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Abstract

How do the Syrian refugees experience a sense of belonging in their temporary settlement in Denmark? And how does the so-called “paradigm shift” affect their sense of belonging? In this thesis I explore how those Syrians perceive the meaning of belonging and in which way it is constructed. I aim also to shed the light on their coping strategies which they apply to adapt to their current situation. Further, to capture their experience in its context I will take into consideration the new implemented law of temporary residence and repatriation to their home country when the situation is stabilised and safe there.

The understanding of the Syrian refugees belonging in this thesis is drawn Nira Yuval-Davis theoretical perspectives on belonging and the politics of belonging through intersectional lens to deeply elaborate on the experience of those Syrians. In this sense, utilizing a qualitative approach based on data collected through qualitative semi-structured interviews with seven Syrian refugees constitutes profound help to grasp the real experience of those Syrian refugees.

ONE STEP FORWARDS, TWO STEPS BACKWARDS: 'THE SUSPENDED BELONGING' OF THE SYRIAN REFUGEES IN DENMARK

1. Introduction

In the global and increasing migration movement with growing numbers of displaced individuals, belonging remains a relevant and central debated concept (Fathi, 2017). Despite being considered a soft concept by the social sciences belonging is still one of the hardest issues that encounter refugees in the various stages of their 'trajectory of exile' (Skrbiš, et.al, 2007). Seeking and obtaining the sense of belonging is a complicated and a multifaceted process. This process is generally interrelated with the changeable political situation and the new applied policies in the contexts of the receiving countries (Skrbiš, et.al, 2007; Hovil, 2016; Huizinga, & van Hoven, 2018). These changes in the host countries are affected by the relative increase of the numbers of the arriving immigrants and refugees.

Recently, the conflicts in the Middle East and the African countries have caused higher numbers of fleeing refugees to Europe. The 2015-16 so-called 'refugees' crisis' has consequently led to noticeable changes in the policies of the European countries (Bordignon, & Moriconi, 2017). Likewise, this has intensified the expansion of the 'populist movements' in the European Union countries (Kaya, 2016). It was gradually deemed as "a security threat" which triggered off the European angst on various dimensions. Economically it was related to the welfare system and employment. And socially it was seen as a 'threat' to the European 'national identities' and its cultural facet. While politically and ethically it was arousing the accountability of these countries towards the newcomers on the other hand (Bordignon & Moriconi 2017

Denmark was among the European countries of destination of various groups of immigrants. Syrian newcomers were among the largest groups of arriving inflows to Denmark (Kvist, 2016). Between 2011 and 2019 Denmark received (42.467) Syrians who arrived either as refugees or as reunified family members (Statistics Denmark, 2019). The political repudiating attitude towards those non-western refugees in Denmark reflected the context of a 'moral panic' (Walter-Franke, 2019). Thus, various tightening measures related to migration policy and residence permits for the newly arrived refugees were introduced in the Danish policy of 2015. (Gammeltoft-Hansen, 2017).

In the following years these restrictions and tightening strategies escalated. In the Danish Financial Law of 2019, new deterrent legislations referred to as the 'paradigm shift' was

approved in the Parliament as a broad agreement between the parties in the government (the Liberals, the Conservatives, and the smaller party Liberal Alliance) also with the support of populist right-wing Danish People's Party (DPP) and the Social Democrats (SD). The government new rules tightened up the conditions for refugees and asylum seekers in Denmark. These laws implemented were intended to be applied to refugees and those who have subsidiary protection*¹. Thus, all types of international protection will take the form of a temporary stay which will be examined at the time of renewal to reconsider the existed need for protection (Walter-Franke, 2019). This new legislation shifts the focus of the Danish policy from integrating refugees and asylum seekers in the Danish community towards only granting them temporary residence permits, as a paradigm based on their repatriation stage when the conditions in the country of origin allows this (The European Council on Refugees And Exiles ECRE,2019).

Generally, the instability in the life of the refugees according to the violence and the losses which they were exposed to during the war in the home country, and their arduous survival from the fleeing journey to the destination country highlight their intense need to safe and secure settlement, also in the long time perspective (Steele, 2017). Being safe, is crucial to promoting their feeling of being lastly at home in the new country (Vandevooordt, 2017) and to allow them to achieve progressively a sense of belonging (Correa-Velez, Gifford, & Barnett, 2010).

A considerable body of scholarly has focused on the refugees' sense of belonging. Scholars address this interrelation with the social bonds and ties of individuals within the 'social fabric' of the majority. Researchers take into account the effect of exclusion as a threatening issue to refugees belonging and to their social inclusion in the short and long time perspective (Anthias, 2006; Anthias, 2008; May, 2011). Furthermore, other studies emphasise belonging has interchangeably co-existing with the concept of connectedness which helps to understand more about the problem of exclusion (Crisp, 2010). While other scholars consider various dimensions of the process of belonging in relation to many other variables. Some tackled for example the issue of citizenship and the preserving of the boundaries of host nation's identity besides the contested feeling of safety in the host country (Antonsich, 2010; Yuval-Davis, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2011; Simonsen, 2016; Udah, & Singh, 2019). Additionally, belonging is seen as a vital human right to secure the individual ability to obtain all other human rights and to 'flourish as a human being' (Lowe, 2019).

However, the majority of the academic studies in Denmark has mainly been focusing on the

*1 *"Refugees with temporary subsidiary protection status: Refugees who are entitled to asylum due to a general situation in the home country is granted residence permit for an initial period of one year, which may be extended twice for one year each. After three years, further extensions can be granted for two years each"* (The Danish Immigration Service, 2019).

problematization of the immigrant minorities in their relation to the Danish majority (Rytter, 2019). Scholars have mostly discussed the obstacles which challenge the acceptance of the

refugees as new social citizens in the Danish community (Entzinger, & Biezeveld, 2003; Olwig, 2011; Jenkins, 2011). While the actual situation of the individual refugee and the experience of belonging are seldom matter of deeper research. For those refugees obtaining a sense of belonging will grant them a genuine feeling about succeeding in their settlement experience and being accepted as integrated members of the new country and community (Spoonley et al, 2005). Belonging is also essential to the refugees' wellbeing (Correa-Velez, et.al, 2010). While, in general the public opinion attitudes look at refugees or the asylum seekers as "strangers" and "outsiders" (Grillo, 2011) for their being racially, ethnically and religiously different from the majority of population and consequently this can impact achieving the sense of belonging and makes them strive harder to feel as accepted and belong in the new country of settlement (Halse, C., Black, R., & Charles, C. 2018).

However, the examples above also witness to a tendency among scholars to 'research' refugees and asylum seekers mainly as subjects that are constructed and talked about. While much less attention has been paid to their 'explicit voice' to explore the unrevealed about their experience of feeling of belonging in their new settlement in the host society (Georgiou, & Zaborowski, 2017). The empirical research in the current literature on the Syrian refugees in Denmark is still scarce. And there is a lack of familiarity with the experience of the newly arriving Syrians who had to flee from their homeland to Denmark. In this sense, this Master Thesis attempt to acquire more knowledge about the refugees' experience and to gain more information about the Syrians' own experience of how they perceive a sense of belonging in the Danish society through their own voices which are generally absent in such types of debates (Stewart, & Mulvey, 2014).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The Syrian refugees in Denmark are living now in a political context of "shifted paradigm" which refers to the new Danish legislations emphasizing the temporary residence of the refugees in the country and which is accompanied by the threatening law of repatriation to Syria at any time this country (or the territorial regions of it) is considered is safe by the Danish authorities. This thesis argues that the challenge of this political approach a direct impact on the way the Syrians' sense of belonging is understood and constructed in such context of temporariness and uncertainty. Furthermore, applying this paradigm shift is intersecting with different aspects of the lives of the Syrian refugees and their families in Denmark and undoubtedly has influenced their stability and sense of security about the future. In this sense and motivated by ongoing public discussions regarding the temporariness of the Syrian newcomers in Denmark, as well as by the relatively limited knowledge about their experience of belonging, my main concern in this study is to produce knowledge and to contribute to the existing literature on migration and the concept of belonging in relation to the Syrian diaspora in Denmark. Thus, my main research question is:

How do Syrian refugees experience and understand belonging in a Danish political context underlying their temporariness?

This will be done by examining the way in which Syrians are sensing and perceiving their belonging in the Danish context and how they construct this feeling within the Danish society. I will here also explore how their experience of feelings of belonging is affected and

in what way in an environment reminding them of the temporariness of their residence in the country. Additionally, I am going to investigate their response to these changing laws and the ways of dealing with these challenges and uncertainty in relation to their planning for the future.

Many Syrians refugees are balancing on a rope, they are unable to dream of a stable life in Denmark as equal to the same way of the other majority and dare not to imagine their going back to Syria as long as their lives will be the price for that step. They are denied dreaming of a bright future of security but left to live inside long nightmare of uncertainty. As a refugee in Denmark you feel that you are living on the edge of a cliff, jumping means to die and at the same time you are not be able to fly.

1.2 Research sub-questions and methodological reflection

This thesis is concerned about exploring the Syrian refugees experience of feelings of belonging in Denmark and the impact of being reminded of the transience of their stay in relation to the paradigm shift. Further, I will look at the way in which the Syrian refugees manage to cope with these socio-political challenges. With a view to explore this the sub-questions of the research are:

How do the Syrian refugees perceive and construct their sense of belonging in their experience of settlement in Denmark?

In what way does the paradigm shift affect the Syrian newcomers' development of a sense of belonging in Denmark?

What strategies are applied by the Syrian refugees to cope with this new policy?

In order to address these questions and to comprehend more depth how the Syrian refugees perceive the meaning of belonging and the way in which it is constructed, it was essential to apply an approach which can explore the reality of the refugees in 'their lens'. Therefore, I to conduct this research I apply a qualitative iterative approach relating it empirically to data collected through qualitative semi-structured interviews with seven Syrian refugees. Thus, the attention will be primarily placed on seven Syrian male and females who have arrived in Denmark as individual refugees, or as reunified family members between 2014 and 2017. The respondents live in five different Danish municipalities. Then, through analysing the initial interviews and reassessing the reviewed literature I applied the theoretical framework of Nira Yuval-Davis (2006) concept of *belonging* and *politics of belonging* in addition to the theory of intersectionality (2006) to look throughout my data. This can help to answer the research questions and explore how the Syrian refugees perceive and construct the sense of belonging in their new settlement in Denmark as a host country. To grasp how the influence of implementing the paradigm shift is occurring mainly when seeking to feel at home in a temporary settlement in the Danish society. Also, to understand how they manage to cope in their live in the challenging socio-political Danish context and the implemented paradigm shift.

Outline of the thesis

In the first chapter, I provide a broad overview about the general issue of migration and refugees in relation to the concept of belonging. The statement of the problem and the research questions help defining the objectives of the study besides the political background of the problem as it is situated in the Danish socio-political context. The second chapter introduces a review of the relevant literature that deals with refugees belonging and their temporary residence in the host countries. The third chapter covers the research strategy and the methodological approach as well as the epistemological and ontological stances which are applied in this research. The fourth chapter conveys and discusses the theoretical concept which I apply to the empirical data, that is my interviews with the Syrians. In the fifth chapter I present the findings of my analysis of the collected data, while in the last chapter I will discuss and present the conclusion of the thesis.

1.3 Overview of the Syrian crisis

Since the beginning of the Syrian Revolution, which was triggered by the longing for a new democratic and pluralistic regime, in March 2011 Syria’s brutal dictator, Bashar al-Assad and his government have tried to maintain their control over the country. According to the struggle between the regime against and the secular and religious rebels, more than 130,000 people have been killed, hundreds of thousands have been wounded and millions of Syrian civilians have been displaced (Ma'oz, 2014). The conflict in Syria is considered one of the enormous humanitarian crises since the Second World War. At the end of 2018, the Syrian crisis continued to be the main cause of displacement in the world. Above 13 million Syrians were forced to flee their homes and live in displacement. 6,654,000 of those Syrians are today refugees, while 6,184,000 are internally displaced (UNHCR, 2018).

Currently, the Syrians are struggling either to survive inside their country, or to establish their new access to livelihood in the neighbouring countries mostly in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq. While part of them fled to the European countries risking their lives whilst looking forward to saving their families. They have been pinning their hopes on finding a stable life and a secure future for their children (Mercy Corps, 2020). During the refugees’ crisis in 2015-16, at least 1.3 million people applied for asylum in the different European countries with a significant proportion from Syria. Those who arrived to Europe were mostly survivors of dangerous journeys and wars in Syria and other countries (Samuelson, 2018). This was soon widely referred to as Europe’s “refugee crisis” or “migration crisis” (Georgiou, & Zaborowski, 2017). This dramatic upsurge of the asylum seekers and refugees in Europe compared to 2023, as shown in (Table 1). This led to a large degree of focus of the European countries on addressing the immediate challenges and also, on how to tackle this crisis and to develop solutions to the anxiety which posed by this migration.

Table 1: Inflow of asylum seekers, growth rates, selected European countries

Growth Rate 2003- 2013	Growth Rate 2013- 2015
------------------------	------------------------

Austria	-22%	389%
Belgium	-26%	212%
Denmark	65%	175%
France	1%	17%
Germany	117%	303%
Greece	0%	38%
Italy	91%	224%
Netherlands	7%	199%
Spain	-24%	224%
Sweden	73%	188%

Source: Bruegel based on data from OECD *International Migration Outlook 2015* and Eurostat

(Table 1) (Bordignon & Moriconi 2017).

Nonetheless, this angst urged several European countries to implement limiting policies to guarantee securing their borders. This was done by tightening border controls and transforming the tolerated admittance towards the newcomers. In addition, some of the European countries have initiated more restrictive immigration and asylum policies converting the residence permits to be interim residence and even to deportation in some cases which is counteracting the basis of the 1951 Convention (Halse, et.al, 2018), (Bordignon & Moriconi 2017), (Biehl, 2015).

During the refugees' crisis, Denmark as the other European countries has received different groups of asylum seekers. The numbers of the arriving Syrian refugees were of the highest among the arriving inflows (Kvist, 2016) and the registered numbers are shown in (Table 2)

Table 2: Numbers of Syrian refugees and Their Descendants in Denmark:

Country	immigrants	Descendants	Total	Proportion of immigrants and descendants
Turkey	33.083	30.736	63.819	8,0 %
Poland	41.497	6.651	48.148	6,1 %
Syria	35.862	6.605	42.467	5,4 %
Iraq	21.859	11.230	33.089	4,2 %

(Statistics Denmark, 2019)

The Syrians arriving to Denmark between 2011-2019 were 42.467 refugees and reunified family members. They arrived sporadically between 2011-2019 (Statistics Denmark, 2019) as shown in (Table3)

Table 3: Syrian Asylum applications in Denmark, 2011–2019:

Nationality	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Syria	429	822	1.710	7.087	8.608	1.253	863	604	314

(The Danish Immigration Service, 2015, 2019).

The general political perception towards non-European refugees and especially the Muslims was the most negative in Denmark (Erdal, et al., 2019) who are seen as a threat to the boundaries of ‘Danishness’. Those refugees were often presented as a potential threat to democracy, human rights, gender equality and the other Danish society values and the welfare state as well (Rytter, 2019). Since then, the Danish newspapers were more concentrating on the negative consequences and the appropriate measures to protect Europe and Denmark from the non-European newcomers. While on the contrary less concentration was paid on measures to help those refugees (Hovden, et al., 2018).

As reaction to the refugee crisis the Danish government has implemented changes in the legislations of asylum seeking in Denmark to become more difficult to reduce the numbers of refugees applying to asylum (Kvist, 2016)

1.4 Overview of the Danish political context

The Paradigm shift

In this section, I will cover the Danish political context that the Syrian refugees are living in Denmark and which constitutes the background for their everyday life and interaction within the Danish community.

In Denmark, the anti-migration right-wing Danish People’s Party (DPP) was the parliamentary support to the Liberal and Conservative Danish minority government in the year 2015-2019. Under (among others) the influence of Danish People’s Party, immigration laws in Denmark became among the strictest in the European countries. Since the refugees’ crisis in 2015, over hundred legislations were adopted in a context of a ‘moral panic’ to make Denmark unattractive destination to refugees. (Walter-Franke, 2019).

Asylum policies were significantly tightened. In September 2015, lower integration allowance or integration benefit replaced the benefits for all, singling out refugees as a specific group with lower attainment. This integration allowance was about half of the normal social benefit assigned to a non-refugee. In January 2016, new restrictions related to the family reunification and shorter residence permits were adopted (Kvist, 2016). A contested new rule known as “The Jewellery Law” was also presented in 2016. It granted the police to confiscate refugees’ valuables which exceed a (\$1520 or €1,340) and the refugees who are able to financially provide for themselves they have to do that. Family reunification was no longer guaranteed, and the waiting period for that was extended to three years of residence,

instead of one year. Also, the temporary residence permits have been shortened as well and other precarious forms of protection have since been introduced (Walter-Franke, 2019).

