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Fourthspace: The Role of Active Social Inclusion in the Workforce Entry of Syrian Refugees in Scandinavia

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Abstract

The 2015 displacement of Syrian refugees into Scandinavian countries provoked a refugee integration policy adjustment that focused on workforce and higher education entry. It is a policy approach that requires attention on barriers to workforce entry to ensure effective policy implementation. This article provides insight into the larger, often overlooked barriers of Eurocentrism and historical biases on refugee labor integration and provides policy solutions to reduce their impact. Active social inclusion (ASI) and Fourthspace are introduced as a framework to reduce biases to workforce entry and integration time barriers faced by Syrian refugees. ASI can provide mechanisms to increase access to labor markets through access to greater opportunities for gaining native language proficiency, mentorship and the creation of network. Fourthspace allows for the intersecting of digital and physical inclusion to reflect the usage of these intersecting geographies and ultimately the assertion of agency by Syrian refugees into physical and liminal European landscapes as a counter to the passivity within integration policy. My argument is that ASI and Fourthspace can serve as an active tool refugees can access to reduce the time barrier to workforce entry and connect to real world and digital resources. As digital social platforms increasingly become crucial in navigating the physical spaces of our daily lives, the intersecting and bridging of online and offline environments, addressing digital divides, biases and barriers are crucial to meet the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) Digital Transformation strategy call for a reduction to barriers to digital inclusion as a strategy to reach integration policy goals.

1. **Introduction**

The Covid-19 global pandemic highlighted the importance of digital connectivity and its role in refugee social and workforce inclusion. Refugee workforce entry remains a central policy goal of receiving countries in the Global North. As receiving countries emphasizes refugee workforce entry, it is essential to identify policy drivers and challenges experienced by refugees that act as barriers to policy success. Insight into managing multiple obstacles that potentially inhibit vocational functionality and labor integration is critical to reaching policy goals.

The UN University Centre for Policy cites seeking work as the largest motivation for migration, particularly from the Global South. Decent Work and Economic growth are among the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals, as well as a fundamental human right (Ramirez Bolivar and Corredor Villamil 2022). Workforce entry is an outcome sought by refugees and receiving countries, yet falls short of reaching targeted indicators, even with the implementation of gold standard Scandinavian integration programs. However, the ineffectiveness of refugee workforce policy lies in the passiveness of national integration policy that does not address the impact of biases, barriers on workforce entry. Refugee workforce entry and readiness are tied to a country's integration approach at multiple points and can serve as sites of passive or active integration. Integration programs determine refugees' access to acquisition of language and to local populations. It impacts refugees' capability to create online/offline networks and acquire the skills and competencies necessary for greater success in social integration and entry into the workforce. Passive national integration programs reproduce societal biases that impact refugees' ability to access resources and impact their ability to achieve employment. The ability to work positively impacts refugee integration indicators, family reunification, education, political participation, and regular migration status (Ramirez Bolivar and Corredor Villamil 2022). Yet, there is much social policy work that needs to occur to make labor markets more favorable to refugees and migrants.

Active social inclusion (ASI) and leveraging digital inclusion is identified as a model to mitigate labor entry obstacles. In order to further embed ASI within a digital world I introduce the concept of Fourthspace as a method to navigate digital spaces as an organized fusion of digital and physical ASI.

This approach is based on fieldwork conducted digitally and physically in Scandinavia, Germany and the Netherlands and builds on Edward Soja's theory of Thirdspace (1996). Given the critical role digital environments play in daily life, particularly highlighted during Covid-19, necessitates attention to digital environments that can be leveraged to promote social inclusion. In this article I introduces a digital Fourthspace (Figure 1) as a site of active social inclusion (ASI). This is an area where policy focus on refugees' access to digital environments can counter biases and passivity to provide refugees with active means to self-integrate in a system designed to lock refugees into positions as passive actors (Abeytia 2019a, 2019b).

ASI enables local populations, refugees, civil society, national institutions, and municipal levels of governmental agencies (municipal, national, and supranational) to adapt best practices to place-based responses. It is an approach modeled on a Norwegian approach rooted in *dugnad* (community service) that created inclusive spaces for meaningful interaction between locals and refugees despite linguistic, cultural, and religious differences (Karlsdottir et al 2020, Abeytia 2019a, Abeytia 2019b). Networks established though *dugnad* by locals, refugees, civil society, and governmental agencies, are essential components in refugees' acquisition of vocational, linguistic, and educational opportunities, which form the rungs to upward mobility and vocational readiness. This localized approach to national integration via digital and community based social networks in Norway has the potential to address biases and prejudices in European cultures that prevent refugee workforce entry (Høy-Petersen 2022, Hagelund 2020, Abeytia 2019a, 2019b, Campbell and Pedersen 2019, Alhahari 2016, Jamil et al. 2012).

Integration functions within physical social spaces, either passively or actively. Given the critical role digital environments play in daily life, particularly highlighted during Covid-19, this article introduces a spatial approach to understanding ASI, by placing digital platforms within a separate spatial category, as both connected to physical geography that can be leveraged to promote social inclusion despite location, and its own digital environment. Refugee and community centered approaches should be shaping digital and social inclusion policy in order to promote labor market entry. However, strong evidence in the literature points to biases rooted in Eurocentrism as the fundamental policy drivers and

preventers of successful refugee workforce entry (Høy- Petersen 2022, Dunbar-Ortiz 2022, Walia 2021, Hagelund 2020, Abeytia 2019a, 2019b, Campbell and Pedersen 2019, Djuve and Kavli, 2018, Alhahari 2016, Jamil et al. 2012, Weber 1991).

ASI and Fourthspace can act as models to mitigate labor entry obstacles. It is a method in line with the call by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on Digital Inclusion (DI) for the removal of social, technological, economic, and cultural barriers to accessing digital environments (UNDP 2022). Recommendations emphasize the importance of community centered approaches and refugee co-creation of digital equity projects to systematically address program gaps in practice, delivery, and policy. This article seeks to highlight these biases as limiting refugees' access to socio-spatiality and workforce entry, and runs counter to Scandinavian refugee integration policy goals.

2.0 Policy Drivers

National refugee integration programs, even gold-standard Scandinavian models, are not immune to Eurocentrism that manifest as systemic and institutionalized passivity (Dunbar-Ortiz 2022, Walia 2021, Bygnes 2021, Hagelund 2020, Fernandes 2015, Gubrium and Fernandes 2014, Valenta and Berg 2010, Deland 1997, Weber 1991). Scandinavian countries offer a rich environment to study Eurocentrism within integration programs precisely due to their government's commitment to the elimination of discriminatory practices. Yet, despite the efforts of Sweden and Norway to curb racism and discrimination, as Allan Pred (2000) points out, racisms remain persistent.

Legislative structures imbued with Eurocentric world views are reflections of the biases present in their societies (Høy-Petersen 2022, Hagelund 2020, Abeytia 2019a, 2019b, Campbell and Pedersen 2019, Djuve and Kavli, 2018, Alhahari 2016, Jamil et al. 2012, Weber 1991). These biases effect refugees' ability to enter the workforce, extending to and exacerbating an already existing digital divide for refugee populations (NDIA 2021, Van Dijk 2020). However, white nationalism, and not refugee centered agendas, are increasingly driving policy (Høy-Petersen 2022, Hagelund 2020, Abeytia 2019a, 2019b, Campbell and Pedersen, 2019, Djuve and Kavli, 2018, Jamil et al. 2012).

ASI and Fourthspace offer an approach to address the with the call by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) on <u>Digital Inclusion.</u> This article is in response to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) Digital Transformation strategy emphasizes the need to reduce barriers to digital inclusion spanning the technological, economic, social and cultural environments. (Caswell, 2019). ASI and digital Fourthspace are strategies to reach refugee integration policy goals by reducing barriers to physical inclusion through digital spaces as sites of active integration.

