day. However, he said that he might reactivate his Facebook account during summer vacation.

The same issue was also highlighted by Miral (35, Female, Student counselor and a mother of three), Rima (41, Female, Married, Student assistant and a mother of two) and Jala (43, Female, Researcher and a mother of two), as they do not have much time to communicate with others on social media because of their duties at home. Therefore, this pattern can be linked to participants who combine studies and work and participants who are working mothers of small children who have to take care of their children for the rest of the day.

Moreover, almost half of the Syrian refugee participants demonstrated having negative experiences with Arabs, including Syrians, in their everyday life in Scania. For example, Omar (40, Male, Divorced) experiences bad treatment from Arab employers, and Jala's (43, Female, Married) acquaintances only contact her when they need help with a matter. According to them, this tension can be a result of the socio-cultural differences within the Arab community in Sweden or simply because Arabs' attitudes changed after their migration. For instance, Omar believes that Arabs became 'arrogant' after they came to Sweden. The participants even explained that there is

segregation within the Arab community members in Scania, in ways that they generally prefer not to be close to them. For instance, Miral clarified the tension between Syrians in Scania as a result of jealousy.

“I feel like Syrians get too jealous of each other ... but because they are very good, that is why everyone wants to show that they are the best” (Miral, 35, Female, Married).

She even added that this segregation is a result of low ethnic self-esteem (Verkuyten & Nekuee, 2001) between Arabs in Europe. Such established stereotypes, together with negative experiences with Arabs, might be a reason why, as mentioned before, most of the participants dislike being connected to Facebook groups of the Arab community in Sweden/Scania.

Even though about half of the participants criticized Syrians and Arabs in Scania, all the participants mentioned that their closest friends are Arabs, and mostly Syrians. However, this might be because of their lack of closeness to Swedes. Most of the participants declared difficulty in having a close and intimate relationship with the original Swedes. For example, Sami (29, Male, Single) explained that even though he spends much of his time with his classmates who are mostly Swedes, he still does not consider them as ‘real friends’.

Heba (43, Female, Married) as well is not able to have close relationships with her Swedish acquaintances, as she feels that they are very different from her, and she prefers to be friends with people who can understand her more. Even though she had a Swedish friend whom she used to visit before moving to Malmö, the communication between them stopped as she moved. According to her, relationships with Swedes are more formal than with others in the society. Likewise, Miral (35, Female, Married) cannot be very close to Swedes, and she can only go out with them or communicate with them once or twice a month. She explains this as a result of the difference in the language and the culture, as well as their thinking and their jokes.

In the case of Layla (25, Female, Single), she explained that the language barrier is a reason why it is difficult for her to communicate with her Swedish classmates and friends effortlessly. Even though she understands the Swedish language very well, she is not yet fluent in speaking. Hence,

her linguistic skills determine her interaction with the people around her (Heckmann, 2005). She mentioned that her closest friends in Sweden are those she met in SFI and similar to her situation.

Additionally, the location sometimes plays a role in the participants' relationships with local Swedes. According to Heckmann (2005), the spatial dimension is related to integration in ways that space as physical space and social construct play a role in the different integration dimensions. In this regard, the locality is crucial to establish interaction and social relations and thus, an interactive integration. Hereof, for some participants who reside in Malmö, reaching Swedes is difficult, compared to other cities in Sweden. For instance, Miral lived in a northern region before moving to the south, and her engagement with Swedes significantly decreased since she moved to Scania.

“When I came to Malmö, honestly, I couldn't meet any Swedes, because the Swedes in Malmö are all escaping from the city, or from the center of the city. Secondly, they have a pre-image of the migrants, so you feel like they avoid talking to us, even if they are there, like, in my surroundings, near my house, there is no one, where am I going to find them?” (Miral, 35, Female, Married).

Similarly, Omar (40, Male, Divorced) recognized a difference between the Swedes in Malmö and those in other cities. When he travels to another city to visit his siblings, he witnesses a friendlier relationship between his siblings and their Swedish neighbors. However, in Malmö, his Swedish neighbor respects him but does not greet him or engage with him.

Nonetheless, host societies are not homogenous (King and Skeldon, 2010), and they hold different cultures and backgrounds (Castles et al., 2002). Therefore, interactive integration does not occur through engaging with original Swedes or Arabs only, but rather with a diversity of the existing cultures and backgrounds. In this regard, participants talked about friends from other nationalities as well. For instance, Layla (25, Female, Single) and Heba (43, Female, Married) have close Afghan and Bosnian friends, and Karim (24, Male, Single) have close dorm-mate friends from Ireland. Those friends are not as close to the participants as Arabs; instead, their level of closeness is situated between very close Syrians/Arabs and distant Swedes. The majority of the participants believe that people from other backgrounds are more open than Swedes. For instance, Amira recognized a difference between her classmates from different backgrounds.

“There was a difference between them and the Swedes, you feel like those are more accessible to talk to and they talk to you or they can be more approachable, you know, but the Swedes you feel like a bit.. I don't know.. I hate to say the Swedes and the Swedes, and to say that they are a group and we are a group, but yes there is something like that” (Amira, 24, Female, Single).

Thus, digital media does not play a role in supporting interactive integration; instead, interaction depends on the locality and the similarity between newcomers and the host society.

4.2.4 Digital media use for identificational integration

The three participants Layla (25, Female, Single), Rand (35, Female, Single), and Karim (24, Male, Single) consume Swedish series, and they articulate the link between watching these series and cultivating a sense of belonging (Hill, 2019). Here, the sense of belonging is to both the host country as a place and the host society as a community, creating a sense of social inclusion which plays a role in developing cultural citizenship (Stevenson, 2003). For instance, Layla identifies with Sweden when she watches different scenes on the Swedish drama series *Bonus Familj*.

“I don't know how to say it, I like when I see something that I see here for example when they go on the streets and I see for example *Pressbyrån* you know so you feel like he is there and they are living in Sweden you know and it's like if someone is living in New York and they watch a series that is being filmed there you know so I like this sometimes that it is being filmed in the same country that I live in”
(Layla, 25, Female, student).

She even follows the Swedish drama series *Festen* which was filmed in Malmö, the city where she resides, and feels like she belongs to the places presented in the scenes (Hill, 2019).

“I liked it for the same reason that I told you that it is being filmed in Malmö and it is nice to see that it is being filmed exactly in the same city you live in ... I don't know how to explain to you but like a feeling, I don't know, honestly like belonging, yes, belonging, that this is where I live!” (Layla, 25, Female, Single).

As Hill (2019) states, a sense of belonging can certainly be achieved by roaming around in familiar landscapes on popular media. Thus, the relation between a place and an individual can be enhanced by consuming popular media (ibid.). In this regard, Layla further added that she deliberately carries these practices with her when she travels abroad. There, the sense of belonging is much more powerful to her.

“There is another series called *Systrar* ... so I was watching this while I am in a visit to Qatar at my father, so I felt like so much belonging and I feel like I miss it so much so I like this so much, sometimes I also like when I am not here and I watch a series from here so I feel like it affects me more” (Layla, 25, Female, Single).

In the case of Rand and Karim, they identify themselves in how Swedish drama series represent different matters in the Swedish society. Hereof, storytelling in popular culture is a factor to promote a sense of belonging (Hill, 2019) and social inclusion (Stevenson, 2003). For example, Rand feels like she is similar to Swedes when she watches *Bonus familj* and how Swedes also have the same struggles.

“... How people also struggle here and that they also have some problems and that they also struggle with their kids and also have to work and so on” (Rand, 35, Female, Single).

Similarly, Karim identifies himself with the Swedish drama series *Festen* and the Norwegian drama series *Skam* as they reflect his personal experiences in Sweden.

“Because they represent the society, also like people from our age, between 20 and 25, the guys and so, and how they are living and what their problems are” (Karim, 24, Male, Single).

Nonetheless, cultivating a sense of belonging does not only occur while consuming Swedish series, but it can also be related to representations of migrant groups. For instance, Miral identifies herself with how *Halal Comedy* (Comedy sketch show starring a migrant, published on Youtube and social media platforms) represents the everyday life of migrants in Sweden. Thereby, she becomes a cultural citizen who is comfortable with being different (Stevenson, 2003:19).

“It is funny, it makes you feel like you are a natural human being like others and how you talk Swedish.

There are people who are embarrassed to talk Swedish for people not to laugh or so, but I feel normal, there is no problem, but I don't get shy. But I like to watch other ‘invandrare’ speak Swedish as well. And viewing it from that corner, the difference between us and them” (Miral, 35, Female, Married).

Miral even highlighted that the fact that *Halal Comedy* is popular among Swedes makes her more attached to it, as it represents how migrant groups think about different matters within the Swedish society, and through the show, migrants’ views can be heard (Rosaldo, 1999 cited in Stevenson, 2003).

However, other kinds of content on social media networking sites can also generate a feeling of belonging to specific groups within society. This can be seen in how Jala (43, Female, Married) and Layla (25, Female, Student) identify themselves with the Syrian community in Sweden through following the Facebook group *Jag är 2015*. This group was established by a Syrian refugee residing in Sweden, creating a space where refugees who arrived in Sweden in 2015 can promote their integration by writing about it in Swedish in the form of posts. This group comes as a result of a statement made by Sweden Democrats’ party leader Jemmie Åkesson in 2020 claiming that “Sweden is full” and has no capacity to take in more refugees. Even though the group is for all refugees, most of the posts are written by Syrians as they were the largest refugee group in 2015. Reading those posts which are written by Syrian refugees promote a sense of belonging to the Syrian community in Sweden:

“I really read about this and I really feel that this doctor is Syrian and this chemist is Syrian and this policeman is also working here and this business man is working and this is a girl who is studying and so on, and you become very proud and you like to see them” (Jala, 43, Female, Married)

Thus, a sense of belonging to the fellow Syrian refugees occurs by consuming content on social media created by the ethnic community. Through this group, Jala and Layla believe that Syrian refugees and their successful integration stories become visible (Stevenson 2003), which establishes a sense of cultural citizenship, as the content encourages others to re-evaluate their stereotyped view of refugees (ibid.:23).

Even though research on digital place-making targets migrants with high education and communicative skills (Polson 2015; Duru & Trenz 2017), place-making of high educated Syrian refugees in Scania shows a different pattern. They do not utilize social media networking sites to engage with other locals and thus feel like locals. Instead, they establish a sense of belonging to their locality through face-to-face communication and by finding similarities between them and others in their locality. Place-making patterns were visible in the interviews with participants who reside in Malmö, and it was mostly related to the city's diversity and multiculturalism. For instance, Heba (43, Female, Married) described Malmö as a 'cultural center', where she does not feel like a stranger because she is different from the original Swedes. In Malmö, she feels like she belongs as she can find things that are important for her, such as the mosque in Malmö and the religious lectures that take place in the mosque every Saturday.