In December 2018, a new plan for creating a detention camp in the uninhabited island of Lindholm was presented by the government and the DPP. It was suggested for refugees having lost their residency rights NGOs considered that it is breaching the European Convention on Human Rights (Walter-Franke, 2019).

In February 2019, the government with the cooperation of the right-wing Danish People's Party (DPP) and the Social Democrats introduced the Law 140 also known as 'paradigm shift'. Among the measures of this law there was a reform amending the right to stay, in particular to refugees (Walter-Franke, 2019). In this sense, the so-called 'paradigm shift' only allows for temporary protection in Denmark. This was done to make the country less attractive to refugees and thus reducing their numbers (Finansloven, 2019).

Thus, the focal point in the 'paradigm shift' is the changing focus from integration to temporariness of refugees' stay in Denmark. As a consequence of this all types of international protection will be only temporary. In contrast to the earlier situation, integration into Danish society will not be a supportive factor to obtain the right of residence in Denmark. And at the time of permit renewal to refugees and family members of refugees, the current need for protection will be re-evaluated and revoked if the need for this protection no longer exists (Walter-Franke, 2019). This was stated in the law:

"Temporality must be a central and pivotal factor in the various demands and services that the refugees meet during their stay in Denmark. There should not be the slightest doubt, either with the authorities or with the refugees or with the family reunited family, that they should go home whenever it is possible - whether by voluntary means or by coercion". (Finansloven, 2019, p.27).

Moreover, the repatriation scheme was also discussed in this law as it is declared:

"The Government and the Danish People's Party have strengthened the repatriation scheme with the Finance Act Agreement for 2018 by introducing a systematic municipal guidance obligation, which means that in all conversations in the employment-directed effort, the municipalities must now advise foreigners on the possibility of repatriation", "financial support can be granted to foreigners from areas where temporary protection status is granted - ie. most definitely Syria" (Finansloven, 2019, p.30, p.31).

Accordingly, the government is attempting to start the practical stage of repatriating the Syrian refugees to their war-torn country since considering Damascus as safe area. And those Syrians who came from this city might not be able to have a renewal to their residence returns (Walter-Franke, 2019).

In the same line, it was expanded that refugees' participation in labour market, the Danish language proficiency or the participation in associational life do not have a positive effect on the decisions about residence. In addition, the importance of the children's affiliation to Denmark, is minimised, children under eight years old will not be included in the assessment of the residence decision as well (Finansloven, 2019).

Evidently, the paradigm shift did not come all at once in the Law 140, but it was the result of a development of immigration and asylum laws in the past few years and particularly since the refugees' crisis in (2015).

The Bosnian law

The paradigm is not new. In the early nineties during the crisis of Bosnian refugees, the law of a temporary protection was also introduced. The aim of the government was the rapid repatriation, when the situation is stabilized in their home country. This legislation was an expression of the non- inclusion Danish policy (Kjaerum, 2002).

In 1993 those Bosnians were placed in reception centres not allowed to participate in schooling and not given have any instruction in the Danish language. The Danish policy was interested essentially with the return strategy of the Bosnian refugees, ignoring any attempt to integrate them within the community. But the time was an effective factor in changing the attitude of the Danish policy. Since the war did not cease as it was desired in 1994-95, but it continued over several years, the decision of the Danish government was granted a permanent residence permits (Berg, 2002).

The current political orientation towards the refugees and asylum seekers conveys an overtly message of exclusionary attitudes and the words of an outstanding member of populist right-wing Danish People's Party (DPP), Peter Skaarup plainly show this when he addressed the refugees:

"You have to get used to the fact that when you come to Denmark, you are here temporarily, and once you have had temporary shelter, you go back again," (nyheder.tv2, 2018).

The same concept was expressed by the Immigration and Integration Minister Inger Støjberg who said: *"We want to send a very clear signal to refugees that when you get to stay in Denmark, it is temporary"* (nyheder.tv2, 2019).

Nonetheless, this focus on returning the refugees was highly criticized by Christian Friis Bach, the Secretary General for the leading Danish INGO and ECRE member, condemned this attitude saying that the organisation is:

"saddened to see that Denmark takes part – and sometimes actually put itself at the front seat – in the European race to the bottom, when it comes to limiting rights for asylum seekers and refugees" (ECRE, 2019). He added also that the organisation is repent that:

"the political focus on temporality and return creates frustration among many of the refugees in Denmark," and he saw that this treatment to refugees *"limits the incentive to begin an education, to take a job, to learn the language."* (ECRE, 2019).

Also, the UNHCR Regional Representative has declared that refugees will *"live in an eternal fear of being sent home every time their residence permit is up for renewal. Such uncertainty can be detrimental to refugees' ability to lead a normal life and adapt to Danish society"* (Walter-Franke, 2019).

2. Literature Review on temporary stay

In this chapter I examine various academic studies on refugees and asylum seekers that engage with how refugees construct a sense of belonging, this in our case under the specific in a context of temporary residence. This enables me to get general understanding of different issues relevant to my study which can open new dimensions in analysing the interviews I collected empirical data. This step can further enhance investigating the ways in which the refugees construct their feelings of belonging in similar contexts or even in contexts which have other interrelated factors that constitute promoting or hindering background for the refugees' experiences.

2.1 On refugees who had temporary residence stay

In this part I cover research on refugees' experiences after gaining a temporary protection in restrictive asylum regimes. Within the academic literature these issues are variously discussed but almost all these researches agree that adopting either of these two implementations seems to clearly impact refugees life as well the feeling of belonging in addition to other effects on other domains of their refuge experiences. Stewart, and Mulvey (2014) paper "**Seeking safety beyond refuge: the impact of immigration and citizenship policy upon refugees in the UK**", which is based on a sample of in-depth interviews with 30 refugees who have gained refugee status before and after 2005 in Scotland (UK), explores refugees' perspectives about the applied policies of asylum and citizenship which had some unexpected results. These results identified unintended consequences of the applied policy. It was shown that the refugees are being encouraged to become citizens but for the wrong reasons.

The foundation for these policies were derived from a deserving reasoning perspective because of the moral panic over the newcomers who constitute a threat to the nation. Thus, limited groups of the asylum seekers only would be worth of obtaining 'refuge'. The adopted key policy was to convert the permanent refugee status to be a temporary one for 'five-years' period, and at the end of these years refugees' situation will be reviewed and the residence decision determined. This procedure gradually reduces the rights of the asylum seekers and refugees about citizenship acquisition (Stewart, & Mulvey, 2014).

Stewart, and Mulvey (2014) consider that the temporary residence can 'freeze the lives of refugees' and thus limits their own decisions for the future. Curtailing refugees' access to citizenship is negatively affecting the refugees' civic participation and engagement and it was perceived that the five-year status will be a barrier for the employer to accept refugee as an employee. The refugees who have temporary status in the host community are less capable of having positive relationships within the community -it was shown in the article- than those who gained permanent statuses. Still, returning to the home country is not an available choice for those refugees and in these circumstances, refugees have a great need to feel the sense of safety and security in the new country (Stewart, & Mulvey, 2014).

The respondents' words reveal the 'dichotomy' of their feelings of both 'security and fear' in their lives. As long as their residence permits are temporary this means a temporary sense of security for the refugees and consequently, they struggle to ensure their feeling of stable settlement or of gaining a sense of belonging. For them it is hard to fully integrate or even to

establish a fixed plan ahead. In this article, the interviewed parents were concerned mainly about the difficulty of ensuring the future of their children if they have a chance in this country. Uncertainty was a dominant notion for those refugees and gaining permanent statuses or citizenship grant them feeling of safety to reverse their fractured sense of belonging (Stewart, & Mulvey, 2014).

In a paper titled “**Contested belonging: Temporary protection in Australia**” the authors Humpage and Marston (2005) discuss the issue of the racist policy of mandatory detention and temporary protection and their crucial outcomes on the refugees’ resettlement experiences and their sense of belonging at the national level in Australia. They argue that the “illegal” asylum seekers and refugees who were different in terms of their ethnic and religious background as Muslim men were depicted in the public debate as actual ‘threat’ to the social cohesion, welfare system and employment opportunities. This fear was used intentionally by the political parties to influence negatively the public opinion (Humpage, & Marston, 2005). The authors notice that considering the newcomers as “second-class citizens” affected their access to settlement services and the right to belong in Australia.

Therefore, to identify refugees’ belonging in regard to the social ‘networks, cultural or legal categories, and the discursive publics Humpage and Marston between 2002-2003 studied the case of refugees on temporary protection visa (TPVs) in the years 2002-2003 through interviewing fifty-one of them and fifteen service providers to explore how the refugees on (TPVs) undergo this experience in different receiving societies. Their findings show that the TPV protection influence was obstructing any opportunity to gain an employment, enrolling to acquire the language or even recognising their previous qualification and leading them to poverty as a result. Furthermore, the interviewed refugees assured that the limbo of temporary visa is limiting their freedom and creates a sense of isolation accompanied with many psychological effects such as stress, anxiety and depression. Humpage and Marston also discuss how those refugees keep feeling the hopelessness in their life and the pressure of uncertainty being afraid of deportation and living ‘on a day-to-day basis’ (Ibid).

On other hand, a second research they did (Humpage, & Marston, 2005) has shed the light on the supporting role of ‘an innovative community organization’ to enhance those refugees feeling of belonging through developing friendships between refugees themselves and with the Australian citizens as well. They argue that the social network’s activities were highly facilitating refugees’ sense of belonging and working on establishing ‘voluntary associations’ in terms of the cultural or legal status basis and such procedures might be a very positive step for developing progressively feelings of social belonging and integration for the (TVP) refugees (Humpage, & Marston, 2005).

2.2 On the Syrian refugees who had temporary residence stay

In this part I will bring up research on the Syrian refugees’ diaspora that might provide additional resources to further understand about their journey to achieve a feeling of belonging in the various contexts of the host countries.

A recent contribution of the scholarly literature on the Syrian refugees’ sense of belonging is “**Everyday geographies of belonging: Syrian refugee experiences in the Northern Netherlands**” by Rik P. Huizingaa and Bettina van Hovenb (2018). However, this study mainly focuses on the case of ten Syrian men who live alone in Northern area of the Netherlands waiting for the reunification with their families. The authors state that the newly

arriving refugees or asylum seekers while waiting the procedures of the asylum request have to stay long time in special canters in isolated rural areas of the Netherlands. The life is a limbo there where they are deprived from any right to learn the language, to study or to work. When they are granted the refuge status their resident permit is temporary and according to the dispersal policy they will be mostly distributed to live among homogeneous Dutch population in rural villages without pre-knowledge of the Dutch language and culture. Gaining a sense of belonging in this setting where they are positioned is highly challenged and hard to be achieved (Huizinga, & van Hoven, 2018).

What this study highlights is how Syrian refugees in the Northern Netherlands navigates their settlement and how the contextual factors and the 'politics of difference' can promote or obstruct their being included or excluded within the community. For this reason, Huizinga and van Hoven, consider that developing a 'multidimensional' and 'hybrid' sense of belonging might be experienced through gaining knowledge about 'locality, its practices', 'norms' and 'values' which can be interrelated with the concept of 'encounters'. But as the argument precedes the study shows that the temporary residence permits which those refugees granted has a negative effect on them in terms of hindering their ability to develop applicable knowledge about accessing the 'sustained encounters'. The encounters such as centres or sport clubs constitute a 'long term' or a 'repetitive' contact between the refugees and the Dutch citizens and so for the respondents the frequency of this social encounters can provide more interaction with the native members and consequently more sense of belonging in the community (Ibid).

According to the refugee status they are unable to have an employment or to study which means that the everyday life routines of the Dutch native population are completely inaccessible for those refugees therefore, they do not actually exist physically in the same places. Apparently, this deprives them from making any social interaction in environments of work or education. The authors expand more on the consequences of this policy on refugees lives as being mostly dependent on 'welfare benefits', and this limits their financial ability to coexist in entertainment places such as bars, cafés and restaurants to enlarge their social networks and deconstruct their personal belonging (Ibid).

Thereby to ensure a primary sense of integration and belonging in this new community the authors argue that the only accessible choices for those refugees are the available encounters in very public spaces such as streets or parks which can not be of a great value to feel as belonging.

Therefore, as the study demonstrates the 'third places' and 'transitory zones' can slightly contribute to create another dimension of feeling a sense of belonging 'beyond the host society territory' but at the same time enables them of exploring the 'unfamiliar host society' (Huizinga, & van Hoven, 2018).

Another example about the feeling belonging of Syrian refugees' in the resettlement experience is the study of Umut Ozkaleli (2018) which is titled "**Displaced selves, dislocated emotions and transforming identities: Syrian refugee women reinventing selves**". Umut Ozkaleli addresses the issue of Syrian refugee women complexity of 'becoming and belonging' in their forced displacement within the context of a temporary protection and the uncertainty of the precarious future. The study based on the voices of four Syrian women in their everyday life in Gaziantep in Turkey. The researcher linked between the meaning of belonging and the self-

relocation of those refugee women in the new place taking in consideration the interaction of the relationships they conform with their family in the national and transnational community context (Ozkaleli, 2018).

Among the various issues which this research has discussed I will concentrate on one part which is relatively connected with my study. This is where Ozkaleli examines the interviewed women descriptions of the varied times when they feel the 'loss of belonging and its relation to their displacement. For them, what prevents them from achieving 'self-fulfilment' is being unable to feel a sense of belonging to a community. However, this paper calls the attention to the idea that the displaced individuals are constantly in a process of 'becoming' as a 'newly arrived people' or even as 'members of the new country where they resettled. As the author argues that considering those refugees as a problem and a burden will not lead to positives outcomes (Ibid).

This study primary insight situates the issue of emplacement and displacement in crucial relation with the ability of the refugee feeling of safety and recognition in a contrast to the feeling of social detachment due to feeling as a victim of discrimination and exclusion (Ozkaleli, U. (2018).

2.3 On asylum-seekers in Danish asylum centres

In this section, I explore more about the concept of belonging and temporariness in literature that discuss the refugees and asylum seekers navigating belonging in the context of increasing restrictive migration policies in the stage of waiting in a refugee camp. The camp as Simon Turner (2015) states "*is an exceptional space that is put in place to deal with populations that disturb the national order of things*" (Turner, 2015). Thus, those who live in these camps are excluded socially and culturally and deemed as not belonging to the host country. Their life in this case is defined as temporary and undecided in terms of its being unpredictable period of time that the refugee will stay in the camp. The sense of belonging of those individuals is certainly 'neither here nor there' and their uncertain lives are seemingly 'on the move' either to 'their way home or somewhere else'. Thus, in short, they live in a challenging limbo 'until another solution is found' (Turner, 2015).

In the context of refugees 'temporariness' in a camp, Andrea Verdasco (2018) in his article "**Communities of belonging in the temporariness of the Danish Asylum System: Shalini's anchoring points**" draws on the case of 'Shalini' a 16 aged young Sri Lankan 'unaccompanied minor' who was 'rejected asylum-seeker' after being for over than five years in a Danish asylum centre. she was waiting for her last chance of gaining the right to stay in Denmark not as asylum seeker but based on her developing 'a stronger attachment' to Denmark for the long-time of living in Denmark than to her home country. For the Danish authorities, 'attachment' means 'belonging to a particular nation state: Denmark'. Thus, the author highlights how Shalini attaches herself to different anchoring points through everyday practices developing various communities of belonging in the context of uncertainty and temporality in the centre (Verdasco, 2018).

In the first period she began to construct 'weak ties' with the young girl refugees have some activities with them and gradually she expanded her communities of belonging and could have a friendship with two boys as well. This asylum centre was her first anchoring point which provided her with a sense stability while the second point which granted her a sense of belonging was the Tamil temple. For her it constituted a familiar community which has

similar strong ties as in Sri Lanka. The change in the legal category after rejecting her asylum case and deciding her deportation besides the new classification as adult at age 18 negatively influenced her social ties and a sense of belonging which consequently led to losing of her anchoring point (Ibid).

At this point, the author illustrates by detailing how the refugees to adapt to their uncertain situation by developing varied communities of belonging and establish new anchoring points. Thus religion becomes a beneficial way to strengthen the sense of belonging and the sense of identity for Shalini through her establishing relationships with refugees from Muslim background, and with her Muslim boyfriend and conversion to Islam shows how religion did not rely on the base of 'faith' but a way to enhance 'strong and weak ties' and a sense of belong to a community. Shalini commitment to the Islam community and the mosque became her new anchoring point which promotes her belonging (Ibid).

