

Hegemonic Whisper

Integration of Marxist Refugees in Norway

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To Komala and all those who were involved in the 24-day war of Sna – those who chose to create history

Summary

This is the first study regarding integration of (former) Marxist refugees in Norway, which is novel in that it categorizes refugees according to their political attitudes rather than ethnicity or religious beliefs. In this way, this thesis bridges an important gap in the existing literature on integration. Previous research has mainly studied integration of immigrants from the perspective of the majority population. Thus, refugees' own perspectives have been missing in most academic discussions of what integration is. Refugees have not been part of the 'game.' In this thesis, refugees' perspectives are the centerpiece in that refugees themselves shape the understanding of how they experience integration. In addition, I present my own reading of Laclau and Mouffe, which differs in particular from one presented by Jørgensen and Phillips.

I discover two discourses of integration that are articulated by informants who have gone through integration. The primary discovery of my thesis is the 'hegemonic whisper.' This is a message sent from people in higher social positions (living within hegemonic discourses); they might not plan to send it, but people from lower social positions (living within non-hegemonic discourses) receive it anyway. This concept is my theoretical contribution to develop discourse analysis.

In order to answer my research question – how former members of Komala, a Kurdish Marxist party, experienced and understood integration – I have interviewed two groups among former members of Komala. One group was citizens of the world and another group was members of nations, meaning the former said they were citizens of the world, but the latter said they were a part of one or several nations. Therefore, the difference between these two groups was that the first one assumed a world without nation states, while the second group did not assume the same. This difference led them to talk about integration in two different ways.

Both groups demonstrated that in order to integrate one must adjust oneself to the new environment. Each person had an explanation for the meaning of adjusting, although I observed something in common in each group. Citizens of the world suggested that one needed to be influential in society in order to be well adjusted to that society. However, they were skeptical to the Norwegian authorities – and the Norwegian society in some instances – because they claimed the authorities did not want refugees to be influential in this country.

In contrast, members of nations put trust in the Norwegian authorities and believed the authorities were learning from their experiences and that the situation for refugees was gradually getting better. It seemed natural for them that there were some troubles in the process

of integration. They held some difficulties to be inevitable, so the authorities were not always responsible for them.

Citizens of the world desired to have the power of convincing others in Norway. Hetaw was a good example among them since she had studied extensively in Norway to achieve this power. At the same time, they were very skeptical to the opportunities they could have in order to convince others about their ideas. They illustrated that there was a threshold for how much they could aspire to. They claimed they were not supposed to aspire to achieve much in Norway.

Members of nations desired to be similar to the Norwegian middle class. They had nothing against the principle of being like others. In fact, they illustrated that it was natural and useful to be like others and not making trouble or create conflicts with the majority population of Norway. In order to be similar to the Norwegian middle class, they suggested that refugees should take responsibility for their own life and work. They insisted that refugees should incorporate in the work life, and they implied the government should assist them in this direction. In one side, they desired to be like Norwegians, and in the other side, they desired that refugees work so that they are not a burden to society. It implied that the brain and individuality of refugees lost attention and their muscles and workforce were the center of attention.

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Table of Contents

- 1 Introduction 1
 - 1.1 Background..... 2
 - 1.2 Research Question..... 3
 - 1.2.1 Why the Marxist Theme is Interesting 3
 - 1.2.2 Why Komala..... 4
 - 1.2.3 My Personal Relationship with Komala 5
 - 1.3 Discoveries..... 6
 - 1.4 Outline of Thesis..... 8
- 2 Theoretical Framework: A Reading of Laclau and Mouffe 11
 - 2.1 Discourse: Binding Linguistic and Non-linguistic Together 11
 - 2.2 Discourse Analysis 13
 - 2.2.1 Moments, Articulations & Elements..... 14
 - 2.2.2 Floating Signifier, Empty Signifier & Nodal Point..... 15
 - 2.3 Previous Literature: Bridging the Gaps 18
- 3 Method: Strategies for Hunting the Hegemonic Whisper 25
 - 3.1 Relevance of Interviewing 25
 - 3.2 How It Started: Recruitment..... 26
 - 3.2.1 Sample Characteristics..... 29
 - 3.2.2 Interviewing and Interview Guide 30
 - 3.3 Ethical Considerations 31
 - 3.4 Coding: The Start of Analyzing..... 33
 - 3.4.1 Developing Concepts 33
 - 3.4.2 Methodological Reflections..... 36
 - 3.5 Reliability, Validity and Generalizability 37
- 4 Hearing the Hegemonic Whisper 39
 - 4.1 Integration for Refugees Who are Citizens of the World 41
 - 4.1.1 Adjusting to a New Environment..... 41
 - 4.1.2 Relating Articulations 1..... 52
 - 4.1.3 Desires 53

4.1.4	Relating Articulations 2.....	60
4.2	Integration for Refugees Who are Members of Nations	62
4.2.1	Adjusting to a New Environment.....	62
4.2.2	Relating Articulations 3.....	69
4.2.3	Desires	72
4.2.4	Relating Articulations 4.....	77
5	Conclusion.....	79
5.1	Hegemonic Whisper	81
5.2	Concluding Remarks	85
	References.....	87
	Appendix 1: Invitasjon til et forskningsprosjekt.....	95
	Appendix 2: Interview Guide.....	97

Table 1: The Outline of Integration in My Thesis: 40

Table 2: Komala Represents Integration: 78

1 Introduction

Imagine there's no countries . . . Imagine all the people living life in peace, you. You may say I'm a dreamer. But I'm not the only one (John Lennon – Imagine).

I'm a pessimist because of intelligence, but an optimist because of will (said to be from Antonio Gramsci).

Integration is a hotly debated topic today, but how do refugees themselves understand integration? This study explores how former members of Komala perceived and experienced integration in Norway. Komala is a Marxist party¹ that arose from the Kurdish armed rebellion in the early 1980s. Several members were later forced to flee the country as political refugees, and some ended up in Norway. How have these refugees understood and responded to the process of integration in Norway? While Norway is a very egalitarian country, it is neither a communist nor Marxist country. Norwegian discussions of integration have often highlighted the role of religion, focusing on the arrival of refugees with conservative values in a liberal society. Differences in terms of ideology is a less salient, but equally relevant topic. Therefore, the way that Marxist refugees, former freedom fighters, encounter a non-communist system is interesting. How do they transition from a strong conflict-influenced context, with big dreams and enthusiasm for revolution, to a well-organized welfare state with a market economy? How do they experience integration politics in practice?

Whenever somebody moves from one place to another, she must integrate, so the importance of integration also emerges. The day that people stop moving to new places integration will lose importance, but we are not getting closer to this day at all. Refugees are not only fleeing from wars and integration is not only about refugees. Climate change and poverty are other reasons for fleeing into a new country. Even people who are not fleeing from anything need to integrate themselves if they move to a new country. Therefore, integration is a very general and interesting topic from various standpoints.

In my master's thesis, I concentrate on the integration of this specific refugee group (called Komala) in Norway. However, integration is one of those academic and social concepts that are hard to capture, and difficult to define. In sociology, this concept comes from a Durkheimian tradition, which is based on harmony and a functionalist approach to society (Hagelund 2003:

¹ A 'party' is not necessarily 'legal' in the Middle East context.

162-163). Durkheim applies social integration as an equilibrium in the collective order that keeps the community together (1952: 167, 206, 207). The word ‘integration’ has been a constant in Norwegian immigration policy for nearly five decades, but its problematizations and underlying concerns have changed over this period (Hagelund 2003: 162). In the Norwegian context, the term integration is applied when including something that is outside: “We aim to integrate the disabled in the society” (Døving 2009: 9). It stands somehow on the border between assimilation and segregation. It is not assimilation, which aims to melt refugees away or into the majority population, and not segregation, which does not let refugees be among the majority population (Døving 2009: 8-11). Therefore, integration is both necessary and complicated. We need to integrate refugees to keep the community together, but they do not need to be assimilated to reach this goal; rather they need to be included.

In the remainder of this chapter I offer some background information about the Komala refugees, before presenting my research question. Then, I discuss the reasons for the relevance of my focus, and present the theoretical approach along with the results of the inquiry.

1.1 Background

Before the revolution of Iran in 1979, the Iranian Marxist party (Tudeh) was strong and popular. After the revolution, the Islamic Republic banned this party. Around the same time, the regime lost control over the Kurdish city of Sna (in Persian: Sanandaj) to local Marxist centers. These centers (in Kurdish: بنکه ‘bnka’) were made up of a population of different districts of the city. They were not satisfied with the way the Shah had organized their society. Inspired by Marxist texts, they started preparing the Kurdish society for being more economically equal. These centers were the start of establishing a Marxist party, which also cared about Kurdish issues, called Komala. This party, which was probably inspired by Tudeh, took control of a huge part of Rojhelat (Kurdistan of Iran)² however not for a long time.

The ‘24-day war of Sna’ (شه‌ری ٢٤ رۆژه‌ی سنه) is a famous historic tragedy among Kurds. In 1980, the Islamic Republic of Iran organized all its power to launch an attack on Sna. The supporters of Komala were young, many of them under 18 years old. They shared a very strong collective dream (see 3.6.1) that they were prepared to die for on one condition: a better life for others – freedom and equality for people of Kurdistan. They resisted the government’s attack.

² This party had members from other ethnicities such as Turks and Persians.

Consequently, the government brought its Western helicopters, tanks, and artilleries, which had been purchased from the West under the Shah's government. They bombarded the city for 24 days until they convinced the young fighters that a better world was not for them – at least not yet.

Facing political persecution, a large number of former Komala members had to leave the region. Some ended up in Norway, and they have been here since the 1990s. In addition, new generations of Komala members would arrive later, as the Islamist regime continued to persecute especially left-leaning politically active Kurds over the next decades.

I grew up in Kurdistan,³ in a province under Iranian rule since those fatal days in 1980. As a child, I would often visit Sna, as it was my grandmother's hometown. My mother showed me the position from which the Iranian convoy bombarded Qala Chwalan (قه‌ل‌ا چوالان), one of the districts with the highest number of Komala supporters. She explained how the Iranian military convoy came down through the main streets to confirm that Sna was going to be an Islamic city and not Marxist or Kurdish. Thousands died and many parents buried their children in their houses since it was dangerous to have a proper burial in a cemetery during a civil war.

1.2 Research Question

For nearly three decades many (former) members of Komala have been living in Norway. My research question is: how did they experience and perceive integration in Norway? Hence, I study how (former) Marxists⁴ experienced integration from their own perspective. In other words, I study how they perceive their experiences of living in Norway and how they interpret their own perceptions of living in Norway.

1.2.1 Why the Marxist Theme is Interesting

The great attention to the relationship between integration and Muslims could result in marginalizing other types of integration, and integration of other groups of refugees and non-Western immigrants in Norway. Needless to say, not all refugees have a strong Islamic identity.

³ Kurdistan is a region divided and occupied by four nation states: the Turkish, Iranian, Iraqi, and Syrian. There is a long history of Kurdish rebellions, resistance and consequently blood, tears, and oppression in all these countries against Kurds.

⁴ Some still identify themselves Marxist and some do not.

Categorizing all of them under the religion of Islam is a simple and excluding approach to them. Thus, my orientation to Marxism is not essential and inherent in Marxism, but it is an attempt to break the strong narrative produced in the last few years about refugees as conservatively religious.

However, the second reason for why integration of Marxist groups is interesting is inherent in Marxism. They are critical and they claim that they have an alternative for today's systems. What, then, happens to this system-critique when they enter another system? Hence, their response to the Norwegian welfare system and integration is interesting. I am curious if they have understood integration differently than other groups, e.g. Somalians, Tamils, Kurds, Muslims or policy makers.