Europe welcomed over 1.3 million first time asylum-seekers in 2015 and by 2016 that number reached 5.2 million and primarily were from Syria and other Muslim majority countries (UNHRC 2022, Pew 2016, Hille 2020). The number of asylum seeker in 2017 decreased to 538, 000, a 25 percent drop from the previous year and by 2019 the numbers shrank to 23, 261 (Bierbach 2019, Eurostats 2018).

Norway registered 30,470 first time asylum-seekers in 2015, and Sweden received 156,110 applications (Statista 2021, Hagelund 2020, Eurostat 2016). This represented a 179 percent increase in Norway and a 108 percent change in Sweden since 2014 (Statista 2021, Hagelund 2020, Eurostat 2016). The majority of refugees arrived from Syria, an Arab and Muslim majority country, comprising 29% of all asylum seekers to Europe (Pew, 2016). Sweden received 162,877 Syrians in 2015 while Norway accepted 3,336 refugees from Syria in the same year (Rabo, Tun and Jorum 2021, Otsby 2017).

During the same time period, Norway and Sweden experienced a conservative shift within their election cycles, voting in officials with stricter approaches to immigration and less refugee centered integration policies (Hagelund, 2020). Researchers found these shifting political ideologies in Scandinavia linked to Eurocentric notions of whiteness. Hübinette and Lundström (2014) write, "We regard contemporary Sweden as a 'white nation in crisis', and diagnose Swedish society as suffering from a 'white melancholia' . . ." perceived to be mourning," . . . what is seen as being lost for the future" (p. 423). Høy-Petersen (2022) describes white Norwegian society, as holding deep-seated racist attitudes and stereotypes, but superficially display egalitarian behaviors]-. In a recently published article, Høy-Petersen (2022) defines this as a duality of human cognition, that "obscures people's

awareness of their own negative stereotypes and argues that this makes confronting racism difficult."

Policy makers are not immune to personal biases or those of the societies they live in (Perry 2019, Brant and Crawford 2016, Pred 2000, Deland 1997). Sivanandan writes, "We are moving from an ethnocentric racism to Eurocentric racism, from the different racisms of the different member states to a common, market racism (in Webber 1991, p 11). A Eurocentric worldview is expressed as preservation of European values, cultural heritage and religious traditions (Hübinette and Lundström). It dictates border security to maintain a fortress Europe, and refugee integration policy imbued with the colonial mentality of the inadequacies of population from the Global South who require civilizing by European integration policies (Høy-Petersen 2022, Emilsson and Öberg, 2022, Hübinette and Lundström 2014, Webber 1991). The policy directives of several European countries seek to force integration to alter Muslim refugees' behavior through legislating measures, that include regulating female dress, meat production and hand-shaking to receive citizenship (Abdelgadir and Fouka 2020, Neslen 2020, Shaheed 2020, Sorensen 2018, CERD 2018, Bilefsky, 2016).

Eurocentric approaches are found within Scandinavian integration programs and exist in what Fernandez (2014) and Hagelund (2010) describe as a passivity that stem from polices that grant asylum seekers little agency. Scandinavian policy goals emphasis workforce or higher education entry, yet integration policy and the programs they create, lock refugees in a cycle of passivity that prevent mastery of local languages and the formation of diverse networks, which are precursors to workforce and university entry (Abeytia 2019b, Djuve and Kavli, 2018, Baroski, Witt and Rudolph 2018, Bandaranaike 2015, Campbell 2012, Fischler and Booth 1999). In order to reduce the impact of these barriers, policy indicators should identify Eurocentrism as a barrier to refugee social inclusion and workforce entry.

2.1 Scandinavian Policy Responses to the 2015 Refugee Flow

The policy directives employed by Norway and Sweden overlapped, beginning with resettlement patterns, changes to visa duration and a focus on workforce and higher education entry (Skodo 2018, Norwegian

Ministry of Justice and Public Security 2016). Scandinavian countries responded to the large influx of refugees by shifting away from the traditional Nordic welfare model of universal service, towards refugee workforce entry (Djuve and Kavli, 2018). Nordic countries created national programs to facilitate labor market entry; however, integrating non-European refugees into Scandinavian labor markets requires attention to barriers rooted in discrimination (Walia 2021, Barkoski, Lynch, Witt, Cort and Rudolph 2018, Djuve and Kavli 2018, Gerickea, Burmeisterc, Löwea, Dellera, Pundt 2018, Alhahari 2016, Djuve and Grødem, 2014).

The Norwegian and Swedish collective policy response to this large influx of refugees was a move away from the traditional Nordic model, to the restriction of integration services (Hagelund 2020, Hernes 2018, Djuve and Kavli, 2018). Djuve and Kavli, (2018) write that the Norwegian and Swedish policy response were to make integration policies restrictive to dissuade further immigration, effectively reducing the number of asylum seekers by 25 percent from 2015 to 2017 (Hagelund 2020, Hernes 2018). These restrictive policies were instituted to dissuade asylum seekers from viewing Scandinavian countries as favorable destination and were effective (Hagelund 2020, Hernes 2018, Djuve and Kavli, 2018, Eurostats 2018). These restrictive policies were ideological responses that viewed refugees as a danger to the welfare state and were heavily influenced by populous sentiments (Hagelund 2020, Hernes 2018, Djuve and Kavli 2018, Billner 2018).

European policy makers focused on work as a means to bolster dwindling tax bases, offset refugee benefit costs, appease nativist movements, presume that workforce entry automatically facilitates interaction with local populations (Karlsdóttir et al. 2020). The involvement of receiving countries is essential to successful integration programs, however refugee employment rates remain low and refugees face multiple barriers to workforce entry (Karlsdóttir et al. 2020, Abeytia 2019, Hagelund 2010). Non-Western refugees, particularly Muslim refugees in Scandinavia, similar to the rest of Europe, experience the greatest barriers to workforce entry that include ethno-religious penalties that contribute to lower employment numbers (Walia 2021, Barkoski, Lynch, Witt, Cort and Rudolph 2018, Djuve and Kavli, 2018, Connor and Koenig 2013, Jamil et al, 2012).

2.2 Employment

There are <u>numerous</u> <u>barriers</u> refugees face when attempting to access formal labor markets in Norway. In 2019, <u>63 percent</u> of Norwegian refugees were employed in full time work, versus <u>74.2 percent</u> among the total wage-earning population. Dissimilar to the overall population, refugees remain <u>overrepresented</u> in entry level and low wage jobs. Syrians in Norway are the most recent arrivals and have yet to gain a strong foothold in the job market and remain greatly impacted by the time barrier and biases, particularly Islamophobia and historical <u>biases</u>. Women who wear <u>hijab</u> face the most <u>discrimination</u> in labor entry.

A comparative <u>study</u> of promoters and barriers to work between immigrants and refugees found refugees were twice as likely to be unemployed, citing lack of access to adequate <u>language</u> skills and <u>biases</u> as the primary barriers. Multiple studies found <u>time</u> of stay as a barrier to refugee workforce entry. The time barrier diminished after a decade and proved a significant obstacle since it is tied to language learning and network creation. Abeytia (2023) found <u>ASI</u> as an approach that may decrease the impact of a time of stay barrier and biases by granting access to local populations and increasing refugees' independence. Research conducted by <u>Diaz</u> with the LGBT refugees in Mexico supports an ASI local approach in supporting their entry into the formal workforce market.

Employment rates for refugees in both Sweden and Norway are linked to their education level before migration, but more critical is the duration of their residency in the receiving country (Statistics Norway 2021, 2017, 2014). Gender has an effect on employment, males are employed in larger numbers than females during their earlier years of residency, but as education and duration of stay increases, gendered employment rates level out (Statistics Norway 2021, 2017, 2014).

In Norway, 63 percent of refugee wage earners held full time work in 2019 versus 74.2 percent among the total wage-earning population (Statistics Norway, 2021). Additionally, refugees remain overrepresented in entry level service and sales occupations compared to other populations (Statistics Norway, 2021). Refugees also experience lower employment rates than immigrants to Norway (Statista

2022, Norway, 2021). Sweden's employment rates for refugees are slightly lower than Norway's (Statista, 2021). In 2019, 59.9 percent of refugees were employed compared to 86.2 percent of people born in Sweden (Statista, 2021).