For Karim (24, Male, Single), his sense of belonging to the city is linked to social inclusion. In Malmö, the diversity allows him to feel 'mentally' healthier in ways that the diversity of people's backgrounds makes him more accepted in the society. He explained how he felt like a stranger among his classmates when he moved to Småland region for one semester, demonstrating that diversity in a locality allows migrants to be more accepted.

In the case of Lama (56, Female, Single), Malmö became a home to her as people she sees on the streets are not strangers anymore. When she walks down the street in Malmö, she greets many people she knows, just like she used to do in Damascus.

Even those participants who are not very attached to Malmö and expressed that they are willing to move to other cities for the sake of education or work, they hesitate to move because of their close relationships in the city. For instance, Sami (29, Male, Single) is thinking about moving to Helsingborg, where the campus he studies at is located. Even though he commutes from Malmö to Helsingborg every weekday, he finds it difficult to leave, as his two closest friends reside in Malmö.

Thus, the multicultural context plays an essential role in constituting a connection to the refugees' locality and creating a sense of familiarity and acceptance.

In the end, digital media are a means to cope with the new environment where refugees settled. It is a fundamental part of their everyday life, and they utilize it to keep in touch with what they left behind and to navigate in their new locality. Digital media consumption support, to some extent, different aspects of the integration process, but offline practices are still essential for the integration of refugees in their new locality.

5. Conclusion

Forced migration is an event that is able to change many aspects of an individual's life, including their daily practices. Adapting to a new environment and lifestyle in a host country requires different affordances and skills, which can be challenging, considering what a forced migrant has been through. Regarding this, forced migrants vary in their abilities, not only because of the shock/trauma of migration, but their cultural and educational backgrounds play an essential role in this process.

Research on refugees in Europe has mostly focused on the low educated and low skilled refugees. This thesis targets the underrepresented, highly educated Syrian refugees, with the acknowledgment that this sample does not represent the majority of the refugees in Sweden.

This thesis aimed to investigate patterns of media consumption of Syrian refugees, taking into account their transnational character (Diminescu, 2008), socio-cultural background, and the forced migration experience, to incorporate their silenced perspectives in the discourses on forced migration (Smets, 2019). In addition to that, this thesis aimed to examine the role of digital media in enhancing and undermining the process of integration, mainly focusing on the educational background of the participants in relation to their media usage, and considering the perspective of participants on integration in the Swedish multicultural context.

By taking a bottom-up approach (Harding, 2008), qualitative interviews and media ethnography methods allowed the participants to speak about their everyday media consumption, not bounded by questions related to their identity, which can situate a particular characterization on their answers (Athique, 2016). In addition to that, with using smartphones in media ethnography, participants were able to represent their realities and select the aspects they want to share, and thus produce knowledge as a site of power (Kaufmann, 2020). The smartphone as a medium helped them to become experts in their everyday lives, as holding and navigating through the smartphone allowed them to remember different consumption patterns, which they forgot to mention during the interview. Combining media ethnography with less structured qualitative interviews served as a sufficient approach to answering the research questions: How do highly educated Syrian refugees

use digital media in their everyday life in Scania? And in what way does the use of digital media enhance or undermine the highly educated Syrian refugees' integration process in Scania?

The Syrian refugee participants' media consumption patterns are associated with the changes in the structure and the new environment. The lack of members of the bigger family and the busy lifestyle in Sweden form the participants' mediated practices in ways that they replace the absence of the weekly family gatherings with collective media consumption for family bonding. Additionally, education provided by the family members such as grandparents and uncles to the children in Syrian families is replaced with different kinds of media, such as educational programs and movies in different languages.

Furthermore, the news media consumption patterns of the participants indicated the consumption of news on the homeland, the host country, and global news. The participants varied in their news media preferences. Half of them consume news from ethnic channels such as Aljazeera and Alarabiya, and the other half dislike ethnic channels, as they believe such channels are biased and untrustworthy. Instead, they prefer to consume news from international platforms such as the BBC. Even though the majority of the participants consume news from Swedish news platforms such as Sydsvenska and Aftonbladet, these platforms mostly do not cover their needs. In compliance with Christiansen's (2004) study on news media consumption of migrants in Denmark, the highly educated Syrian refugee participants in Scania choose from the various news sources to cover their needs through their language skills. Thus, transnational refugees are more cosmopolitan than the sedentary national audiences as they are exposed to multiple news sources every day (Robins and Aksoy, 2001).

The hybridity character of the Syrian refugee participants' is also visible in their media consumption habits. Participants illustrated a diversity of media choices and preferences, including Syrian, ethnic, Swedish and international media, and these patterns are associated with their personal interests and consumed for the sake of entertainment (Athique, 2016). Such a pattern becomes reasonable as Syrian refugees are like the audiences around the world, who engage with a pluralized media environment that is not associated with their ethnicity, but prefer "transnational

flow and niche content” (ibid.:82). Most of these patterns emerged as a result of media affordance, as media consumption patterns changed after their migration.

Media affordances provide the participants with the means to stay connected to their transnational families and friends (Madianou and Miller, 2012). Through different social media applications such as Whatsapp, Messenger, and Instagram, Syrian refugees are able to be ‘present’ in the lives of those they left behind (Diminescu, 2008). In addition to that, the participants use these social media platforms as well to communicate with their social circles in their current localities.

Nonetheless, the findings indicate that a part of the participants’ media consumption or non-consumption is related to their emotions. Some participants avoid consuming particular media such as news on Syria, Arabic songs, and Syrian drama series. Additionally, they avoid consuming different popular media that is not related to their ethnicity, such as Japanese anime, as it is associated with memories and habits from Syria. Accordingly, this thesis proposed the concept of *Affective affordances*, which refers to the affective ability and willingness to consume certain kinds of media.

Regarding the second research question, the thesis adopts Heckmann’s (2005) dimensions of integration (structural, cultural, interactive, and identificational) to explore how Syrian refugee participants use digital media to support or undermine the process of integration. Applying Heckmann’s categorization of integration was useful as it helped the researcher examine which aspects of integration are supported by the media consumption and in which aspects the media plays no role. Accordingly, the findings indicate that highly educated Syrian refugees utilize digital media to reach the needed information to establish themselves in the host country’s structure (structural integration). Participants rely on the governmental platforms to obtain trustworthy information, as according to them, information collected from social media is unreliable and untrustworthy. Relying on these platforms is associated with their linguistic skills as well as skills to navigate in complex media spaces, in which their educational background plays a crucial role.

Moreover, the participants’ media consumption patterns include consuming different kinds of media to learn the Swedish language, such as Swedish popular media with Swedish subtitles,

different Swedish language applications, and different Swedish language learning pages on Facebook. Even though many of the participants currently have proper levels of Swedish language skills, they regularly use applications such as Google Translate for immediate translation or for learning new words. However, participants illustrated that the media cannot be utilized to learn about Swedish culture and the society's traditions and norms. Instead, it requires offline participation and face-to-face communication. In this regard, Heckmann (2005) highlighted that integration is not a linear process, and its dimensions rely on each other to operate. Accordingly, the participants expressed that offline participation to learn about the culture requires linguistic skills.

Likewise, linguistic skills are crucial for interaction with the host society. However, although most of the participants speak Swedish well, all of them stated that their closest friends from their local social circles are Arabs. Having close relationships with Swedes is difficult, as participants find a significant difference in their culture and opinion. In addition to that, the spatial dimension (ibid.) influences some participants' social circles in ways that, according to them, Swedes in Malmö avoid interaction with migrants as a result of negative representations of the media and pre-judgment. Moreover, multiculturalism in Scania allows the participants to have friends from different backgrounds.

Regarding the role of media in interactive integration, the findings indicate that Syrian refugee participants do not utilize digital media to establish networks in the host society; however, they utilize social media to keep in touch with the people whom they meet offline. Utilizing social media for socialization is associated with the busy lifestyle they have in Sweden, as well as the change in the structure of the home. Some of the participants mentioned that the lack of the guest room, which is related to the Syrian and Arab culture, in the Swedish homes prevents them from spending time with their social circles. And even though the participants utilize media instead of inviting others to their homes, their busy lifestyle of combining work and studies or being working mothers leads to a relatively low communication with others in their locality.

In terms of identificational integration, findings reveal that participants identify themselves with their locality, host society, and ethnic community through utilizing digital media. Consuming

Swedish drama series allows the participants to establish a sense of belonging to Sweden and cities where they reside, as they watch familiar landscapes (Hill, 2019). In addition to that, these series allow them to feel socially included as they reflect similar struggles they go through, such as finding a job or having personal relationship troubles.

Unlike the highly educated skilled migrants in Paris (Polson, 2015) and different cities in Denmark (Duru & Trenz, 2017), the highly educated Syrian refugees do not constitute a sense of place in their localities by communicating with other locals on social media platforms. However, a sense of place is created as a result of being in a multicultural environment, where they do not feel like strangers as they find many familiar aspects such as large migrant communities and ethnic restaurants. Thus, digital place-making of highly educated Syrian refugees in Scania occurs through consuming different media content and by being offline in a multicultural and similar environment.

Lastly, this research addressed the issue of representing the voice of the forced migrants (Smets, 2019) by selecting an understudied refugee group, the highly educated Syrian refugees. The thesis further attempted to “reveal the important emotional layers that migration inherently entails” (Alinejad & Olivieri, 2020) by extending the focus beyond notions of identity and belonging, to include *affect*. Accordingly, the research reveals that *affective affordances* construct much of the refugees’ media consumption habits. In addition to that, this research highlighted the importance of locality in media and migration studies by exploring the patterns of digital media consumption in everyday life and for the purpose of integration by focusing on the respective locality, in this case, Scania.

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7. Appendices

Appendix 1 Consent form

Consent Form

Master in Media and Communication Studies, Lund University

Researcher: Jumana Khoja

This research seeks to explore the use of digital media by Syrian refugees in everyday life in the Scania region. I will ask about the use of different media platforms and channels, social media, and news media consumption in everyday life in the new host country. The interview will last around one hour and the data will only be used within the confinement of my thesis dissertation for my Masters studies.

I would like to record the interview and use the dialogue to present my findings and I will only do this with your written consent. Please feel free to say as much or as little as you want. You can decide not to answer any question, or to stop the interview any time you want. I ensure that the interview will be treated confidentially and your identity will remain anonymous.

If you agree to take part in this study, please sign below:

Name _____

Age and civil status _____

Signature & Date _____

Appendix 2 Pilot interview guide

Background: Tell me about your migration

- How did you decide to migrate? Why?
- With whom did you migrate?
- When did you migrate to Sweden?
- How long did you wait for a decision from the migration agency?
- What are you doing now? (Work, study, other activities)

Theme 1: Digital media use in everyday life

- Describe a typical day with your media gadgets in Sweden
 - What sort of routine do you have?
 - What type of device? (polymedia)
 - Could you tell me how you get access to these media? When? And where?
- Has your media routine changed after you moved here?

Theme 2: Media use in relation to integration

- Do you use any time of media for integration purposes? (cultural citizenship, placement in society such as housing, education, and work, interaction, and identification).
 - How? Which devices/platforms/language?
 - Who do you interact with during these practices?
(Syrians/Muslims/Arabs/Swedish/Others?)
 - What did you achieve from these practices in terms of your integration?
(community, work, identity).
- What is the importance of these media in your integration process (value)?- Could you do without them?