There is a big discussion in different European countries about the alleged failure of integration. This discussion is mostly around the integration of Muslims and refugees from non-Western countries. However, religion is only one of multiple identities influencing integration. In order to broaden this discussion, we need to explore why and how other types of refugees with strong identities integrate. We need to expand our view beyond the attention to the religious dimension. Norms and values are not only related to religion, but may also come from ideological conviction. How do refugees with strong ideological opposition against capitalism (like Marxists) integrate in Europe and Norway? How do they combine the support for the armed struggle in Rojhelat (Kurdistan of Iran) with life in peaceful and so-called harmony-oriented Norway, while they are ideologically against capitalism in general?

1.2.2 Why Komala

There is no such thing as a homogeneous group of immigrants. They involve a broad variation in Norway from ethnic Swedish people to Africans from South Africa. Even the concept of non-Western immigrants includes a large number of heterogeneous immigrants. They are Arabs, Ethiopian, Chinese, etc. In addition, there is high variation among ethnic groups as well. Therefore, I have chosen a specific group due to the needed delimitation of my thesis, and because I am interested in the role of political identity for integration. Moreover, this restriction keeps the context relatively constant, like cultural-historical background factors.

Finally, this selection was also pragmatically reasoned. Although the integration of any refugee group with a Marxist background is potentially relevant to my thesis, there were some

details and practical reasons that made Komala more suitable for my thesis. They spoke Sorani (Central Kurdish) fluently, which is my mother tongue, and they cooperated with me faster and better thanks to my network. Hence, I could start my study faster, increase the chances of informants being willing to participate and interview them in Sorani. However, they are not the only non-Western accessible group for me. I could for example choose members of PKK or PYD (other Kurdish parties with Marxist ideology). The PKK/PYD are more famous and popular than Komala and that is why I chose Komala. Because they are less famous and maybe more marginalized in that sense there is less academic research about them and they generally get less attention than a big influential party like PKK. I think there is more to explore among members of a marginalized group than famous, popular groups, which have already received a lot of academic attention.

1.2.3 My Personal Relationship with Komala

Three of my uncles, my father's brother-in-law, my mother's cousins etc. were engaged in that revolutionary movement. In memory of those who died in the struggle against the Iranian regime, many children in my generation (myself included) were named after Komala's fallen heroes. However, for a long time, I did not even know that I was from such a strong political family. It was so dangerous to talk about Komala that my whole family had hidden their history. The Iranian government's savagery had made my mother largely passive; "All who get engaged in politics, get vanquished finally," she used to say. Therefore, I grew up in an almost apolitical environment. It was only when I started studying at the University of Tehran that I truly realized the family fate. I got involved in the Iranian student movement early, before I found out my family secrets, probably because I had experienced the oppression in Kurdistan and I did not need to be convinced to act against the government.

The point of this brief history is that I have never been a member of any political party, and my approach to the world was constructed at the University of Tehran and not through any political party. I did not know that much about Komala when I was younger. In Tehran, I got an incomplete perception of Komala, then later here in Norway, among the Kurdish diaspora (including my uncles), I got a fuller picture of them. My involvement in politics started in Tehran through the Iranian student movement. I was a political student activist, but it had nothing to do with Komala. Furthermore, my family background is not unique in the Kurdish context. In contrast, it is relatively common to have a family history that is intertwined with the

political struggles in that region of Kurdistan that is located in today's Iran. After the revolution of Iran in 1979, a large part of Kurdish population was involved in the different political activities and my family members were among thousands.

Thus intertwined, it is all the more important to be transparent about it, which is why I present this already in the introduction (rather than only in the method chapter). My personal relationship with Komala is discussed to demonstrate that I am not a supporter of Komala, and Komala as a party is not a matter of interest for me. I am not interested in their ideology, but I am interested in the more general aspects of their life. They tried to make a better world (from their point of view), they lost the war and they ended up in Norway. I also had a dream about a better world in Iran and Kurdistan. The regime arrested me and punished me so I ended up in Norway. This aspect of their lives, which I have personally been through, is interesting for me as a field of study. The interaction between being involved in a political/revolutionary movement, dreaming of a better world, then going through integration, being a good citizen for Norway, is an interesting topic – how a collective dream starts, where it ends up and how it ends, continues or is transformed.

1.3 Discoveries

In order to examine how my informants themselves understood and experienced integration, discourse analysis is applied. Simply put, discourse is the way that we understand reality. Laclau and Mouffe's theory of discourse analysis is a very useful framework for conceptualizing the particular situation of refugees all the while being able to discuss it in a larger context. With this theory, I can clarify the particular situation of refugees; then I can relate it to the more abstract and general concept of hegemony – how some meanings are more dominant than others – to understand the particular situation of refugees in a broader context in society.

At first, I applied this theory to my material.⁵ I uncovered two groups of informants, which configured two discourses of integration. One group recognized themselves as citizens of the world and the other group as members of nations. Therefore, one discourse was constructed in relation with this concept: 'citizenship of the world' and the other was in relation with this

⁵ The author has done all translations in this thesis from both Norwegian and Central Kurdish (Sorani), either from interviews or official documents.

concept: ‘membership of nations’. Each of these concepts constitutes a nodal point in my thesis. In other words, citizens of the world talk about integration differently than members of nations.

Through the analysis, I will show there are two floating signifiers in my material, which have different meanings in relation to different nodal points – there are two words which have different meanings in each discourse. These are ‘adjusting’ and ‘desires’. My informants interpret the floating signifiers differently in different discourses so I have discovered two floating signifiers and will show how they are differently articulated in the two discourses. In other words, the two groups talk about the same concepts in order to integrate, but they define them differently.

I have made a new concept in my thesis to conceptualize how hegemonic discourses communicate with non-hegemonic discourses. ‘Hegemonic whisper’ is the concept that I use for showing that hegemonic discourses talk to people who are living inside non-hegemonic discourses. They hear it from the authorities, from television, from the police, in education institutes, from friends with high class positions, at work etc. What they hear is something that only those people can hear because one must live within non-hegemonic discourses to hear it. People who are living inside hegemonic discourses themselves are not able to hear this whisper. With a less metaphoric language, you must live within non-hegemonic discourses to be able to pick up the underlying messages hegemonic discourses send. This whisper has only one direction, from hegemonic nodal points/discourses/groups to non-hegemonic nodal points/discourses/groups. In other words, this is an underlying message that hegemonic discourses send to non-hegemonic discourses. However, there is no specific plan to send this message. That is why I use the metaphor of a whisper. It involves this point that there is no specific plan to make this message. However, I show that this message is received nevertheless.

The group that recognized themselves as citizens of the world still believed in the fight they had once fought against the Islamic Republic of Iran. They still believed in values they had shared with other members of Komala. They wished to have more influence in Norway. They felt they were treated as temporary guests rather than full citizens in Norway and they were not supposed to have that much influence in this society. Some of them had tried hard to be influential in the Norwegian society, but still something like a whisper somehow told them: that is enough; this is not your country. They were confused about why refugees were always accused by the authorities for being lazy and not working.⁶

⁶ Since my informants are adult refugees who did not grow up in Norway, I mostly consider adult refugees in my thesis.

They desired to convince people in this society about their values and principles but they felt something stopped them somewhere. A whisper somehow told them: do not be ambitious; and they felt they were not supposed to aspire much in Norway. They were disappointed because of that and I could see it in their body language, as I will explain in “4.1.3 The Glint in Her Eyes Was Gone.” They heard this society (mostly authorities) did not trust them.

In contrast, the group that recognized themselves as members of nations (Kurdish, Iranian or/and Norwegian) put trust in the Norwegian authorities. They were convinced by the whisper that told them they were not from this society so it appeared natural to them that they had some troubles during the process of integration. In other words, they accepted the underlying message that they were not from Norway and were supposed to have some troubles. They explained that it was a game refugees should learn how to play and if they must choose between Norwegian values and their own, they should choose the Norwegian ones. As I will show in my analysis, this group attempted to be similar to the Norwegian middle class. Moreover, I will show that they were convinced by the whisper that a good refugee should not be too ambitious so that when they talk about other refugees, they usually associate them with working, only working, no matter which type of work, but they must work.

1.4 Outline of Thesis

This thesis comprises five chapters including the introduction. I will present my distinct reading of Laclau and Mouffe and its relevance to answering my research question in the next chapter. There, I will discuss what a discourse is, and then present concepts that are essential for understanding how a discourse functions. Afterward, I clarify those concepts that are crucial to understanding the relation between discourses, and to having a perception of hegemony.

In the third chapter, I present my methodological strategy to identify discourses as well as hegemonic whispers. I also discuss the relevance of my strategy for my research question. Moreover, I clarify the relation between my theoretical framework and methodological strategy. Then, I discuss how I did my research and the methodological concerns about it.

I will discuss the discourses I have found in the fourth chapter, which is the analysis chapter. There, I will apply the theoretical framework to the material and show how theoretical concepts can be understood in practice. In addition, I explain the concept ‘hegemonic whisper’ more

precisely while I show how it appears in my material. This chapter includes two main sections, each dedicated to one of the two groups among the informants.

The conclusion is the final chapter where I recapitulate all my discoveries. There, I summarize two discourses I have discovered and further discuss the hegemonic whisper more theoretically and in detail. The thesis rounds off by highlighting the predominant aspects of my project.

2 Theoretical Framework: A Reading of Laclau and Mouffe

In this chapter, I present the theoretical framework for analyzing how refugees conceptualize integration. As I am using Laclau and Mouffe's discourse analysis in my thesis, I concentrate on what they say about discourse, and how they analyze discourses. In the following, I first present and discuss their understanding of discourse, before clarifying how they would carry out a discourse analysis.

Discourse analysis allows me to show how meanings are differently constructed. In this approach, we focus on meanings and observe the process of constituting meanings. Nevertheless, we should always remember that meanings are strongly tied to practice in this approach and they are not only perceptions or linguistic games. It is therefore a suitable theory to explicate how former members of Komala perceived and experienced integration in Norway because I can discuss both their perceptions and experiences.

2.1 Discourse: Binding Linguistic and Non-linguistic Together

The existence of an external physical world, independent of our mind, is taken as a matter of fact in studying discourses (Laclau and Mouffe 2014: 94). The moment we start thinking, talking, writing, and acting in this external and independent world, discourses emerge (Laclau 1990: 100). Our dependence on action is the reason why discourses emerge, because without them, we cannot act (Dunn and Neumann 2016: 4).

To decide what to do in a particular situation, we need to have a feeling for what is the natural thing to do. Thus, although a discourse is not determining what we must do, it gives us the feeling of doing the right or natural thing in a particular situation. This feeling of knowing what to do is related to our perception of the external world. The point is that we act, not according to the external world, but according to our perception of the external world. It is discourses, in other words, which inform us how to act. Therefore, discourse is the totality that ties our thoughts and our actions together. Speech and writing are parts of discourses, as well as action and practice. "This totality which includes within itself the linguistic and non-linguistic, is what we call discourse," in the way that discourse is not only a matter of language, but it involves language (Laclau 1990: 100).

The insistence on the totality, which relates “linguistic” and “non-linguistic,” leads us to a very fundamental point in discourse studies: the meaning that we give to the “non-linguistic” (the external world existing outside our mind), happens through the “linguistic,” and it is only socially constructed, which means the relation between language and external world is arbitrary. In other words, there is no essential relation between language and the world outside. What “linguistic” does, is to impose meanings upon the external world, external objects. Meaning is imposed on external objects (the external world) through language, and the linguistic makes a system of relations that connect different external objects to each other. This system of objects, which are arbitrarily related by arbitrary imposition of meaning, is what Laclau and Mouffe consider ‘discourse’ (1990: 100).