Refugees in both countries experienced a rise in employment with length of residency and completion of higher education (Statista 2022, Statistics Sweden, 2022). In Norway employment rates increased after 10 years, and in Sweden after 20 years of residency, employment for refugees reached at 80 percent (Statista 2022, Statistics Sweden 2022).The duration of stay may also correlate with increased proficiency in the native language, educational opportunities and the creation of networks, effectively acting as a time barrier (Abeytia a, b 2019, Gerickea, Burmeisterc, Löwea, Dellera, Pundt 2018, Bandaranaike 2015, Campbell 2012, Fischler and Booth 1999). A comparative study of promoters and barriers to work between immigrants and refugees found that refugees were twice as likely to be unemployed, citing lack of access to adequate language skills as the primary barrier (Jamil et al., 2012).

ASI coupled with Fouthspace as a digital means for self integration, can be a catalyst to shorten the duration of language acquisition and network building to increased employability (Abeytia 2019a, 2019b) ASI offers policy instruments to address the multiple workforce barriers refugees experience.

2.3 Barriers

The 2015 mass displacement of refugees into Europe, primarily from Syria, produced policy responses anchored in Eurocentrism, which is a postcolonial antecedent[1], built on historical biases, enshrined in European laws, codes, legal norms, and policies that impact refugee workforce policy goals (Dunbar-Ortiz 2022, Emilsson and Öberg 2022, Abeytia 2021, Abeytia and Diab 2021, Walia 2021, Prpic, 2018, Radjenovic 2016, Deland 1997, Weber 1991).

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[1] Colonial antecedents function as echoes of empire that continue to shape societal structures and bureaucratic apparati through unchecked biases in law, policy and codes which are rooted in Eurocentric racisms cultivated during colonization. In the context of this article Eurocentrism is utilized to indicate a link to a ubiquitous normalized white identity developed during colonialism that negatively impacts refugees from the Global South despite the receiving country's direct ties to a colonial past.

Policy shift are sense making exercises and, in an effort to make sense of events to draft new policy modes, it is useful to examine barriers to refugee employment. Biases and Eurocentrism are common barriers rooted in ideology rather than best practices, which hinder larger policy objectives of work and higher education integration (Høy-Petersen 2022, Hagelund, 2020, Abeytia 2019, Baroski, Witt and Rudolph 2018, Campbell and Pedersen 2019).

Djuve and Kavli, (2018), write, [t]his highly ideological policy field is an interesting case for the study of policy learning versus ideas as drivers for institutional change or continuity (p 1). Ideological approaches to policy directly impact refugees' ability to work. Refugees struggle to find a foothold in local labor markets despite national integration efforts and an increased drive for workforce entry based on an ideological approach without addressing barriers that place refugees at a greater disadvantage, particularly Muslims, who face the greatest barriers and are the largest population of refugees (Djuve and Kavli 2018, Jamil et al. 2012). (Djuve and Kavli 2018, Djuve and Grodem 2014, Jamil et al. 2012).

The refugee population in Europe are primarily Muslim and although only comprising 4.9 percent of the total regional population in 2016 and with a projected 7.4 percent increase in population by 2050, they disproportionately face labor market discrimination (Baroski, Witt and Rudolph 2018, Jamil et al. 2012). Muslim refugees face the greatest difficulty in workforce entry (Walia 2020, ANSA, 2018, Bergfeld 2017, Connor and Koenig 2013, Jamil et al. 2012). Syrians, a majority Muslim and Arab population, make up the largest ratio of recent arrivals to both Norway and Sweden, and in Norway have the lowest employment rates (Oesterud, 2017). As Edward Said (1978) pointed out, for Westerners, Muslims and Arabs are synonyms. This continues to hold true in Sweden where a recent study by Marta Wozniak-Bobinska (2020) among Syrian Christians in Sweden, reported experiencing high rates of Islamophobia. The conflation between Arab, Muslim, foreigner and enemy, extends to job applications (Andereasen 2022, Fangen 2021).

Previous studies found that applicants with Muslim-sounding names are 25 percent less likely than 'ethnic' Norwegian or Swedish names applicants with similar qualifications and work experience,

were less likely to be called in for interviews (Bayrakli and Hafez, 2018). Connor and Koenig (2013) conducted research utilizing data from the European Social Survey and found that 40% of the employment variance between Muslims and non-Muslims was based on migration background and cultural biases.

Connor and Koenig (2013) explain the Muslim employment gap in Western Europe as an individual effect:

> It is well-documented that Muslims experience economic disadvantages in Western European labor markets. Results reveal that human capital, migration background, religiosity, cultural values, and perceptions of discrimination jointly account for about 40% of the employment variance between Muslims and non-Muslims. Model specifications for first- and second-generation Muslim immigrants reveal a similar pattern, with migration background and perceived discrimination being of key relevance in mediating employment difference. While individual-level effects are indeed relevant, unexplained variance suggests that symbolic boundaries against Islam may still translate into tangible ethno-religious penalties (p 191).

National integration programs place significant pressure on refugees to self-integrate while society is not asked to address the numerous barriers refugees face when attempting to access formal labor markets (Pocock and Chan 2018, Hagelund 2010). Bayrakli and Hafez in a 2017 report to the UN on Sweden state, "discrimination in the workplace should be tackled to address the low level of economic activity among Muslims through targeted interventions at the stages of recruitment, job retention, and promotion," (p.27).

Research by Jamil et al. (2012) demonstrated the pivotal role discrimination plays in affecting refugee's ability to obtain employment (Yakushko et al, 2008, Yakushko 2007). The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) compiled a list of ten challenges that young refugees face, which includes discrimination, (ANSA, 2018). ASI can be utilized by decision makers to understand the intertwined relationships between Eurocentrism, integration programs and refugee workforce and higher education entry to create social and cultural policy instruments to address the barriers facing refugees.

Scandinavian governments are focused on policy initiatives prioritizing refugees' entry into the workforce. Yet, such policy goals require equally robust initiatives to prepare and assist refugees for labor market entry, in order to minimized major factors preventing entry into local labor markets.

The encroachment of ideologies, biases and Eurocentrism imbued within policies are subtle and for non-European refugees, particularly Muslims, are expressed as social penalties and restrictions (Mishra 2017, Connor and Koenig 2013, Michalak-Pikukska and Pikulski 2006). In Sweden there is vocal Muslims objection to further institutionalization of Islamophobia as it serves, among other things, as a further hindrance to job seekers (Bayrakli and Hafez, 2017).

3.0 Eurocentrism within Integration Programs

Refugee integration programs are essential to workforce and higher education entry as they provide vital resources for language acquisition and network creation. However, they do not reduce discrimination or biases within society or labor markets. Scandinavian countries represent the gold standard in refugee integration, yet even in Sweden, racism exist and impacts refugee integration (Pred, 2004). Biases, Islamophobia, and racism are deeply rooted in Europe, which are entrenched institutionally through policy directives and in society's Eurocentric worldview (Samaddar 2020, Connor and Koenig, 2013, Michalak-Pikukska and Pikulski 2006, Tolan 1996, Maalouf 1984). It is an invisible milieu, difficult to identify due to its pervasiveness as the cultural normative perspective (Mishra 2017, Go 2016, Ansary 2009, Tolan 1996).

Refugee integration programs are imbued with the traces of empire and a commitment to upholding the ontological framework set up by Enlightenment thinkers who placed northern Europeans at the apex of a hierarchy of being (Pred 2004, 2000). The past is not dead, Allan Pred wrote in 2004 about Sweden's enduring racial stereotypes of Africans and Muslims, rooted in the Swedish Crown's investment in the colonial West Indian Trading Company (Pred 2004, 2000). Norway is also not impervious to historical stereotypes of Arabs and Muslims. Norwegians flocked to the Holy Land to commit atrocities in the name of Christendom during the Crusades (Tolan 1996, Maalouf 1984).