The 'women's café' in the deportees centre was a gendered anchoring point that opened a door for more weak ties and for keeping the gender identity where the refugees women can forget their problems, and be happy for being themselves throwing off the scarf and be with other similar women (Ibid).

On other hand, the school was an additional anchoring point for establishing weak ties with teachers and students with an immigrant background and for helping the sense of progressive development during the awaiting time and assisting a sense of routine to support the sense of self (Ibid).

At last she was granted a temporary residence according to 'her ability and willingness to integrate' in the Danish community. Her 'attachment' did not take the form of a linear process, but it took a fragmented shape of 'negotiating belonging' and stability in uncertain atmosphere (Verdasco, A. (2018).

In another contribution of Andrea Verdasco (2019) which is titled **"Everyday Rituals of Migration: Constructing Relatedness and Agency among Young Refugees in Denmark"** he brings in the case of young unaccompanied refugees who are affected by the restrictive policies in a Danish asylum centre. The study provides a set of arguments about the vital role of various 'rituals' of everyday life activities in creating a meaningful social relatedness within the camp. This relatedness was established among the young refugees themselves and with those who work with them as well. Another point was negatively influencing the unaccompanied minors, and particularly those close to coming of age was the restrictive policies of asylum-seekers and refugees in terms of temporary protection and deportation (Verdasco, 2019).

Through a daily routine of preparing food a group of Afghan friends baking their bread while talking and listening to music similar to that they used to in their homeland were constructing their own distinctive rituals. These rituals of gathering and preparing the bread promotes building up the friendship relations among those young refugees. Another issue was mentioned by the author is the gender dimension which was particularly visible in deciding about refugees group formations. The van trip for buying food from the 'Arab market' which was a shared activity among the young Kurds group was a supportive factor to enhance their

reciprocity and adding meaning to their friendships through their collective contribution in pooling their ‘pocket money’, buying the food then cooking and sharing the food later (Ibid).

Moreover, the author argues that ‘ritualisation’ might include other aspects which consolidate the ties within the camp. Thus, the inter-generational participation between staff of the centre and the young refugees in preparing food shows the effective side of sharing the ‘language and cultural understanding’ of cooking and food experience. In this sense, relatedness can develop ‘parental-like relationship’ between the two participating sides and can affect the ‘meaning and value of time’ in this process.

The study also demonstrates that a ‘collective sense of identity’ was obviously seen among the Eritreans who were indifferent about issues such as religion or gender when preparing the cake and the food for a birthday party to one of them. The celebration was an opportunity to dissolve the social difference and to merge between the varied groups (Ibid).

Additional positive aspect was shown in the collective contribution in playing football matches. It had a unifying role and led to constructing ‘a sense of community’ and ‘likeness’ among those young refugees. Such experiences inserted a sense belonging to their social life in spite of the existing cultural differences in their backgrounds (Ibid).

Critically, Verdasco study draws out a link between the temporality which marked the asylum system and the new created relatedness in the life within the camp. The shared temporal aspect which strengthened the ties among the refugees was completely influenced by this policy. Accordingly, the differences in responding to the asylum applicants especially when granting the Syrian refugees the asylum shortly after arriving the camp in contrast to other groups of refugees who might be deported was negatively influential. Thus, the categorising of refugees in the migration system had a harmful effect on the social relations leading to separation among those refugees and unfavourably reduced their sense of belonging (Verdasco, 2019)

To sum up, in the scholarly studies in the current time of globally displacement, the issue of belonging is still a matter of concern especially to those who are forcibly displaced. The sense of belonging for those vulnerable individuals can be promoted or obstructed according to various challenging to the social locations and the constructed narratives of identities. The most effective factor on establishing and developing the sense of belonging is the temporary situations in which the refugees are situated according to the politics of belonging of the national collectivities where they are seeking asylum. But this sense of belonging can be constructed on minimised levels within the environment where the refugees are existed. It can be enhanced through refugees’ interaction with the local social community which they are allowed to access. Although this slight sense of belonging can be experienced by refugees, but it is still felt as contested feeling until it can be declared in a satisfying way.

3. Methodology

“[M]ethodology is a coherent set of ideas about the philosophy, methods, and data that underlie the research process and the production of knowledge” (McCall, 2008, p.1774).

In this following chapter, I will discuss the theoretical and philosophical assumptions underpinning this study. Thus, I will start with explanation of philosophy of science; ontological, epistemological, and methodological viewpoint that I found appropriate for my study. Then, the choice of the study design and the methods I followed for collecting relative data will be underlined. Lastly, I will mention the limitations and the difficulties that I encountered while conducting this study.

3.1 Research design

A research design stands for the preceding arrangement of the range of methods to be employed for collecting the relevant data and the necessary techniques for analysing the generated data (Kothari, 2004). This depends on the research purpose

The research design process starts with defining the philosophical assumptions of the research. The researcher can apply his/her worldviews or paradigm to enhance conducting the intended research (Creswell, 2007).

Qualitative approach

Choosing a qualitative approach for my research is based on the nature of the investigated problems and the aim of the research which is exploring about the experience of the Syrian refugees in feeling a sense of belonging in Denmark. And relying on the type of research design, the appropriate methods will be defined to collect and analyse the rich generated data which the qualitative approach provides (Walliman, 2011). The design process in this research is accordingly qualitative in regard to the flexibility which the qualitative approach provides for considering the different aspects of the experience which those Syrians go through (Kothari, 2004).

It is the most appropriate to answer the research questions and in terms of achieving the purpose of this study which is exploring the unrevealed about the Syrian refugees feeling of belonging in the challenging Danish context. Also, to make explicit how their experiences are affected while they encounter a new law of temporary residence and possible repatriation to Syria. Qualitative approach in this study is primarily based on direct interaction between the researcher (me) and the interviewed Syrian respondents through qualitative interviews that are interested with the subjective assessment of their opinions and behaviours (Kothari, 2004). Besides, this qualitative method reflects how they themselves perceive and construct their feeling of belonging in this context where the interaction occurs.

Unlike the quantitative approach which negated this subjectivity by aligning with controlled collection of data and relying on the measurement of the quantity or the amount of the studied phenomena. An important point here, is the type of the results which the qualitative approach produces which are 'non-quantitative' as a form and not subjected to rigid quantitative analysis. In general, the applied techniques in such approach are focus group interviews and depth individual interviews (Kothari, 2004). For this reason in the qualitative study, it is preferable that the researcher got close to the participants who are under the study and the field where they have everyday life to understand the meanings of the words which the participants say (Creswell, 2007).

Iterative approach

To define the relation between the theory and the process of analysis in my study I that the iterative approach was the most suitable as long as my aim is not to generate a theory as in the inductive approach nor to test a theory as in the deductive one as well. I wanted the process of collecting the data to be free from the influence of existing theories and to have a flexible approach to analysis the data.

After preliminary general reading of the first few interviews I did an initial coding of them and this was mentoring step to decide on which the theoretical framework to apply in this study. When considering these theories, I turned back to reread the transcribed data and revising the later interviews where new information were developed and then keep moving between the theories and the data to reflect on them. This iterative approach is a process of “weaving back and forth between data and theory” as Bryman (2016) defined it.

It is basically a mutual process between readings of the data and applying existing explanations in other scholarly researches, and theories (Tracy, 2019). At the same time iteration process is ‘not a repetitive mechanical task’, but rather a ‘reflexive process’ of “*visiting and revisiting the data and connecting them with emerging insights, progressively leading to refined focus and understandings*” (Srivastava,& Hopwood, 2009).

3.2 Research paradigm

Researcher needs to define his/her belief system, paradigm or worldview that is applied as a guidance to help in conducting the research process and in generating knowledge. It is a set of assumptions about choosing the methods in ontological and epistemological approach (Guba, & Lincoln, 1994). However, after choosing a qualitative approach, the deciding on the compatible worldview will be social constructivism since my purpose is to explore and grasp the meanings which the participants develop about their social reality in the Danish context.

social constructivism

In **social constructivism**, which Creswell (2007) considered as equivalent to interpretivism, the social actors are interested in finding out and understanding the subjective meanings of their own social world (Creswell, 2007). This asserts that the knowledge is not discovered from an external reality nor produced by applying reason as separated from the reality. It is an outcome of the individuals’ given meanings of their interaction with others wherein they live in a certain historical and cultural setting (Blaikie, 2007).

On this, I employ the social constructivism approach as a paradigm or a worldview to investigate the real meanings which the Syrian refugees develop about their feeling of belonging in the social reality of the Danish context.

Social constructivism believes that individuals develop multiple and distinctive meanings of the social phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Thus, it helps achieving my aim to understand how their multiple perspectives about belonging are constructed differently as being affected by the paradigm shift and the new law of temporariness of their residence in Denmark.

Moreover, social constructivism view that the mission of the researcher is to be aware of the varied and interrelated meanings of the participants and be careful not to reduce them into fewer categories. This displays that the main interest of this approach is to make sense of how the participants themselves perceive the phenomena and construct subjectively their meanings about them to form then their own perspectives (Creswell, 2007). This assist my

interest in deeply investigating how the changing in Danish setting in term of the power relations and the Danish policy towards the Syrian refugees influence their view of the future and how to plane it in such context.

Further, through a lens of social constructivism it can be understood that being born as male/ female or black/ white or African/ European, from the middle class or working class do not have any meaning within it for any human until the social interaction with other humans and institutions provide the meaning of these categories. Constructing these categories grants them a type of power positionality (Ore, 2009).

As it is discussed, social constructivism is not concern about testing a theory as the post-positivism or even inducting a theory. But on the contrary, its main applicable characteristic is being 'interpretive'. This primarily conform to the purpose of the qualitative approach of my study in interpreting the subjective meanings which ae established of the participants who are under the study (Creswell, 2007).

3.3 Philosophy of science

Philosophy of research addresses the ontological aspect which is concerned with the nature of the reality, and the epistemological aspect which main focus is about the relation that exists between the 'knower' and the 'knowable' (Guba, 1990).

Ontological position

The ontological assumption is interested in the nature of the social reality that is investigated. Different researchers have different standpoints about realities which becomes diverse according to how the knowledge is obtained in the social research (Blaikie, 2007). In the ontological position, regarding the perspective about the nature of social realities, there are two main opposed stands, objectivism and constructionism.

The objectivism position deems that the social phenomena and the applied categories in everyday life exist completely independent apart from the social actors. The social actors do not have influence on the external facts of social reality (Bryman, 2016). This is completely opposite to my aim in this research which is contradicted with the subjective interaction between the participants and the social reality. Therefore, the other position which is constructionism is the most appropriate to my study.

The **constructionism** position- which is termed as '**constructivist**', and also 'constructionist' position- (Tracy, 2019) is seen as alternative ontological stance that consider the social phenomena is constantly generated in new versions through social interaction and communication. This means that social reality is not fixed but it is always constructed in a new state of existence (Bryman, 2016) and it produces indefinite realities that differ according to each individual. Thus, in this study my ontological position is the constructivist stance to enhance my aim in exploring the ways in which the Syrian participants perceive and constructs their social reality individually by their own words. The study does not aim to give clear-cut answers to the investigations as in a positivist approach but it is more likely have smoother approach to understand the meaning of participants' words and to interpret what is said (Tracy, 2019).

Epistemological position

The epistemological assumption accounts for the way in which knowledge about social reality is created. It is concerned about the way in which individuals gain the knowledge about a phenomenon or how they know what they know (Blaikie, 2007). In social sciences studies there are two approaches to consider the position of the human subject and researcher, and the status of social phenomena. These two epistemological positions are positivism and interpretivism (Bryman, 2016).

The first epistemological stance **positivism** is correlated with applying the methods of the natural sciences when studying social reality. It is associated with deductive approach that test the theory and has a descriptive nature. The data in positivism are collected in a value-free manner and use facts to generate the knowledge. It entails objective not subjective results and thus it relies on numbers and natural laws (Bryman, 2016).

On the other hand, the second stance **interpretivism** is generally used in the studies of society. It attempts to understand the subjective meaning which individuals connect to their social behaviours or words in everyday life which cannot be realized by analysing fixed numbers and controllable variables (Blaikie, 2007; Bryman, 2016). Interpretivism reflects the views which the subjects under study produce in relation to social reality as the individuals are connected with it not separated from. This makes such approach highly beneficial and applicable in my study about the reality of those Syrian belonging in the Danish society.

Bryman (2016), following Von Wright (1971), consider that interpretivism contrasts the positivist position. Interpretivism in studies which seek to understand the complicated social world is more useful unlike the positivist position which provides facts to produce generalised facts of natural science in an objective manner (Blaikie, 2007; Bryman, 2016).

Hermeneutic approach

Since my concerned in this study is understanding in more depth the meanings of the Syrian respondents' perspectives to interpret them, the **hermeneutic** approach is my choice. Hermeneutic approach for Bryman (2016) is concerned with the theory and method of the interpretation of human action. It asserts the need to understand the social world from the perspective of the social actor. It was fundamental to see the world in the way they see it to grasp how those Syrians perceive the notion of belonging while living as refugees in Denmark. However, to find answers to my research question I had to be fully aware of the situation they are living in and the factors that influence their way of thinking and the background for constructing the meanings in this way. Therefore, this knowledge can be deeply acquired through applying hermeneutic methodology. It reflects the voice of the participants and reconstructs their own constructions of their social world (Guba, & Lincoln, 1994).

The hermeneutic approach involves an iterative form of application when interpreting the qualitative data and reinterpreting them according to the developing of the whole understanding due to the continues modifying through reading and rereading (Thompson, et al., 1994)

When investigating about the social phenomena of belonging and the effect of the new law of temporary residence on it and, the challenges of the future which they face as a result, I tried genuinely to reflect their subjective side of the experiences. In this sense, in my interviews and the analysis, I had to consider the personal experience of each respondents as a different

reality. In this context, Guba and Lincoln (1994) argued that It takes into account that the multiple knowledge can exist and be accepted whenever the social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender influences that contributes to the way each respondent interprets his own view. This explain that the construction process is constantly under revision (Guba, & Lincoln, 1994).

3. 4 Data Collection

In this study both primary and secondary data were collected. The primary data are collected by conducting Qualitative interviews with seven Syrian refugees. And the secondary data are gathered from several available resources to help in collecting the most comprehensive relevant information about the investigated topic, and to cross-check the ‘consistency’ with my findings (Wahyuni, 2012).

The key search words were ‘sense of belonging’ and ‘refugees’ belonging’. In this term, there were various theoretical studies that discuss different perspectives of theorising ‘belonging’. I reviewed other many research, academic papers and journals which discuss belonging in varied ways in relation to different arguments as place, space, citizenship, psychology, wellbeing, temporariness and so forth. The most searching was through the databases of Aalborg University Library, AAU project library, Google Scholar, EBSCO Academic Search Premier and Sage Journals Premier.

Moreover, to revise the official numbers about the refugees in Europe and Denmark I searched in the web pages of ‘The Danish Immigration Service’, ‘OECD Reports’, Statistics Denmark’. The information about the Danish policy of immigration and the regulations of the new law of temporary residence I got from the Publications of ‘Udlændingestyrelsen,’ The Danish Immigration Service, Udlændinge og Integrationsministeriet and ‘The European Council on Refugees and Exiles ECRE’. And some statements of Danish politicians I found in ‘nyheder.tv2’ web page.

Sampling process and gaining access

As the study I want to conduct is about the sense of belonging of the newly arrived Syrian refugees in Denmark in a context of challenging changes in the policy towards them, thus, my criteria about the participants is already decided. All the participants have to be from Syrian background who arrived Denmark as refugees or as reunified family members between 2014 and 2017. It is preferable to be males and females whose ages are between 18-55 years to cover various characteristics of the arriving Syrians in Denmark. I chose to have participants who live in different Danish municipalities within rural and urban areas to have different social experiences of belonging in the Danish community.

To find Syrian participants who meet my criteria I have to apply the approach of **purposive sampling**. This strategy is based on selected criteria which determine intentionally definite individuals and settings in order to provide the information for the study. This information can not be obtained from other choices out of the criterion (Maxwell, 2005). To contact with Syrians, I applied another strategy which is **snowball sampling**. Sampling in qualitative research can be applied in various methods and when selecting a purposive sampling it should be followed by using the snowball strategy to get the studied subjects. (Bryman, 2016). I contacted with a Syrian woman I have interviewed earlier in a previous research. I explain to her specifically my criteria asking her to refer me to other Syrians who she might

know through her social networks in other municipalities in Denmark. She gave me two names who I called and through one of them I could contact other two Syrians who in turn referred the other respondents in other municipalities.