The fact that a football is only a football as long as it is integrated within a system of socially constructed rules does not mean that it thereby ceases to be a physical object. A stone exists independently of any system of social relations, but it is, for instance, either a projectile or an object of aesthetic contemplation only within a specific discursive configuration (Laclau 1990: 100, 101).

Objects are “integrated within a system of socially constructed rules,” while the existence of them is not under question at all. Take a stone for instance, it is not the stone in itself which determines the meaning it has for us but the meaning is created by “a specific discursive configuration.” However, we should not fall into an exaggerated version of relativism, where we may think everything in a discourse is relative. Torfing (1999: 94, 95) explains it as a misunderstanding regarding the nature of discourse. The relations and identities within a discourse are not completely arbitrary. They are arbitrary in a sense that there is no essential and determined relation between a discourse and the external world (Laclau and Mouffe 2014: 99; Laclau 1990: 104). Nevertheless “the relations and identities within a concrete discourse are strictly necessary: not because they are governed by an underlying rationality, but because they are part of a whole which stands in a relation of reciprocal conditioning with its parts” (Benveniste in Torfing 1999: 95).

I think the same holds true for integration: the existence of adult refugees and their lives in Norway have no essential meaning in itself, but “a system of socially constructed rules” invests integration with meaning. In other words, how they and others perceive integration depends on discourses. Their lives in an existentialist way exist independently, but discourses impose meanings upon their lives and experiences. These meanings are arbitrary and not essential, since they could be completely different. However, they are necessary within a concrete discourse

since they are related as part of a whole. Studying these discourses is interesting because it leads us to discover the systems of socially constructed rules around adult refugees' existence and their experiences in Norway. Some of these discourses are used by the government. Anniken Hagelund (2003) has studied them. My thesis is in some ways a continuation of Hagelund's study (2003) but also very different, since I am examining discourses that are reproduced by refugees and not the government; however, it is possible that they overlap at some points.

2.2 Discourse Analysis

Here, I clarify how I carry out a discourse analysis in accordance with Laclau (and his works with Mouffe). Firstly, I start with moments, articulations, and elements. These three concepts are the first stage to understand discourse analysis and they are mainly meant to show mechanisms within one single discourse. I want to understand how my informants constitute meanings. This involves articulations, which clarify how my informants connect different words together. Any of these connections between words constitute a moment that is a partially fixed meaning. Thus, articulation refers to the process of transformation from unfixity (element) to partial fixity (moment).

The second stage to understand discourse analysis involves floating signifiers, empty signifiers, and nodal points. In that section (2.2.2), I clarify that there is a competition between discourses. A part of this competition is to fix a meaning for ambiguous concepts while different discourses use them and want them to have only one meaning. Then I explain how a discourse constitutes meanings and is constructed around one center, which partially fixes meanings that would otherwise be ambiguous. In a broader perspective, I will clarify how I can recognize a discourse and distinguish it from another discourse, alongside a discussion about the relation between discourses and hegemony.

2.2.1 Moments, Articulations & Elements

An object has an existence independent of discourses but we have no access to this independent existence whatsoever (Laclau 1990: 104). Discourses make meanings around these objects. Any meaning, to be understood, needs to have a differential position within a discourse – a position that is different from all other positions within a particular discourse. This particular position,

recognized in a particular discourse, is what Laclau and Mouffe refer to as a ‘moment’ (2014: 91). Therefore, moment is a meaning in a particular position within a particular discourse. Thus, we necessarily need a sort of relationship among positions in order to understand a particular position, a position that is different from all other positions. These relationships among positions are considered as an articulation in discourse analysis (2014: 91; Jørgensen and Phillips 2013: 38; Dunn and Neumann 2016: 50).

An articulation among meanings is the only way that a meaning can be fixed, since within a relationship we can perceive what exactly a word means. Therefore, outside the constrictions of relationships, we can never understand the exact meaning of a word (or a ‘sign’ for Jørgensen and Phillips 2013). This exact meaning inside an articulation is a moment, but a word (sign) before its exact meaning is considered as an element (Laclau and Mouffe 2014: 91). Hence, an element is a word/sign whose meaning is not fixed. A discourse fixes meanings for elements. When an element has a fixed meaning, it is not an element anymore, but a moment. Discourses transform elements to moments, but this transformation is never completed (2014: 93).

A totality (discourse) where all moments have their exact meaning and there is no element anymore will never be sutured. This means that the competition for making meanings and fulfilling elements will last without limit (2014: 92-108). For instance, when I asked my informants what integration meant, all commented “adjusting to a new environment.” This is an element because we do not know what “adjusting” means exactly if we do not articulate it with other meanings and positions. “I wanted to build up a simple life,” commented Xebat, while Hetaw articulated, “to continue my political ideas.” These two different articulations make two different moments out of “adjusting.” When Xebat articulates it with “simple life,” “adjusting” stands against “complicated life.” It implies that Xebat wanted to rest and live peacefully in Norway; she was probably tired of her past. But when Hetaw articulates it with “continue,” it implies that she was not tired. She wanted to connect her past, which was a complicated military fight, to the present, while Xebat wanted to break with her past. Hetaw articulated a moment for “adjusting” that is different from what Xebat articulated. Hence, you see that the meaning of one single element is dependent on how we articulate it with other positions and meanings within a discourse.

2.2.2 Floating Signifier, Empty Signifier & Nodal Point

I have already explained that there is a competition inside *discourses* for fixing the meaning of elements – a competition that never ends. When an element has a fixed meaning, it is considered a moment, but as long as it does not have a fixed meaning, it is considered as an element. Scholars use *the field of discursivity* for a situation where elements do not have fixed meanings, but they use *discourse* for a situation in which we have moments (not elements) with partially fixed meanings (Torfing 1999: 93). It is the difference between *discursivity* and *discourse*. The former does not have fixed meanings for its elements while the latter has partially fixed meanings for its moments.

Different *discourses* compete with each other to fix meanings of elements in *the field of discursivity*, or in other words, to dominate the *discursivity*. This domination takes place through floating signifiers and empty signifiers (Laclau 1993: 287, 288; 1990: 28; 2007: 36, 37, 44, 45). The element in *the field of discursivity*, which does not have a fixed meaning, is a floating signifier. It is a signifier with different meanings. It is ambiguous (1990: 28; 2007: 36) and we cannot fully fix one meaning for it but any *discourse* attempts to do it.

For instance, *the field of discursivity* in my thesis involves ‘desires’ as a floating signifier, which is ambiguous. In one *discourse* ‘desires’ is a wish to convince others about one’s values and thoughts but in another *discourse* ‘desires’ is a wish to be similar to others.

Fixation of any meaning for floating signifiers requires excluding other meanings. Therefore, the domination achieved by one meaning of a particular floating signifier comes alongside exclusion of other identities and meanings of the floating signifier (Jørgensen and Phillips 2013: 37-39). This process is hegemonizing the content of floating signifiers (Laclau 1990: 28). Empty signifiers are the mechanism of hegemonizing a content (2007: 36-46). They are signifiers without any content. Empty signifiers do not have any concrete meaning. They have no signified. This emptiness makes a possibility for *discourses* to put particular meanings or identities as the empty signifier’s content. Laclau (2007: 43) considers this to be a hegemonic relationship. Hence, *discourses* attempt to make a central meaning for empty signifiers. This means that a concrete group (2007: 44) will be presented as an incarnation of the empty signifier. This concrete group also represents the most privileged and central point in the discourse. All floating signifiers in *the field of discursivity* find their partially fixed meaning in relation to this privileged and central point, which is presented as the content of the empty signifier and is represented by a particular group.

For instance, if one meaning of ‘desires’ (that is a refugee should be similar to others) excludes the other meaning (that is a refugee should convince others of the refugee’s values and thoughts), the content of ‘desires’ (as a floating signifier) is hegemonized by the meaning that relates a refugee with being similar to others (and not convincing others). I have already explained that these differences among *discourses* are arbitrary for Laclau and Mouffe and we cannot ask which one is true or right, but inside a particular *discourse* they are so well-articulated that they are not arbitrary anymore. Inside a particular *discourse*, they are systematically part of the whole and related to other meanings so they do not appear arbitrary whatsoever. However, all the system as a wholeness is only arbitrary.

The most central and privileged point in a *discourse* that is represented by a particular group as the incarnation of an empty signifier is considered as a nodal point, in relation to which all elements fix their meaning. Further, floating signifiers are understood as elements in *the field of discursivity*, which transform to moments after they have been partially fixed by a nodal point (Laclau and Mouffe 2014: 99). Moreover, *discourses* constitute their domination by fixing every unfixity in relation to nodal points. This is the reason that any nodal point is hegemonic because it sits as a meaning for an empty content. To identify a particular meaning as pure content and center for empty signifiers ends up excluding other possible *discursive* configurations of the world, reality, history, conflicts etc.

It is highly complicated to apply concepts of empty signifier and floating signifier to concrete examples. Even Laclau himself has confronted this difficulty. He mentions ‘unity’ as a floating signifier once (1993: 287), and another time mentions it as an empty signifier (2007: 44). In my thesis, I consider integration as an empty signifier. Integration has no content until we present a group as its incarnation – a group that represents its content.

I will demonstrate how meanings change when I shift from one nodal point (citizenship of the world) to another (membership of nations). ‘Adjusting’ and ‘desires’ are floating signifiers in my thesis, which have partially fixed meanings in relation to an incarnation (each of the groups that I have interviewed). Two nodal points in my project refer to the existence of two *discourses*, since any *discourse* is constructed around one nodal point as a center. In other words, adjusting and desires are ambiguous elements and floating signifiers in *the field of discursivity*, and nodal points construct a partially fixed meaning for them in each *discourse*, which is represented by one particular group.

This complexity of recognizing empty signifiers and floating signifiers is more obvious when I see that my reading of Laclau differs from one presented by Jørgensen and Phillips (2013) in

their much-read textbook. Although Laclau has written ten pages about the importance of empty signifiers (2007: 36-46), Jørgensen and Phillips do not discuss it at all. As the result of ignoring empty signifiers, they do not discuss hegemony when they discuss floating signifiers, because, as I have already explained, floating signifiers are connected to hegemony through empty signifiers. In my view, it turns out to be a blurred presentation of Laclau and Mouffe's discourse analysis. In the way that I have understood Jørgensen and Phillips, negligence on empty signifiers results in the idea that nodal points are floating signifiers (2013: 39). In my view, this is not correct. 'Elements' are floating signifiers. "The status of the "elements" is that of floating signifiers, incapable of being wholly articulated to a discursive chain" (Laclau and Mouffe 2014: 99).

Moreover, when they discuss hegemony, they mostly discuss a hegemonic situation that is established by 'force' (Jørgensen and Phillips 2013: 60). Their discussion of another side of hegemony is too weak because they do not consider the other side of hegemony that does not consist of force (2013: 61). They not only do not discuss empty signifiers, but they also do not present any perception of this concept which is vital for understanding hegemony without force. For instance, Torfing (1999) does not discuss empty signifiers when he discusses hegemony, but he uses other concepts of Laclau (myth and social imaginary) (1999: 115), which express the same conception of hegemony.

Hegemony without force takes place when a particular group as incarnation of an empty signifier is representing a central point; this is a hegemonic relationship (Laclau 2007: 43, 44). 'Nation' is one of these empty signifiers because there is no content in this word (Torfing 1999: 98). Jørgensen and Phillip demonstrate that nation is a floating signifier with different meanings in different discourses (2013: 178). This is probably because they have no perception of empty signifiers' mechanism, and consequently, no perception of hegemony without force.