Theme 3: Personal integration and belonging

- How do you define integration? What is being integrated means to you?
 - In what ways do you think that you are integrated/not integrated?
 - How can you, for example, integrate more?

- How do you identify yourself as a migrant in Sweden?
- What kind of relationship do you think you have towards Malmö/Sweden?
- What makes you belong to Sweden? Do you feel like you belong?

Do you have anything else to add?

Appendix 3 Revised interview guide

Background: Tell me about your migration

- When did you migrate to Sweden?
- Why did you decide to migrate? And how did you migrate?
- With whom did you migrate?
- How long did you wait for a decision from the migration agency? Can you tell me a little bit about the process and your experience?
- What are you doing now? (Work, study, other activities).

Theme 1: Media consumption habits

- I would like to talk a little bit about your daily media consumption.
- When do you watch/listen/read what? (this signals to newspapers, TV, radio, podcast).
- In which languages do you consume media? (You and your family). (try to check media in Swedish, in Arabic and any other international media)
- Do you follow the news? What kinds of news? How?
- How do you consume them? Which platforms or devices do you use? (polymedia)
- Do you consume any Syrian news? News on different platforms? Series? Which platforms do you use?

Theme 2: Media value

- What is the role of social media/digital media in your social life in Sweden?
- Who do you socialize with? Hangout with? (Online and offline). Where do they come from?
- How do you make friends in Sweden? Do you use digital media to make friends?
- Are you a part of social media groups? (Facebook/Whatsapp) How do you participate in these groups?
- How do you keep contact with your family and friends back home/in other countries? (Skype, Whatsapp, Facetime, email?) How often? (polymedia).
- How do you use the media to go around the city?

Theme 3: Life in Scania/Sweden

- How important is it for you to live in this city?
- How happy are you to live in Sweden?
- What do you miss, comparing your life here and back home?
- How did your media consumption change?
- What is your perception about how Syrians, refugees or migrants are represented in the media? (ask these one by one, Syrians, then refugees, then migrants)
- Who is a good migrant to you? And who is a bad migrant?
- What should migrants do to overcome these stereotypes?
- What are your expectations from Sweden? Swedish government? Swedes?
- What can Sweden/Swedish people do to make you feel like you are at home? (Sense of belonging).
- If you have a chance to go back to Syria, would you? Why?

Do you have anything else to add?

Appendix 4 A translated interview transcript

Sami - Male, 29, Medical Student, arrived in Sweden in April 2014.

When did you migrate to Sweden?

I arrived here in April 2014, so almost 6 years.

And why did you migrate?

Now when I first fled, I went to Turkey, I stayed there for approximately four months. The situation in Turkey was not clear, not in education or work or any papers, for someone to stay.

When you migrated to Turkey first, did you decide to stay back then?

It was temporary, I thought I might go back to Syria, but like nothing seemed to give me an idea for like papers or if one wants to study.. And at that time everybody was migrating, and Sweden started giving permanent residence permits, so I liked it. I thought that there is a future.

Who told you about it?

I have my friend, his uncle fled to Sweden before. So I thought the idea was good, for the future.

The people who migrated before, did they migrate long before or during the conflict in Syria?

During the conflict. All of them. So this my uncle's friend, he fled in 2013 or something.

And then how did you come here?

First from Turkey to Greece, and then from Greece to Italy, and then here. By sea and then a flight.

And who did you migrate with?

First , from Turkey there was a guy that I knew, I met him in turkey, but then from Greece to here, alone.

Did you flee Syria with someone?

No no alone, because my goal was not that I stay outside, it was just temporary for a short period of time.

Why just a period of time?

We had some problems, my brother had some problems.. And so. With the state.. So I went for aiming to come back, I was even waiting for my final exam.

So you had to go?

Yes.

And the situation did not get better so you had to stay out?

Yes.

And how long did you wait for a decision?

I came in april, and got a decision in december.. So like 8 months.

And what did you do during this time?

This time was a waste.

Where were you?

In a small village called laxu, near Orebro. The village was very small, its population was like 700 people, and it was far from everything, so we did have the chance to do anything. So I didn't do anything beneficial.

And where did you apply?

I applied in Malmo, but then they sent me there. So during these 8 months.. Just like sports activities and so.. Just wasting time.

And what are you doing now?

No I study at the university, and work as well. I am studying medicine, my seventh semester, and working in an association that I started at before I started university. They have several projects and 'verksamhet'. So I work as like working with those who have problems with addiction and 'hemlöshet', so I work on the weekends. I used to work fulltime before university, but now it is 25%.

What did you do after you got your permit?

I first moved to another city, to Karlskrona.

Why?

I found accommodation there, temporarily. I started studying in those schools and through the labor agency (arbetsformedlingen).

The etableringsplan?

Yes. and then I moved to Malmo.

Why?

I met my ex-girl friend. So I moved to Malmo. I found work immediately, so I was working and studying in komvux, and completing courses that were required to complete higher education.

Were you studying before in Syria?

Yes.

How did they evaluate your studies?

Before I get into university, they don't evaluate me. So I had to study normal courses, physics, kemi, english.. and so on. When I got into university, I applied that I studied before and so. So they accepted me in the fourth semester, I studied before for five years, but they evaluated it as one and half years.

We will talk now about your media consumption. Tell me about what you watch, read, or listen to?

Currently?

Yes. Also tell me about the languages you prefer for each thing.

Okay. First, I listen to music while training, mostly on spotify. Music mostly. When I am at home and have free time, mostly youtube, I watch mostly Satirical political programs.

In which language?

In Arabic language, but mostly egyptians. Also cultural programmes in Arabic. During my studying time, I usually study using my laptop. I use a website, it is paid, it leaves in no need for buying books for every subject and so. The website includes videos and so.. It's called hippocampus, it is in swedish. There is another one in english, called ozmoses, these are for studying. There are other features in these platforms, like social media, and one can also do a study plan and see how others are doing and so. In my free time, mostly.. Hmm.. netflix not so much, but youtube, youtubers programmes in arabic. I also watch some things on youtube, related to my studies, like practical things. For example something about a test and execute it, and so, or other operation, or like when someone gets an Epileptic fit. These are in english. But there is no specific channel, I just search.

Do you use subtitles for these?

No.

What about radio?

No, not so much. Sometimes I listen to podcasts, there is one also called AT-läkarna, it has to do with the medical sector, and it is my study field, so I listen and so, and each episode they talk about something, like how to deal with this illness in the operation room.

Is it weekly?

Yeah, almost. They stopped for a period of time and came back, yeah one time a week.

What about newspapers?

I mostly read digital newspapers, not paper and so. Sydsvenska for example, and mostly if there are some events or so. When I hear something or so I check Sydsvenska to know about it.

Do you also check facebook in such times?

Yes, but mostly here in malmo, sydsvenska. On facebook I mostly check on things about Syria, the pages that talk about Aleppo and what's happening there. I also watch Aljazeera, if there is something, especially during such times.. With Turkey and so.

What else? Do you have a receiver?

No.

How do you watch these things?

Aljazeera, I mostly, read the news, not like I watch their life stream. For other things.. The tv I have is not smart, so when I watch something I cast from the mobile. But for channels, I mostly watch youtube, or like Facebook, watching videos on Facebook too.

So you don't read any newspapers.. Also arabic ones?

Like.. there is this one Alkompis.. Like also digitally, I might look at it, I mostly see them on facebook, news and so.

Do you like to follow them?

Not so much. They publish videos daily on updated news, but I don't watch it. But I check if there is some specific news that attracted me and so.

Why is that?

Hmmm.. their way of presenting the news.. Like.. I don't like it. And also always when one reads news on facebook, one is forced to see the comments sometimes. And the comments are mostly like..not like it provokes me.. but I don't like to read it.

Is it the news that provokes you?

No, their news is normal. But maybe their way of presenting the news.. They like.. They present good news and mention good things.. Like of course everyone has followers and interests and so on. Sometimes they present news that is not related to Sweden or Swedish followers or anything. As I said, mostly the provocative thing is the comments, I don't comment or write anything, maybe I didn't write anything on Facebook for 10 years, I just follow the news and check what friends are posting. But like when I see someone writing, sometimes I think it is not logical, especially on Alkompis, you always witness some fights in the comments.

Does it have to do with trustworthiness?

I always see that they are not always first to publish the news. They always take news from other resources like Aftonbladet newspaper and Expressen. And these are not that trustworthy. And then also Sydsvenskan.

What do you mean by not trustworthy?

Aftonbladet and Expressen and so are like yellow journalism.. Most of their subjects.. Like they have good topics but also many other topics focus on personal things, so this side of their news leads to think less about their trustworthiness. I don't like to follow them much.

But you like Sydsvenska?

Yeah, it is better. Its news is important according to me.

So you only read news in Arabic and English?

Yes.

Other international platforms?

Hmm.. not for the news. But there are scientific articles which mostly are in English, so sometimes when I am researching on a specific topic, I mostly find articles in English.

On which platforms?

There is a website called UptoDate, this is a medical website, but all the articles are in English.

Do you translate it?

No. I don't have a problem in English with understanding English. But since I don't normally use it, I don't think that I am that comfortable in talking, I don't think that I speak fluently. But I understand, I don't need to translate. Maybe I will translate a word or two if I didn't understand from the context.

Tell me about other things that you watch.. Other than news?

Like alone, I very rarely watch series. But maybe Netflix.

What do you watch on netflix?

Like something related to non-fiction, something related to reality. I don't like sci-fi, some 'documentär', documentary films, some crime stories happening or so. Mostly in America. I also watch swedish series like Bron and so. But mostly Drama and something in reality that has to do with crime and killing, maybe not on netflix, but other platforms. HBO or so, if there is something.

Do you have a subscription?

I had a subscription, but then I deleted it.

What about netflix subscription?

Yes I have it.

What about other platforms?

Maybe I had one on via play, then I deleted it. Because I also mostly follow sports...

Are you subscribed to via play?

No, I was.

For sports, sometimes I borrow from my friends, they have SeeMore, or Via sport and so, and sometimes I do 'streaming' from normal websites, they generally are not legally streaming.

Do you watch anything in Arabic, for example series?

Arabic things.. I watch currently those youtubers, for example ALDAHEEH, and others who youtubers who generally talk about.. There is one called Ahmed Albuhairi, and... there are several who talk about politics, politics in a sarcastic way, and about the current situation.. But for the series.. No.

Let's go back to the news.. Tell me about your routine

I read the news daily, for example during my lunch break.. Also in the evening.. Mostly several times a day.

Which platforms do you check daily?

Facebook. Mostly. On facebook mostly arabic things, and things related to Syria. They are pages.

What about the groups?

For the groups, I mostly go on groups for buying and selling stuff here in Malmo. But groups for other things related to 'intresse'.. Hmm. maybe, I used to play sports with a group so we had facebook group, that's it.