I contacted with each one of the suggested persons who meet my criteria. I introduced myself and clarified some issue about the research that I conduct. Then, I explained the aim of the interview and the type of questions. Those who respond positively and were willing to contribute in the interviews, I arranged with them to define the dates, times and the places which fit with them. Bryman (2016) argued that the ethical principles are needed when undertaking qualitative interviews. In this sense, I tried to clarify accurately for the respondents their free will to answer the questions in the way that is appropriate for them and their right to refuse to answer certain question if they found it is harmful in any way. And to give them a sense of trust and safety I affirmed the confidentiality of the information they provide in the interviews and the anonymity of their name as I can replace their names by pseudonyms instead. I further, asked for the participant's permission to record each interview explaining for them the necessity of this process for my research (Bryman, 2016).

The sampling size was eight participants, but unfortunately the eighth participant withdrew at the last minute. Thus, I could interview seven Syrian informants who live in five Danish municipalities at the end of my sampling process. The participants were five males and two females. Three of the males are single and one of them aged (18,5 years) lives with his parents. Two males are married and live with their families. And the two females are married as well and live with their families.

I interviewed five of the Syrian interviewees who live in three different municipalities in person in their homes. The idea of interviewing them in the place they live in helped me to have direct communication with them in the real environment where they live their daily lives to gain more understanding about the current state of their real-world (Parker, 2003).

But I could not meet the other two participants personally where they live because of my inability to travel there to interview them. As travelling was challenging for me therefore, I decided to conduct the interviews by the telephone after the agreement with two informants. Though it could prove limiting potential of the achieved value in contrast to a face to face meeting with them, but it was the only choice for me. Accordingly, some participants' responses as the body language or some emotional reactions of the informants will not be recognised and will be missed through such type of interview (Bryman, 2016). It was different from the personal interviews that the sitting of their real life was not attainable, though I tried to make the best of these two interviews.

Informants overview

Interviewee name	Age	Male Female	Municipality	Children/Age	Time of arriving Denmark
Majed	43	Male	Kopenhagen	-----	2014
Fadia	40	Female	Hjørring	A girl: 14 years A boy: 12 years A boy: 9 years	End of 2014
Amena	30	Female	Hjørring	A girl: 7 years A boy: 8 years A boy: 1 years	2017
Nasser	53	Male	Viborg	A boy: 19 years A girl: 16 years A girl: 11 years	2014
Hadi	18	Male	Viborg	-----	End of 2014
Aser		Male	Brønderslev	A girl: 14 years A girl: 9 years	End of 2015
Basem	31	Male	Vejle	-----	2014

3. 5 Qualitative interviews

Finding answers on how the newly arrived Syrian refugees are experiencing the feeling of belonging in Denmark and the affecting factors of the changing political context on their experiences, I decided to employ qualitative interviews method. In my qualitative research the primary data can be collected by conducting **semi-structured interviews** with seven Syrian participants. The interviews were conducted between December (2019) and February (2020).

The importance of these interviews is to facilitate respondents sharing of their ideas, perspectives and experiences about the social phenomena of belonging which I investigate (Wahyuni, 2012). Employing semi-structured interviews is the most appropriate choice due to the exploratory nature of my qualitative study. This type of interview is considered in a place between structured interviews and in-depth interviews. This granted me the potentiality to use a list of prearranged questions like in a structured interview, at the same time I could

maintain the flexibility of the interview. This allows me to ask other questions for additional elaborations during the interview or a request more clarification whenever a new issue comes up (Wahyuni, 2012).

I started the interview questions by asking about their educational background and employment in Syria and the reason for leaving the country. The main questions of the interview are open-ended questions. The main questions are developed in relation to the research problem and the research questions to guarantee the attaining valid answers. There are questions about their settlement in Denmark and the feeling of belonging here. Other questions are about the meaning of belonging and what factors affect it. More questions are about the new law of temporary residence and the resulting influences on their future. The follow-up questions I ask when needed to insure clarifying the unclear details which the respondents mention.

3. 6 Researcher's role

In the qualitative studies, researcher has to be aware of his/her contributing role in constructing the meanings and the real experiences when conducting the research (Palaganas, et al., 2017). During the process of conducting this research I was reflexive on my being a Syrian woman who was exposed during four and a half years to the plight of the war in my home country. And in the past four and a half years I have been part of the Syrian diaspora. Now whilst I am living in Denmark as a family reunified member I study as a master student in Aalborg University. Human struggle for freedom, equality, justice, human rights and better quality of life shaped my awareness of life.

My reflexivity was partially informed by my experiences with displaced people, having interacted with them for years in Syria and being one of them now I Denmark. On one hand, this can create my biases, but when conducting earlier research about refugees in education, integration and access to labour market; I was continually attempting to practice neutrality and keep checking my objective positionality along the way. On the other hand, this exact issue constitutes a supporting factor which facilitates my access to the informants' community and bridging mutual trust with them. It enhances my role as a researcher being aware of the cultural and social background of the informants and the most important is my ability to speak the same language. Therefore, interpreting the meanings of the informants' words and perspective can be more comprehended and transparently reflected in my study.

According to Palaganas, et al., (2017)

“The researcher's positionality/ies does not exist independently of the research process nor does it completely determine the latter. Instead, this must be seen as a dialogue – challenging perspectives and assumptions both about the social world and of the researcher him/herself. This enriches the research process and its outcomes” (Palaganas, et al., 2017). In this sense, as being the 'human instrument' who mediate the collected data and the knowledge (Simon, 2011) I have a complete consciousness of my responsibility towards my current role as an academic learner and my eternal position as a human being. Thus, finding out that the basic need for human beings to feel alive is their feeling as internally safe and the core of their feeling safe is their feeling as belong, has arouse my awareness of the

humanity essence. This awareness conforms my commitment for lifting up the awareness for human needs and to stand up for humanity as a whole and this commitment is the core of my reflexivity.

6.7 Limitations

The study conducted involves aspects of the Syrian refugees 'experience of feeling sense of belonging within their temporary settlement in Denmark. But it is evenly important to indicate that it can not encompass all the aspects of their experience such as the problematic issue of family reunification of the Syrian refugees in terms of the new laws. Other issues I encountered were according to relatively limited time of the research which affected my ability to conduct more interviews was confined. As the research is determined by analysing the data from these seven interviews which I have inevitably, the findings of the study cannot be generalized. One more issue I have to mention is the withdrawal of the eighth informant who has contacted me shortly before the time of the interview that we arranged for earlier.

6.8 Data coding

The collected data represent the descriptive part of the research and the researcher is the one who makes sense of data when explaining and interpreting the data (Burnard, et al., 2008)

once the initial interviews have been done, I started the process of organising the data. The first step was transcribing and translating each of them from Arabic to English. I then began reading through to get familiarised with each transcript and while I reread again, I was taking only marginal notes about important observations (Bryman, 2016).

I repeated this process multiple times to generate codes by writing down some basic key words and statements whose meanings are attached to a segment of the text (Burnard, et al., 2008). Repeating the reading is a process of iteration, moving back and forth through the interview transcripts trying to understand and interpret them initially to find the patterns within the data to form these patterns in themes afterwards (McAuley, 2004). The rereading helps in finding themes and categories initially (Burnard, et al., 2008) but iterative approach does not necessitate fracturing the corpus of data entirely through the primary coding cycle (Tracy, 2019).

Data coding was neither influenced by existing theories nor testing theory hypothesis, but it was describing the experiences and actions within the data thus, coding was data driven. After several coding stages I began reviewing the codes and modifying them to find out the connection between the codes. I attempted to lay out how to categorize these codes in relation to their connections with each other (Kvale, & Brinkmann, 2009). The first level of coding was mainly descriptive while, second level of coding was analytic. The analysis can alternate between the 'emergent, readings' of data and comparing the data to other explanations and theories (Tracy, 2019) according to my iterative approach to be able finally to choose my theoretical framework. Thus, researching previously and reviewing literature helped in understanding and defining some boundaries within the data which means that this preunderstanding and my research go through iteration and interpretation process (McAuley, 2004).

4. Theoretical framework

In this chapter I articulate the central concepts and the theoretical framework that correlated with my analysis of data. The employed theoretical framework is relied basically on an initial coding of the preliminary interviews and moving between both the theory and data with iterative approach. Aligning with the aim of this study and the collected data the theoretical framework of intersectionality, belonging and politics of belonging can be a proper approach. It provides a basis to explore and understand how the Syrian refugees who share the experience of forced displacement and refuge in Denmark are facing the question of “where do I belong?” This question of belonging has a great importance for them especially in their threatened existence within the Danish social collectivities within the context of the challenging policy and its paradigm shift towards them.

Theoretical Framework

The notion of belonging and the politics of belonging have been a hallmark in classical psychology and sociology. Large amount of the psychological and psychoanalytic studies concerned about the sense of fear which babies and children feel as a result of separation from womb, the mother, or from the familiar. Additionally, those works concentrated on the highly destructive and damaging influences which these humans experience when their belonging is not acknowledged (Yuval-Davis, 2006).

Similarly, in the social psychology works the focus was great on the essential need of individuals to belong being fearful of exclusion or losing their membership and position in the group. It is likewise in sociological works of Emile Durkheim (1893), Karl Marx (1964), the concentration was clear on individuals belonging to collectivities and states besides the effective factors of industrialization and migration on belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2006).

However, recognising the difference between belonging and politics of belonging is an essential departure point to start with to understand what each term means.

Belonging as Yuval-Davis argues

“is not just about membership, rights and duties, but also about the emotions that such memberships evoke. Nor can belonging be reduced to identities and identifications, which are about individual and collective narratives of self and other, presentation and labelling, myths of origin and myths of destiny” (Yuval-Davis, et al., 2005 p.526).

Belonging is related to individuals’ emotional, ontological attachment and feeling ‘at home’ even if this does not create positive feelings (Yuval-Davis, 2011) as Ignatieff (2010) notes it is generates a sense of being ‘safe’, ‘secure’ and at the same time being well understood and recognised (Ignatieff, 2010). Naturally, belonging is lived and practice in everyday life but when it is threatened it can be then ‘formally structured and politicized’ (Yuval-Davis, 2011). In this way, as Yuval-Davis (2011) explains:

“The politics of belonging comprise specific political projects aimed at constructing

belonging to particular collectivity/ies which are themselves being constructed in these projects in very specific ways and in very specific boundaries” (Yuval-Davis, 2011, p.7).

These boundaries in addition to being constructed by particular social collectivities, they can be spatial and limited by the physical geography (Antonsich, 2010; Yuval-Davis, 2011).

Yuval-Davis (2006) provides an analytic approach that helps in comprehending the notion of belonging and politics of belonging through unpack the social and political construction aspects of belonging.

4.1 Belonging

Yuval-Davis (2006) states that individuals’ feeling of belonging can take various ways and towards varied objects of attachment. It differs from one person to the rest of humans and it enables each individual of identifying himself and to be identified by others, whether in stable, contested or even transitional situation. Belonging for Yuval-Davis “*is always a dynamic process, not a reified fixity – the latter is only a naturalized construction of a particular hegemonic form of power relations*” (Yuval-Davis, 2011).

To clarify the notion of belonging and its constructions Yuval-Davis distinguish between three analytical dimensions which are: 1. The social locations, 2. individuals’ identifications and emotional attachments and 3. ethical and political value systems

In the first dimension is **social locations** Yuval-Davis proposes that belonging to a specific gender, race, class and nation or to certain age-group or a profession means belonging to particular social and economic locations. Individuals are in general engaged in multiple social locations at the same time. These locations implement a definite power axis in a specific context within the society as for instance being a woman or a man from a middle or working class in African nation or European (Yuval-Davis, 2006).

Thus, categorising people within certain social locations indicates the grid of their power position in the contextualized hierarchy of the society. It is also correlated with the changes of the historical context in which those people exist. When studying social locations Yuval-Davis suggests that applying an intersectional approach is beneficial according to their continuous reconstruction which intersects proportionally with the changing power relations (Yuval-Davis, 2006).

Through the second dimension, **identifications and emotional attachments** Yuval-Davis draws the attention to the meaning of ‘identity’ and ‘identification’. For her, identities are the subjective narrated vision which people have about who they themselves are or are not. These might be about how they belong to a social solidarity and being attached to a certain collectivity or about issues such as ‘individual attributes’ or vocational aspirations. Their narratives can be affected in a way or in another by the way they are perceived according to their membership in ethnic, racial, national or religious collectivity (Yuval-Davis, 2006).

Yuval-Davis considers that the narratives of individual or collective identity are selectively regenerated through generations. And They are constantly changing to be more related to the ‘myth of the past or to the present but mostly they reflect a future vision. And she emphasises that the Constructions of belonging are unceasing ‘state of becoming’ which have emotional connotations and intense willingness to belong and thus, they can not be seen simply as ‘cognitive stories’ (Yuval-Davis, 2006).

Belonging differs in its importance according to each individual in regard to the diverse situations. The emotional part of these identities might be shifted, and it is the most stimulated and unsecure when it is under threat. In this sense people would be willing to pay their lives to preserve their identities, attachments and what compromise their identifications. According to Yuval-Davis, people in wars or in diaspora feel basic urge to closeness with those whose fate is share with them even if this can be unsafe (Yuval-Davis, 2006).

performative dimension of belonging tightly connects individual and collective identities in specific social and cultural locations with their repeated practices as a mean to reproduce and preserve the distinctive constructions of their identity narratives (Bell,1999, Yuval-Davis, 2006). On other hand, belonging to social locations and identifications become interlaced strongly and get the central attention when identity and self-constructions are challenged or denied. Identity construction is ‘reflective’ and ‘constitutive’ and at the same time it might be individual or collective (Yuval-Davis, 2006).

The third dimension **ethical and political values** demonstrates how Yuval-Davis reflects that belonging, in addition to its being about social locations and constructions of individual and collective identities, it is also about how all of these can be imposed and in which way the assessment is done. This is associated particularly with the reflected positions of certain ideologies about assessing identity and categorical boundaries and about confining them.

However, applying such excluding ideologies to decide w belong and who do not, and claiming particular boundaries of identity and social categorisation, open the door wide open in the direction of the politics of belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2006).

4.2 The politics of belonging

Following John Crowley insight that the politics of belonging is ‘the dirty work of boundary maintenance’(Crowley, 1999), Yuval-Davis argues that the intended boundaries are those drawn by the ‘political community of belonging’ which own the power position to construct people “sometimes physically, but always symbolically” into ‘us’ and ‘them’. When constructing these boundaries, politics of belonging is categorising the social groupings as belonging or not belonging within these boundaries through excluding those who are situated as being lower in the power positionality (Yuval-Davis, 2011).

Presenting the idea of Benedict Anderson (1983) the ‘imagined communities’ Yuval-Davis notes that the ‘abstract form of community’ must have been based on ‘an abstract sense of imagined simultaneity’. According to the obvious physical impossibility of such face to face meeting between all the community members, thus, they will be axiomatically only imagining their ‘ communion’ within their ‘imagined political community’ (Anderson, 1983; Yuval-Davis, 2006).

Yuval-Davis further argues that constructing the boundaries of the invented community means that only particular groupings of people are included while some others must be excluded, and this comprises ‘an act of active and situated imagination’ (Stoetzler, & Yuval-Davis,2002)

Expanding on that, Yuval-Davis considers that the ‘situated imaginations’ are affected by the positioning of ‘social locations’ and how the individuals define themselves and what values they claim. In other words, the ‘dirty business of boundary maintenance’ is not about the situated imaginations of an impossible meeting of its members within its imagined

boundaries. But it is rather about the possibility of meeting the ‘other’ people whose belonging is contested according to the varied meanings and entitlements that are held by ‘us’ towards ‘them’ as for being outsiders (Yuval-Davis, 2006).

Yuval-Davis demonstrates that, “*Politics involves the exercise of power and different hegemonic political projects of belonging represent different symbolic power orders*”

And she points that these symbolic powers are central point for political projects of belonging and they are always in a state of challenging contestation and resistance by other political agents. In this way, as Yuval-Davis explains, the aim of the competitive political agents is actualising their own projects of their imagined collectivity and its boundaries on one side and to get hold of the highest power positionality whether inside or outside their collectivity. Other aspect of this struggle is related to defining the requirements of belonging and which typical entitlements, social locations and specific narratives of identity that initiate the individual to be included within a community (Yuval-Davis, 2006).