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Norwegian mass killer, Anders Breivik, and Swedish skin heads are a testament to the salient nature of Eurocentrism and the racial/religious hierarchies that continue to be embedded within Scandinavian societies.

Empire and the heretical structures it created produced discriminatory practices that are both new and old (Andreasen 2022, Fangen 2021, Deland 1997, Said 1996, Webber 1991). Ancient animosities between Muslims and Christendom continue to spill over in public sentiments of populism that hold on to Crusader mentalities that evolved and ripened under colonization and are the foundational ideologies behind white supremacy (Dunbar-Ortiz 2021, Walia 2021, Mishra 2017). Elected officials and public servants who draft policy, which in turn shape our world, are not immune from the sway of populism (Bayrakli and Hafez, 2017).

Instruments to measure societal biases that affect policy implementation, should be developed to reduce their impact, particularly in refugee integration programs. Biases and racial stereotypes were entrenched over centuries in European spaces and continue to remain unscrutinized, allowing for a legacy of racially constructed biases to remain pervasive within refugee integration policy. Best intentions can no longer pass for a consorted effort. Even in Sweden as Pred (2004, 2000, 1995) points out, racisms continue to create discrepancies within society that profoundly impact immigrant and refugee populations. In order to reach policy goals of refugee work force entry and integration, policy sense making exercises should probe deeper into the entrenched biases rooted in historic animosities (Prpic, 2018, Radjenovic, 2016).

3.1 Public Sentiment and Government Attitudes

The establishment of the Swedish Institute for Racial Biology in 1922 enforced 40 years of forced sterilization to improve Swedish racial purity, and from 1934 to 1976, 63,000 people - 90 per cent of them women - were sterilized. The Swedish program of "ethnic hygiene" only came to light in 1997 by a study published in the United States by a Scandinavian researcher, Maija Runics (Balz, 1997).

Runics (2013) research was initially ignored by the Swedish government. Later, the Swedish government substantiated Runic's research. Runics' (2013) uncovering of Swedish racial hygiene laws via forced sterilization of females identified as deviant, links it to a form of forced social homogenization by bio-political means and is an integral part the Swedish welfare state. Yilmaz (2019) connects Scandinavian society's self-image as an egalitarian welfare state modeled on gender equality, while continuing to struggle with populations who deviate from the norm, with Blaagaard's (2009) discussion of myth of homogeneity and whiteness. "In the Scandinavian countries, Blaagaard (2009, pp.53-54) writes, the "norm has been based on the unquestioned assumptions stemming from whiteness as an unacknowledged category." The implementation of eugenic policies, "based on social and racial hygiene implicate ableist, racist and classist nature of the discrimination against the "unfit," the category of women and the process of gendered othering implicated in those practices remain unaddressed to a large extent" (Yilmaz, 2019, 2-3). Racial and gender othering rooted in Scandinavian eugenic laws extend to the workforce discrimination Muslim women experience.

Islamophobia is ubiquitous in Scandinavian societies and is denied by leading editorial boards in Austria and Norway. This is accomplished by shifting focus to a critique of Islamists' attempts to delegitimize any debate on Islam and Muslims by calling it Islamophobic (Shaheed 2021, Bayrakli and Hafez 2017, Doving, 2017). Negative media representation of Islam and Muslims, particularly during election campaigns fuel a disproportionate unfavorable view of Muslims in Nordic countries. (CERD 2018, Saeed, 2007). The Norwegian Government's Action Plan against Racism and Discrimination on the Grounds of Ethnicity and Religion (2022) also cited ubiquitous discrimination against Muslims in Norway (2022). Shaheed (2021) reported to the UN that, "[o]ften Muslims in vulnerable situations encounter multiple human rights challenges in addition to the discrimination based on their actual or perceived religious identities" (Shaheed 2021, p6).

According to a Norwegian survey, 80 percent of Norwegians reported that negative attitudes towards Muslims were highly prevalent (Doving, 2017). Norwegians view Muslims as enemies and 31percent of Norwegians view Muslims as wanting to take over Europe (Andreasen 2022, Fangen 2021).

A report issued by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (2018) expressed concern over the rise in hate speech and arson attacks on refugee resettlement centers and mosques. An additional report by the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (2017) on Sweden (fifth monitoring cycle), recommended that:

> The authorities review the Introduction Programme for refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection with the aim of strengthening it and achieving higher success rates in labor market participation, paying particular attention to addressing the specific needs of women (p. 5)

A Swedish state agency, believing an unsubstantiated report on an alleged Muslim Brotherhood conspiracy to establish an Islamic State, the Swedish agency published the report and later retracted the statement (Bayrakli and Hafez, 2017). The incident demonstrates that individual biases impact institutional decisions.

Gendered Islamophobia is also an issue in Scandinavia (ARDI 2020, UN CERD 2018). Muslim women in Sweden face "difficulties … in terms of access to employment and housing outside of minority populated areas, amounting to de facto segregation" (UN CERD, 2018, p.4). One pharmacist stated, "I have an education and a job, how much more should I do? Even if I take off my headscarf, I'm still black. I cannot take off my skin color" (*The Local,* 2018).

The social penalties experienced by Muslim women extend to policies. In one study, 40 percent of women wearing head scarves reported that they felt discriminated against when applying for a job, while the EU's highest court upheld Muslim headscarf ban in the workplace (Alderman and Eddy 2021, Abdelgadir and Fouka 2020, FRA, 2017). A 2016 study of Muslims in fifteen European countries reported that 30 percent experienced discrimination in receiving public services and access to jobs (FRA, 2017).

Muslim refugees, particularly Muslim women, face the largest social penalties in Norway and Sweden that impact their ability work. The implications for integration policy and social inclusion efforts are numerous and highlight vulnerabilities often overlooked in integration policy.

3.2 Passive Integration Policy

Refugee workforce entry and readiness is tied to a country's integration approach. It determines refugees' access to resources, acquisition of language and access to local populations. It impacts refugees' capability to create online/offline networks and acquire the skills and competencies necessary for greater success in social integration and entry into the workforce. The literature written about Scandinavian integration programs describe systemic passivity beginning in reception centers and extending out to resettlement distributions patterns (Gubrium and Fernandes 2014, Valenta and Berg 2010, Marko and Berit 2010).

The passivity Fernandes's (2015) research identifies in reception center programs in Scandinavia stem from a policy that grants asylum seekers little agency. Hagelund's (2010) asserts that Scandinavian governments postulate that newly arrived refugees are responsible for self-integrating into society, but instead, it is the responsibility of society to integrate new commers. A Norwegian library study supports Hagelund's (2010) assertion that integration of refugees becomes much simpler when local populations are involved (Vårheim 2014). Valenta and Berg (2010) further argue that ,"disqualification, passivity and lack of influence may be reduced through empowerment, participation and involvement of users in their own use of service. Instead of enhancing and enforcing social control, 'real' social change should be encouraged" (p. 487). Despite Scandinavian countries placing an emphasize on producing programs to promote refugee agency, an environment of passivity and powerlessness remains, and are based on an uneven power relationship anchored in Eurocentrism that prevents social inclusion (Gubrium and Fernandes 2014, Valenta and Berg 2010).

A comparative study of 14 EU countries acknowledged the two-way character of integration that requires the participation of the receiving country and refugees (Wolffhardt et al. 2019). The involvement of receiving countries is essential to successful integration programs, particularly when focused on refugee workforce entry (Bygnes 2021, Abeytia 2019b, Valenta 2017, Halvorsen 2017, Gubrium and Fernandes 2014, Langmead 2014, Kivisto and Wahlbeck 2013, Hagelund 2010, Valenta and Berg 2010, Cvetkovic 2009, Hagelund 2006, Eriksen 2003, Elovitz and Kahn 1997).