I discussed Jørgensen and Phillips to make two points: Firstly, hegemony is not necessarily operated through force, at least not in my reading of Laclau (and his works with Mouffe). Thus, we can also discuss it in peaceful situations including Scandinavia. Secondly, I have an alternative reading of Laclau, which I will apply to my material in the analysis and conclusion chapter. I discussed Jørgensen and Phillips to show what distinguishes my reading from theirs.

2.3 Previous Literature: Bridging the Gaps

Integration of refugees is discussed in a large number of scholarly works both inside and outside Norway. Here, I present an overview of the literature. First, I start with a presentation of what is a rather broad literature, before zooming in on previous work of particular relevance to my research.

Part of the previous research examines refugees in order to understand the difference between Muslims and Norwegians (Jacobsen 2002; 2006; 2011; Walseth 2016). Others differentiate between different ethnic groups of Muslims (Nes, Skoug and Strømstad 2005; Østberg 2003). Some researchers are more interested in ethnic questions in relation to integration (Kamalkhani 1988; Fuglerud 1999; Engebriksen and Fuglerud 2006; 2007; Fangen 2008), while others have been particularly interested in predicaments and dilemmas around integration and refugees (Bø 1988; 2004; Rugkåsa 2012).

Multicultural and nation-building studies are another approach to refugees and their integration in Norway and in Europe (Hagelund 2002; Otterstad 2008; Bygnes 2012; Favell 2013; Favell 2014). Here, scholars have examined the relation between activation discourse and citizenship discourse (Hagelund and Kavli 2009; Djuve 2011). Research on immigrants and refugees is also carried out in order to contribute to the broader literature on citizenship (Aleinikoff and Klusmeyer 2001; Bloemraad 2006). Studies have also looked at how refugees deal with the labor market, which is a highly relevant topic in the Norwegian discussion about refugees (Lie 1983; Guha 1998; Rugkåsa 2010; 2011; NOU 2017:2). However, that does not mean that the cultural approach is ignored in Norway (Engebriksen and Fuglerud 2009). Whether and how refugees experience racism in Norway has been extensively researched (Eitinger 1981; Brox 1991; Gullestad 2002a; Gullestad 2002b; Gullestad 2004; Gressgård 2014; Agora 2014). Moreover, the political discourses about refugees and integration, alongside moral questions in relation to immigration control, have been among some other interesting studies in Norway (Bø 2002; Hagelund 2003; 2004). The bureaucracy of immigration control has been problematized (Fuglerud 2003). The question of immigration is sometimes more generally discussed (Simmel 1950; Fuglerud 2001), sometimes specifically as an exile experience (Berg and Lauritsen 2008), and sometimes in between general and specific aspects (Fuglerud 1997; Fontanari 2015).

Thus, this is a large and varied literature. As my research objective is about perceptions of integration, the remainder of the literature review will be focused towards this topic. This

project is close to Anniken Hagelund's works because I use discourse analysis, but it is different because I examine the informants' perspective and not the state's.

Hagelund (2003) discusses how attentions towards 'failed integration policy' arose in Norwegian political debates. She argues that integration was defined to be a good social model for the whole population so that no vulnerable groups would fall outside society. Hagelund finds that there was a goal to preserve a state of equality despite immigration, in order for the Norwegian society become a better and more harmonious place. This thinking would later face a backlash, with questions raised on whether integration policy had been ruled by mistaken desires to do good. Here, Hagelund highlights the concept of 'kind-ism' (snillisme), which represents a mistaken kindness. The concept was coined by Carl I. Hagen (Progress Party Leader at the time) and picked up by Rune Gerhardsen (the head of the city government in Oslo at the time, representing the Labour Party). In this presentation of integration, the attack is on "weakest groups in society rather than tackling the real issues" (2003: 197). Gerhardsen defined snillisme as a misunderstanding of the good will arising from good intentions; individuals were not taking enough responsibility anymore (Hagelund 2003).

Hagelund also discusses Unni Wikan's discourse, professor in social anthropology, that gave rise to similar questions about good will and poor outcomes (2003: 198). She discusses the importance of the language skills for immigrants and their children: without a proper command of Norwegian language the immigrants' children are "sentenced to a life outside of the regular market – a life in the underclass" (Hagelund 2003: 199).

According to Hagelund (2003), the government had taken aboard many of Wikan's points. The government emphasized women's particular needs and started to consider immigrants as individuals and not only as part of a culture or religion. Furthermore, the Minister for Local Government, Kjell Opseth, "spoke about the limits and rules of acceptable behavior in the 'multicultural Norway'" (2003: 201).⁷ He discussed that a multicultural society is valuable only if people are not left 'outside.'

Hagelund's work on integration emphasizes the hegemonic discourses. She attempts to understand integration through what researchers and politicians have said. She discusses a new concept in the Norwegian political debates and argues Wikan wrote in the same direction. While this is an important contribution to our knowledge of integration, Hagelund only studies how the majority is thinking about integration, but the minorities' perspectives are not reflected.

⁷ In Norway, most tasks related to integration are in the hands of local government.

Those who have gone through the integration process are absent in Hagelund's study. I bridge this gap by presenting the minorities' discourses of integration.

I may build on Øivind Fuglerud's (1999) anthropological study of a diaspora group in Norway. Fuglerud concentrates on characteristics of Tamil migration to Norway – how Tamils in Sri Lanka got interested in immigration to Norway and how they did it (1999: 55-71). Afterward, he explains Tamils' viewpoint of life in exile (1999: 72-94). My thesis is also close to Fuglerud's works because all my informants have a common ethnic background but it is different from his works because their ethnic background is not the way I categorize them. I do it according to their political attitudes. I do not see my informants as victims or a population in exile, as Fuglerud does.

Øivind Fuglerud (1999) develops his study about a stateless nation, Tamils. He discusses that the state of Sri Lanka was involved in ethnic cleansing of Tamils (1999: 13). He clarifies where Tamils live and explains the growth of nationalism among them (1999: 20-31).

Fuglerud explains restrictions on Tamils' opportunity for education as one of the main reasons that many young Tamils were involved in the establishment of the Tamil Students' Union. Tamils were dissatisfied because their language was not official in Sri Lanka and peasants from other communities were settled within their own "homeland" (1999: 31-32). The Tamil's militant struggle came out of this context. Fuglerud associates LTTE, one of the militant organizations, with brutality and terror. He demonstrates this organization separated from the major population of Tamils: ". . . it is not *their* organisation in any meaningful sense of the term, it is a force which rules them . . ." (1999: 53).

Fuglerud does not go beyond the approach that Tamils are a stateless nation. He insists on studying them in relation to their "homeland." It seems like Tamils are only a stateless nation. Even when he considers their viewpoint, it is still in relation to the state of life in exile. In my view, Fuglerud does not let Tamils talk as individuals regardless of their "homeland." Their lives in Norway are heavily under the shadow of their "homeland" in Fuglerud's works; they are victims with a terrible fate; they are discriminated against in both Sri Lanka and Norway. They have a high rate of employment and low level of welfare support in Norway but their main employment is cleaning and washing dishes in restaurants (1999: 95).

My informants do not have much in common with the construction of 'Tamils' in Fuglerud's approach specially because the political aspect of Tamils' identity is not central. Komala was a Marxist party and had members from other ethnicities such as Turks and Persians, so it is a

partial accident that all my informants are Kurds. However, although my informants have the same ethnic background, it is not what binds them together. Their political approach, their common experience and their belief in their collective dream (see 3.6.1) is the basis for categorizing them as a group. I do not recognize them as victims in Iran or in Norway. Many of them recognize themselves as fighters and not victims in both Iranian and Norwegian contexts. Fuglerud doubts if Tamils are well integrated in Norway (1999: 173), while many of my informants can be examples for a high level of integration in Norway; some of them had a higher education degree than mine when I interviewed them. Moreover, when Fuglerud discusses integration, he concentrates on an exile identity. My approach differs from his in that I am explicitly considering what integration is from the informants' perspective. Even if Fuglerud answered what integration is, he is not studying it from the informants' perspective; rather he is telling the Tamils what their identity is.

Literature on refugees written from their own perspective is few and far between. It is really difficult to find literature about refugees from their own perspective. Marianne Gullestad explains that the majority is mostly studying immigrants from the majority perspective:

The researching (including this book), is so far mostly done by majority people in majority institutions, financed of 'action-oriented' governmental research funding. The conceptualizations in the literature involve a strong impact of being formed by 'us' for 'our' professional and political needs (Gullestad 2002a: 170).

Naushad Ali Qureshi is one of the few people researching minorities in Norway who has a minority background. However, simply having a minority background is not enough to argue that he is not among the "us/our" Gullestad discusses. Qureshi (2005) discusses the dichotomy of "Norwegians/immigrants" and explains how the media and the majority population construct those concepts. This is also an important issue in some works by Gullestad (2002a, 2002b). However, neither Qureshi nor Gullestad discuss how immigrants themselves construct or interpret those concepts. This is what I do in my thesis; I demonstrate how refugees construct the concept 'Norwegians' and some other concepts (see 3.4.1). In the conclusion chapter I will discuss further how this thesis contributes to Gullestad's problematization of the dichotomy "Norwegians" versus "immigrants" from a minority perspective (adult refugees).

My thesis contributes to studies by Marianne Rugkåsa through comparing her research with how my informants have understood integration. For instance, in "4.1.1 Influence," I will compare my informant Ajwan's approach with Rugkåsa's about refugees' influence in the

Norwegian society. Nevertheless, despite the critical approach Rugkåsa has, she is not bridging the gaps that I have mentioned. For instance, she is not discovering or developing any concept constructed by minorities/refugees.

Rugkåsa (2008: 89) discusses “an unfortunate specialization and a personalized responsibility for working with minorities” in Norway. She argues the increasing desire in Norway for persuading people with minority background towards working with minorities can result in an exaggerated focus on ‘ethnicity’ as an underlying solution for problems. This “unfortunate specialization” is intertwined with the exclusion of experts with an ethnic minority background. Rugkåsa explains that in many education institutions in Norway such as universities and colleges there are “almost zero” faculty members with ethnic minority backgrounds (2008: 90). She argues these institutions are vital because they have the power to produce science and therefore the power to define how reality looks. She demonstrates (2008: 91) that employing more faculty members with ethnic minority backgrounds can increase a better understanding of the groups with ethnic minority backgrounds. However, she remains critical since what minorities think about themselves is not legitimated unless the majority experts accept it and problematize it as legitimated science. Hence, she argues there is a sort of exclusion of minorities’ perceptions of themselves; what minorities claim about themselves is less legitimate than what the majority claim about them and minorities are not part of the game to shape what and how they are.

My social position and background differentiate me from most of the aforementioned researchers. In the method chapter I am going to discuss approaches that demonstrate this personal distinction is epistemologically crucial because it helps me to bridge the gap that is well-defined and understood but not solved: minorities are not part of the game to shape what and how they are. Discourse analysis is an appropriate strategy to give this opportunity to informants to shape how reality looks. In order to fill the gap, I develop some concepts from my informants’ perspective (see 3.6.1). Furthermore, I clarify how integration looks like for my informants. Expressing their political identity is another way to shape them according to their own perceptions of themselves.

In addition to filling the gap in previous research, the group I am studying and the way I am categorizing them are new in Norway. I have already briefly mentioned that refugees in Norway are studied from various approaches. Generally, immigrants are examined in order to answer questions about religion, ethnicity, life in exile, gender, generations, and citizenship, but I have

not found any research on integration of Marxist refugees in Norway, and I have not found any researchers who categorize refugees according to their political attitudes in Norway.