4.3 Intersectionality

A considerable number of scholars such as Leslie McCall (2008) and Mary Hawkes (2015) have argued that intersectionality is still the most valuable theoretical contribution that was added by women’s and gender studies in conjunction with various correlated fields (McCall, 2008; Hawkesworth, 2015; Fathi, 2017; Yuval-Davis, 2011). It can be considered as a fundamental paradigm of research in women’s studies rather than being just a content specialization (McCall, 2008) or a normative-theoretical argument (Hancock, A. M. (2007)). This analytical framework is the most beneficial to understand about the social and political identities (race, class, gender, sexuality) when they intersect to create discrimination. It thus, the tool which explicates issues of social justice, inequality legislation, human rights and development discourses (Fathi, 2017).

Brah and Phoenix (2004) stated that ‘intersectionality’ as a concept is

“signifying the complex, irreducible, varied, and variable effects which ensue when multiple axis of differentiation – economic, political, cultural, psychic, subjective and experiential – intersect in historically specific contexts. The concept emphasizes that different dimensions of social life cannot be separated out into discrete and pure strands” (Brah, & Phoenix, 2004 p. 76).

Intersectionality is a qualitative analytical framework help to clarify the resulting influence of the overlapping power systems on the those who are the most marginalised within the society (Cooper, 2016).

Brah and Phoenix (2004) state that Intersectionality prior to its mainstreaming, was basically developed through many years as an analytic frame by black and racialized women (Brah, & Phoenix, 2004; Fathi, 2017) who as a response to situated gaze refused any attempt of homogenizing women’s situation. They point out that black feminists had an essential contribution in developing intersectional analysis such as the role of ‘Combahee River Collective’, the black lesbian feminist organization. It accounted for the need to ‘an

integrated analysis and practice', such as intersectional analysis, according to the interlinking between the 'major systems of oppression' (Brah, & Phoenix, 2004). And it was then employed largely across other different disciplines as well (Hankivsky, & Jordan-Zachery, 2019).

Intersectionality, when looked at epistemologically, can be seen as a development of feminist standpoint theory in which the social positioning of the social agent gained central attention (Stoetzler, & Yuval-Davis, 2002; Yuval-Davis, 2011) as advocating for necessary changing of the injustice of the positive social positioning (Hankivsky, & Jordan-Zachery, 2019). However, 'situated gaze', 'situated knowledge' and 'situated imagination' are the reason for the varied ways in which the individuals construct their vision of the world (Stoetzler, & Yuval-Davis, 2002; Yuval-Davis, 2011). And in this way, intersectionality theory drew more attention on "*how differential situatedness of different social agents affects the ways they affect and are affected by different social, economic and political projects*" (Yuval-Davis, 2011). This means that intersectionality is a result of mobilization and reproduction of 'identity groups' of these mobilized collectivities who strive for recognition of difference in ethnicity, nationality, race and gender (Fraser, 1995).

'Intersectional thinking' history goes long back in time. And the most notable date in this history is the speech which was given in Akron, Ohio in 1851 by the emancipated slave Sojourner Truth whose famous words "Ain't I a Woman?" is still remembered to date (Boryczka, & Disney, 2015).

But, the critical race feminist Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw was the first in applying the term "intersectionality" in her pathbreaking articles when she tackled the issue of intersectionality and its relation to race, sex, identity politics, and violence in the context of employment in USA against women of color (Hankivsky, & Jordan-Zachery, 2019; Charusheela, 2013).

'Intersectional analysis' was in a continual process of development among number of European and post-colonial feminists at the same time in Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1983, As Yuval2005), Lutz (1991), Brah (1996) (Hankivsky, & Jordan-Zachery, 2019).

As Yuval-Davis viewed that the time had come for the development of the theory of intersectionality and this was what she with Floya Anthias worked on (e.g. Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1983, 1992). In relation to intersectionality, which was called at that time 'social divisions', both started in studying gender and ethnic divisions and debating with British black feminists on the most suitable way to theorize what was called then 'an intersectional approach' (Yuval-Davis, 2011).

Later, it was 'mainstreamed' and accepted by the 'United Nations', the 'European Union' and other equality and equity policy organizations in many countries. And applying intersectionality was diversified according to the varied purposes and the disciplines which was applying it (Yuval-Davis, 2011).

The intersectional approach which I will apply is out lined by Yuval-Dives (2011). This approach as Yuval-Davis argued is 'a metaphorical term' which is portrayed as a 'road intersection' where the number of the intersecting roads, is undefined or contested regarding who is applying this terms and the number of the examined social divisions in the intersectional analysis. Some other scholars had reservations on the terminology of 'intersectionality' and they tried to employ alternative terms for it. One of these was Kum-

Kum Bhavnani term 'configurations' which she saw as more flexible term than the fixed intersectionality. Another term was 'social dynamics' used by Davina Cooper (2004) who found this term is having the ability to follow the changing inequality in the different facets of social life. However, Yuval-Davis continued to apply the term 'intersectionality' because it "evokes an intuitive understanding of the subject matter discussed" (Yuval-Davis, 2011).

The three positions of intersectionality approach are defined in this study as Yuval-Davis situated them. The first positions Yuval-Davis applied is following McCall (2005) divisions of approaching intersectionality. These are and they are 'inter-categorical' and 'intra-categorical'.

The second position is basically related to the stance in which the relationships which exist among the intersectional categories should be fully understood and applied. While, the third position is concerned with defining the boundaries of the intersectional approach and the number of the social categories besides identifying which of them can be included in the intersectional analysis inter- or intra-categories? (Yuval-Davis, 2011).

'Inter-categorical' position relies on existing analytical categories to define the relationships among social groups and changing positioning of various dimensions thus, its usage of the categories is strategically. On the other hand, 'intra-categorical' tends to focus on particular social groups at specific point of intersection to uncover the experience within these groups. (McCall, 2008).

For McCall the 'inter-categorical' approach (which is called also as the categorical approach) means concentration on the intersected relationships within and across multiple constituted social categories like ethnicity, gender, race or class and on the way they influence certain social interaction and distribution of resources (McCall, 2008; Yuval-Davis, 2011). While the main focus of 'intra-categorical' is not the existing relationship among these social groups but rather on interrogating the ongoing process of 'boundary-making' and 'boundary-defining' itself (McCall, 2008; Yuval-Davis, 2011).

Disparate from McCall, Yuval-Davis points out that these approaches are not 'mutually exclusive'. And according to this attitude, Yuval-Davis seeks to approach intersectionality also by implementing the 'sensitivity' and 'dynamism' of the intra-categorical approach with the more 'macro socio-economic' stance of the inter-categorical approach. Expanding on this, Yuval-Davis emphasize the significance of considering the difference between the various 'facets' of social analysis- "*that of people's positionings along socio-economic grids of power; that of people's experiential and identificatory perspectives of where they belong; and that of their normative value systems*". These 'facets are connected and can not be simply reduced or to each other (Yuval-Davis, 2011).

Furthermore, she argues that, even though the intersectional analysis is developed from the standpoint theory, but the 'emotional', 'cognitive' and 'moral' perspectives which people have on their life are not necessarily affected directly by their situated gaze. In another words, constructing inter-categorical classification is not fully sufficient to comprehend how people themselves see the world and constitute their perspectives about it. Thus, it can be advisable not to use the inter-categorical approach solely, but it is rather preferred to be accompanied with the intra-categorical approach.

This is the case when applying ethnicity, class, race and gender discourses which can not be taken individually that for their being ‘mutually constitutive’ in specific historical moment. Such attitude can be seen when discussing for example how being a woman might be clearly different when she is middle or working class, from the hegemonic majority or the racialized minority, straight or gay.

The Boundaries of Intersectional Analysis and Intersectional Categories

Intersectionality as Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) stated is “*the multidimensionality of marginalized subjects’ lived experiences*”. Several black feminists preserved the same ‘triad’ of race, class and gender (Dill, 1983). While those who have more interest or involvement developed more categories like (Taylor, et al., 2010) or Charlotte Bunch (2001) who used complete lists with higher numbers adding 16 categories (Bunch, 2001). It was observed that some social divisions have more effective influence on constructing people positionings in terms of their daily lives in a particular historical context in contrast to others around them. Ethnicity, gender, stage in the life cycle, and class as social divisions tend to shape people's lives mostly in all social locations (Yuval-Davis, 2011).

Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias (1983, 1992) considered that the boundaries of intersectional analysis should include all society members not only those who are multiply marginalised. In this sense, intersectionality constitutes the right theoretical framework for social stratification analysis.

4.4 Contextualising the theoretical framework

The general theoretical base of this study is situated on the theory of belonging and politics of belonging, and intersectionality as conceptual frameworks for analysing and comprehending how the Syrian refugees perceive and construct their sense of belonging in Denmark in relation to the power structures and the new law of temporary residence permits and their effect on their future.

Examining the process which the Syrian participants go through while trying to construct and gain a sense of belonging is necessarily in need to be looked at by using intersectional lens. Intersectionality as a theoretical tool provides a methodological perspective that facilitates achieving the aim of this study. It sheds the light on how the different social locations of those Syrian refugees such as (ethnicity, race, gender, class, religion and age) overlap in the specific Danish contexts in order to explore how belonging is negotiated and constructed in an oppression environment which reflect the sense of exclusion not inclusion.

The Syrian participants process of achieving belonging in Denmark is constituted of various interrelated categories and complexities thus, it can not be considered by simply adding one of the social categories to another one. In other words, approaching this process by applying the Syrian refugees’ ethnicity, class, race, religion and gender discourses individually can lead us to lose the particularity that distinguishes the experience of each one of those Syrian participants.

In this sense, it is preferable to fully understand the intersected complexities of those experiences by using both, the inter-categorical and intra-categorical positions together. The

social categories need to be looked at them as being distinctively central and ‘mutually constitutive’ in this specific historical moment in the Danish context and its changing policy discourse and practices towards those Syrian refugees.

Expanding on this, to examine the way in which the notion of politics of belonging affects their social locations; their identities and self-image; and ethical and political values; it will be crucial to consider their positionings on the grid of power within the Danish context. This helps in recognise how particular social divisions are more important for certain Syrian participants than others in this existing historical situation in Denmark

This power positioning can explain how the new law of temporary residence permits with its intention of repatriation to Syria does not guarantee the right of those Syrians to plan for a future in the Danish community and how it affects their perspectives about how they perceive belonging and where they belong.

5. Findings

This chapter contains the results from the analysis of the qualitative data, which is presented according to the aim of the study in order to answer the research questions. The emerged results contribute in understanding how the Syrian refugees are experiencing their sense of belonging in Denmark.

5.1. Perception of belonging

The Syrian participants who have been in Denmark for few years after fleeing their war-torn country were asked about their perception of the notion of belonging, and what does it mean for them to feel as belonging to somewhere or something. Their answers were varied according to their own personal perspectives. Some of them have identified belonging as having similarities with other individuals. Some others have referred to belonging as feeling safety. While it was in other case related to equality.

Belonging means identifications and emotional attachment

One of the interviewees mentioned that belonging is for him a strong emotional connection to the place that he is willing to die for its sake. Belonging as the informant says:

“It means connectedness to something you love and scarify for it” (Majed, p.5).

This symbolic identification of his feeling of himself as a member in a nation or a community where he can belong and feels as attached to it.

Belonging is also correlated with the need for the emotional support and feeling of inclusion within a group. Being a member of a collectivity, one can feel connection and accepted in the way which this informant tells about:

“We belong to the group of people who are close to us, who we love them, and they love us” (Basem, p.35).

In another case it means the deep feelings of the ties which connect the refugee to the life with the family in the homeland. The family with whom the mutual emotional relations have grown and interrelated within the social location of particular place of birth or land as Fadia talked about what she thinks about belonging:

“But inside your heart you think definitely about your country Syria, because your family is still there and you feel you want to go back” (Fadia, p.9).

Moreover, the sense of belonging can be evoked when relating it with the memories of the childhood. Even if these memories are not all good ones but they are filled with the narration social location of his home of origin. This home for the refugee is where he can actually feel himself as Aser explains

“the emotions are mixed, I can not feel I am belonging to Denmark because I did not live my childhood here, so the memories issues regardless whether they are positive or negative, I belong to Syria. Although, I was not satisfied about many details in Syria, but my belonging is still there more than to Denmark” (Aser, p. 27).

1. Belonging is identification with a common cultural and linguistic background

Belonging for the Syrian refugee constitutes his identification of his membership in a social group with whom he shares the same cultural background. It involves their nation and common language. Hadi states that belonging for him means his *“culture, the place of birth, the mother tongue language and nationalism”* (Hadi, p.25). And he explains more on this meaning of belonging as he perceives it. It is then, as common repetitive practices which reflect the narrative of his identity as a member of this social collectivity when speaking the same language in a shared social location within one geographical place:

“The mother tongue language makes me feel that I am in my home country and the culture. When there are for instance lots of people from our culture or our city so one can feel that he is in his country like in the old days when we were gathering with our friends and the family” (Hadi, p.25)

Refugee can feel belonging as attachment to a particular place which makes him feel at home in a certain local neighbourhood where his house and friends exist. This generates a sense of familiarity feeling of safety and a kind of intimacy within the place as this informant mentions

“My belonging is to my neighbourhood, to my friends to my home, it is when we take about belonging in general” (Basem, p.35)

2. Belonging is language acquiring

The Syrian refugees have realized that the Danish language is a basis of belonging in the Danish society. They mostly considered it as their key to the new world. Learning the language facilitate understand the cultural traditions and norms of the new society which enable the refugee of creating a way to interact with the members of the host society.

To feel as belonging Majed considers that the language was an essential factor as he tells: *“The language is the most important thing”* (Majed, p.5). While lacking this language means his deprivation from accessing this sense of belonging to this social collectivity as he believes *“but because one does not have the language one feels that he lives in another world”* (Majed, p.5).

Fadia also stress that learning the language will pave the way for herself and for her children to be part of the community.

“It is the language. The language which I learn as well as our children” (Fadia, p.9)

3. Belonging is bridging social connections

The Syrian informants assure that having interpersonal relationships with members of the of the Danish community is crucial to establish a sense of belonging to this country.

To be connected socially with Danes is enhancing the belonging to the new country and being accepted within it. Fadia tells that to feel belonging it is necessarily to establish social ties and communicate with Danes *“You should engage with people, talk to them and make relations with them”* (Fadia, p.9).

This social ties with Danes mean a lot for those Syrian refugees. It is a sign of being evaluated and accepted in spite of the socially and culturally differences from the Danish community. It shows that their collective identities are recognised and validated by those Danes and consequently this reflects on their positive valuing for themselves. Thus, belonging as Amena assures: *“It is social cohabitation and integration with Danes”* (Amena, p.13)

Being socially interrelated with the people of this society can provide a sense of relief and enhance the feeling of connectedness to the new country. It might be helpful to make the refugee overcome the sense of losing and separation from the home country as Basem states *“the social network that you have plays a great role. It connects you to the place you are in. It is difficult for me here. The social network makes you forget many things and details”* (Basem, p.35)

4. Belonging is obtaining equal rights

The sense of belonging as the Syrian refugees perceive is built upon a basis of being equal to Danes. To be granted equal rights is legitimizing their belonging and asserts their connection to the nation state of Denmark. Fadia affirms on the feeling of similarity in having full residence rights as well as accessing the available rights in society,

“To become like the Danes but not exactly the same but to feel that it is your country, and you should work and learn its language” (Fadia, p.9)

When talking about belonging for Amena, she mentioned that belonging implies having the right to share the life with Danes and be accepted and included from the mainstream society

“they should give you an opportunity to live with them and to enable you to find an employment opportunity” (Amena, p.13).

Amena continues that her feeling of belonging is related also to obtaining rights associated with securing an employment and right to other services as she sees,

“but to be given rights as when they talk about securing a job. to secure you the opportunity to really get a job and to give you the rights that you need” (Amena, p.13).

At the same time Amena’s sense of belonging is co-existed with being seen as equal rights in identifications with all the members of the collectivity regardless of race, ethnicity and religion,

“they should give you the same rights without differentiating between Arabs and Danes because we are all living in one country” (Amena, p.13)

The same notion is repeated when Aser explained about the meaning of belonging as he considers it. He believes that having equal positioning in the collective narrative of the new community is legitimised by obtaining the right of nation membership as equal citizen. This should be accompanied with the right of dignity like the other members in this collectivity. *“my existence in society which does not have social inequality or the gaze which differentiate or discriminate. Belonging, as I can call it, is the thing which grant me the right of citizenship and grant me the right to exist in the country”* (Aser, p. 29).

Aser expands on how sense of belonging is more approved for a refugee. It is when he/she can feel of full and equal membership in the Danish community. This can be achieved through the reciprocal relation between the civic rights and the responsibilities which are entrusted to him/her as the others within the society. In this sense it links the refugee and the collective which enhance refugee reproduction of his identity narratives within the state.