Entry into the workforce is a commonly utilized marker to assess successful integration policy goals (Anderson 2017, Connor and Koenig 2017, Månsson and Delander 2017, Pileburg 2016). However, refugees arrive with significant amounts of depression and trauma (Chung et al 2017, Kivisto and La-Vecchia 2015, Jakobsen 2015, Bahloul and Khoshnood 2015, Kirkbride and Hollander 2015, Stenmark et al, 2014, Campbell 2012, Teodorescu et al 2012,). The trauma they experienced may negatively impact vocational functionality (Bandaranaike 2015, Varga et. al 2014, Fallows and Stevens 2000, Fischler and Booth 1999). In addition, lack of opportunity to acquire language skills required to enter the workforce can also be a hindrance (Abeytia 2019, Connor and Koenig 2017, Månsson and Delander 2017, Cvetkovic 2009). These factors act as barriers to accessing the social spaces that comprise the multiple locations where integration occurs.

4.0 A Spatial Approach to Active Social Inclusion

The migration of Arab-Muslim refugees from the periphery of the Global South to the urban and rural spaces of Scandinavian cities, remapped both spaces, creating anxiety among locals who do not view their country as nations of immigrants (Samaddar 2020, Benoist 2018, Bhabha 2004, Hooks 1995, Said 1994). Brandt and Crawford's (2016) boundary phenomenon can assist in explaining the negative and sometimes violent European reactions to refugees. As refugees moved from the Global South into Europe it served as a breach of a barrier that previously existed physically and mentally. Hungary's push to erect a border wall was a desire to literally build a boundary between Europe and refugees from the Global South. Brandt and Crawford explain, "having clear boundaries helps people feel like the opposing group is distinct and far away. That is, they won't be so much of a threat," (Tourjée, 2016). Fortress Europe and the model of erecting border walls and fences was a visceral response that can be understood as a spatial response within boundary phenomenon (Tourjée 2016).

Soja's Thirdspace (1996) interpretation of post-modern geographies is useful in contextualizing the geographies experienced by refugees and locals, as well as the cultural-political implications of integrating into a new society. Thirdspace (1996) offers a valuable framework to interpret the geographic

margins and socio-political periphery occupied by refugees and experienced by locals. Digital social platforms are increasingly crucial in navigating the physical spaces of our daily lives that intersect and bridge online and offline environments, serving as an active tool refugees can access to reduce the time barrier to workforce entry and connect to real world and digital resources.

The spatial theoretical framework offered in this article folds in a contextual historical approach that is necessary in light of a 2016 EU report that states Islamophobia has, "deep roots in history, but [is] on the rise because of more recent political and economic influences," that links Islam with terrorism (Radjenovic, 2016). The role of Eurocentrism is particularly relevant to resettled refugee populations who largely identify as Muslims and face the lowest social acceptance rates among refugee populations (Prpic 2018, Benoist 2018, Pew, 2016).

A spatial understanding of integration programs is necessary as the "situation of ethnic minorities in Europe can be fully understood only in a global context" (Pred 2000, 23). The racial becomes spatial as areas in Sweden are racialized and labeled "black cities," and where Rinkeby and Alby in Stockholm, Rosengard in Malmo and Bergsjon and Hamarkullen in Goteborg are segregated from the rest of Swedish society, and as distant as Mogadishu, Bagdad and Aleppo (Anderson 2014, Pred 2000). Self-segregation by immigrants into "ghettos," populism and xenophobia were responses to refugees from the Global South entering European geography (Anderson, 2014, Cvetkovic 2009, Pred, 2000). Spatial, cultural and economic segregation within European spaces are demarcated as "Black cities," creating an obstruction in the flow of interaction between refugees and Swedish locals, blocking language acquisition and outgroup and ingroup network formation (Anderson, 2014).

Cvetkovic (2009) offers insight into the role socio-spatiality plays in the integration process in Sweden through the Swedish government's urban renewal policy, *Strömsund,* initiated in the 1990s. Strömsund disperses refugees away from metropolitan areas in favor of smaller, rural destinations and away from older migrant populations. In 2016 the Swedish government augmented Strömsund with the Resettlement Act but if fell short of its goal of producing greater social inclusion for refugees (Emilsson and Oberg 2021, Cvetkovic 2009, Pred 2000, Soja 1996). Despite the failure of Strömsund to increase

social integration, it became the model for refugee resettlement in 2015 (Cvetkovic 2009, Robinson, Andersson and Musterd 2005).The adoption of the Swedish resettlement policy of *Strömsund* throughout Europe highlights the importance of placed based integration but also how digital technologies can be utilized in social inclusion efforts.

4.1 *Strömsund* (Pioneering Country)

In 1985 the Swedish government initiated Strömsund, a program focused on the socio-spatial distribution of immigrants (Emilsson and Öberg, 2022). The adoption of the Swedish resettlement policy of *Strömsund* that disperses refugees away from metropolitan areas in favor of smaller, rural destination and away from older migrant populations, necessitating alternate forms of connection, which Syrian refugeess found within digital geography (Emilsson and Öberg, 2022, Abeytia 2021, 2019c, Anderson 2014, Cvetkovic, 2009).). The digital became a site of reterritorialization or self-integration where Syrians were able to actively participate in European society, bypassing discriminatory and passive practices in integration policies. However, the Syrian state's digital censorship apparatus continues to shape refugees' relationship with social media and e-government technologies (Sexton 2020, Abeytia 2019d, 2018, Moss 2018, Ramirez-Diaz 2016, Freedom House 2017, Freedom House 2017, Tkacheva et al. 2013, 37 Smith and Braginsky 2012, Khamis et al. 2012, Eisenlorh-Shaery 2011, Preston 2011 Oghia and Indelicato 2010).

The aim was to remedy social isolation and mal-integration of immigrants that was associated with overpopulation in urban centers in favor of settling refugees and immigrants in Northern rural areas (Emilsson and Öberg, 2022, Cvetkovic, 2009). However, the program failed to produce the intended outcomes of workforce entry and integration (Cvetkovic 2009, Robinson, Andersson and Musterd 2005). The recent arrival of thousands of Arab Muslim refugees pose a further challenge to Swedish society, whose immigrant populations increasingly experience discrimination, marginalization and social segregation in both rural and urban settings (Emilsson and Öberg, 2022, Benoist 2018, Connor and Koenig 2017, Cvetkovic 2009, Pred 2000, Lindberg and Dahlstedt, 2002). This trend

extends to other European countries particularly with the adoption of Strömsund by other European countries (Prpic 2018, Benoist 2018).

Marginalization and socio-geographic segregation became common in Sweden as early as 2000 (Emilsson and Öberg, 2022, Emilsson and Oberg 2021, Cvetkovic 2009, Lindberg and Dahlstedt, 2002). It was hoped that the widespread dispersal of immigrants would contribute to positive social interaction, but largely resulted in isolation from both the ethnic community and local populations (Robinson, Andersson and Musterd 2005, Sandberg, 1998). Spatial, cultural and economic segregation within Swedish spaces created an obstruction in the flow of interaction between refugees and Swedish locals that continues to impact Syrian refugees (Cvetkovic 2009, Robinson, Andersson and Musterd 2005, Lindberg and Dahlstedt, 2002, Sandberg, 1998).

Soja's theory of Thirdspace (1996) is enlisted as the theoretical framework here and serves as a multilayered scaffolding for understanding the social interactions between Syrian refugees and local populations occurring within geographic and liminal spaces, as well as the digital milieu of Refugee Welcome pages and digital *jamaiyat* (social networks). In order to describe this online phenomenon Fourthspace is introduced as an addition to Thirdspace.

4.2 Soja's Thirdspace

Soja's (1996) theory of Thirdspace offers a valuable framework to interpret the geographic margins and socio-political periphery occupied by refugees as they migrate into their new communities. Thirdspace operates as a tri-level approach to understanding the idea of space and the location of an individual within that space. It is within these spaces that power relationships are recreated or reinforced. Thirdspace is an interconnected, multidimensionally lens to approach refugee social inclusion by functioning within three spatial categories.