Where?

Here in Malmo.

Who is in this group?

Just the players. Mostly swedish, but also other nationalities. So it was not like an active group, but like: there is a match today.. Today we will go to this location.. And so.

Does this group use any other platform for managing the members?

Like.. I use an app called 365, I check if there are matches and so. Lives scourse and so.

Regarding news on Syria particularly, where do you most get that from?

Mostly there is "Shahed Ayan Halab", I mostly care about the situation in Aleppo, and also Aljazeera, their page, when I want to check something about syria as a whole or international talks about it.

Tell me about Shahed Ayan, what is their source and how do you find it?

Guys, I think, In Aleppo. I don't take their news as 100% trustworthy, but maybe because their political opinions are similar to mine, there is bias in there, for that In think that their news is realistic.

Do you check on the transparency of their news from other sources?

Not every news, but like more than once it happened that I read the news and then saw that it really happened. For example, I read a news that I heard before from someone I know there, who is in that location of the event. My family doesn't tell me much, but my brother sometimes tells me, so I think there is matching in the news and as I said there is bias because their political opinions are close to mine.

Now, we will talk about your social media use. Tell me which social media networks do you use and on which devices?

I mostly use social media on my mobile, on the laptop not so much. On facebook, but I am not very active, but I follow, not the people but the pages, and also my friends and what they are posting, since most of my close friends don't live in Malmo or Sweden. I also use whatsapp to talk with my family. Hmm.. what else

The participant starts to navigate on his phone..

Hmm.. what else.. On Spotify I listen to songs..
Also snapchat, I talk with people from here, the ones I talk to.

So snapchat is for people here in Malmo and facebook is for people who are not here..?

Yes. it is mixed, but mostly people who I don't see. They use facebook more, also whatsapp for my family, they are not so developed in technology so whatsapp is the easiest for them. For snapchat, mostly... I don't like to take photos and stay active on social media.. so like for all tastes, there are people who use snapchat, that's why I have it. But not like I use it daily, but maybe someone will text me on snapchat and we talk.. Instagram also I open it and check images, I don't post, I just watch images on some pages, medical pages or cars and so.. My interests.

So Instagram is for you personally and not for your social life..?

Yes.

What about viber?

I rarely use it, but I just talk with my sister on viber, she is the only one, she is in Algeria, other than that I don't need it.

What about skype?

I have skype! Oh I don't use it. I used to use it a while back also with my sister but now it's been a very long time since I last used it.

I see some online shopping apps, like blocket..

I also look at it.. But like during times when I need to buy something.

So you have other apps for such things?

No, I use facebook.. Market place.. If I need something.

Also socializing on tinder, I don't know which category it is.

*Navigating through the apps ..
We found SJ app and other traveling apps.*

I mostly use skanetrafiiken because I transport between here and helsingborg. But sometimes I use them for traveling and so on. I don't travel much but I like them to be here.

Did you use to travel before?

Before.. No. rarely.

And what are the applications that were introduced to you here?

Mostly, all. There is for example prisjakt, I didn't know about that, it compares the prices and so.

What about pinterest?

I don't use it much. But sometimes I might open it and check some images mostly about sports.

Do you like to download applications generally?

For example I download these and use them just once and leave them here, I don't delete them. For example this 'filmstaden' (Bio app), I went once two months ago and I left it here.

So you like to use applications and not use them on the browser?

No no, anything has an application I download it immediately. I think it is easier and you might also find.. If something you will buy.. The application sometimes gives you some kind of discount when you download the app.

This is a parking application for example.

This is the newest application that I downloaded (Karma).

Do you use it?

Yes I used it a few times, I don't cook much at home, so .. it started to cost a lot because I eat out daily. So I found it suitable.

How did you find out about it?

Honestly, I don't remember. Maybe I found it advertising in some place, maybe facebook or something.. I don't know, but I saw it somewhere and I liked the idea. It decreases the cost and the food is at the same quality.

Generally I like electrical things. Like I don't like to carry the bankcard with me. So I find it easier if one buys from the application.

Do you use the wallet application?

Yes. *(the participant opens the application and shows me his cards).*

I have.. So I don't like to carry things. But maybe I will carry something like a boarding pass, but not everything else.

Okay. Now we will talk about your social life. How is your circle of people? Who do you hang out with? Who are your friends?

Generally, my day is very long at the university. I go daily from 7 in the morning to 18 in the evening. Mostly who I meet daily are people who are at the same... I have this friend who works at AT-lakare, so sometimes we leave together. I knew him from Syria, we used to study together.

He also lives next to me, so we have a lot of similar things. So we go out and come back like each other. Also there is another guy who lives in the same building I live in, he also studies but he studies in Malmo. He is Syrian too. He also has some similar things to me, studying and so.. I met him at the university. Other than that, I have friends from work, when I used to work fulltime, they are the same age as me, I meet them but like once a month, we go out and so. They also changed their jobs, so we meet sometimes.

And how do you communicate with them?

SMS. mostly. We plan something to meet at my place or someone's place.

What about university?

In university, they are not like friends, we just sit in the university and we eat together and so on. They are my classmates. Normally, we are divided into groups, totally we are 15 - 16 students. So now for example I have two with me in the group, so we are together all the time, at any department or any clinic and so, always together. One is forced to spend time with them.

Do you also go out?

No, not outside the university. We just like sit together and eat or so.

And how do you communicate with them? In swedish?

Yes.

We also have a group, a group for students in helsingborg on facebook, if there is something important or so. Because we have a student representative, if the students want something or so. They sometimes meet for opinions or something about the 'kurs' we are taking, something positive or negative. Also we have 'place..'.. They put us in different places like in angelholm or lund or so.. So someone posts like: I can't get into this section.. Anyone know? And so. But rarely, not that much communication.

People who you hang out with in university or communicate with, where do they come from?

They are swedes.

So either swedes or arabs? Because you told me that you have these two arab friends.

Yeah there is this guy, he is not with me, he lives next to me. The other guy my friend yes, either we sit together and eat and so, or the others who are with are all swedes. Because you know this programme is swedish. There is also a girl who is finnish is our class. The medical sector here, you feel like it is 'homogen grupp', there is not this cultural diversity and so.. The majority are swedes.

And do you have a problem communicating with them?

No no. normal.

Who else?

There are some girls who I know, I met them when I used to play sports, and so. We get the same trains so we have the same routes, she works in landskrona, so we have the same way, and sometimes we go out in the evening and eat together. And sometimes I go out and meet new people through tinder and so, but friends? I don't call them friends.

From what I understand, you mostly communicate with swedes, except the people who you knew from before. Is it easy for you to hang out with swedes and get to know new people?

I meet new people.. But keeping the relationship? I don't know. When one came here.. Became... not introverted but .. I don't know.. Maybe the time.. The time or one doesn't feel like it anymore.

How?

Swedes are generally, not all of them, are not ... the Arabs generally... I know Arabs but our relationship is not like friends.. But more like I help them in like translating some papers and so.

Where?

Here in Sweden. There are two people who I know from work and we kept the relationship but it is formal, I help them in papers and certain things and so. But.. I don't know.. Not like I prefer,, but I feel like swedes are not hard to deal with.. Not like the Arabs are hard to deal with.. (stops and doesn't know how to describe it).

Like, you don't like to be close with arabs?

No, not like this. But there is more understanding if someone doesn't have time, not meeting everyday doesn't meet that you don't want to.

So reproach occurs?

Yes.

Did this happen to you before?

No.. like, I don't know how it is in this country, if it is the time or so.. One feels controlled by time mostly. This period of time I have very little time, so .. I don't know. Even most of my friends.. I have several friends living in other cities, and I don't see them or communicate with them daily, they are from syria, from aleppo. I meet them like once every 4 to 5 months if they pass by here or so.. Or maybe more. There is no reproach, there is understanding. Other than that, I feel like one does not feel like establishing relationships anymore. All these people who I communicate with and so.. I don't feel like.. Just this guy who studies with me, I can say that there is a friendship between us, and also this guy who is staying at my place now. So I didn't make this much friendship and I don't know if it is the time.

Was this different from what you used to have in Syria?

Yes.

Why?

In Syria, the society is different, and my interests were different and I was younger, and there was time for all these things.

Is it the routine here that controls these things?

Yes.

But like before you worked, when you were waiting for a decision.. Were there people who you hung out with?

I used to live in a room, like with the other four, so one is forced to be social. But I like to be social and so, I don't like to be alone, even though I am alone most of the time. I don't know.

Are you still in contact with these people?

This guy, the one who is staying at my place for a visit. Just him. Rarely, like I have their numbers and on facebook and so. Everyone lives in a different place and likes.. The time.. The routine and the time are controlling everything. Maybe also most of those who I know have families and kids, and I am alone, maybe.. If I am alone and I don't have much time, so I assume they are even more busy.

What about those you communicate with online..?

Mostly my family.

Do you have some kind of group, maybe on whatsapp?

No. I talk to them separately. I talk with my mother and father and they are mostly together, my aunt, and my sister. Every two to three days, according to the situation of the internet there. But like these I communicate with them online. Other than that, there are these people who I help, they are in malmo, this guy sends me each time he receives some paper, he sends me on whatsapp. He takes a photo of the paper and sends it to me.

How did you meet these guys?

I knew them, these two people, through work. So, we kept the relationship, I once helped him with something.. And the relationship stayed and so. Not friends, but like, I think that it is okay if I helped them and so, that's not a huge thing.

Also, my friends on facebook messenger. I also have a group of my friends on whatsapp from highschool or university or so, also not very active, like someone writes something every two to three months, or on occasions, someone had a newborn or so.

And do you have a close connection to someone who is not in Malmo or Sweden?

Close?.. Hmm.. there are my friends in turkey, or my friend in Turkey. They were in Syria and went to Turkey.

Were they with you when you were in turkey?

Yes, during a certain period of time, I was there, and then they came, and then I came here. But since then I went to Turkey a few times and we met there. I know their situations but not the details, like they are working and so.. What they do.. And what I do and so.

Where did you also travel?

Italy, Germany, the Netherlands..

Who do you travel with?

I have this friend in Vaxjo, we mostly travel together. He is Syrian. I knew him from Syria, since we were 6 years old, we were neighbors, and we kept that. He is the one who his uncle went to Sweden before.

We also traveled to Spain and Morocco.

And how do you make friends in Sweden?

Hmm.. maybe people I know, more than being friends, those who I used to play football with and so, one always meets new people. There is also the possibility if someone wants to have a friendship with a certain one, but I don't know.. I.. I don't feel like I have.. I am trying to keep everything like this.. To see them just during the activity.

Is it you or them who gives this impression?

Me, I don't know why I became like this. Like, not introverted.. Just a bit 'kräsen' as they say in swedish, like with requirements, someone that has specific characteristics, for example a calm person, so that I get motivated to.. That I feel that it is going to be fun to meet the person again or have a friendship.

There is.. In the sports area, one can meet many people.

And where do you find these places?