There has been some research about immigrants voting behavior in Norway (Bjørklund and Kval 2001; Bergh, Bjørklund, and Aalandslid 2008) but here the attention is directed towards who is voting and for what political party on the one hand, and the consequences of immigration on the Norwegian political parties on the other hand.

Political attitudes are vital because: Firstly, it is not easy to access them since they are not colors we see on refugee's face, or accents we hear so it is more complicated to explore them. Secondly, at the same time, political attitudes and principles can be reasons or explanations for many practices of refugees. It is probably one of the reasons that people from the same background are different. Thirdly, concentration on refugees' self-images and political attitudes makes the research closer to refugees' and minorities' perceptions and makes a broader space for not only answering the majorities' questions about refugees, but also answering the refugees' questions about themselves. A refugee is maybe more curious to read research about political questions in which she is engaged in her everyday life. Thus, she is maybe less objectified as a stranger and more recognized as an individual with political content.

3 Method: Strategies for Hunting⁸ the Hegemonic Whisper

This study aims to explore how former members of Komala perceived and experienced integration in Norway. In this chapter, I will explain why my strategy to obtain the material suits my research question and theoretical framework. Then I will clarify how I obtained the material.

3.1 Relevance of Interviewing

Discourse analysis is usually used to study texts and documents; it is not a common theoretical framework to analyze interviews. Therefore, it is a common strategy to explore meanings produced by authorities and people in power positions since what they say will be written and lasting. However, Laclau and Mouffe's discourse analysis does not have any contradiction with non-written meanings; in fact, every sort of meaning production, whether in texts or in oral speaking, is a source of analysis. Hence, my method is not less legitimated because it is not a text. Both texts and unwritten sources are epistemologically equal to study in my theoretical framework despite the fact that the former is more common and the latter is less common. Even if we assume a text is a better source when analyzing discourses, interviews are also transformed to texts after transcription.

What can distinguish an interview transcription from a text or document is the collaborative meaning construction of interviews because "Any interview situation – no matter how formalized, restricted, or standardized – relies upon the interaction between participants" (Garfinkel, Sacks, Schgloff, and Jefferson in Gubrium and Holstein 2003: 78). However, it is difficult to claim that in other type of texts and documents meanings are not socially constructed; in fact, according to my theoretical framework, any sort of meaning is only socially constructed and we do not have any access to any foundation that is not socially constructed. Hence, the social construction essence of meanings is not only typical in interviews and it is the same in all other texts insofar as they are also socially constructed.

⁸ I use the word 'hunt' because articulations are something fluid and it is difficult to capture them. They are flowing and running away. You must hunt them down, write them down, and imprison them in a thesis to have them forever.

Even if we assume interviews are more affected by the interaction between participants, it is still difficult to doubt the importance of interviewing because “Interviewing gives us access to the observations of others. Through interviewing we can learn about places we have not been and could not go and about settings in which we have not lived” (Weiss 1994: 1). If we restrict discourse analysis only to available texts and documents, we are reinforcing the hegemonic and weakening the non-hegemonic discourses. Interviewing gives us this opportunity to explore other perceptions and experiences we do not have access to otherwise. Hence, my methodological strategy is appropriate to filling the gap I discussed in “2.3 Previous Literature” since I discover how informants interpret their perceptions, insofar as I let them shape their experiences.

In order to answer my research question, I need a type of information that is not available. It is neither written nor documented how former members of Komala experienced integration. The only way to access it is to ask them. Interviewing is again suitable since my approach is to understand their integration from their own perspective (Kvale and Brinkmann 2015: 20).

“Active interviewing” was the best interview strategy to answer my research question because I had been through integration personally and I was not neutral regarding integration in Norway whatsoever. I had feelings, curiosity, and preexisting knowledge of integration. These three indicators were the source of spontaneous questions I asked during the interviews in addition to the interview guide. Thus, my interviews were “. . . an occasion for constructing, not merely discovering or conveying, information” (Gubrium and Holstein 2003: 73). Moreover, Pierre Bourdieu is one of the sociologists who has done non-neutral interviews and has legitimated the state of being a non-neutral interviewer (Kvale and Brinkmann 2015: 26). “Active interviewing” is also very relevant to my theoretical framework since every sort of meaning is only social constructed in this framework so according to my theoretical approach, it is not a problem that I was not neutral while interviewing. Summing up, the interviews were conducted to understand how informants conceptualized their experiences – they talked, explained, and clarified and I had usually short questions to understand what they meant more precisely insofar they were the senders and I was the receiver.

3.2 How It Started: Recruitment

Person: “They [Capitalists] won’t give you a good grade if you write about Marxists. You have to write what they want to pass your thesis. University is just bullshit here. I have written theses

in two different programs and got A in both. In one of them, I had to interview somebody. I just made up an interview and got A. Don't bother yourself, just do something simple, get a good grade and find a job. If they suspect that you are a Marxist, they won't let you find a job, or find a high position job."

Me: "I'm not thinking about getting a high position. I want to do my thesis and this is the topic I have chosen to work on, Marxism. I don't think it's that dangerous as you say. Actually, I have gotten good feedback, and my supervisor is very interested."

Person: "You don't need to be at a university to work on Marxism. You can do it outside of university. Find books and read. Then do what you should do."

Me: "But I have decided to do it at university."

Person: "They won't let you, it's impossible"

Me: "Don't you believe in resistance? I write about what I want. They can throw me out of university or give me a bad grade . . . but I don't care. I got arrested in Tehran twice. What can they do more than that? I follow my interests. If I fail, so I have failed. But resistance is always possible. Nobody even knows you exist in Norway. You have done so much and your generation is dying in silence. Presenting a Marxist group in university, in itself, is a kind of work."

Person: "Well, if you really believe in good things, I will do anything for you."

This was the kind of conversations I had before recruiting my informants, with a former member of Komala who helped me to find informants afterward. The point of bringing this discussion here is to show a small part of the process of how current and former members of Komala trusted, accepted, and helped me. It was a process that started before the thesis, and many such dialogues occurred, until I was not a total outsider anymore. I had many similar discussions with (former) members of Komala to convince them that it was possible to write about Marxists at a university. They were usually very skeptical. Two former members of Komala (especially one of them who had a close family relation with me), who I knew a long time before the project, helped me to recruit informants. Therefore, I did a snowball sampling.

If the people you want to interview are likely to know others like themselves, you can ask *them* for referrals. Then the referrals can provide still further referrals. This technique is known as *snowball sampling* (Weiss 1994: 25).

Thus, I started out with my existing network of contacts, asking them to recommend other people to me that fitted the criteria (current or existing Komala member that arrived in Norway in the same immigration wave). This way, I was able to recruit and interview 10 people. That many members of Komala knew me, and some of my family members were well-known Peshmarga (freedom fighter) in Komala, were important keys in my being trusted by them. I have encountered former members of Komala at different parties and dinners where family

members had invited me. I share their mother tongue, Kurdish, and Persian, the other language they use a lot. At the same time, I am deeply familiar with their culture because I have grown up in Kurdistan of Iran where they grew up. Therefore, it has been very easy for me to have a comfortable conversation with them. Moreover, that I was a refugee like them in Norway creates a feeling of similarity, which helped me understand them.

Although I share many of their political values, I am not one of them because I have not been a Peshmarga. They have been Peshmarga, many of them more than 10 years, involved in a military fight in the mountains of Kurdistan. My experiences of politics were totally different than theirs. I finished high school in Saqqez (my hometown), before moving to Tehran to study a bachelor in sociology. It was only there that I engaged in politics through the student movement in the University of Tehran, subsequently forcing me to flee the country due to political persecution. Hence, I shared some of their experiences (refugee), but our political experiences were different. It puts me in the position of both an insider and an outsider to this group.

To balance my insider relation with them, after discussing it with my supervisor, I avoided interviewing any family members. However, a family member who was not so close to me was interested in the project and started discussing it with me, asking various questions. It was a tempting situation, a ready informant, which persuaded me to interview him. My supervisor was critical to having a family member (although we were not so close) as an informant, but the fact that he discussed some articulations that were not discussed by other informants persuaded me to keep him. Thus, in light of the substantive contributions gained and especially that this informant was not closely related, this interview was included in the material. The other nine informants did not have any family or any other close relation with me.

I have the same insider-outsider position to the sociology of integration in Norway that I had in relation to my informants. I am an insider in the sense that I have gone through the process of integration personally. Just six years ago, I was personally living in a Norwegian asylum center. But I am an outsider now, because I am looking at the phenomenon as a sociology student, a member of the academic population in Norway.

Wylie (2003; 2012) discusses the advantages of an insider-outsider position. This position can help to “understand the norms of a dominant culture as well as those that structure your own subdominant community” (2012: 63). I can “grasp the effects of power relations on their own understanding and that of others” (2003: 34) thanks to my insider-outsider position. Hence, my social position and background gives me a deeper understanding of the phenomenon that I

am studying. With a Bourdieuan terminology (1990: 61), I argue that my insider-outsider position to integration gives me “the practical sense” or “a feel for the game,” due to my loved experience, which Bourdieu explains as “a mastery acquired by experience of the game.”

3.2.1 Sample Characteristics

There are various generations of former members of Komala in Norway. I only interviewed the generation who were Peshmarga during the 24-day war of Sna, in 1980s, and came to Norway in 1990s. Some other former members of Komala, living in Norway, were Peshmarga (freedom fighter) in 1990s, and some were after 2000. The situation in Kurdistan, Iran, and Komala changed significantly afterward. The integration process has also changed dramatically in Norway. As a result, I focus on a specific group to keep the context (of their emigration as well as immigration) more comparable.

In order to answer my research question, I interviewed 10 informants. They were atheists and they typically did not like religions, including Islam. I got the impression that they even underestimated and belittled Muslims. They were obviously proud of not being Muslims. Many of them criticized Islam and Muslims for not being adaptable to or suitable for a modern society like Norway with progressive rights for women. They criticized the hijab. They were proud of being feminists. Male informants were proud of supporting their wives but my female informants criticized Komala for discriminating against women.

I had four female informants who were approximately between 50 and 55 years old. My six male informants were approximately between 55 and 65 years old. All of them had permanent jobs, and they were living in their own houses. Six of them had higher education. They had never been in Iran after their escape because it would be too dangerous for them. Furthermore, they were politically against the Islamic Republic of Iran. Ostensibly, there was no doubt that they were well integrated. All of them had some sort of deep emotions for Norway and they celebrated Christmas.

Almost all of them insisted they had their values before they came to Norway, developed and nurtured by Komala so they explained how Komala had a broad and influential system in Kurdistan of Iran, before and after the revolution of Iran in 1979, to spread Marxist and modern values among people. They proudly insisted that Komala was the original source of new and

democratic values for them, not Norway, but that they had better opportunities in Norway to practice them.

3.2.2 Interviewing and Interview Guide

In nine cases, I called my informants to see if they were interested in the project. In one case, I asked while we were talking together face to face. I explained the project – how former members of Komala (a Marxist party) perceived and experienced integration. Furthermore, I explained the ethical principles for them – for instance: participation was voluntary; they could leave the project whenever they wished; their identities will remain anonymous; they did not need to answer all the questions; and the transcribed interviews would be stored securely and destroyed upon the completion of the study.

After recruiting, I either called them or sent them a message to make an appointment. I conducted all interviews in Central Kurdish (Sorani). It was a natural choice because Kurdish was their mother tongue. The very fact that I could speak both Persian and Norwegian helped me understand them whichever language they used. I allowed the informants to choose the location for the interview. Two informants invited me into their home for the interview. Five informants invited me for a dinner in their home. I did two interviews in cafés, where the informants insisted on paying for my coffee. One informant came to my home for the interview. These conditions show the deep trust and confidence they had in me.