Firstspace is the physical location, a sending or receiving country, Oslo, Norway or Aleppo in Syria. It represents spaces that occupy the longitude and latitude lines on a map. Secondspace demarcates the intersection between geography and social interaction. It is the nexus of the social inclusion process
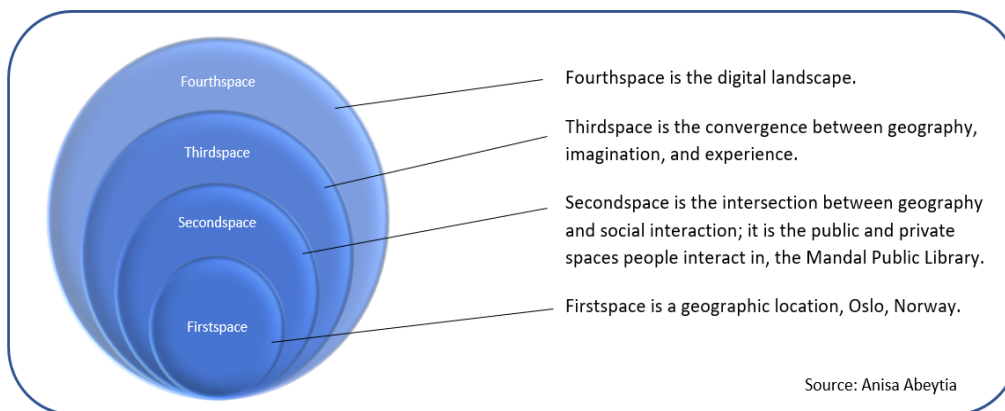
and where policy is enacted. Secondspace functions as the valve of integration where old power relationships and cultural exchanges are reinforced or recreated. Thirdspace is where geography, imagination, and experience intersect to expand or constrain geographic imaginations and initiates or constrains larger impacts on societal structures through individuals and groups. Thirdspace is where individuals and society examine and identify Eurocentric biases to reduce their impact and produce more inclusive societies and polices.

In order to capture the influence of the digital milieu, I expand Soja's Thirdspace (1996) and introduce Fourthspace here to represent a new digital geography (Figure 1). Fourthspace is the intersection between digital landscapes and Soja's (1996) Thirdspace and is as an expansion of what Soja (1996) calls the geographic imagination (Abeytia 2021, 2019b, 2019c, Pappa 2014, Logan 2012, Lee 2010, O'Neil 2008, Clifton-Elsden 2006, Hunter 2005).

4.3 The Digital Fourthspace

The Digital Age brought the full impact of modernity to public and private spaces and with it came the digital divide (Van Dijk 2020). The ambiguity of the hypermodern world can be disconcerting and disorienting to those unaccustomed to it. Yet the simultaneous occupation of different spaces and times is the mainstay of the refugee experience. Refugees live fractured lives navigating the cultural and geographic margins, occupying spaces that are continually being

Figure 1: Thirdspace with the Addition of Fourthspace

Fourthspace is the digital landscape.

Thirdspace is the convergence between geography, imagination, and experience.

Secondspace is the intersection between geography and social interaction; it is the public and private spaces people interact in, the Mandal Public Library.

Firstspace is a geographic location, Oslo, Norway.

Source: Anisa Abeytia

recreated and reimagined. Refugees inhabit the physical and cultural margins of societies and

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integration policies are tasked with bringing them into the mainstream.

Refugees occupy multiple socio-spatialities, both physically and digitally. The physical geographies include their home countries and the people they left behind, which loom large in their geographical imaginations (Abeytia 2021, Moss 2018, Akhtar 1999). Although they may not be physically present in their countries of birth, transnational connections remain strengthened via online platforms (Moss 2019). The overlapping nature of the interacting between sending/receiving countries, private/public, digital/physical spaces, converge within what I term Fourthspace that converge Soja's (1996) theory with the interconnectedness or intersectionality of space, race, modernity and history described in Alan Pred's work (2004, 2000, 1995, 1986).

Fourthspace fits within Soja's physical and liminal spaces as distinctive, Russian nesting dolls, one building upon the other, but also interconnected. Fourthspace allows for the intersecting of digital physical and liminal geographies to reflect the mundane usage of these intersecting geographies to inform social inclusion policy. Notions of location, community and self are intimately connected to how social media is used and interpreted as a digital geography inhabited by schools, businesses and social networks that mimic, overlap and at times, supersede physical geography.

Fourthspace encompasses Soja's (1996) three spatialities and expands the physical geographies of Firstspace and Secondspace into digital locations. Although Fourthspace is an independent sphere, its landscapes produce a digital Firstspace (Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram) and Secondspace (Facebook Groups, LinkedIn, Refugee Welcome Pages) functioning to expand or constrain the geographic imaginations of Thirdspace.

Fourthspace is useful in contextualizing and interpreting Syrian's online and offline social inclusion (Abeytia 2021, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c 2017). The increasing popularity of digital social platforms in daily lives requires a reassessment of Soja's Thirdspace (1996) and an expansion of the geographic imagination to introduce a digital Fourthspace. Notions of location, community and self are intimately connected to how social media is used and interpreted as a digital geography inhabited by schools, businesses and social networks that mimic, overlap and at times, superseded physical geography.

Fourthspace allows for the intersecting of digital and physical geographies to reflect the mundane usage of these intersecting geographies and ultimately the assertion of agency of Syrians into physical and liminal European landscapes as a counter to the passivity within integration policy.

The critique of Thirdspace is in its postmodern approach it decentralizes its subject, and, in its universality, it runs the risk of losing relevance. The same can be said for a Fourthspace disconnected and separate from the physical world, particularly in the context of social inclusion. As such, in order to avoid this critique Thirdspace and Fourthspace necessitate a continual rootedness in the lived experiences and places of refugee actors to avoid tangentiality. ASI continually roots Thirdspace and Fourthspace in the lived experiences of refugees and the places they are located.

Linking the notion of a fourth space to the digital is not a new concept. However, this linkage is commonly associated with market-driven communications and the proliferation of handheld devices to propagate digital communications (WARC 2021, Kemp 2016). WARC (2021) describes what they term fourth space as where "digitally mediated versions of once offline, real-world activities take place," to the neglect of physical geographies and the spillage from one environment to the other. Similarly, the approach urban design brings to the term fourth places is focused on public settings for informal social interaction among strangers (Aelbrecht, 2016). Lastly, Minganti's (2016) interprets fourth space as a mechanism by which young Muslims in Europe reconcile and bridge two cultures to redefine a personal interpretation of Islam. Although useful conceptually to broaden Soja's (1996) work, Minganti (2016) does not add to the theoretical concepts he introduced, and these explorations do not ground Fourthspace within Soja's (1996) theory.

These interpretations of fourth/place/space are a departure and disjuncture from Soja's (1996) presentation of Thirdspace. Fourthspace should be both independent and connected to each aspect of Thirdspace, the physical, the commons and the liminal, to hold significance and reflect the relevance of digital spaces in the lives of refugee population.

Additionally, Fourthspace allows for the investigation of the effects of censorship and digital bordering on the digital lives of Syrian refugees and by extension on other refugee populations escaping

authoritarian regimes. Syrian refugees heavily leveraged the use of digital environments not only as a tool to migrate, but as means to participate in larger social networks (Refugee Welcome pages) and smaller, in group Facebook groups, in order to navigate their new physical First and Second spaces (Abeytia 2021, 2019a). However, the encroachment of the Syrian states' censorship apparatus remains omnipresent (Abeytia 2019d, Moss 2018).

4.4 Digital Borders: Censored Fourthspace and Authoritative Regimes

Syrian refugee's experience of online environments continues to be shaped by their initial digital interactions and the Syrian state's extensive censorship apparatus (Kohlmann and Kobray 2020, Soliman 2020, 2018, Moss 2018, Freedom House 2017, Ramirez-Diaz 2016 Tkacheva et al. 2013, 37 Smith and Braginsky 2012, Khamis, Gold, and Vaughn, 2012, Eisenlorh-Shaery 2011, Preston 2011 Oghia and Indelicato 2010). This digital bordering within Syria was most impactful on social media, where repercussions for a post could result in imprisonment, torture or death (Kohlmann and Kobray 2020, Soliman 2020, Tkacheva et al. 2013, Khamis, Gold, and Vaughn, 2012, Preston 2011, Eisenlorh-Shaery 2011). These ramifications for social media interactions remain relevant for Syrian refugees as they fear reprisals not for themselves, but for their family and friends who remain in Syria (Kohlmann and Kobray 2020, Soliman 2020, Moss 2018).