First, I started playing.. Like.. I found it on the internet and so, 'Idrottsforeningar' and so.

Did you search for it?

Yes, on google. And I contacted them and there was this 'prov' that you go and train as testing, and I went and trained in the team, and from there I knew this team, but there is no like.. And I have them on facebook, we might talk if we met on the street and so, but not so much as friends.

What else do you have other than sports?

Hmm.. I don't have any other interests... so sports mostly and my friends from work, there is a bit of friendship, you can name it. Other than that, I don't have other interests like cultural or dance or so. Because the girl I was in a relationship with, she is from orebro, so she has so many friends here and likes to meet new people, she had many interest like theater and dancing and so, also there is an application called gofriendly and so, you go and meet people, so she likes to meet people, for me I don't have the same interests and I don't like to meet people like this randomly.

And why is that?

I don't know, I don't feel the need to do that. I feel like if I have time, I prefer to see someone who I know.

Do you have groups on whatsapp or any other platform?

On whatsapp, I have a group of my friends who I used to study at university with them, everyone is in a different place.

How active are you in this group?

Not like.. I never started the talk, but they for example send in Eid AlAdha for example they congratulate each other so I reply and so.

And where are they?

One in turkey, one in lebanon, one in germany, one so, we are five people. And also there is another group, when I started studying in the fourth semester, there were few of us who were arabs, in the classroom, so we have a group between us, but they continued in malmo and I moved to helsingborg so I am not so active and so, I just see what they write. I don't have other groups.

What about facebook?

The university one, and the team group, I am still with them I don't know why, tho I left the team. There is also this buying and selling in malmo.

Are you active on it?

Just when I moved to malmo for example, I wanted to sell some things and so. Other than that, I check it if I need something, but not that active. There is also a group which sells books for lakareprogramme in lund and so, also if I need something and so..

And where do you find these groups?

Buying and selling, I found them myself, but the university one, first when I started, someone in my class told me that these groups are good and so.

When you communicate with your family and friends in Syria or Turkey, what do you use?

For my friends in Turkey, mostly messenger on my mobile. With my family mostly just calling, with my friends we sometimes video call on whatsapp or messenger.

Why not with your family?

The internet controls this, it is hard, we sometimes try but the signal is very bad so the best way is just calling.

Do you stream it on the tv?

No, I don't remember that I did that.

And on the laptop?

No, just on the mobile phone.

**Now we will talk about your life in malmo and other questions about migration.
How important is it for you to live in Malmo?**

Honestly.. There are of course positive things here, the live, it is a lively city. But I think any other city.. Because I am also thinking about moving to helsingborg, I think that one can adapt anywhere. Some people tell you that they cannot leave malmo, I can't and so.. I don't think that it is that important, that I can't live.. If I had to move to another city I don't think that it is going to be a problem.

And why are you staying?

I am too lazy to move haha. Other than that, my work.. It is true that I go to helsingborg everyday, but I think that it would be annoying to come here everyday for work and so.

So you work here and study there?

Yes, and I am residing here. Other than that, maybe I don't have this huge social network, I am not that active in seeing others, but when I want to do that, most of those who I know are here.

So its importance is in the people you know here?

Yes. other than that.. The city in general, not very important, just the people I know.

I feel like it is close.. I feel like I live close to the station and close to the gym and so, I feel like it is small and there is everything here.

Like what?

Like, for example, if someone wants to travel to Denmark it is close, if I want to buy something, because I used to live in other cities.. For example it provides things like consumer goods, not available in other places. I don't cook much, but generally food and restaurants from all nationalities and so. For example thai and veitnamese food, there are many things. And I don't have many certain interests, but I feel like if I would have interest with time, in some kind of food and some kind of activity, I would find it in this city. You find everything here, compared to other cities.

Why?

Maybe its location, as it is close to Denmark and it is relatively big. If you have an interest, you can find some community who has similar interests or so.

And how happy are you in Sweden?

Good. a democratic country and there are laws. I like the country generally, maybe just a social problem, because one is alone, this is the only thing. One likes their families to be with them and so. Other than that, the country as a system and so.. I think it is very good. A country where everyone has the same rights, for example in medical care, everyone gets the same treatment, regardless of who they are and how much money they have.

And what do you miss? Comparing syrian to the new country?

I don't know.. Like one got used to this.. But one used to feel happy more. I don't know why, I don't know if it is a feeling that one gets or.. One changed... It's an age, like 6 or 7 years, so one got a bit older. But the feeling that someone is really happy, I don't think that I can feel it here that much.

Why?

I don't know, maybe because of migration and seeking refuge and without the family, one changed a bit. But like this feeling of happiness, when one used to spend time enjoying it with family and friends in syria.. I don't know. Maybe this is the thing I miss the most. Other than that, not so much. Because there are many things as a system is much better here. And our traditions I really respect it, and our religion, but this country respects that so it is not something I miss because it is available and respected. The majority understands. They understand and open more than us, more than we are open to them.

And regarding this, did you face any difficulties here as a migrant?

I hear many people and so.. But personally I didn't face such a thing. But like I know in the future, in this field, there are some specialities that just swedes can specialize in.

How do you know that?

First, from the doctors, I see that most of them are swedes, and it is talked about between the swedes, so you have to know someone and so to get a chance in this sector, someone must recommend you and so, in the surgical sector for example. Not intermediary like what we have in Syria, but relationships. People you know, a network.

Personally I didn't face anything, but I know it happens with others. But this society is much better than other ones. Where I work for example, there are many people who come to us all migrants, also from syria, I see from their stories that it is not easy for one to enter the labor market if they have another background coming from another place, but for certain reasons and just because of racism, because the requirements of the labor market is like degree and language and things, and these people don't have the ability, even if they have the ability, there will be some preferences and so, it will be harder generally.

What is the perceived image of syrians here?

From hearing, the some sentences I heard from certain people, who have connections with syrians, working in sfi or working generally with syrian migrants, they say that syrians are hard working, and they found jobs, and also other people, than swedes, some people I met, they day that syrians, the majority of them, succeeded in entering the labor market and to enter universities, in a period that is half what they needed to do the same thing. Generally what I heard is good. There is a positive view to syrians in general.

What about the refugees?

This is according to the person you talk to, of course if one is educated and so, they would know.. It is not easy, every person has some abilities and came in a certain age and has certain abilities, so not everyone who came can be creative, for example in a country that is not theirs and also there is the factor of migration, it is not a simple thing, it has a big psychological factor. So there are people who take the freedom of saying that these refugees are not good, and there are people who are more alerted about this, so they don't talk about if refugees are good or not. For example the left don't like to say if the refugee is good or not, because they are the same as citizens in this country, they don't describe them as refugee or something else, but from I see that people generally they know that refugees who come, they give a positive push to this country, because of the old ages in this country, and they are benefiting more from people coming here.

How so?

The people here who are originally swedish and were born here are all of high ages, so they are benefiting from workers and other experiences from outside and so. So this is an economical benefit.

And what about the migrants here and their image?

As I told you, it is according to the city.. For example for me, all people are the same. But for example for people, that I hear.. According to the person.. There are many people who have previous judgements, they say: see how these people are shooting each other and the crime and so, they are all arabs. So they say that it is like this, they don't distinguish. And there are people who know that not all people are the same, and not all people.. Like swedes.. Every society has layers and so.. Different mentalities and so.. So there are people who know that it is normal that there will be good people and bad people and people with different abilities, and there are people who are afraid so much from the refugees, they say: problems and killing and violence against women, and women want to stay at home and so.. So it is according to how much everyone is connect to the migrants and how much sees and understand their culture, and there the previous judgements, they don't deal with them, but they hear and read in the newspaper, there is the media and so and there exaggerating, but it is according to the person, of course some people don't have these judgement at all about a whole society just from one person.

And who do you think is a good migrant and who is a bad migrant?

I think that there is no one who is bad. But generally, each person..

I mean who do you think is a good migrant and another one who is not?

Or like any person can be good or bad. The migrant is generally like didn't come willingly, they were forced to be here in this society, and one a person who is good try to help the society, and have an understanding of how like this society helped him when he first came here, that he doesn't use the system to take money or financial aid, or manipulate or so.. I think that it is not the migrant, I mean there is good and bad, and also there are people who were born here and who use the system to take financial aid or claim illness or so, so I think it is the same thing with all people.

And how can one overcome these stereotypes?

One should try according to their abilities. Learn the language of the country, if one didn't learn the language, but also according to their ability, not mandatory, but if someone has the ability so..

And why do you think that it is not mandatory?

It's according to each person's abilities, for example I am thinking if my father came here and he is 70 y/o, it would be very hard for him logically to learn the language, it wouldn't change anything if he didn't learn the language, but he can try, as much as he can, and like this society generally there is welcoming, not from everyone, but from the system of the country, regardless of all the negative things, there is a positivity to someone who came here new and has a residence permit and so, so he can try with his abilities to do, work or do something, according to their abilities, but just sit and use the system to like: I am like this.

Regarding the migrants and their image.. How can one change this image?

This is a complicated thing, but one can try from a personal level, one can try alone to like.. Like they know me in the university that I am not swedish, that I am from syria, so it is the person who gives an image, and then..

How?

A person gives a good image generally, but like.. The Swedish society, normally they don't talk about something that is bothering them, but if someone talks and says: you do this and so.. About migrants, one can try to correct them, not to be afraid to enter this discussion, try to correct the image and so.. But how to change the whole image, I think it is complicated, since there are these gangs and so.. And the majority of them are.. Of course there are Swedes, but the majority that are active and so, they have a migration background, and this is complicated. I don't think that anyone wants to be a criminal or so. But it is a complicated thing that leads them to his level. Because of this image on the majority of the migrants, I don't know how one can change the whole image, but I think people who are seeing that there are many people with migration background who are successful, if one can say, for example in restaurants and so or in some crafts for example. Engineers, doctors, any science field, I think this also supports.

What can Sweden or the Swedish society do to make you feel at home?

They try, but they are not an emotional society like us, following their emotions, like us, a population that is practical, so I don't know how. They try...

How?

At least when you see like, they have different colors and different religions than us, and even so you feel like there is sympathy. And they mention, they write, welcome refugee and so, and generally the system of this country, provide to people, regardless of where they came from or if they have been here for only two days, the same rights as a person who were born here and so, I feel like this is something that make someone feel.. I don't know about the people if they are doing it, but the system is who is forcing them to be.. To make others feel like this. Other than that, for normal people, that they don't be.. As I told you there are many people, I hear, who say that: oh I talked with someone and he doesn't know Swedish and so, at the doctor and so.. There are people who don't think about this person who left his country and came here and been here for less than two months, and he is working and so.. So they don't put themselves in other people's shoes. They can hurt someone by that, and the language is not everything. Like they say: you are good and you speak Swedish, but there are many who are not good. This is very shallow thinking. So I don't know how to alter the human attitude, I don't know, but I guess that the system as a country, did what they are supposed to do.

And after all these 6 years.. Where do you belong?

I don't feel like Malmö is home and so, but generally and Sweden.. I don't know about belonging, I feel like it is still to Aleppo, to Syria.