Furthermore, I had long and extensive interviews with them. They lasted from one and a half hours to two and a half hours. This confidence would not have been achieved if I had been a total outsider, or if there had been a language barrier. Another reason for this confidence was that they were glad to see me, a refugee like them, being successful in studying. Some of them demonstrated that they were proud of me. In some cases, after the answer, they told me “What more do you need? Just tell me and I will tell you.”

Before the interviews, I handed my informants the informed consent form (repeating the information about informed consent that I had explained to them when I asked them if they wanted to participate) and I recorded all the interviews. During the interviews I had a fixed interview guide with nine themes and follow-up questions under each theme. I understood immediately during the first interview that even follow-up questions were not enough to satisfy my curiosity. In some other interviews, I understood that I had irrelevant questions. Thus, I

adjusted to the situation in each interview, following up with spontaneous questions until I felt I could move to the next topic in the interview guide. When a fixed question was irrelevant or had already been addressed via another question, I dropped it. I also noticed that not everybody was directly answering what I was looking for. Some of them answered irrelevantly and some did not understand my questions in a way that satisfied my curiosity. For example, when I asked them “Why did you become a member of Komala?” some answered “how” they did it. Thus, I would follow up with additional questions.

I started out with a fixed interview guide, but I ended up in a semi-structured one because I needed to adjust my interviews to the social setting and the development of the conversation. Both my theoretical framework and interview strategy were prepared to have a social constructed approach to reality and interviews, so a fixed interview guide was used as a guide rather than as a script to be followed in detail.

3.3 Ethical Considerations

At a dinner party with former members of Komala, A (who was my informant) asked if I was going to interview B. “Sorry, I can’t answer this question,” I said. A simply turned to B and asked if he was my informant. “Yes,” answered B.

The state of being insider-outsider gives rise to some ethical dilemmas and maybe problems. For instance, it was almost impossible to keep a perfect observation of the principle of anonymity. The informants were friends with each other, and I could not control their relations to maintain their anonymity. However, two of them told me explicitly that they did not care about such things. Despite this fact, I have kept their anonymity to a large extent. I have never mentioned their identities to anybody. In addition, I have changed their names and other characteristics that could have identified them, like age, gender, and name of places, whenever it was necessary.

I got the ethical approval for the study from Norwegian Social Sciences Data Services (NSD), in August 2017. The first interview was challenging for me since I had mistakenly printed the second to the last version of the informed consent form when I interviewed him. He was obviously offended when I handed him the final version of the consent form one week later, which was only slightly different. It did not happen in the other interviews. When I asked him about his family problems in Norway, I felt that he was not that comfortable with the question.

I changed the way I asked it in the other interviews. It functioned much better after that. For example, I explained in advance that the next question would be about their private lives, and they could just skip it, or answer in a general manner if they did not want to talk about their private lives. It seemed like some of them were even more open after this strategy; it created a state of intimacy and trust. Another challenge in the first interview was that I asked a question using SMS afterwards. It was clearly a mistake. I did it because he started sending me messages and explaining more about his answers, so I felt free to ask a question via SMS. I asked, “Why don’t you fight for your principles anymore? Don’t you believe in them anymore?” His answer was weird, so I called him. Then, I understood that my question was a challenging question for him. He was frustrated, with a shaking voice, accusing me of exploring his private life. I apologized to him and promised him that I would delete this part of his answers (which I did).

I also asked the others the same question but this time I prepared them in advance: “Now, I’ll ask you a question that can challenge you. Someone got offended by this question but I ask it because your answer is important for my thesis. Please skip it if you find it inappropriate.” This strategy functioned. Others answered peacefully. I never asked any question using SMS again. However, this gave rise to another ethical dilemma. The answer he gave me while he was frustrated on the phone affected my interpretation of his interview. I got a very original interpretation as a result of his honesty in the frustration. However, I did not transcribe the conversation on the phone, and I deleted the information I promised to delete; asking confrontational questions, such as the question I discussed, and challenging informants, are allowed and legitimated in confrontational interviews (Kvale and Brinkmann 2015: 187-189). Although I did not plan to have confrontational interviews I had one confrontational question because I found it interesting and useful. However, I changed the way I asked this question following the experience from the first interview.

I gained the trust of the informants. Their age and social position make them less vulnerable to possible gossip, which is possibly the reason they discussed their thoughts and experiences with me freely. As a result of their confidence in me, I know much about their secrets and internal conflicts now after the interviews. I do not find any ethical considerations to this knowledge, but I would find it against research ethics if I did not keep these secrets for the rest of my life.

3.4 Coding: The Start of Analyzing

After the interviews, I transcribed them in the original language, Central Kurdish. Then I started reading them and coding. Aksel Tjora (2012: 179) suggests starting coding with concepts that already exist in the interviews. I restricted myself to the words my informants used in shaping many codes. However, I also used my perceptions and imagination to find codes when the informants were talking about the same condition/state/manner with different words so I could find what they said about the same situation afterward under one single code.

Coding around 500 pages in Kurdish took almost two months. I used the program OneNote because it was possible to use Central Kurdish alphabet (which is similar to Arabic and is written right to left) with that program. I ended up with more than 150 codes, and 13 discourses in the first round of coding. Then, I developed three codes which were more general, suitable for categorizing, and more relevant to my research question (2012: 185): how did former members of Komala perceive and experience integration in Norway? These codes could function as floating signifiers (see 2.2.2) so that I could discuss different discourses through them. They were: adjusting to a new environment, desires, and prove yourself. These three codes (floating signifiers) include 40 primary codes. ‘Adjusting’ and ‘desires’ are for discussing the two main discourses of integration. ‘Prove yourself’ was for discussing racism, but I dropped it because of time constraints. The rest of the codes helped me to constitute the discourses, discover the differences between citizens of the world and members of nations, and build up one other concept (see 3.6.1). Furthermore, ‘adjusting’ is a direct translation of the Kurdish word “ته تبيق” (tatbiq), which was directly used by all my informants and ‘desires’ is a phrase for my informants’ wishes, aims, regrets, state of contentment, principles, and ambitions.

3.4.1 Developing Concepts

During the interviews and while I was coding them, I noticed my informants had a special understanding of their (inter)national identity and a particular expression of what they were fighting for in Komala. In order to clarify these patterns, I developed two concepts based on what my informants expressed: ‘citizens of the world’ and ‘collective dream.’ These concepts will be very helpful to understand discourses my informants configure.

- Citizens of the world

According to the way my informants deal with the question of identity, I divide them into two groups. One group involves those who associate themselves with nations (Kurdish, Norwegian, Iranian). For instance, when I asked Befrin “Where do you belong to?” she answered:

Still, I recognize myself from Sna [Sanandaj]. I still recognize myself as a Kurd, being Kurdish is always with me, I’ll never forget it, but I don’t recognize myself as an Iranian. Now, I mostly belong to Norway.

In this quote, we see that Befrin’s perception of her identity was associated with the existence of nations such as “being Kurdish” and “belong to Norway.” Moreover, she felt an essential relationship with her hometown, Sna. On the contrary, when I asked Xebat the same question, she answered:

According to my life and the immigrations I have gone through, I belong to all those places [I have lived in]. I can say that I don’t belong to any places, or I can say that I belonged to the place where I was living.

Xebat represent a second group, which are those who do not illustrate their identity in terms of nations. As Xebat explained their perception, they belong to where they live. They named the cities they had lived in like Tehran, Kirkuk, and Oslo, and demonstrated that they belonged to all those places and in contrast to Befrin, they did not mention that “being Kurdish” is something essential for them and they did not felt an essential relationship with their hometown. Two of them used the concept of “citizen of the world” (*verdensborger*) hence I adopted this concept to identify them.

Of my ten informants, four informants were *members of nations*, and five informants were *citizens of the world*. It was more complicated to categorize Ajwan. When I asked him where he belonged, he answered:

I’m Kurdish, born in Kurdistan, my parents were Kurdish, my mother tongue is Kurdish . . . I think all humans, with all the different colors, with all the differences, if they are sharing the same values with me; which are equality, freedom, justice, and a society with right norms and principles; no matter who they are, I can easily find common interests with them, match with them and have close relations with them. Therefore, I have no nationality in that sense, but like everybody else, I was born in a particular place, and I’m Kurdish.

His insistence that he was Kurdish makes his articulation different than citizens of the world. However, he clarified that values were more important for him than nationality. One can argue that he associated his identity with a nation because he insisted on being Kurdish. But I argue that “sharing the same values” was more important for him than his nationality. When it came to values, “I have no nationality,” he said. Kurdishness was a fact to him, although he belonged more to his values than to his nationality. Making values more central than nationality is closer to being a citizen of the world than being a member of a nation. As he clarified, his close relations were based on “sharing the same values” and not nationality.

- Collective Dream

All my informants demonstrated that they were involved in a Marxist military fight in the 1980s against the Islamic Republic of Iran. Moreover, they demonstrated that they were aware of the situation and knew they could be killed anytime, but they chose to fight. When I asked them what they were fighting for, all of them used the term “equality.” Seven informants also referred to “freedom.” Two of them also mentioned “justice”. Hence, equality, freedom and justice were a conceptualization of what they were fighting for according to their articulations. I call it the *collective dream* for which they fought. It is a dream in the sense that they fought, militarily and politically for an envisaged better society, and they were willing even to sacrifice their lives for it. It is collective in that sense that they did not talk about their voluntary sacrifices as individual sacrifices. Their participation was an individual choice, but not an individual action. When they explained their sacrifice, most of them used ‘we’ as a pronoun and not ‘I’. All of them stated that most members (if not everybody) in Komala were willing to sacrifice everything they had. Furthermore, there are some examples from when I asked my informants how much they were willing to give for their goal. In my question, which I asked in Kurdish, I used ‘تو’ (to), which is a singular Kurdish pronoun for ‘you,’ but they answered in plural ‘ئێمه’ (ema), meaning ‘we.’

Well, we were young that time, revolutionary youth who didn’t have many individual wishes for themselves. We were willing to sacrifice our life. (Aso)

We were people who were ready to give their lives. (Befrin)

We knew that death was involved. (Jila)

I think all my generation who got involved in politics, generally as a part of politics in our society, ended up in giving up their most important things. (Rebwar)

The concept of *collective dream* distinguishes the two identity groups mentioned above. Members of nations had lost their faith in fighting for the *collective dream*. Norway was an ideal system for them. It was a realization of the *collective dream* for them. On the contrary, citizens of the world still believed in fighting for the *collective dream*. They were skeptical to the Norwegian system. It was still a capitalist nation-state for them. This will be further discussed in chapter 4.

3.4.2 Methodological Reflections

“What does integration mean for the Norwegian state?” was one of the main questions in my interview guide. Before interviewing, the point of this question was to make the informants comfortable to talk about integration and let them criticize the concept integration if they wished to do so. I had asked my informants what integration, in their view, was for the Norwegian government and authorities. The word I used for “the Norwegian state” was “ده وڵه تی نوروژ”.” This word can be translated to both “the Norwegian state” and “the Norwegian government.” In the follow-up questions, I used other words such as “جیڤه ده وڵه تیه کان” and “نه هادهای ده وڵه”.” The former is Kurdish, and the latter comes from Persian, and both mean “Norwegian authorities.” In this way, I could be surer my informants understood what I meant and they had more information to share with me.