The Syrian government initiated a multi-layered censorship apparatus that continues to maintain firm control over the internet use of Syrians. (Kohlmann and Kobray 2020, Soliman 2020, Moss 2018). The censorship that began inside Syria and continues to shape the social media use of Syrians in diaspora (Moss 2018, Al Ghazzi 2014, Bogart 2013). The Syrian censorship apparatus actively trolls for dissenters at home and abroad and those who voice dissent disproportionately experience its negative effects (Kohlmann and Kobray 2020, Soliman 2020, Freedom House 2017, 2018, Moss 2018, Ramirez-Diaz 2016 Tkacheva et al. 2013, 37 Smith and Braginsky 2012, Khamis, Gold, and Vaughn, 2012, Eisenlorh-Shaery 2011, Preston 2011 Oghia and Indelicato 2010).

The Syrian secret police, *mukhabarat,* were able to use Facebook to monitor political activists, and gain access to their online and offline networks, often through the threat or use of torture (Kohlmann and Kobray 2020, Moss 2018, Ramirez-Diaz 2016 Tkacheva et al. 2013, 37 Smith and Braginsky 2012, Khamis, Gold, and Vaughn, 2012, Eisenlorh-Shaery 2011, Preston 2011 Oghia and Indelicato 2010). The Syrian Electronic Army (SEA), a hacker group loyal to Syrian President Bashar al Assad, hacked many Facebook accounts and wrongly reported activists, activist groups and LGCs pages, which lead to the removal of their accounts and loss of content (Abeytia 2019c Kohlmann and Kobray 2020, Soliman 2020, Moss 2018, Tkacheva et al. 2013, Khamis, Gold, and Vaughn, 2012). Syrians learned that Facebook is the right tool if you win quickly, if not it becomes "much more dangerous," as a tool of censorship, social media exerts substantial influence on the daily lives of users (Khamis, Gold, and Vaughn, 2012).

Navigation and negotiation within this context shaped the cultural understanding of Syrians who lived under authoritarian rule and impacts the ways they utilize social media. The introduction of e-government apps particularly in Europe, requires an understanding of Syrian refugee's relationship with digital platforms evolved as a multilayered digital border that includes a suspicion of government collection of personal information, and the production of self-isolation/ethnic enclaves and self-censorship, that shape access to Fourthspace. Also, in reaction to digital borders, Syrian refugees utilized Fourthspace to produce pockets of resistance, as predicted by Soja's understanding of Thirdspace (1996), to bypass exclusion and the passivity inherent in integration policy as an active form of self-inclusion.

5.0 Integration, Social Inclusion and Active Social Inclusion

There are several theoretical models seeking to explain the integration process from the perspective of ethnic relations, cultural differences, individual initiative, assimilation and a theoretical blended approach. From the perspective of policy, these approaches can be categorized as based on an integration or social inclusion models, this article introduces an emerging approach, active social inclusion (ASI).

5.1 Integration

Closely associated with the European approach, integration of refugees includes an emphasis on acquisition of the local language and a proficiency in the history and culture of the receiving country. Refugee integration programs often place refugees in the role of passive actors, and although Scandinavian countries like Norway initiated programs to promote agency, such as refugee-led councils in reception centers to engage asylum seekers, an environment of passivity remains (Vårheim 2014 (Gubrium and Fernandes 2014, Valenta and Berg 2010, Marko and Berit 2010). Literature concerning conditions in reception centers describe life of residents as rife with uncertainty, powerlessness, and passivity (Marko and Berit 2010). Fernandes (2015) describes introduction programs as a framework that is based on an uneven power relationship. Marko and Berit's (2010) study further argue that emphasis is placed on social control rather than real social change or empowering refugees.

5.2 Social Inclusion

Social inclusion is influenced by classic sociology and Max Weber's concept of exclusion and social groups' desire to maintain their privilege by monopolizing society's material opportunities (Schierup and Krifr0ms 2015. Dahrendorf (1985) expanded the concept in the 1980s by identifying the decline of the welfare state as creating a barrier between majority populations and socially disadvantaged groups who are excluded from enjoying fundamental civil rights (Schierup and Krifroms 2015, Dahrendorf 1985). As such, social inclusion is rooted in citizenship and a citizen's rights and granting access to resources that encourage belonging through access to economic, and educational opportunities along with access to health and services (Schierup and Krifroms 2015, Taylor 2012, Dahrendorf 1985).

Canada is closely associated with the implementation of social inclusion policy. Bloemraad (2006) comparison between the United States and Canadian integration policies leaves a favorable view of the Canadian approach, particularly in terms of political integration of immigrants. Ameeriar (2017) offers a more critical view of Canadian social inclusion.

Ameeriar (2017) interrogation of the enforcement of Canadian norms within social inclusion programs as an approach that desires to eradicate markers of cultural difference in favor of cultural elites.

Ameeriar (2017) points to the," Barbaric Cultural Practices Act," which groups illegal acts already contained in the amendments to the Immigration Act and Criminal Code, as a repackaging effort to link these crimes with Muslim culture (Ameeriar 2017). Essentially connecting the crisis of Canadian multiculturalism, as a "Muslim problem," a dilemma European populous movement are advocating European governments to acknowledge (Ameeriar 2017). Social inclusion policy contains several commendable approaches, particularly a shift to refugee and community participation, but continues to maintain the coercive integration approach invested in maintaining an asymmetrical power dynamic between receiving countries in the Global North with populations from sending countries in the Global South. Refugee integration and inclusion approaches invested in these Eurocentric attitudes can sabotage larger policy objectives of workforce and higher education entry by reinforcing biases ubiquitous in Europe that prevent refugees, especially Muslim women, from entering the workforce as a ladder of social mobility and inclusion (Walia 2021, Abeytia and Diab 2021a, 2021b ARDI 2020, UN CERD 2018, Prpic, 2018, Bayrakli and Hafez, 2017, Radjenovic 2016, Gubrium and Fernandes 2014, Connor and Koenig, 2013, Jamil et al 2012, Valenta, M. and Berg, B. 2010, Marko and Berit 2010).

5.4 Active Social Inclusion

ASI grew organically in Norwegian communities to from a social inclusion model that involves multiple actors in multiple spaces actively engaged in integration. Where this model was present, Syrian refugees began to exit the periphery of society as they gain access to language skills and local culture, customs, and networks to enter the workforce or universities (Karlsdóttir et al. 2020, Abeytia 2019a, 2019b).

In Norway, more so than in Sweden, a local approach to integration produced a community-based approach rooted in *dugnad*. Dugnad, a Norwegian social phenomena, identifies local needs and seeks out local solutions, was implement in small towns that leveraged digital technologies, like social media groups and Refugee Welcome pages, to create spaces of social inclusion in the physical world (Abeytia 2021, 2019b, 2019b 2019c).