“I can say, equality, it is in the first place, social justice, indiscrimination, knowing my rights, duties and law. These give a sense of belonging to the country more than being attached to a land with borders or other things” (Aser, p. 29).

And Basem adds another issue which constitutes an evidence of the belonging as it is assumed by his thinking. Belonging is connected to the feelings of being privileged of having systems of rules which works basically for individuals’ best interests which he missed in his home country.

“Belonging is to belong to the laws and rules which you have, these rules and law should be essentially for your best interest but, there was no such thing in Syria” (Basem, p.35)

5. Belonging is achieving a sense of safety

When clarified how he perceive belonging, one of the Syrian refugees assessed the ability of feeling of economic and social safety of generating a sense of belonging in the Danish society. It locates him in similar positioning with the members of the collectivity without feeling any differentiating for his origin, ethnicity or place of birth.

“Wherever the human being achieves this social and economic safety regardless of geography, he will have this sense of belonging” (Nasser, p.21).

Feeling this material security is the focal foundation to achieve sense solidarity and support from the members of grouping and to be a marker of belonging,

“The financial stability might be the essential factor which generates later a social and psychological stability” (Nasser, p.21).

Nasser added that fulfilling the aspired purpose of securing the safety of all life aspects of his children will be principally the fundament of achieving sense of belonging as he states

“to feel that the main purpose behind coming here, which is finding a safe and productive place for my children in their education and securing their future, was fulfilled in Denmark. Then it will be a positive factor to feel this sense of belonging” (Nasser, p.21).

5.2. Constructing Belonging

The participants expressed a partial feeling of belonging in varied terms. They have different constructions of belonging promoted in various occasions. They had their own ways to construct a kind of belonging and feelings of being at home relying on the available sources which they could have. They were at times constructing this feeling socially and in other times through language and occasionally it was through interactions with Danish members of the community.

1. Belonging as Danish language familiarity

As noted in the participants words learning the Danish languages is a vital step that facilitates the access to refugee membership in the new community and to feel as belong. Fadia refers to her sense of relief when she came back to Denmark after sometimes away from I, and that was for her feeling as belonging here because of her knowledge of the language. While travelling out of Denmark does not give a sense of ease for the lack of the other country language. Thus, familiarity with the Danish language is applied interestingly as promoting factor to her feeling of belonging as she explains:

“When I leave the country, as in the summer when we went to Germany, I felt that I am a stranger there and when I came back here, I felt that Denmark is my country. I felt released because I know the language here. The Danish language is not used out of here, so you feel yourself as a foreigner in another country” (Fadia, p.9)

2. Belonging as social ties

One of the most significant sources of feeling belonging for the Syrian refugees is the social relations with members of the Danish local community. These relations ensure a feeling of inclusion within the boundaries of the social lives of the of these collectivities.

Amena expresses her happiness when the pedagogues in the kindergarten are communicating with her and this provides her a sense of belonging. This type of social connection in spite of its being weak ties but they are seen for a refugee as a sign of being seen and recognised as a human.

“When I was in the kindergarten (as a trainee) my colleagues, who I was working with them to help the children, were so nice and positive with me. They were greeting me, and they ask me about the place that I come from and talk to me” (Amena, p.13)

Instead of thinking of being socially unaccepted identity the refugee may look at the slight kind of social engagement with the community members as a marker of his being considered as inside the grouping. This is rather than admitting his being an outsider and live in a social insecurity and isolation. In this way Nasser shows his appreciation of these weak ties when he states:

“But we communicate with a large group of people in the sports club where our daughter plays football within the school team” (Nasser, p.20). And he continues saying:

“Thus, we had a good and a direct relation to all the parents of the children; even though we do not visit them, but we have good relations with them (Nasser, p.20).

Sense of belonging can be embedded in bridging social networks of friendships with Danes.

Fadia is stressing on keeping the relational ties with the Danish friends as face to face meetings when it is possible, or even through the social media connections.

“I had an internship in a kindergarten for seven months and I had two friends there and up till now they are still friends on my Facebook page. At the beginning we were visiting each other but after starting education as a pedagogue they chose to study in Aarhus, but we still contact on messenger” (Fadia, p.9)

These social ties are of great importance for the Syrian refugees to develop an effective sense of belonging and to provide them with new attachments to the Danish community. Nasser reflects on his friendship with Danish people illustrating their acceptance of his identity. This means their overcoming the issue of construction of his self-narration and also his ethnic and religious background as he himself expresses:

“Our relations with the Danish friends who we start meet here are very good, and which through we overcame the psychological barriers of the religious and social identity, thus we did not have such connection barrier” (Nasser, p.19).

And he adds on the nature of this relation as having mutual openness that is supporting to these social ties saying:

“However, we visit the other friends that we have, and they invite us to their occasions, and we invite them as well in our occasions” (Nasser, p.20)

3. Belonging as emotional and practical support

The received support from the Danish community members in different settings have positive effect on the Syrian refugee's sense of belonging. These supportive attitudes are appreciated by those who receive them. And they are seen as enhancing to their existence as new members within the Danish community.

The emotional support granted by different Danish members denotes the positivity of Danes towards the Syrian refugees. All of the Informants expressed the kindness of the most Danes with them in various ways, as this informant mentions:

“The community as I see is friendly and generous” (Basem, p.36). And other informant assures the same issue

“I see that the people are good the same as people in Syria, but the leadership is bad” (Nasser, p.21).

In addition to the comment of a third informant as well,

“there are kind people who help us a lot and response to us” (Aser, p.27)

The same informant notices that some of the community members are tenderly interacting with the story of his fleeing from the war in Syria. This humane sentimentality towards a refugee have important role in his developing a sense of human belonging to those people who he is living among.

“When they listen to your story and why you are coming, and as I said whether the asylum reasoning is economic, security, political or other type of asylum, so when listening to the story they highly sympathize” (Nasser, p.21).

Fadi as well, have similar impression about the kindness of the people who make her feels as welcomed and an equal member within the Danish community who deserves to be granted the same rights. In this sense, the inner feeling of being seen and accepted can help in generating a sense of belonging within her.

“You can find people here in Denmark who sympathy with us and who like us to get our rights” (Fadia, p.10)

Other forms of support which few refugees have received was a practical one. Hadi describes the valuable help which he had within the school setting from his Danish class peers it. This type of help makes him feel of being included and supported and thus the outcome is constructed as a sense of belonging.

“my classmates try to help me in pronouncing a word when I find difficulty and I keep talking Danish with them. At the beginning I was talking in English but then I learned the Danish. They were helpful in learning the language” (Hadi, p.26).

This support experience is lived also by the informant Basem who felt of the valuable help from his work colleagues.

“some others are so nice, and I see their help while contacting with them within the work. They help me, people are friendly and like to help. When they see your deficiency, they support you and back you up” (Basem, p.35).

4. Belonging as embrative social bonds in school setting

According to Hadi in his initial stage of living in Denmark, his schooling experience has affected positively his feeling of belonging within the small community of his class and within the larger community of Denmark. Although he is not legitimately a member within the Danish nation, but his sense of belonging was according to the feeling of being embraced by his peers and accepted in the school collectivity. This what he states

“sometimes I feel myself as Danish and Syrian even though I do not have the Danish citizenship and being a foreigner. While inside the classroom and within the community I feel myself as a Dane” (Hadi, p.25).

His initially perceived himself as insider within this grouping of classmates and peers when they welcome him as one of them not as a foreigner as their words denotes,

“I heard it a lot in the ‘Gymnasium’ and in ‘Efterskole’ that “you are Dane more than the Danish people” (Hadi, p.26).

When reflecting on his experiences with those peers he elaborates the improvement in his engagement in the Danish life and culture by their encouragement. His belonging was constructed through his being allowed to participate in different activities and sport with them. Additionally, his inclusion in conversations with them has further promoted the acquisition of knowledge about the cultural side of this new community. Hadi clarifies this

“I went with them to parties I talked to them and learned about their cultures and what they do after the school. I knew that they play football, so I started playing with them and so on” (Hadi, p.26).

After implementing the new law of temporary residence and repatriation of the Syrian refugees Hadi talks about the affectionate responses of his school peers towards him. He demonstrates how this caring reaction was a significant source of assistance to overcome such circumstances. This what he expresses about,

““if they will deport you, we will be in the airplane with you”. They make me feel that they do not want me to leave the country, so I feel ease” (Hadi, p.27)

And in similar occasion when he told them about the difficulty of gaining the permanent residence in Denmark, they sympathised with him and expressed their negative response to this treatment and assured him his being one of them. The feeling of belonging can be sustained in such embracing attitudes towards him,

“When I tell them that the citizenship can be granted after eight or ten years, they feel irritated because of this. They say: “you are well integrated in the society so you are Dane the same like us” (Hadi, p.26)

5.3. Paradigm shift impact

The Syrian informants recurrently denoted the effects of the new law of the temporary residence and the indefinite time of their repatriation to Syria on their instability and uncertainty in their lives. This has undeniably affected the process of establishing a sense of belonging and on their psychological wellbeing in addition to other effects on different aspects of their practical lives. of ambitions. This section introduces these effects which are connected and overlapped with each other.

1. Impact on the sense of belonging

The destructive effect of the new law was notable among all the Syrian informants. They told about their experiences of losing the relatively gained feeling of belonging within the Danish community. This affirms their perspective of being not considered as belonging as their own words show.

Majed notes that any hope to feel as belonging is vanished at the time of introducing this law

“if you were starting to feel that you are belonging you will stop as a result of this laws” (Majed, p.7). Basem talks more about his experience in this regard also,

“in the beginning when someone comes here and wants to have a new start, the new collection of laws against the refugee make him isolated or looks like as if he is detained in a corner and everyone is watching him. This law makes him considered as if he is responsible for everything and the reason of all the problems here. This how the issue was presented in Denmark” (Basem, p.36).

Another informant has the same feeling of being not accepted or belonging as she tells

“Absolutely you feel yourself as a foreigner because they will not grant you the citizenship” (Fadia, p.9).

This feeling as a foreigner emerged from the excluding the refugees from the membership in the Danish community by the government.

“there are still racists who hate us and refuse us such as the previous government” (Fadia, p.10).

Nasser shares the same opinion about this feeling of non-belonging because of the structural excluding attitude of the Danish government towards the refugees.

“All the existed legislations now are pushing in the opposite direction, we do not want you in this country and we do not want you to feel the sense of belonging to this country” (Nasser, p20).

He reaffirms this perspective and feeling of his loss of any opportunity to be accepted within the Danish society

“Therefore, to have a sense of belonging to this country the politicians or the general policy of this country must be encouraging me to be rooted in this country. Unfortunately, this is not seen yet in this country” (Nasser, p20).

Another informant views that the changing of the government negative attitude and decision will change his feeling of non-belonging and stability in life.

“Certainly, it will be completely different. If I got the permanent residence there will be a sense of security and relief in any step I will have” (Basem, p.37).

While this point was not seen as new procedure by Hadi, because the government has always implemented such policies with the refugees

“Nothing has changed for me because the (DF) party was in the government when I arrived Denmark and after my arrival. The new racial laws started against the refugees since my arrival until now, I did not feel any difference. I have heard all the racial laws since my arrival, and I did not see Denmark before these laws” (Hadi, p. 27).

All these make those refugees stuck in a vicious circle of searching for the survival straw as the experience of Aser:

“It turned us into machines, we lost our feelings and concentrate only on how can I gain the permanent residence,,,,? or how can I snatch the permanent residence? This became the main obsession now” (Aser, p.30).

2. Sense of powerlessness and losing control over their lives

The general situation in which those Syrian refugees live is continual impairment state. This is a consequence of their positioning in unequal power relations as refugees. They are not able to have any decision about their lives or future as they all assert in the interviews.

Majed is unable to know when he will be sent back *“One does not decide for himself. I go to work and then home waiting the time that they will deport us nothing more,, only this”* (Majed, p.6). It is something he does not control over as he wishes to have this control for himself to avoid this current sense of powerlessness and unpredictability.

“I wish they said that you yourself can decide to go back when the situation is safe in Syria but they themselves decide when they want to send you back and this is what makes one feels the most distress” (Majed, p.7).

Nasser in this this situation remembers the similarity between the situation from which he fled from his home country and this current state he lives in Denmark now. Therefore, he expresses his frustration of this governmental dominance over his life

““Basically, when they legitimize such a law, they do not enable the individual to choose in the same way that we have in Syria, where one is compelled and do not have the power of the free choice. There, the government introduces the law whether you like it or not and here we experience the same situation” (Nasser, p.22)

Basem does not have the opportunity to form the future that he is willing to have according to this arbitrary decision of this government. When asking him about his future plane after the new law he answered this question saying: *“Honestly, I can not answer this question because it is not me who control over this”* (Basem, p.36). And the reason as he further elaborates

“If I will have a plane it should be based on a solid foundation and unchangeable laws. Now this law is introduced but I do not know whether they will introduce another different one later. So, to have a plane is something difficult as long as the changes are constantly happening” (Basem, p.37).

Similarly, Hadi, who is studying now in the high school, replied on the same question:

“The future is continuing my education here if they renew our residence permit, but the problem is when they do not renew it. Thus, you are staying for five years in this country and learning the language and the laws then, you have to go back to your country” (Hadi, p.27)

3. Feeling injustice

The unjustifiable law as the refugee see it adds to their vulnerability and powerlessness which they live as refugees. This feeling of nonrecognition show their low power positionality as not visible in the Danish system. Those refugees were striving hard to achieve the hard-

requested requirements to obtain the permanent resident. But all the applied efforts were invaluable according to the increasing difficulties after introducing this paradigm shift. Aser illustrates his frustration in regard to the inequitable law of residence as follow

“The problem within the new law is that the unfair requirements of work. As I have been studying for four years and I have to start from scratch to meet the requirements of the permanent residence in terms of the salary and the period of employment and for how long I have been employed. Even my education period is not evaluated according to the law to enhance my right in gaining the permanent residence” (Aser, p.31).

Aser’s persistence to achieve his aim of safety which is the permanent residence will be through a long journey in which he loses years of his life for uncertain success.

“So, I have a new challenge and a long time, I will lose,,,,,10 years,,,,,10 years to start feeling that I am safe in this country. This is actually shameful for humanity, to be living with eighty percent of my thinking about how I can gain the permanent residence” (Aser, p.31).

Aser’s mentions at the end how the result is unavoidable frustration of this oppression and nonrecognition of his hard efforts and paid time:

“I believe this law is unfair and unjust against good individuals who are work and trying hard to stay here” (Aser, p.30)

Refugees undergo additionally a sense of injustice in evaluating their behaviours and deeds which are unfairly portrait in a distorted image. This generalised image as they see is a type of punishment for them. It is also broadly reflected in the social level in a negative impression from the majorities as Basem narrates:

“But, lately the laws against the refugee make one feels,,,,, The community became, according to my interacting and communicating with them in my work, they are very afraid of the refugee. This fear of the refugee, I expect that there is not such generalization in Denmark. I expected that there is individual action that one person do so only this person will get the punishment or be punished solely, but here, the punishment is collective and it is a consequence for the actions of few individuals who are foreigners. The penalty is collective, let us say this is a negative thing, did you understand me, yah. The laws are unfair for us” (Basem, p.34-35).

He expands in more explanation about his feeling of this oppression experience regarding the restriction of planning for his future and unacknowledged scarify and effort to achieve this aim:

“It greatly affected me and my plane” “My aim is to be independent. I frankly was working to gain the permanent residence permit and I have sacrificed my education for the sake of the permanent residence”, “ You will not be granted a permanent residence if you are just studying but it is only if you were working within the labour market. For this reason, I had the decision of accessing the labour market to gain an employment and gain the permanent residence permit. But unfortunately, it is all in vain after this new law” “everything I was doing is to lose what I have planned for” (Basem, p.36)

4. Psychological impact

The link between the temporariness of the Syrian refugees' residence law and the actual negative effects on their lives is significantly mentioned by all the informants throughout the data. There was distinctly immense shares of feelings of distress, insecurity and uncertainty correlated with the implementation of the paradigm shift.

The ongoing thinking became the everyday life which can not be stable as the case of Majed

“My thinking is different now. Man keeps thinking when will they send us back? No one knows, and the situation in the country there ,,,, surely you know” (Majed, p.6).

This also can be related to his nervous state about being send back to the country which is profoundly fearful thinking for him.

“One will be nervous and feel that he will leave at any time. If the situation is normal in my country it will be fine for me, I will go back then. But the situation is not normal to go back, and they will send me back at any time and whenever they want” (Majed, p.6).