Would you go back if you had the chance?

No, I don't think so. I wouldn't.

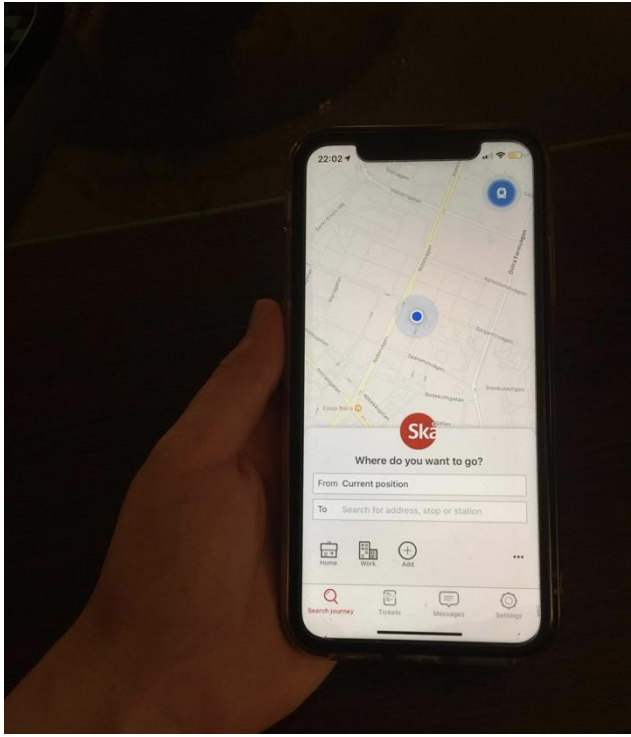
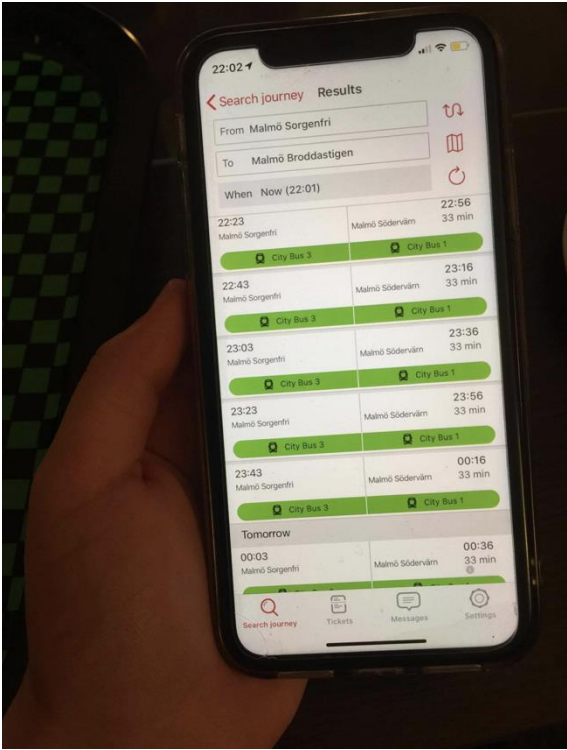
Why?

Because in the current situation, I feel like, as a country.. Even in other developed countries like the USA, there is no such social justice and governing law like this country. And out country there is nothing as such, even if the situation got better, in the near future i don't think that... like to be a social justice after a time of war and weapons and injustice and so. So if I had a chance to go back and the situation is the same, I wouldn't go back.

And what if the situation changed?

Sometimes when I travel to turkey for example, it is hard for me now to live in turkey as a country. So I guess someone got used to it, maybe it is the routine, but the countries generally have chaos, social or political and there is no such justice and law that I think is it the thing that makes me love sweden. Sweden is generally, as a country.. Not like belonging.. But I feel comfortable here. I don't link to a specific place, to malmo or so.

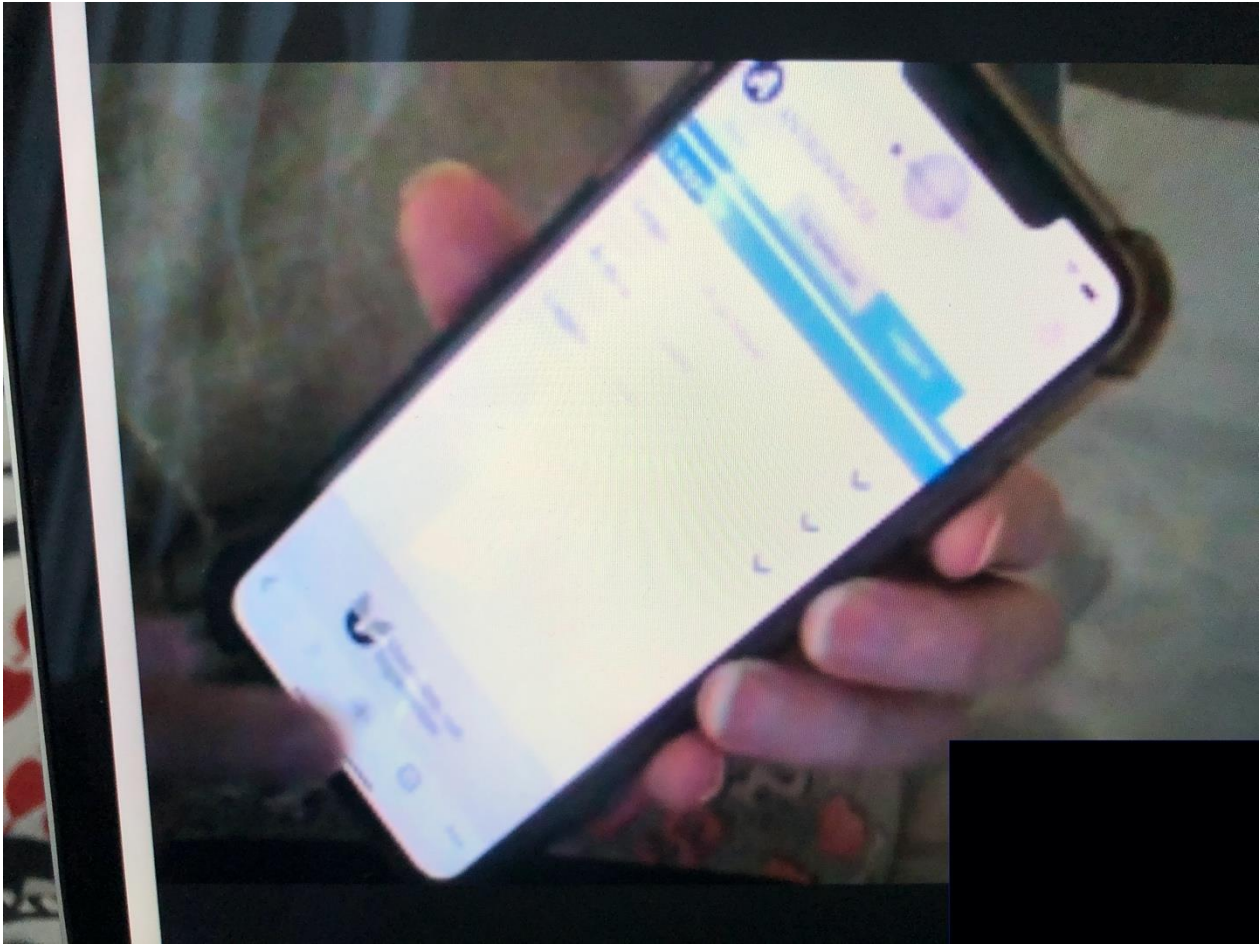
Appendix 5 Media ethnography with smartphones: shots during the interviews



Navigating with Amira through her transportation applications.



Layla navigating through her social media applications.



Rand navigating through her phone during the online interview.

Appendix 6 Examples of coding process

Screenshots of coding the transcribed interview with Karim (24, Male, Single, Student and intern at an elementary school).

And do you use youtube? And for what?

For youtube mostly music, and tutorials. If I want how something can be done. And also the mentor kid, he is already a youtuber, he has a page. So we watch a lot on youtube. Top 10, mostly watched, something comedy and funny.

You watch together for his content?

Yes.

And in which language do you watch on youtube? For everything.

The music depends, arabic, english, french sometimes. Swedish not so much honestly, they don't have much nice music. English for tutorials because you find everything in english, for example if I want to search in arabic or swedish, I would not find. Sometimes just music, like without lyrics.

Do you use things like spotify?

I have Spotify, yes, but I don't have a subscription. I put on youtube, winter. If you googled winter, you just get clips of winter. Sometimes the shomine, you know, you listen to it how it is burning, it is there on the screen.

Why do you like that?

When I want to sit and relax.

Is it related to something?

Winter reminds me of Syria, this... the rain is dropping on berries, you listen to its voice.

So you don't read things at all?

If there is some news that I really want to know about and there is no audio news, I would read it.

And where would you read it?

Lokala nyheter or BBC.

Jumana Khoja
12:58 PM Today

Consuming media content which reminds him of the memories and feelings in Syria

Are these experiences beneficial for you?

Yes. like someone did this and it worked and someone did this and did not work.. Or just to get emotional support, because all of them are in this situation, but they want to continue, or someone says that don't think about the permits, just do what you do.

Is this a specific group?

Yes.

For temporary permits?

Yeah, I guess this is what it is called.

And how did you find out about it?

My friend told me about it.

Are you active?

No, I just read.

These experiences they write about, how do you know if it is true? Do you believe it?

Depending on the information, if he is talking about some news like occurred in the USA or somewhere, it will not be as trustworthy as when he talks about his own experiences and so.. I have to make sure.

So they talk about different things.. Also news..? What is the content?

About their situation. But when I want to make sure of something, if someone did something in a specific way, I don't take it as trustworthy, I have to go to a website like of the migration and read if this is true, if these requirements are true or just some talks.

And why don't you trust them?

I don't know, fake news on social media. And also one has to have a kritik.. To criticize some news. Maybe this might work for me, for some reason, but this doesn't mean.. If there is no law on this thing, it doesn't mean that it will happen with you.

Did you experience that?

Yes.

Jumana Khoja
1:06 PM Today

Reading about other refugees experiences and struggles and getting emotional support through Facebook groups.

Jumana Khoja
1:07 PM Today

Participant does not trust news and information spread on social media, instead he relies more on information he reads on governmental platforms.

How important is it for you to live in Malmö?

Being a refugee, and not from a son of this country, it is very important to be in Malmö, also for my mental health, that I live in an environment where there are people from this country and half of the people who reside in this city are migrants, they have someone from outside of Sweden, not only from the area where I come from, but mixed. Malmö is a cosmopolitan city, like this is what is nice about Malmö, that one is not just Swedish or just Syrian or foreigner or English, there will be a new culture here.

And you like to be in such an environment?

Yes.

Why?

Because this environment takes from all these people who live here.

And why do you like it? Or did it differ from your experience in Småland?

Yes.

How? What is the difference?