Abeytia (2019a, 2019b) states that active social inclusion (ASI) requires the creation of multiple layers of interconnected networks to produce the most successful outcomes, and the lack of participation, or passivity, on the part of one or multiple actors res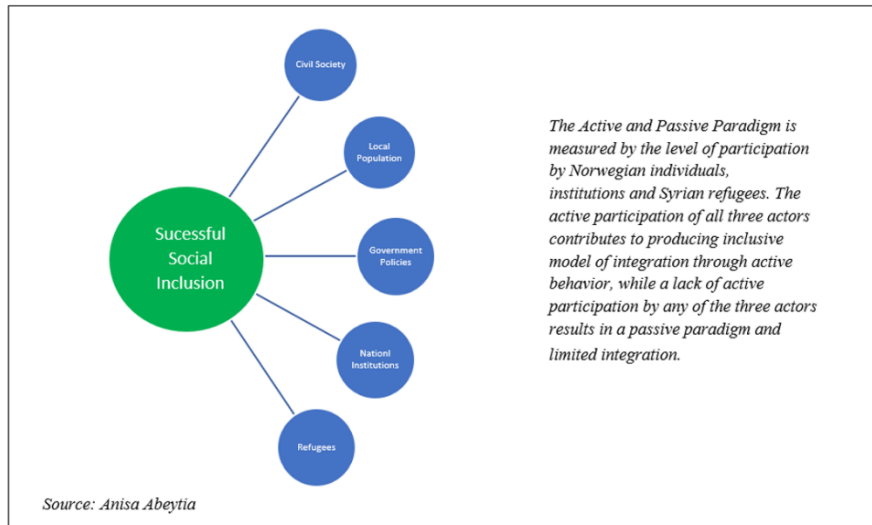ulted in limited or a lack of integration. ASI functions differently than national integration programs, which the literature describes as passive, instead ASI relies on refugee participation and the good will of local communities, universities,

The Active and Passive Paradigm is measured by the level of participation by Norwegian individuals, institutions and Syrian refugees. The active participation of all three actors contributes to producing inclusive model of integration through active behavior, while a lack of active participation by any of the three actors results in a passive paradigm and limited integration.

Source: Anisa Abeytia

Figure 2: The Active Social Inclusion Paradigm

civil society, municipalities, that is supported by the national government.

Hagelund's (2010) research asserts that governments operate on the opinion that newly arrived immigrants are responsible for self-integrating into society however, Hagelund's (2010) writes that in order for integration to occur, society also must recalibrate to include newer populations. A Norwegian library study shows that integration of refugees becomes much simpler if the local residents are involved as this engenders trust among participants—both the locals and refugees. (Vårheim 2014). A similar ASI approach by refugees in Germany leveraged networks into social capital and created greater entry into the workforce than job searches conducted alone (Gerickea, Burmeisterc, Löwea, Dellera, Pundtb, 2018). A study of integration programs across Scandinavian countries also found that the involvement of receiving countries is essential to successful integration programs (Karlsdóttir et al., 2021).

5.5 Digital Active Social Inclusion

Refugee Welcome Pages and Facebook *jamaiyat* (groups) created by Syrian refugees are important

fixtures of ASI that overlap and connected physical, liminal and digital geographies (Abeytia, 2019c). As

Syrians began arriving in Europe, their posting habits on Facebook reflected changes they were

experiencing during resettlement (Abeytia 2019c). Facebook instant messaging and private/secret groups

mimicked older Syrian social networks, jamaiya, which migrated onto the internet and served as in-group

networks for self-integration (Abeytia, 2019a, 2019b, 2019c).

      Facebook became a conduit for the development of communities that emerged from an

outpouring of sympathy for asylum seekers and served as a major platform for expanding Syrian's digital

lives via the creation of Refugee Welcome Pages and digital jamaiyat. However, not all countries were

able to build robust communities online (Abeytia 2019c). There was an overlap between online and

offline activity as indicative of the level of engagement between refugees and locals in offline locations,

suggesting the vital role social media can play as part of a multifaceted ASI process for Syrian refugees

into Scandinavian countries (Abeytia 2019c).

      The implementation ASI enables locals, refugees, civil society, national institutions, and

municipal levels of governmental agencies (municipal, national, and supranational) to adapt their placed-

based responses. Rooted in *dugnad* (community service) ASI created inclusive spaces for meaningful

interaction between locals and refugees despite linguistic, cultural, and religious differences (Karlsdottir

et al 2020, Abeytia 2019a, Abeytia 2019b). The localized implementation of national integration policy

via digital and community based social networks in Norway expanded the potential of integration policy

to a model that produced inclusiveness by granting refugees access to local populations and a means for

local populations to participate in the integration process (Abeytia 2019a,b). These networks established

by locals, refugees, civil society, and governmental agencies, are essential components in refugees'

acquisition of vocational, linguistic, and educational opportunities, which form the rungs to upward

mobility and vocational readiness.

ASI provides a flexible framework for European governments to implement across muli-governance apparatuses focused on refugee integration and workforce entry. In the coming decades as tax revenue continues to dwindle due to aging populations and the economic fallout of Covid-19, governments will increasingly need to turn to local communities and leadership to provide solutions and will require flexible, community-based policy approaches. Karlsdottir et al 2020).

5.3 A Community-Centered Approach for Workforce Entry

The large flow of refugees into Europe in 2015 overwhelmed national and supranational governments and created a rupture between practice and policy that allowed the power balance to shift to local communities (Bygnes 2021, Karlsdóttir et al. 2020, Abeytia 2019a, 2019b). In Scandinavia a local approach to integration was adopted out of necessity to absorb and provide for the needs of refugees that resulted in active social inclusion (Karlsdóttir et al. 2020, Abeytia 2019a, 2019b, Collie, Liu, Podsiadlowski, and Kindon (2009).

Local communities initiated a multifaceted, reterritorialization of Syrian refugees into a small Norwegian town (Abeytia, 2019b). This accomplished Soja's (1996) expansion of the geographic imagination by highly leveraging digital spaces. Inda & Rosaldo's (2002), suggest that the complexities of people's live within the margins of society, requires a multidimensionally lens, this type of approach is offered by active social inclusion.

This approach observed in Norway where interaction between Norwegians and refugees offered a mechanism for a robust acquisition of higher-level language above what is offered by government sponsored programs (Abeytia 2019 a, 2019b). ASI provides mechanisms to increase access to labor markets through access to greater opportunities for native language proficiency, mentorship and the creation of network (Abeytia 2019 a, 2019b). It is an approach modeled on a Norwegian approach rooted in *dugnad* (community service) and created inclusive spaces for meaningful interaction between locals and refugees despite linguistic, cultural, and religious differences that can be implemented as a method to reduce Eurocentric penalties within integration programs (Bygnes 2021, Karlsdottir et al 2020, Abeytia

2019a, Abeytia 2019b). The most profound implication of digital and physical ASI is its potential to decrease the time barrier (10 to 20 years) refugees face in successfully entering the labor market.

6.0 Conclusion

Eurocentrism, historic animosities towards Muslim and populations from the Global South spill over not only into populous movements, but also in policy responses to refugee integration, impacting the potential of the successful implementation of policy goals focused on workforce entry. ASI is a framework that provides a method to recognize and reduce biases and prejudices that serve as barriers to refugee workforce and higher education entry. ASI enables locals, refugees, civil society, national institutions, and multiple levels of governmental agencies (municipal, national, and supranational) to participate in place-based responses.

The introduction of Fourthspace acknowledges the importance of online environments in social inclusion and the role digital platforms play in reducing the passivity of national integration programs that do not promote refugee agency despite efforts to address this challenge. Fourthspace and ASI provide policy makers with a flexible framework that supports the democratic practices of inclusion and representation through the support of local participation. This approach allows for the establishment of networks by locals, refugees, civil society, and governmental agencies that are essential components in refugees' acquisition of vocational, linguistic, and educational opportunities, which form the rungs to upward mobility and vocational readiness.

The core of the policy shift towards workforce entry was to boost refugees' ability to contribute to and invigorate the economies of their new home countries. However successful workforce entry hinges greatly on societal attitudes in hiring practices. European policy makers would do well to begin to develop legislature unencumbered by populous sentiments rooted in Eurocentric views, arcane animosities and instead focus on the creation of programs that will include the newest citizens while involving local populations.

Digital social platforms are increasingly crucial in navigating the physical spaces of our daily lives that intersect and bridge online and offline environments, serving as an active tool refugees can access to reduce the time barrier to workforce entry and connect to real world and digital resources. ASI and Fourthspace answers the (UNHCR) Digital Transformation strategy emphasizes the need to reduce barriers to digital inclusion. This research introduces ASI and the digital Fourthspace as an approach to reduce barriers to physical inclusion through leveraging digital spaces as sites of active integration. Creating policy increasing refugees' access to digital environments provides refugees with active means to self integrate in a system designed to lock refugees into positions as passive actors.

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