Fadia tells about the anxiety and unease which she and her husband undergo currently about dealing with the various issues concerning their future and their children as well.

“for us there is difficulty to deal with them because the language need time to learn it. We hope that they will grant the children the citizenship when they are 18 years as they say. And for us, it might be or might not, it is impossible to gain it because the requirements are so difficult here unlike the other countries” (Fadia, p.14).

The life for her became unbearable situation of instabilty“*You feel yourself unstable and at any minute they will say you have to go back”* (Fadia, p.11)

The impasse of both decisions of leaving the country and starting a new life in another place or staying for uncertain future has devastating effect on their physical and psychology health. Fadia explain about this physical and psychological depression which she and her husband have. There are many things that occupied their minds which has impacted them tremendously. She describes how they are trying to not think more about their confusing situation and leave it to the fate.

“we had depression and headache but then, we handed it to Allah (our God), everything Allah decrees will be good. At the beginning we were confused. We want to leave the country and at same time we were afraid and sorrowful about the children” (Fadia, p.10).

It is injurious law for Aser who feels its oppressive results on him and other refugees. It causes him a sense of instability in his life especially when going back will be deadly decision.

“This created instability to the majority of the good people who I have mentioned those who are working and, whom I can say , commit to the requirements of integration, they have now unknown future for them and for the family particularly those who can not go back like me being threatened with arrest” (Aser, p.30).

This situation constitutes additional pressures to his burden of trauma which he has because of the earlier experiences

“this new law was very unfair and caused me a huge psychological pressure and add one more burden to the previous pressure which I have encountered in my life” (Aser, p.31)

And this contribute to stressing condition of insecurity “*This created a state of psychological insecurity and great pressure, it make us lose ,,,*” (Aser, p.30).

He continues in illustrating other harmful results he encounters in terms of anxious and insecure state of living which is the only certain thing he feels now

“*Certainly, it is not good for a refugee. It will cause him firstly a sense of insecurity about everything, about the future, and distress about being threatened in any step he is taking. You will be threatened of going back to your country*” (Basem, p.36)

While Basem feels the inevitable end to his settlement hopes which he had in Denmark. And he feels a pressure of this stressful insecurity in his life here as he states

“*I was thinking that there will not be tough laws against the refugees more than the previous ones, but frankly this law was very very difficult. Firstly, it makes one constantly feel anxiety and feel that everything here comes to an end and one will be sent back to his home country. Honestly it is insecurity and distress*” (Basem, p.36)

The difficulty of living a life with unpredictable future where those refugees are not knowing whether to remain in Denmark or to return to the home country where their lives are threatened is confusing state to live within. This in general is the life which Aser does not know how to go through

“*In fact, I can not say yes, or no, I do not know about the future, it is uncertain for me*” (Aser, p.30). “*It is, in short, uncertain, unknown*” (Aser, p.31).

5. Fears of deportation repatriation

Unexceptional reaction was expressed by each one of the Syrian informants which is the fear of repatriation to Syria. In a way or in another all of them were victims of the Syrian conflict and have painful experiences there. Therefore, being sent back to Syria constitutes a threatening decision on their lives.

Majed is obsessed about his fear of the terrifying torture process on the hands of the governmental forces which he knew well. For him, death will be the only wish when compared to the dreadful ways of torture in the prisons of this regime.

“*Certainly, one becomes nervous as if they are saying to us “go to be killed there”. They are throwing you to death, especially for me I left without stamping my pass on the borders” “I left the country illegally and they will send me back there!! There, I will maybe wish to die a thousand times a day*” (Majed, p.6)

Fadia is more concentrating on her fear of losing her husband as a result of the military arbitrary imprisonment of those who are opposing the regime. Also, she thinks about the awful actions of the illegal military forces who are merciless murderers with an absolute power there.

“*one is afraid to go back and there they will imprison my husband. They say that they will give you money but there they will take the money and imprison my husband. It is not safe there yet and on the contrary the “shabiha” (Syrian government militias) are still there up till now. We are afraid of the situation there and we keep thinking*” (Fadia, p.10).

The same fear about her husband is mentioned by Amena. As she knows about the actual conditions in Syria, she is not able to think seriously about returning there according to what is said about the settled situation in Syria. The real situation is unpublished, and the danger is still there

“when they introduced a law about deporting the Syrians to Syria it means we should return to zero, and go back to Syria where safety is missing, unlike to what they are saying that there is no bombing or war. But killing and kidnapping are still there, and for my husband as he is still young man, they might recall him to the military service, and they might capture him the moment he gets out of the airplane. I can not tell him to go back and you will be risking your husband and your children jus to go back to your home country” (Amena, p.14)

Nasser as well, have his own fears about repatriation decision. He is expert in the types of the punishments which are used by the regime forces in Syria. Thus, his mind is highly occupied with the idea of punishment and harm which can reach to murdering the punished individual in case he will be sent back.

“anyone left the country will not be safe when going back there. This regime will punish him inevitably and they might kill him as a penalty. These laws which are introduced are so bad” (Nasser, p.22).

6. Impact on children

Children are particularly the most vulnerable victims of the hardships of pre-migration, war and disruption in addition to the insecurity which they are encountering now. Against the backdrop of the current situation, the refugees who have children face more fear and anxious about the situation of their children. Fadia is worried about how her children have to leave everything they have now to start again from scratch a new life in Syria or another place.

“We like to be back, but our children had grown here and the education in Syria became difficult and they should start from scratch. How the child can be back again, it will be so difficult. If it was without the children, one could go back but it is about the children” (Fadia, p.10).

Nasser children are teenagers and they are well integrated, speak the language and have social life here in Denmark. As he feels, such decision about the temporary life of even repatriation can easily affect their sense of stability.

“but the children they are integrating so well, their language is great and their relations and integration with their friends are perfect. They do not have any barriers with their peers whether the boys or girls” (Nasser, p.23).

But it became clearly seen that the worries and fears which the parents have about the insecure and uncertain life can not be detached. Without any doubt, the children when started paying attention to this situation, their feelings were affected as he explains:

“They all notice that their parents are anxious about the future of their children, especially that their parents came here for the sake of the children. The children have a sense of anxiety” (Nasser, p.22).

Aser finds it very hard for him to uproot his daughters again after overcoming the initial period of their new settlement in Denmark and establishing the basis of their feeling of belonging.

“even my children when living here for long time their belonging became to this country more than to Syria” (Aser, p.30)

Knowing about the change in the settlement decision in Denmark, the daughters of Aser face this feeling of distress. In school, one of his daughters has to interact with this issue frequently when the same questions about her residence here is asked by the teacher and the other students as he tells about,

“my children live in uncertainty. And they always ask me whether we are staying or leaving, even the teachers in school start asking my eldest daughter about this and her friends also. So, she started asking to get an answer whether we will stay here or not. In fact, I can not say yes, or no” (Aser, p.30).

These continuous questions ultimately led the father to be in a difficult situation. He has to offer his daughter a definite answer to make her feel again of stability and certainty in her life. Thus, he has to create a sense of security to calm his daughters as he tells,

“the teachers and her friends have been asking her are staying here, can you get the permanent residence,,, this caused her stress and tried as much as I could to talk to her and reassure her that we are staying her” (Aser, p.31)

5.4 Coping strategies

When considering the life complexity of the Syrian refugees and the various levels of insecurity and uncertainty, it will be necessary to investigate how they navigate this disturbed life. The Syrian informants have their own varying reactions and consequently developed various coping strategies to continue in their everyday life while they are still settled in Denmark.

1. Clinging to the rope of hope

The strategy which Fadia and her husband decided about their best solution in this stage is to maintain a hope in less negative future in regard to obtain the permanent residence. This sense of hope is expressed through their waiting for their children to grow up and be eligible to gain permanent residence. She illustrates this in her words saying:

“We decided that my husband will continue in his job so he could be matching to the requirements of the permanent residence. But if he could not get the permanent residence he will try to get an employment residence hoping that the children might have an opportunity to apply for the permanent residence when they become 18 because they arrived at a little age and the existing law says that when a child who studied the primary school here can gain the citizenship when he becomes 18 years old. So, now we live with this hope. Even if we could not gain it, they will at least” (Fadia, p.10-11)

2. Flexible bypassing

For other informants they employed another strategy to deal with their feelings of distress. They attempt to continue in the same way they were acting previously. This bypassing is

flexible and positive in some way. Thus, if it did not lead to the desired aim it ,at least, will not have a more worse results than the existing situation.

Nasser talked about maintaining his old strategy as he express *“We are trying to establish a life here in Denmark regardless of the laws. Work is a duty and an honour for each capable human being, so we try hard to work to be, at least, financially independent, and not in need for help from the government”* (Nasser, p.22).

The same is what Bassem is trying to persist in his life to achieve what was his purpose since the beginning as he mentions:

“But the essential thing is to keep in the same way I was doing since the beginning which is keep working in my job to get the permanent residence. But how the procedures are going to change, I frankly do not know” (Basem, p.37).

Also, Aser have insist on keeping on what he considered as his important challenge of studying

“The first challenge is completing my education” (Aser, p.31).

3. Fulfilling contribution

Three of the informants felt that they have a moral duty towards the country which received them and saved their lives and families. Even if it is not willing to have them as citizens but they feel the necessity to pay back its favour.

The attitude of Nasser is a kind of keeping his dignity and respectful image when he keeps independent and productive as he always used to be.

“The other thing basically is to be able to contribute. They made a favour in receiving us in this country thus, as kind of giving back, we work and contribute in paying the taxes and try to be productive citizens. This is what we are trying now, we do not try to think so far” (Nasser, p.22-23)

In the same line Bassem reaction was about being productive and doing his best in this country.

“I will keep working and keep doing the basic things as usual; to be productive and contribute in the way I can in this country” (Basem, p.36-37)

Aser similarly talked about his feeling of responsibility towards this country and it favour in having him and his family

“I was really thinking that I will pay back the favour which this country offered me in protecting me and receiving my family” (Aser, p.30).

4. Alternative plane

The younger aged informant Hadi found for himself a different way to minimise his sense of uncertainty through alternative solution as he explains what he thinks about

“Now, I became so open to other countries. When I came to Denmark, I was thinking that I want to study and keep living my life here, but when I saw the other countries, I thought that I

can choose other countries to study there. Therefore, I did not feel this pressure. There is still a hope whenever the deportation decision is issued” (Hadi, p.27).

5. Stagnation: not learning Danish

The last informant decided that his life is inactive now so there is no need to do any effort in order to learn the language as long as he will be sent back to his country

“the laws now do not encourage me to learn and I do not obligate myself to learn. I feel that at any time I will be expelled” (Majed, p.6)

5.5 Obstructions of belonging

1. Politics of belonging as obstruction of belonging

The political boundaries of the Danish community of belonging defines distinctively who are considered as ‘us’ or ‘them’. Those Syrian refugees feels this division and can recognise these excluding boundaries when denying them the formal right of belonging and to be inside these boundaries. This is what Fadia mentions when she was asked about her feelings of belonging in Denmark

“foreigner because they will not grant you the citizenship and not even the residency. It is so difficult and that takes a lot of effort to be accepted” (Fadia, p.9).

She reassures the importance of this formal belonging to feel of her actual belonging

“Refusing to grant us the citizenship and the permanent residence permit. This is the most important thing” (Fadia, p.10).

Granting refugees their human rights is usually assumed as a factor of empowerment and recognition especially for those who are more exposed to racialisation. The supposed role of the human rights is to ensure the right of these groups in obtaining various rights such as gaining employment. These rights also can indicate the actual belonging of those individuals within the boundaries of the collectivity. But as it the case in the Danish context where the Syrian refugees exist, the boundaries of such human rights are not clearly recognised according to the higher power positionality of the political agents. Those refugees are not deemed as citizens for having particular ethnicity, religion and culture and thus are not eligible to have legal rights such as citizenship and employment. As Amena expressed,

“Because they do not give you your rights such as the permanent residence or an employment opportunity, but they keep sending you to internships. They do not give you even if you worked, integrated with them and went to school” (Amena, p.14).

And in another situation Nasser explains how the right to get help in seeking an employment was not accounted as he tells about his experience

“I did not find anything as easy especially in the absence of the logistic support from the official system. Honestly, to provide you an employment they tell you to fill an application and to apply yourself, so there was not any valuable help from the commune to secure an employment” (Nasser, p.20).

Those refugees are not able to feel that they are perceived as members of the Danish community. Their social locations and their narratives of identity has determined their being not involved and not seen as belonging in this community. Thus, the intersected categories of origin, race, culture, gender and religion can be racialized according to who is not belonging. when the two Syrian female informants were asked about employment, their answers were negative. They explain the reason for not trying to apply for a job and that was because they saw other Muslim women experience of not being able to obtain an employed as a result of wearing hijab. Therefore, they did not risk of seeking an employment in order to avoid such excluding result.

Fadia reflects about this issue saying:

“I did not try that because there are others who tried earlier but because they were wearing hijab, they could not get a job. And as I am wearing hijab, I will not find an employment surely” (Fadia, p.9).

Amena explains further about the same point,

“When they do not look at you as being different in everything just for wearing a hijab. It is not about the hijab” (Amena, p.13).

“It should not be related to the hijab; each one has his own religion. We neither interfere with their religion, as you know, nor in their norms and traditions, so they have their own religion and traditions and we also have ours” (Amena, p.13).

In regard to media constructions of the narrative of the Syrian refugee during the historical contexts of refugee crisis and in the last few years, it seems as deliberately portrayed and introduced. This determines the positionings of those refugees in the Danish community and increase the pressure of feeling as not belonging for their identity politics. Basem clarifies this issue through his perspective

“as a Syrian I feel I am very stranger here because I keep watching the news on the television and what in the newspapers. Let me say that not all the Syrians are good but not all of them are bad, so everything became against us. Generally everything about the refugee, the Syrian is generalised. Surely, I feel of alienation and that there is something missing. I feel of exclusion” (Basem, p.35).

The political agenda was promoted by the politicised media to define in more determination the ‘Danishness’ of Denmark or the Danish identity against the devaluated ‘others’ or refugees. This can be observed in media construction of the intersected categories of ethnicity, culture, and religion in order to stereotype those ethnic and Muslim minorities. Such construction can lead the members of the Danish community to the way in which those refugees can be perceived and identified according to the Danish norms and values as the ‘others’. In the other side this affects negatively those identified Syrians in terms of their perception of self and in relation to their sense of belonging within the Danish community.

This is what Nasser notice about how the Danish people are influenced by the politicised media. He says

“they are still using idioms that unfortunately, the politicians implant in their heads as ‘invandrer’ (immigrant), or ‘ny borgerne’ (new citizens) or something else. Thus, the idioms which are used by the politicians and the government are applied racially so, it became a

culture in the society to view this person as a foreigner. Therefore, when one is classified as not Scandinavian, so he is a foreigner regardless to the characteristic he has” (Nasser, p.21)

Nasser explains further about the impact of the political agents on people way of treatment towards the Syrian as strangers who are constructed according to their overlapped social locations and identities.

“Thus, this conservative and closed politics which are applied by all the political parties and this kind of intimidation from the other is causing fear from communications with those who are coming from other different cultures or religions” (Nasser, p.21).

This attitude of the Danish people has been recognised by Basem in his work place setting as well. He this tells about:

“This was shocking to me. I tell my colleagues in work, but they see what is presented in the media and it a bad thing for us as refugees” (Basem, p.35).

The Danish political foundation is plainly based on the political agents’ construction of the Danish collectivity as homogeneity which has its defined boundaries to stand against the ethnical, cultural and religious diversity. It is in this way, claiming who can be within and belong as a member in the community can be detrmind. And at the same time, the diverse construction of this homogeneity is consequently dictated on the unwanted collective identities of those Syrian refugees and asserting their unbelonging.

Constructing all the Syrian refugees as Muslims certainly means constructing them as the ‘others’ or the ‘outsiders’ who are coming to invade and occupy the country. Nasser have mentioned this idea when he talked about the political attitude of the Minister of Migration that made him feel a great disappointment for such presentation of the refugees in Denmark as he expresses,

“religion was a fundamental aspect and there was a fear of the arriving human mass who has an Islamic background which constitute terror for her. This is a faulty orientation. It is regrettable that some of the Danish politicians might think in such uptight way which does not differ from the authoritarian regime which we were living with in Syria or similar to ISIS and its followers. When a person way of thinking descends to a such level of intolerance so there is no differentiation of his background whether it was Islamic, Christian or Jewish, this person will be intolerant and beyond the framework of time and humanity” (Nasser, p.18).