At the time, it was not clear to me how confusing this question could be. While I was analyzing the data, difficult questions rose; what is the Norwegian state? Who is representing the Norwegian state? These questions even seemed more confusing as almost a third of the Norwegian working population are in the public sector that is for the government and authorities. Clearly, this is not a uniform entity. On the other side, if the question was not suitable, how could my informants answer it so clearly and detailed?

This confusion led me to this conclusion that it was a hole in the theoretical framework. I made the concept ‘hegemonic whisper’ to fill this hole. It is not important what my informants exactly meant by “Norwegian government or authorities.” The point is that they had a perception of hegemonic discourses and those words were only methodological strategies to persuade my informants to express their understandings of the hegemonic discourses. Therefore, when I reflect their articulations of “Norwegian government or authorities,” it has nothing to do with individuals who are working for the Norwegian government and authorities.

3.5 Reliability, Validity and Generalizability

- Reliability

A conventional way of speaking about reliability is to say that the project is reliable if other researchers can come to the same results from the same informants at other times (Kvale and Brinkmann 2015: 276). This state of reliability can be confusing in my thesis because of my skills and special relationship to the informants. I spoke their languages fluently and I was familiar with their culture. I put it this way: if another student with my skills and relationship to the informants does the same research, she should come to the same result. However, I did use an interview guide (see Appendix 2), which is positive for reliability, but also increases the transparency about my approach.

My questions during the interviews were usually open and informants were free to answer the questions in the way they wanted as long as it was relevant. It allowed me to keep the reliability during the interviews because I was not leading them to any special answer. My Kurdish was also good enough to understand them without any difficulty. I did not have any difficulty understanding other languages (Persian and Norwegian) they used during the interviews. I recorded everything they said during the interviews so I had full access to their answers afterwards. However, I translated Kurdish and Norwegian to English: I have translated informants' quotes where I used them in the thesis. While any translation risks a losing some of the original meaning, I have cross-checked many of my translations with other multilingual persons in order to avoid possible mistakes. Furthermore, I have also translated all citations from Norwegian textbooks/articles. Thus, I take full responsibility for any mistakes in the translations from Kurdish and Norwegian.

- Validity

Validity addresses the question if a method in fact explores what it claims to be exploring (Kvale and Brinkmann 2015: 276). Seale (2007) discusses that we are living in a stage of social sciences with no "fixed gold standard for truth," so what a researcher should learn to do is not to provide an emancipatory position, but she should learn to respect the multilateral quality of social sciences. He argues there is no philosophical foundation for truth or fact anymore but a good-quality research makes its own story and constructs its own facts. He demonstrates that social theories provide a conceptual framework to see some things that common sense is not

able to see. Furthermore, he explains that a good-quality methodology does not pick a side in a dispute but rather considers various positions and occasions.

My method chapter presents my approach to studying how former members of Komala perceived and experienced integration in Norway. Obtaining refugees' own account of their experiences via interviews is a valid approach to studying refugees' understanding of integration. In-depth interviews with open-ended questions allows for a deeper understanding of refugees' experiences than for instance a survey or employment data. Moreover, I have explained how I obtained my material, and how I treated it before the analysis. I use the conceptual framework of Laclau and Mouffe to see something in my material that others cannot see since it could not be readily observable to an observer without these theoretical lenses. Thus, I have made a new concept to show the even more complicated mechanisms of integration – I am digging into integration in order to bring out more complexities and I do not need to pick a side. Thus, the methodological approach taken is valid to answer my research question.

- Generalizability

This project is an example of case study research because I focus on understanding the dynamics present within one single setting (Eisenhardt 1989: 534). Furthermore, interviewing is one of the sources one can use in case study research (1989: 534, 535), as I did. According to Eisenhardt, shaping hypotheses is possible in case study research through emerging concepts and relationships between variables (1989: 541). One can compare them systematically with other studies to discuss theories. The discourses of integration that I discuss can be systematically compared with other studies that have been done about the concept of integration. The floating signifiers, nodal points, and moments that I discuss can be understood as variables, whose relationships I explore. Moreover, I suggest a new concept in my thesis 'hegemonic whisper,' which can be studied in further research – so I am identifying concepts that may be generalized instead of findings.

4 Hearing the Hegemonic Whisper

Integration is a very broad and confusing concept. It is very complicated to say what it means because different groups in Norway use it to mean different things. The authorities can also disagree about what integration is. However, many studies have examined integration on a societal level and assess the government's understanding of integration. In order to broaden our perception of integration I have chosen a particular group of adult refugees to see how they think about integration. They were freedom fighters in Iranian Kurdistan and they militarily fought for values like freedom, justice, equality, and feminism in the 1980s. Afterward, many of them fled to Norway in the 1990s. Their understanding of integration is different from the authorities because they are not in a position of power, and what they say is mostly according to their lived experiences rather than theoretical or political discussions; however, they have their own principles and thoughts. Therefore, the discourses they construct give us the opportunity to compare refugees' perceptions of integration with those of the state as well as of other researchers who have studied integration. It is also interesting to see how they configure integration differently from others because this group is different from the other adult refugee groups in Norway.

In this chapter, I present two discourses of integration. The chapter is divided in two sections, one for each discourse. In both sections, I use two concepts to discuss and compare these discourses together: adjusting to a new environment and desires. The informants tell us how they perceive these concepts and I compare them together. See table 1 for an overview of the structure of this chapter.

In order to clarify the distinct meanings attached to each concept, I discuss the concepts under separate subheadings, where each presents one articulation of the relevant concept. Afterward, I comparing the different meanings around each concept in the sections called "Relating Articulations" where I bring out the common meanings in each discourse. Thus, I present two common meanings among the informants in each discourse, which will be compared together.

The Outline of Integration in My Thesis

Discourses of Integration by Refugees	
Nodal Point: Citizenship of the World	Nodal Point: Membership of Nations
Floating Signifier: Adjusting	Floating Signifier: Adjusting
Floating Signifier: Desires	Floating Signifier: Desires

Table 1

Generally, my informants perceived integration in different ways, but on one aspect there was total convergence: For everyone, integration entailed finding work and learning the language. “You should find a place for yourself inside that environment you are living in,” Xebat said. She explained then that you should learn the language, and start working. Job and language are the only moments that are objective (ideological) in my thesis, meaning nobody contests them. Integration without having job and speaking Norwegian is not relevant in either of the two discourses I found. Laclau argues that if a meaning for something is fixed, then it is ideological, because nobody contests it:

The ideological would not consist of the misrecognition of a positive essence, but exactly the opposite: it would consist of the non-recognition of the precarious character of any positivity, of the impossibility of any ultimate suture (Laclau 1990: 92).

Laclau defines ideology as a moment in which something is understood as essence and nature of an element. It is what has happened to the relation between integration and “job & language.” Nobody recognized it as a “precarious character.” Nobody doubted in the essential necessity of it to integrate. My informants recognized it as a natural and essential relation. Informants always argued that a healthy refugee should try to learn the language and find a job. Therefore, there is no contestation of the expectation that a healthy refugee should speak Norwegian and find a job.

4.1 Integration for Refugees Who are Citizens of the World

In this section, refugees talk about how they articulate and practice integration. Hence, I concentrate on their opinions about themselves and other refugees as well as how they understood the government's expectations and practices. I am going to hunt articulations and practices existing among former members of Komala. This part focuses on those who recognize themselves as citizens of the world.

4.1.1 Adjusting to a New Environment

Adjusting to a new environment is something that all my informants discussed. When I asked them what integration meant to them, they answered immediately that one should adjust oneself to the new environment. This articulation appears very clear at first, but further listening or follow-up questions revealed that the meaning of adjusting to a new environment was not fixed whatsoever.

Influence: The Ultimate Point of Adjusting

Integration happens through the social position that you reach. In a society like Norway, you reach a social position through education, proficiency, and then job . . . One of the main preconditions is to learn the language.

Someone who comes to this society should first try to learn the language of this society, try to adjust herself, try to find a job then, try to study if it's possible, then, use the opportunities in this society to be influential both in her private life and in the society.

It is integration in my opinion. A social position according to the job and the role that somebody has in this society, gives you the conditions for being influential in this society. (Ajwan)

Ajwan related the concept of adjusting to the concept of influence. He explained that somebody's social position would make it possible to influence society. "And the only way to create a social position is to have a job, to be a member of the society somehow," he said. Then, Ajwan claimed that through a job, you gain your rights, your political position, networks like syndicates to be a member of and be protected by. Furthermore, he argued that one's influence in society is intertwined with one's job.

This implies that the main purpose of integration for Ajwan was finding a job. However, it was different than just having a job. The articulation of job in this context was sutured with education and *influence*. Integration was represented as finding a job that guarantees your *influence* in the society, which happens through education. Hence, *influence* is the keyword for understanding this moment of integration. Marianne Rugkåsa (2011) discusses briefly the crucial effects of giving positions, power, and *influence* to refugees in the social processes, in order to integrate:

Ethnic minority women and men must furthermore, in a much greater extent than today's society, be given positions where they get influence and power to affect various social processes (2011: 95).

Here, Rugkåsa explains (2011) that working does not mean minorities (refugees) are integrated entirely in all aspects of society, since sharing power and influence with them is necessary for integration.

Collapse: The Impact of the Collective Dream

Jila had a different approach to adjusting. She did not wish to integrate herself in Norway. "Because there are lots of wrong and retarded traditions here as well," she said. She was content with herself and claimed that she in fact had more than what this society could offer her. There was not enough freedom here, and women were not equal with men from her perspective. She identified much more with the collective dream (see 3.6.1) than with Norwegian values.

"Many Norwegian women care too much about their appearance," she said. Jila pointed out that Norwegian women were afraid of aging, of getting old and ugly. She argued that Norwegian women think they are strong, but they always need acknowledgment.

How can I adjust myself to this society?! . . . They say it's so peaceful, it's so good in Norway, while they send wars to other countries. Why should I adjust myself to these thoughts?! (Jila)

On one side, Jila positioned herself as a colleague that took care of other colleagues when they felt ugly. She encouraged her colleagues not to care that much about their appearance. Therefore, she argued that her confidence was much better than her colleagues.

On the other side, she argued that she had higher moral standards than many Norwegians. She said that Norway "send war" to other countries like Syria and many Norwegians did not care

about it. She positioned herself as a human who cared about other humans all over the world while she positioned many Norwegians as weak people who did not care about humans in other countries. This implies that she positioned herself as a human with higher moral standards than many Norwegians. Hence, *the necessity of integration had collapsed for her*. She insisted that many Norwegians were weak while she was strong and integration was not something positive for her.

Confused: Obstacles to Adjusting

I decided to take care of my kids now . . . preparing a good life for my kids . . . I didn't care taking a higher education . . . I wanted to build up a simple life . . . If I would've had economic support, I wouldn't even work. (Xebat)

Xebat learned Norwegian and started working in Norway, but she was exhausted and traumatized when she came to Norway. She told me she needed a peaceful life here. She said that since she was a guerilla for more than 10 years, without any opportunity to rest in between, she wished to rest in Norway, and try to make a nice and peaceful life for her children. She clarified that she wanted to teach her children to love all humans, no matter where they were from.

Xebat discussed that the government and the system should provide the opportunities for integration. She argued that if they, the government, the system, did not make that possible, it would not be possible to integrate, or at least, it would be much more difficult.

People in this world, because of different reasons, war, poverty, or especially political insecurities, are forced to move to other places to live. Therefore, you must look at them as humans, no matter where they come from. And when they come here you should look at them as humans who want to have a good life and job and they live. (Xebat)

In this articulation, refugees are those who want to integrate. I understand Xebat to be saying that if integration fails, refugees are not the cause. The government apparatus, which controls the resources and the economic system in society, is where she lays the blame for failed integration. Her explanation accused the government of causing any problems in the process of integration. In her view, refugees would integrate if nothing stopped them. "If the government provides job opportunities, people integrate, otherwise, refugees get isolated and marginalized," she said.