I don't know if it is because of Malmö, because I directly came to Malmö from Syria, if it really like this, in Småland they were more closed on themselves. As they are old, or also young ages like me, but they are together.

They were only Swedes?

Yes, in the class. There are people who are half Swedish half another nationality, but mostly Swedes.

Malmö, as your local place.. As a city....

It makes my daily life easier, for example on the bike. I buy things and do some visits on the bike, it is very close.. How can I say it.. The places are close to each other. It is flat, there are no highs and lows, this makes it easier, even for walking or cycling. There is greenery.. What else.. There is a sea, in the summer I swim.

Series on BBC?

BBC1 for example has this death in paradise, so if you have a VPN in the UK, you can watch it without subscription.

What is the content you watch on BBC?

This series is like investigating, in Caribbean islands. Very nice. This is a tip!
Also Swedish drama, on SVT play. They don't have subscription.

What are the best things you watch from Swedish drama?

Now, there is one called Festen. And Skamm, but this is Norwegian.

Why do you like it?

Because they represent the society, also like people from our age, between 20 and 25, the guys and so and how they are living and what are their problems.

I don't watch much Syrian, because .. even my friends in Syria, we used to watch together.

What?

Series.

Syrian series?

Yes. even movies and series from other places, Japanese anime, and now everyone is in a different country, so I stopped watching Syrian series and anime series, because there is no connection.

And why did you stop watching anime?

Because we used to watch it together. They stopped watching and I stopped watching because there is nothing to share with someone. Like: oh did you see what happened in this episode and so.. You know. Unfortunately.

Did you try to watch it then stopped?

No, I didn't try.

What about Syrian series?



Jumana Khoja
1:26 PM Today

Resolve

The multicultural environment in Malmö leads the participant to feel like he belongs, like he is not a stranger, but included, like this place is familiar.

Reply...



Jumana Khoja
1:32 PM Today

Resolve

Consume global media according to his interests and for entertainment.



Jumana Khoja
1:32 PM Today

Resolve

Feeling of inclusion in the society by watching Swedish drama series that represent his everyday life.



Jumana Khoja
1:34 PM Today

Resolve

Unable to watch Syrian series and Japanese anime as this habit is associated with his friends in Syria, where they used to watch these things together. After migration, this habit could not be practiced anymore.

Appendix 7 Generating sub-categories and categories

Emotional use (Affect)

- Some participants consume media that reminds them of their memories in Syria, such as old syrian drama series or sound effects on youtube that is linked to a sound in Syria such as the sound of the rain dropping to trees in the winter.
- Participants avoid consuming news about Syria and find it difficult to watch it because it makes them feel helpless and depressed, while the other half consume news about Syria regularly.
- Participants don't consume popular culture if they used to consume it with a particular group in Syria.
- Participants don't consume popular culture because it reflects their struggles and memories in Syria.
- Participants don't consume popular culture because they don't have the 'spirit' to watch such things for pleasure after what they have been through. Some of the
- Facebook groups of Arabs/Syrians in Sweden provide emotional support to some participants as they read about similar experiences.
- Disconnectivity pattern appears as transnational communication can be a reminder of the struggles and helplessness.

Media they like to consume (Their taste)

- Participants mentioned that they consume different kinds of media that are related to their studies or work.
- Participants consume different media which they are interested in such as political satire, turkish drama, art houses, and feminist movies.
- Participants consume news from the Arab world, news from Sweden, and international news because of their transnational character.
- Some participants consume Arab popular media to maintain the tradition of watching Arab series during Ramadan.

Media and Integration

- Participants rely on government-owned platforms to reach the right information, such as migrationsverket.se or skolutveckling.se or the applications.
- Participants consume Swedish popular media with Swedish subtitles to learn more vocabularies.
- Learning about the host society's culture occurs through offline participation and face-to-face communication.
- Participants use different applications for language learning, translation, and dictionary.

Social circles (Social life)

- Participants talked about stereotypes of Arabs in Scania/Sweden/Europe, such as their low ethnic self-esteem and their arrogance.
- Participants have bad experiences with arabs such as taking advantage of them in social life and at work.
- Lack of closeness in their relationships with Swedes which translate that in the big differences in the language, culture, and thinking.
- All participants have Arab close friends.
- Swedes in Scania are influenced by stereotypes on migrants and thus they try to avoid them.
- Through social media, they keep their relationships strong, and become more present. Participants vary in their level of connection to their transnational ties.
- All the participants use social media to communicate with their families and friends in Syria and around the world.
- Participants have relationships with other backgrounds than Swedes and Arabs, such as Afghan, Irish and bosnian. Most of these relationships are not as close as Arabs nor as distant as Swedes.

locality

- Swedes in Scania are more accepting to migrants as Scania is more multicultural.
- about feeling at home in their localities as there are many people who are similar to them (refugees, migrants, muslims), and because they can find familiar things to them such as oriental food and mosque.
- Some of the participants watch Swedish drama series and feel a sense of belonging when they see familiar places on the screens, such as presabyrn and neighborhoods in Malmö.
- In Malmö, it is hard to find Swedes to engage with them as they tend to live outside the city.

The new life in Sweden (Migration)

- Participants use various online shopping applications because they don't have time to go to the stores as they are busy between their studies, job, and family.
- The limited internet in Syria resulted in limited access to media, and more consumption of mainstream television channels.
- Participants consume popular media and other types of media content as a link to the past or for stress relief.
- Members of the family in Syria play a role in educating the children in the family, and in Sweden the participants lack that so they have to do it themselves with the help of digital media.
- In Sweden, in Sweden, they don't have a guest room in their homes which does not let them practice the cultural tradition of hospitality, and thus they use social media to communicate with others.
- In Sweden, they have access to different platforms such as Netflix, Youtube, and national geographic.
- Participants use applications to practice their religion such as applications to find the Qibla and application for a digital Quran and prayer time.

Appendix 8 Coding Scheme

Themes	Categories	Subcategories	Code description
Taste	Interest	Interests related to their studies or work	Almost all the participants mentioned that they consume different kinds of media that are related to their studies or work. For instance, Sami is a medical student and he consumes medical lectures on youtube and medical podcasts, and Miral is a student counselor at a SFI school and she follows different pages for swedish language learning to get inspired by others from her work
		Personal interests	Participants consume different media which they are interested in such as political satire, turkish drama, art house, and feminist movies
	Gratification and hybridity	Consume various news sources for their needs	Participants consume news from the Arab world, news from Sweden, and International news because of their transnational character
		Consumption of media for maintaining traditions or longing to Syria	Some participants consume Arab popular media to maintain the tradition of watching Arab series during Ramadan. Others consume media that reminds them of their memories in Syria, such as old syrian drama series or sound effects on youtube that is linked to a sound in Syria such as the sound of the rain dropping to trees in the winter.
Affordances	Media affordances	Internet	The limited internet in Syria resulted in limited access to media, and more consumption of mainstream television channels
		Digital platforms	In Sweden, they have access to different platforms such as Netflix, YouTube, and national geographic

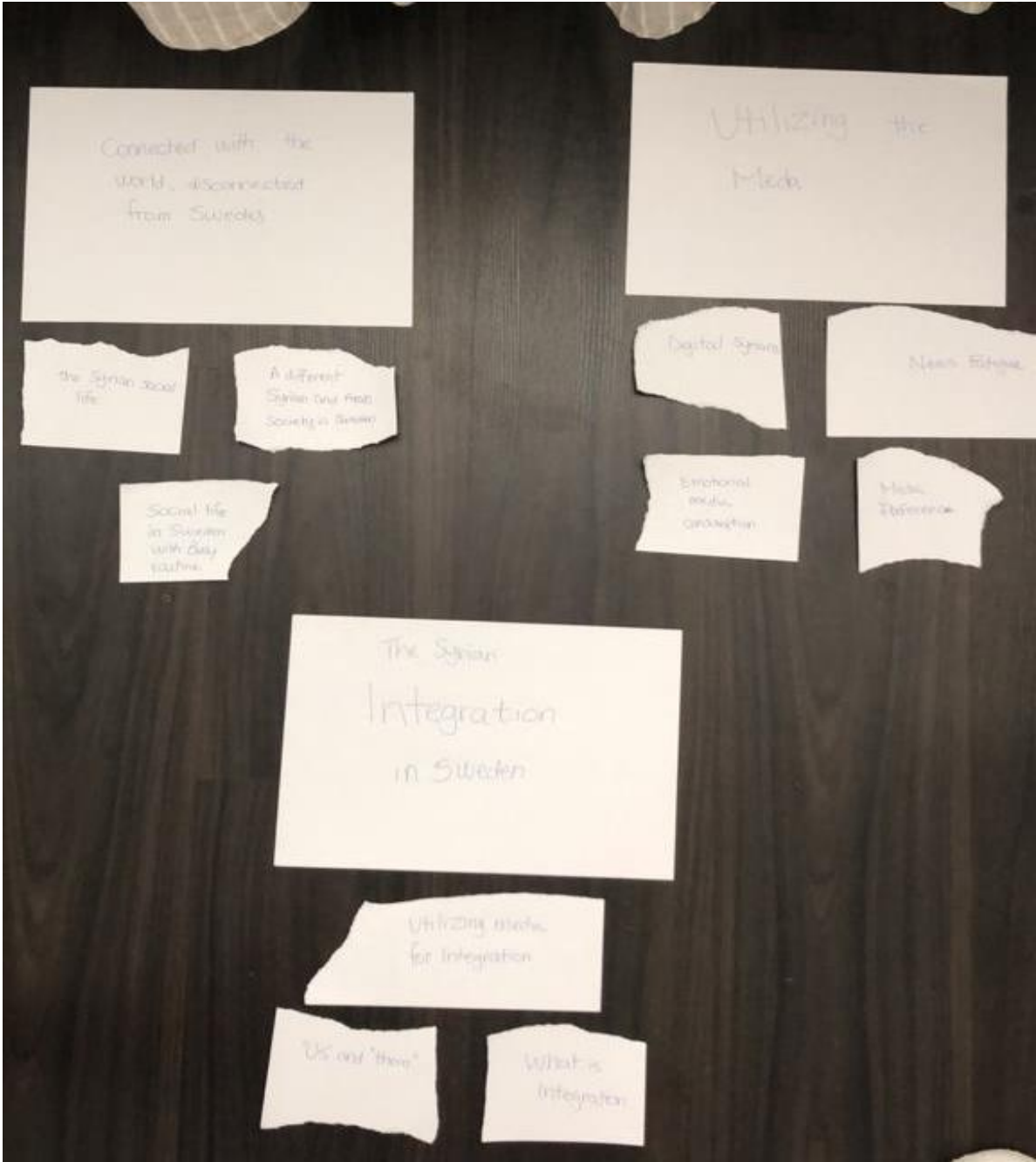
	Affective affordances	Affordances to consume news	Half of the participants avoid consuming news about Syria and find it difficult to watch it because it makes them feel helpless and depressed, while the other half consume news about Syria regularly
		Affordances to consume popular culture	There are three reasons why many participants don't consume popular culture: 1) if it reflects their struggles and memories in Syria. 2) if they used to consume it with a particular group in Syria. 3) if they don't have the 'spirit' to watch such things for pleasure after what they have been through. Some of the participants consume popular media and other types of media content as a link to the past or for stress relief
		Affordances for transnational ties	Most participants showed willingness to connect with their transnational families and friends. However, a pattern of disconnectivity appears as well as transnational communication can be a reminder of the struggles and helplessness.
Media use for life in Sweden	Socio-cultural differences	Lack of the 'bigger' family	Members of the family in Syria play a role in educating the children in the family, and in Sweden the participants lack that so they have to do it themselves with the help of digital media
		Inability to practice socio-cultural traditions	The home in Syria is different from the one in Sweden. In Sweden, they don't have a guest room in their homes which does not let them practice the cultural tradition of hospitality, and thus they use social media to communicate with others