For this reason, he thinks that such attitude which devaluate the diversity of refugees does not fit with the positioning of a Minister for Migration and Integration as he considers,

“the minister was called as a minister for immigration and integration while she was a minister to relegation and non-integration and her programme was not for integration but for domestication. She was thinking as if these refugees were coming from the wilderness where they did not see any civilized humanity” (Nasser, p.18).

For him, it is unfair treatment and any supportive attitude towards them as refugees is not tolerated within this context as he perceives the situation.

“no one defends us or asks us, and if a political party thought about defending the refugees slightly, it will be classified as being abnormal in the Danish culture” (Nasser, p.22).

2. Social isolation

Refugees' need to feel belonging is basically interrelated with their being socially included by the host country members. But the experiences of being part of the Danish community was not greatly successful according to the Syrian refugees' perspectives. Their sense of belonging was explicitly contested because of their feeling of social isolation. The fractured types of social relations that they have are related to the drawn boundaries that they are mostly not involved within.

Establishing social connections with the local community was not available for Amena. For her, it was because of the difference in the social culture between Denmark and her homeland as she says:

“Some people you can not integrate with them straightway because they do not like that. While conversely with Arabs you can integrate directly because they talk to you immediately and you can talk to them, while here if you did not talk to them, they do not start talking to you. This is the difficulty; they do not encourage you to start talking to them, so you feel them closed” (Amena, p.13).

In addition to the different social culture of the Danish society, Basem found that the nature of the Danish people is also unlike that of his country people and this was not a positive encouraging for him to feel as included and able to establish social relation with Danes as he explains

“we are coming from a social area which has interest in active gathering, company, going out unlike here. It is completely different; you feel the community here is independent. Once in the language school, the teacher told us to go in a street to make a survey in which we ask a Dane whether he is isolated and prefer to be independent or meeting foreign people, this was the type of the questions. Honestly, the answers were that he prefers individuality, it is essential for them. It is difficult for them to be involved” (Basem, p.34).

He further explains how he sees the social relation that he has with Danes

“I felt that the Danish community is difficult to be penetrated, I mean here in (city name). One can have friends but not exactly friends, one can say companions not friends” (Basem, p.34)

Generally, this difficulty of social bridging causes their social separation from the local community and increased sense of loneliness and isolation in the way that Aser feel.

“I feel myself as a stranger, very much, sure. An example about my feeling of alienation is that as if I am living in a prison which I consider so large despite the rights which I have here and living safely in contrast to Syria. But I feel I am a prisoner in a land that I do not know why I am existed in” (Aser, p.29)

3. Reality shock

One of the emerged issues in the data was the informants feeling of a reality shock after arriving to Denmark. It was related to contradiction between the image that they have in mind

and that which is real. This has an influence on Aser feeling about his ability to establish any sense of belonging to this community. He tells about this

“I was expecting that the human side will be the dominant side in this country. Although, many people try to help us but there is a law you should commit to it and a particular form you must fit in it to be accepted in this country. It is their country and they have the right in that, but this was shocking for me, in fact. So, I always feel that I am as accused, pointed at, and always observed” (Aser, p.30).

He elaborates more on his feelings saying:

“the shock of the reality here and the new system and I am required to commit to many things. This caused me a lot of pressure and stress whether in learning the language or finding a job or the moral lectures which I heard at the beginning that I should work and learn the language, and being required to do so. This was not what I was expecting” (Aser, p.30)

This mismatching between the prior expectations and the reality of the life which they are living was shocking. In the case of Nasser, he was mostly influenced by the political attitude in such Democratic European country.

“When arriving a country, the most important thing for any refugee is that people open their hearts for him, but for this governments it meant opening their pockets. The situation was considered just economically, and the human aspect was eliminated. The refugee wants the human aspect not the material aspect. Unfortunately, the situation of the refugees became so bad in Denmark compared with the neighbouring countries” (Nasser, p.17).

The most unexpected point for Nasser was the attitude of the Minister of Migration and Integration towards the refugees. As she is supposed to be the responsible about integrating them in the Danish community not to make them feel of the reality of their unwelcomed existence in Denmark. Nasser expresses about his shock.

“Now, we have an obsession; we watch the television awaiting the disaster which the immigration minister will introduce, because now we have a feeling that even when she is sleeping, she is thinking about a new law to annoy us. Unfortunately, that there is such a decadent level of politicians in Denmark” (Nasser, p.22).

4. Poverty

The unstable and low income for the refugee is something can not be controlled according to many reasons. One of them is the reduction in the social benefit and also the difficulty of obtaining an employment. And even if the refugee could find one it might not equal to his qualifications. Therefore, such economic condition that the refugee finds himself living in are out of his will but mostly imposed on him. This is what Nasser was telling about when he talked about what makes him feel a sense of belonging and his answer was related to the economic and social stability. None of these was attainable for him as he says:

“Honestly, this did not happen in Denmark yet; neither economically as we did not have an economic safety according to our low income, nor socially as for absorbing the culture to make one feel as a part of this system” (Nasser, p. 21)

He tells more about this financial situation and its results,

“The financial help from the government ‘the integration benefit’ was reduced to the extent that the benefit for me and my wife was not enough to cover the living expenses, the rent, and the bills of water, electricity and phone. There was a deficiency and consequently, I was obliged and had to get any job with whatsoever contract to provide our needs” (Nasser, p. 20).

Necessarily, he has to work in the only available job he could success in obtaining. He clarifies what job he is has now:

“The employment was not based on my master education and the job I had was as an assistant in the agricultural research. The employment description was like a gardener and the salary was the same as a gardener who does not have any educational qualification or experience” (Nasser, p.19).

5. Deficiency in language provision

It was mentioned by two informants that the provision of the Danish language in the language courses was inadequate according to the unqualified teachers or the system of the language schools as Nasser has mentioned.

“the course was not systematic, and the students with different levels were mixed together in the same classroom. It is unbelievable that a student from the second level is with another one from the fifth level and the teacher has to explain the same topic to all of the students. Definitely, the level of understanding was very different and consequently we felt lost.” (Nasser, p.19).

And the problem for Majed was in changing the teacher as he says:

“If the teacher was skilled, there would not be any problem for me to learn. But when you have a different teacher each day, or a teacher who just read for us, how a person can learn?” (Majed, p.4).

6. Discussion

What does it mean to belong for a refugee? How belonging can be constructed?

In which way does temporary residence impact refugees’ feeling of belonging?

These questions I attempted to understand and interpret from the perspective of the Syrian refugees who arrived to Denmark between 2014-2017. The lives and settlement of those refugees were unstable literally according to the successive implements of many laws by the Danish government since 2015 up till 2019. In February 2019, the (Law140) was introduced as the latest in a series of gradually implemented laws in relation to immigration. This was called the “paradigm shift” and it was introduced under the influence of the anti-migration right-wing Danish People’s Party (DPP) (Walter-Franke, 2019). The shift in this law was the major change of the policy towards the refugees and asylum seekers from focusing on integration to temporary residence and repatriation to the country of origin when the situation is safe there. In introducing this law, the Danish immigration policy was considered as one of the strictest among the other European countries’ (Walter-Franke, 2019). With no doubt, this

paradigm shift had actual effects on the lives and the sense of belonging of those Syrian refugees. In this perspective, this thesis is investigating how the sense of belonging is perceived and constructed by the Syrian refugees in this Danish context. And it also examines how the ‘paradigm shift’ is affecting the different aspects of their experience. In addition to exploring the strategies that they are applying to cope within this challenging context.

Analysing the primary data has basically led to extracting varied findings. Firstly, the meaning of belonging be understood in many different ways and it can be connected to different objects of attachments. This meaning is defined variously according to each person which means it is not a fixed meaning but a dynamic process (Yuval-Davis, 2011). Hence, the meaning of belonging for the interviewed Syrians was perceived in many ways according to their own intersected social locations, identifications and self-narratives in addition to their values (Yuval-Davis, 2006).

Emotionally, belonging means for some of the informants an emotional attachment to the place of origin or the nation state in which one feels as being a member. Also, it was seen as an aspired emotional support and feeling of inclusion within a collectivity. Another meaning of belonging was the emotional connection to the family in the place of birth. This place in which the refugee feels as ‘at home’ and, thus, to belong means for him the emotional attachment through finding a place where he feels familiarity, safety and security (Antonsich, 2010; Yuval-Davis, 2006). Additionally, it was also related to the childhood memories with their positive and negative connotations. The place where the refugee was born and had his childhood memories remains the central place to which he will always feel as belonging throughout his life (Antonsich, 2010).

Culturally, belonging as the Syrian refugees consider is the identification of the membership in a social group whose members share the same language, repetitive practices and cultural background. These experiences, emotions of inclusion and sharing values, networks and practices denote the sense of belonging (Anthias, 2006). One other side of belonging as the informants understand was related to acquiring the Danish language which can enhance their entrance and interaction with the Danish community. Thus, learning the language helps the refugee to overcome the restricting barrier of social interaction. It promotes the participation in labour market, beside facilitating refugees’ access to information about the available services (Ager, & Strang, 2008). And it can be an essential requirement in order for refugee to be entitled as belonging to the collectivity (Yuval-Davis, 2006). These common cultural identifications can imply a sense of the community in which one feels the ‘warm sensation’ of being among the people who can understand what he says and at the same time they can grasp what he means (Ignatieff, 2010).

Socially, all the informants asserted that bridging social relations with members of the local community creates a feeling of inclusion and acceptance of their identities which lead to their feeling of belonging. This social bridging which is “outward looking” promotes refugees ‘getting ahead’ in the host community (Putnam, 2001)

Formally, belonging was perceived as obtaining the right of permanent residence which legitimizes their belonging and tightens their full membership in the nation state of Denmark. And further, it was connected with the idea of attaining equal rights of employment and other services the same as the Danish people. This can lead to another meaning of belonging as the Syrian refugees perceived which is the sense of safety. When a refugee has the similar

positioning which other collectivity's members have without differentiation of his origin, ethnicity or religion, he can achieve an economic and social safety.

Furthermore, the Syrian refugees had their own ways in which they could construct a feeling of belonging. In few available realms within their local communities, they were allowed to establish a slight sense of belonging. One of the informants found that speaking the Danish language made her feel as belonging to Denmark when she once left to another country where she could not communicate with people there. In other cases, the social relationships which those Syrians could bridge with Danish people whether within the workplace or in an occasional interaction in public and private spaces were seen as important for them. Refugees' experiences of being part of the social fabric of the community and the social ties which are manifested in practices constitute an important supportive factor of refugee feeling of belonging (Anthias, 2006). Although these social ties were deemed as weak ties with Danes but that could in some way grant them a slight feeling of belong. Thus, the friendly attitude from the members of host community is important in helping the refugee to feel a sense of security and feeling that he is welcomed and accepted (Ager, & Strang, 2008).

In the same way, the support from many members within different settings have positive effect on the Syrian refugee's sense of belonging. These emotional and practical supportive attitudes were encouraging them to feel as being seen and welcomed as new members within the Danish community.

While, having strong ties with Danes as the experience of one of the informants in his class had highly positive effect. When he was embraced by his classmates and included within the school collectivity, he felt as one of them not as a foreigner. This provided him the opportunity to strengthen his sense of belonging within these groupings.

However, the effects which the so-called 'paradigm shift' on the Syrian refugees in Denmark, were reflected in all the aspects of their lives as the data has shown. The informants emphasized that this unfair law has eliminated their hopes in achieving any sense of belonging in Denmark. It asserted their continual perception of their self-image as being foreigners and not belong in this country. Among the many impacts which they suffered from, was their feeling of their powerlessness and incapability of controlling their own future as long as the government is only responsible about the decision their repatriation. This certainly was the main reason for feeling of injustice and suffering of various psychological impacts. Likewise, the uncertainty and insecurity they encounter has aggravated their feelings of stress, depression and their ongoing thinking and distress. The most undesirable sensation they had mostly is their fear of repatriation to Syria where the terrifying punishment of the regime forces is waiting for them. The effects of this situation which the adult refugees were immersed in has severely reflected on their children as well. The anxiety and insecurity were contagious within refugees' families where the children have started to feel anxious as well.

Spontaneously, as a natural human reaction, those refugees started in finding new strategies to help them in overcoming the stressful conditions of their lives. Keeping the hope of possibility of granting the permanent resident permit for the children in the future was an optimistic reaction from one informant. While, another coping strategy was to continue the life whether in work or in education without thinking about the future which is unpredictable as they see it. A respectful reaction was mentioned by more than one refugee related to the feeling of the necessity of paying back the favour of this country through committing to do all

their duties. Among the seven informants only one has a freezing reaction regarding learning the Danish language as he considered this language will not be useful as long as he will be repatriated to his country.

It is important to point out the observed obstructing factors which inevitably have prevented the refugees from feeling as being at home and belonging in this country since their arrival. The major obstructive factor was the Danish politics of belonging. The politics of belonging has constructed explicit political boundaries which exclude the Syrian refugees for being outsiders in this imagined political community. The bordering practices of the Danish government asserts the cultural homogeneity of the Danish community (Pace, 2018). While accordingly, the social locations of the Syrian refugees such as language, culture and religion were more open to assimilatory identification in this political community (Yuval-Davis, 2006).

Denying the Syrian refugees, the permanent residence which is the formal right that legitimises their acceptance inside this collectivity was the declaration of their unbelonging. Sense of belonging is related to obtaining the rights and obligations of the citizenship which is conditioned with meeting the definite criteria of inclusion within a particular collectivity (Anthias, 2006).

Moreover, their deprivation from different civil rights according to the intersection between the categories of their social locations, identities and values with the higher power positionality of the political agents in this country. Those political agents consider that Danes are 'indigenous' people who have the right to their own nation in which all the immigrants are deemed as 'aliens' and 'intruders'. Among those immigrants the Muslims are considered as 'occupying force' which Denmark must defeat (Rytter, 2019). Thus, the intersected categories of origin, race, culture, gender and religion of those refugees were racialized in the media construction of their identity narratives. The talk about 'so-called hijab' and the 'gender equality arguments' influenced the Muslims in general and the Muslim woman in particular. The construction of all Muslims as being outside "Danishness", and as "the others" who will take Denmark from Danes (Christensen, 2009) has played an affective role in the negative reception of those refugees within the community.

This matter was highly influencing on their identity politics and self-image in the Danish community. In this community, the notion of "Danishness" has been very dominant discourse in the public debate (Christensen, 2009). And thus, protecting this "Danishness and preserving the Danish values and norms was very applied issue in the Danish community as a consequence (Rytter, 2019). In this sense, those refugees were exposed to hostile perception from the majorities and feeling themselves as not belonging in this country.

Additionally, another obstructing factor was observed in the interviews was the social isolation. The fractured social relations with the Danish members of their local communities were resulting from the drawn political boundaries that they are mostly not involved within. Furthermore, all the informants had experienced a reality shock after their arrival and settlement in Denmark. The mismatching between the prior expectations and the reality of the life especially the Danish political attitude and the lack of recognition was shocking for those refugees. On other hand, the reduction in the social benefit and the difficulty of obtaining an employment have led the refugees to live in poverty with unstable and low income. However, the intersection of several categories constitutes the foundation of the cultural borders and the

notion of ‘us’ ‘them’ which are affecting the everyday social interaction. This repetitive daily interaction reproduces the notion of “the others (Christensen, 2009).

7. Conclusion

This study discussed the notion of belonging of the Syrian refugees in the context of temporariness in the Danish community. The overall findings of this thesis have been presented from the perspective of the Syrian refugees. These findings shed the light on the effects of implementing the ‘paradigm shift’ which is adopted by the Danish government in February 2019. By examining the effects of this law, it seems that it has multiple challenging impacts on different aspects of the lives of those refugees and how they can shape their decisions about the future.

The findings show that the ‘paradigm shift’ has negatively affected their establishing a sense of belonging in the country. Further, the temporality of the Syrian refugees’ residence and the uncertainty about their future caused them feelings of stress, depression, anxiety, injustice, powerlessness, and fear of repatriation to Syria. These states have particularly impacted their children as well. Moreover, it was found that other obstructions to constructing their belonging have been emerged, and the major obstructing factors were the Danish politics of belonging and the lack of recognition. Additional hindering factors were the sense of social isolation, the reality shock, poverty and the deficiency in language provision.

According to the perspective of the interviewed Syrian refugees, it seems quite clear that the experience of belonging in Denmark was unfulfilled and restricted by various factors and on different levels. And the impacts of the ‘paradigm shift’ are deemed as profoundly negative on their present lives, their children and their future and as well.

In sum, more research is needed on the situation of the refugees and asylum seekers and their families in the context of the temporary residence in Denmark. This can help in investigate and understanding more about the effects of this policy and its impact on refugees’ sense of belonging and their psychological well-being.

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