	Digitalization	Utilizing digital media for the busy lifestyle	Participants use various online shopping applications because they don't have time to go to the stores as they are busy between their studies, job, and family
		Utilizing digital media for personal practices	Participants use applications to practice their religion such as applications to find the Qibla and application for a digital Quran and prayer time
Media and integration	Reaching information	Utilizing governmental platforms and digital media to reach information	Participants rely on government-owned platforms to reach the right information, such as migrationsverket.se or skatteverket.se or the applications
		Asking others to reach information	Participants ask others for information about things which are less important, such as different activities and homework
	Social inclusion	Utilizing social media for emotional support	Facebook groups of Arabs/Syrians in Sweden provide emotional support to some participants as they read about similar experiences
		Utilizing popular media to feel included	Consumption of Swedish popular media or Ethnic-media allow participants to recognize the similarities between the two lives and thus feel included
		Utilizing social media to feel included	Participants read posts on Facebook group 'Jag är 2015' and feel socially included and related to the Syrian refugee community
	Learning	Utilizing media to learn the Swedish language	Participants use different applications for language learning, translation, and dictionary. Some of them consume Swedish popular media with Swedish subtitles to learn more vocabularies
		Lack of media to utilize to learn about the culture	Learning about the host society's culture occur through offline

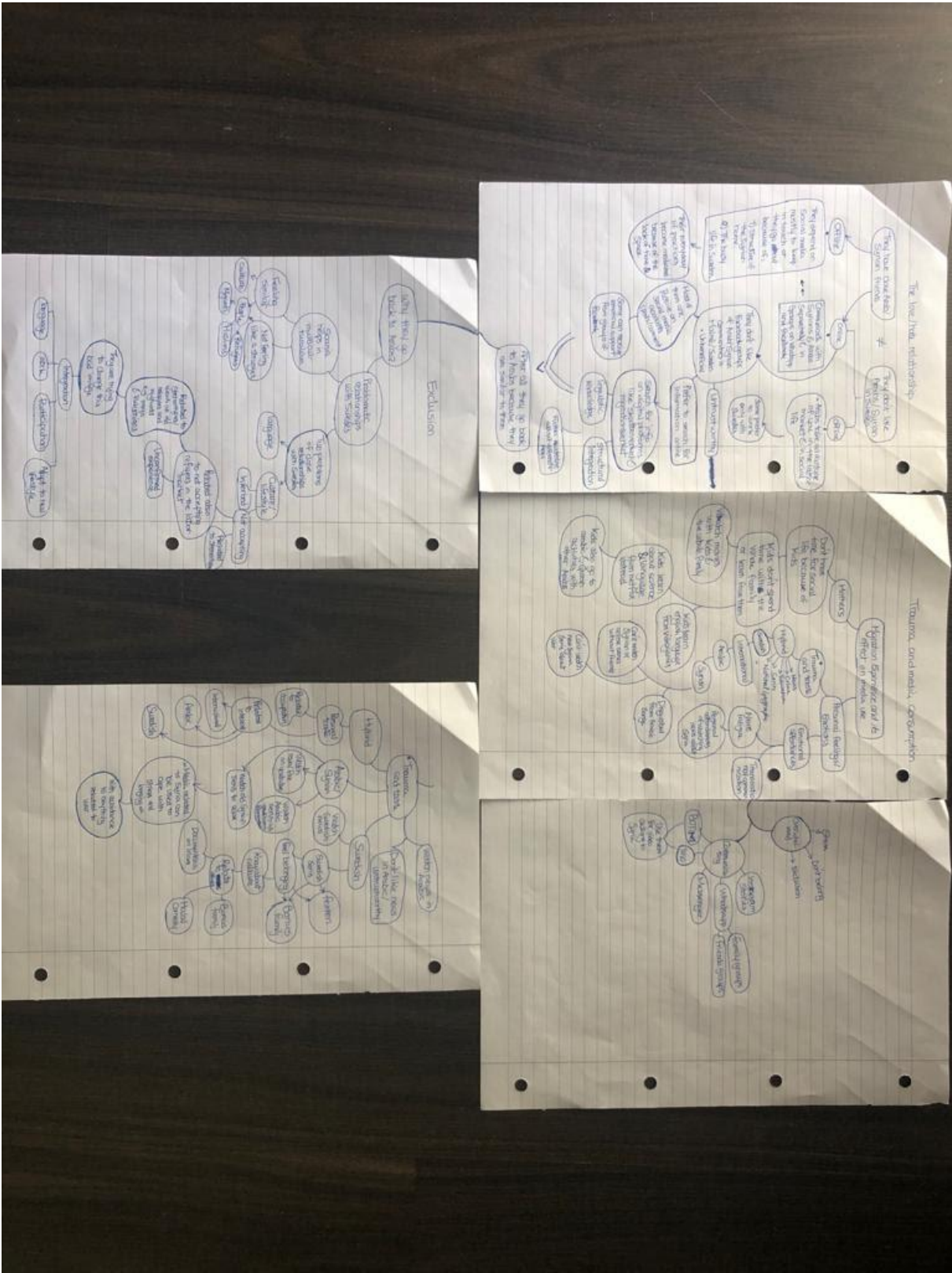
			participation and face-to-face communication
Social life	Syrians/Arabs	Positive: close friends	All participants have Arab close friends and mostly Syrians
		Negative: stereotypes and bad experiences	Half of the participants talked about stereotypes of Arabs in Scania/Sweden/Europe, such as their low ethnic self-esteem and their arrogance. They also had bad experiences with Arabs such as taking advantage of them in social life and at work
	Swedes	Lack of closeness	The majority of the participants expressed a lack of closeness in their relationships with Swedes. They translate that in the big differences in the language, culture, and thinking
		Swedes in Scania	Some of the participants mentioned that Swedes in Scania are influenced by stereotypes on migrants and thus they try to avoid them. In Malmö, it is hard to find Swedes to engage with them as they tend to live outside the city. However, other participants demonstrated that Swedes in Scania are more accepting to migrants as Scania is more multicultural
	Diversity	Relationships with different backgrounds in the society	Participants have relationships with other backgrounds than Swedes and Arabs, such as Afghan, Irish and b Bosnian. Most of these relationships are not as close as Arabs nor as distant as Swedes
	Utilizing social media for communication	Transnational ties	All the participants use social media to communicate with their families and friends in Syria and around the world. Through social media, they keep their relationships strong, and become more present. Participants

			vary in their level of connection to their transnational ties
		Communicating with social circles in Sweden	Participants use social media to communicate with people in their locality, to check on them and to plan gatherings with them
Locality	Place-making	Place-making as a result of familiarity and similarity	Participants who reside in Malmö talked about feeling at home in their localities as there are many people who are similar to them (refugees, migrants, muslims), and because they can find familiar things to them such as oriental food and mosque
		Place-making as a result of multiculturalism	Participants who reside in Malmö emphasized the importance of the multicultural atmosphere for them to feel comfortable and more at home in their localities
	Sense of belonging	Utilizing Swedish popular media to establish a sense of belonging to the locality (Malmö/Sweden)	Some of the participants watch Swedish drama series and feel a sense of belonging when they see familiar places on the screens, such as pressbyrån and neighborhoods in Malmö

Appendix 9 Mind maps



First attempt of structuring the analysis using the coding scheme.



Second attempt: a revised structure for the analysis.

Appendix 10 Reflective ethnographic diary

They say that one should not choose a dissertation topic that is very personal. But honestly, choosing this thesis topic was not that personal to me until I started this research.

I came to Sweden in June 2015, and since then my relationships were very limited. Maybe because I am not a social person, and maybe because I was busy between studying the Swedish language, job hunting, and then my graduate studies. Engaging with Syrians is not a part of my everyday life, and I have always thought of myself as someone different from them. Maybe because I didn't live in Syria, and was born outside of Syria. Those who migrated from Syria to Sweden were like strangers to me. This is why when I chose this topic, it was like any other topic for me, and it wasn't even my first choice.

When I started reading literature and studies on Syrian refugees, I was starting to know who they are, and how they think, and I learned about their struggles that I did not experience. Throughout reading different studies, I tended to compare my situation with them, and between the lines I found some similarities. It was very difficult to study a group that is supposed to be very similar to you but at the same time you feel like they are 'others'.

When the time came for me to engage with my study group, I entered a whole new phase of emotional storm. The Interviews involved discussions about sensitive topics such as their personal struggles in Syria because of the war, and my heart was breaking during the interviews but of course I couldn't show it. The only thing that I could do is listen and act like their struggle in Syria, our homeland, had nothing to do with me. I honestly don't know how they felt towards me at that point, but I tried to be understanding without showing my emotions.

During the interviews I got a chance to know Syrians in Scania. And they turned out to be very similar to me. Some of them shared the same struggles that I have been through, and still am, with employment and difficulties to find close friends in this new place. Some of them reminded me of the long-forgotten Syrian revolution, and the real struggle of innocent Syrians who started the whole thing in 2011. I remembered how I was engaging at that time with the events in Syria and communicating with many activists on the ground and many Syrians in exile. I went back to my

old posts on Facebook, I re-watched the popular demonstrations that happened each Friday in many cities in Syria a few years back. How did I forget? How can I? The blame was killing me inside.

But other participants who fled Syria and got far away from everything that is happening in Syria when they came to Sweden reminded me that I am only a human. And even though I cannot compare myself to what they have been through, I am also like them, only have certain abilities.

The interviews' transcription part of the thesis was the most difficult part. As the transcript process takes a considerable time of the research process, I ended up dealing with the participants' experiences and emotions for a long time. During transcription, I would be listening and getting very emotional, sometimes crying while transcribing. But after the transcription, it got better.

Coming to the analytical part of the study, I was able to take a step back by dealing with theories and concepts to analyze the data. At that point, I could find a balance and was able to handle the data critically.

This study allowed me to grow as a researcher. I gained knowledge in how to deal with sensitive issues related to the topic of the study and to the participants' experiences. It also allowed me to grow as a person, thinking about others' experiences and their personal affordances, which are normally taken for granted.

Finally, the study allowed me to find myself in my participants, and share their experiences inside me, reminding me of who I am, and what I have been through to reach this point in my life.