“But, you see in a period, integration for the government can be an excuse for why [refugees] have come here and they must go back,” said Xebat. She argued the government was not always satisfied with having refugees in Norway so it used integration as a mechanism or winning card for its policies. She claimed integration was not really important in itself for government, but it helped the government to operate its policies. She mentioned it as an “excuse” for controlling refugees. The government was the reason that integration failed by not providing job opportunities for individuals. “When there is job for individuals, nobody wants to be unemployed. Everybody wants to work,” Xebat said.

Use of this expression “everybody wants to work” implies that integration is something natural for her. She takes it for granted that refugees would like to integrate. When she says that the government uses it as an excuse, it reminds me of the protagonist in *The Trial* (Kafka 2015): Josef K. was arrested one day “without having done anything wrong” (Kafka 2015: 1). Refugees are accused of not being integrated without having done anything wrong in the articulation put forward by Xebat. However, it is clear what refugees are accused of (not working) and who is accusing them (the government) while Josef K. did not know who accused him and for what. Nevertheless, the state of confusion and not having done something wrong are common between them.

Josef K. is confused and tries hard to find out why he is accused. Xebat did the same. After more than 20 years living in Norway, she had tried hard to find out why she was always accused of not being integrated, not personally, but as a member of a group, the refugees. She had not done anything wrong. Refugees had not done anything wrong (from her perspective), but they were accused. She had observed how hard her colleagues with refugee backgrounds worked, and still they were accused.

Do I, he thought, have to let myself be even more confused by the twaddle of these lowest of instruments – they themselves admit that’s all they are? (Kafka 2015: 5)

Josef K. used the word “twaddle” to describe what the warders told him when they arrested him without showing him any evidence. I think the word “excuse,” which Xebat used, functions the same in her articulation. She was *confused* by the twaddle of the government about integration and refugees. It was like a whisper in her ear: “refugees must go back.” She recognized it as just as an “excuse” for another purpose (refugees must go back) without showing her any evidence for the accusation.

The Fighter is Transformed: The Price of Adjusting

We have just seen how Xebat wanted to rest in Norway. In contrast, Hetaw wished to continue fighting in Norway. “I came to continue myself [to be the same person] somehow in Norway as well, to continue my political ideas and so,” Hetaw said. “I made a project for myself, the project of studying.”

She explained that she wanted to continue her fight for the collective dream when she came to Norway, but she noticed it was not possible to fight in the way she did in Iranian Kurdistan. She realized therefore, she should find a new strategy of fighting. Hetaw said she chose to study because she found out that higher education would give her the opportunity for fighting in the Norwegian context.

Hetaw studied for a long time in Norway. She stated explicitly in her interview that she wanted to be loyal to the collective dream she shared with Komala. Her purpose was to continue being who she was; that is clear in her quote, “I came to continue myself.” She said this was the reason she found a new strategy of fighting. However, the process of transforming the way she would fight also came to transform Hetaw.

I used to spend time with my friends [from Komala], talk and laugh loudly with them for three hours, but I don't enjoy it anymore. My hobby is now to drink a bottle of wine [and talk calmly] with somebody. But, I can't do it with the same friends anymore, I need different friends now [to drink a bottle of wine and talk calmly with].

For example, I'm more comfortable to discuss [my field of education] with somebody who has knowledge about it, and thinks like me, but I'm not comfortable anymore to talk with somebody who knows nothing about it and I have to always try to say something that is understandable for her. So, I have to just talk about everyday life with a person like that. (Hetaw)

In this context, cultural transition is a consequence of studying and going through the Norwegian education system. Hetaw clarified she needed another type of friends when she did not enjoy spending time with her old friends from Komala anymore. This transformation happened through studying and finding a relevant job. She perceived herself as a person who kept her loyalty to the collective dream in Norway. She transformed her fighting, from a military and partisan struggle to a social and cultural one. Her struggle to keep this loyalty to the cause affected her connection with the people with whom she had once fought alongside. Her state of comfort had been transformed. She was not comfortable with her old Komala friends anymore, but she still shared the same political goal with them. The extension of the collective dream persuaded her to study in Norway, but the consequence was that she was not

the same person anymore, though she still subscribed to the same values. She was still a fighter, but a *transformed fighter*.

The *transformed fighter* (Hetaw) emphasized that her high level of integration in Norway was only a result of a personal “plan” because “In my opinion, integration is not important for them [the government] whatsoever,” Hetaw said. In her opinion, the government only cared about refugees finding a job and speaking Norwegian. She said there are many people living here in Norway who might as well be living in Pakistan. They speak Norwegian, but they are not enjoying the benefits of the Norwegian quality of life. “The quality of life is not important for the government,” Hetaw said.

Their lifestyle [Pakistanis’ lifestyle] has not changed that much here, it doesn’t seem like their life quality [in Norway] is different than their neighbor’s life quality in Pakistan. (Hetaw)

Hetaw claimed that refugees did not have the opportunities Norwegians had. She said refugees were not as privileged as ethnic Norwegian people. Moreover, she did not think the government cared. In that way she was articulating integration but was saying that only having a job and speaking Norwegian was far from being integrated. She mentioned that refugees did not have “cabins in mountains” or special “plans on Saturdays” unlike ethnic Norwegian people. When she articulated what integration would be to her, she related it to “sport clubs for their children” and “improving the life level of their children.”

I think, now, the government’s project is to do something that these groups [refugees] in this society form a life for themselves without being able to be a danger for the main groups, which are in the government. (Hetaw)

Hence, she even thought the government did not wish for a higher level of integration for refugees. It did not want them to be influential in Norwegian society, at least not in a way that meant they could be a danger to the dominant groups (main groups).

Hetaw confronted the government when forming her perception of integration. In this articulation, governmental integration is related to indifference: the government does not care enough. From Hetaw’s perspective, the main question for the government is whether somebody is integrated or not, in the sense of learning Norwegian and finding a job. The level of integration is not a matter of concern for the government while this is exactly what is important for Hetaw. For her, the question is not if somebody is integrated or not. For Hetaw, the main question is about the level of integration, and the influence of refugees in society. The

government does not want refugees to be influential whatsoever (from Hetaw's perspective). Hence, this articulation relates governmental integration with a level of integration that will hold refugees down.

Fontanari (2015) conceptualizes the term *threshold* when she explains everyday life in the residential accommodation for asylum-seekers (the Wohnheime) in Germany. She presents this concept "as a condition of time suspension, non-belonging and in-betweenness" (2015: 715). I think that the state of in-betweenness is relevant to Hetaw's presentation. She explained that refugees were not totally excluded because a level of integration (job and language) was still important for the government, but at the same time they were not included because the government did not want them to be influential or to have the same quality of life as ethnic Norwegians. I perceive the in-between conditions of life at this *threshold* as a whisper that constantly reminded Hetaw: "Integration is not important for them [the government] whatsoever." If refugees pass the *threshold*, it will threaten the government's influence, well, passing the *threshold* and having influence in Norway is the "real" integration for Hetaw.

Quiet Guests: Contradictions Within Adjusting

I mean that the Norwegian society is weak, it doesn't prepare the situation [for integration], and when somebody [refugee] finds a job and wants to show her potentials in some fields, then the people [Norwegians] won't let her. (Jila)

Several of my informants noted that refugees were not really welcomed into society. Jila mentioned that refugees in Norway were constantly reminded they did not belong to this society. Jila was not so concerned about what the government claimed about integration, but its practice was more important for her, which was exclusionary. Ajwan expressed this concern clearly. He argued that professors and intellectuals, who were in academic communities, and ideologically supplied Norwegian political parties, could certainly supply a crystal-clear definition of integration. Nevertheless, it did not mean that it would be practiced in society.

Hiwa illustrated not belonging to this society with a concrete example of how she was stopped in a systematic way. She had a typical working class job. Since she was well educated in her country, she had planned to advance in her workplace by improving herself through different courses. Nevertheless, it never happened. She felt that her leaders at work marginalized her. "They stopped me . . . I didn't get the opportunity [to advance to a higher position]," she said, while she strongly felt that she deserved a better position.

Ajwan explained how three political parties in practice wanted refugees to give up their principles and thoughts in Norway. He told me that when it came to integration and refugees, there was not that much of a difference between the Labour Party (Arbeiderpartiet) and the Conservative Party (Høyre) because the Labour Party supported so many of the same policies as the Conservative Party in integration. He claimed that both parties wanted refugees to obey their system and do whatever they wanted without thinking independently. The Progress Party (Fremskrittspartiet) was just a more radical version of the same to him. Ajwan did not see any fundamental differences among these three parties in relation to integration.

Aso brought this articulation to another level. He stated that the government did not like refugees that brought their own principles with them. He said the government wanted them to give up all their principles, and abandon any loyalty they had to any special values (like the collective dream they had). However, it did not mean the government wanted them to take on Norwegian values.

A woman with hijab in Grønland, who does not have enough freedom [in her family], is not their [government's] concern. Nevertheless, there is 100 years struggle for women's rights in this society . . . They [women with hijab] ain't a part of this society. They [the government] want to get rid of them, [and not fight for them]. (Ajwan)

My informants relate the constitutive outside of integration to not belonging to this society, giving up principles, and not even having Norwegian values. I relate this articulation to the metaphor of *quiet guests*. If my informants do not belong to this society (according to their perception) they are consequently guests. If they give up their principles, they have nothing to fight for. In addition, the government does not fight for them according to my informants' explanation. Consequently, they will live quietly, without making any noise.

What Ajwan claimed above, that the government did not fight for refugees, is discussed by Hagelund (2002). She says that Wikan discussed the emergence of a new Norwegian underclass:

For Wikan (1995) the message seems to be that the integration dilemma is no dilemma; it is a matter on which we must choose to side with women, children, and human dignity and "unilaterally defend the premises for the social order immigrants shall be integrated into" (Borchgrevink, 1997, p. 33). On the other hand, no claims have been made publically about the right to mutilate their daughters or to marry them off against their will (2002: 411).

Hagelund (2002)'s message resonates with Ajwan's perception that the government does not fight for refugee women when she comments that no claims for supporting women have been made publically. "The Government's action plan is directed toward change through dialogue with the relevant minority groups themselves" (2002: 412). Ajwan argued that the government did not see refugee women as a part of this society, so it did not fight for them even though "there is 100 years struggle for women's rights in this society." His argumentation implied that refugee women stood outside of the rights that were achieved for Norwegian women through feminist struggles. In Hagelund's reading of Wikan, the government should not remain neutral, but instead pick sides. Then, Hagelund implies the government has chosen to calm down the internal conflicts among refugees through dialogue and discussion, instead of attempting to solve them by making policy, rules and laws.⁹ According to Hagelund, then, the purpose of Wikan's message is to solve the problem, while the government defuses and neutralizes it, in effect putting the problem on ice rather than solving it (2002: 409-412).¹⁰

"This says something about the quality of our society," the Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg said in his televised New Year speech in 2001, after praising Norwegian women for being at the top of the Euro-league in terms of employment, education, and birth rates (in 2002: 409). I am not sure that Ajwan could consider "a woman with hijab in Grønland," who was mentioned in his quote, to be within Stoltenberg's perception of "our society," and that is probably the reason Ajwan articulated that "a woman with hijab in Grønland" was not the government's "concern." I consider this feeling of not being within the government's perception of "our society" and not being the government's "concern" as a whisper in Ajwan's ear that refugee women "ain't a part of this society" (see his quote).

How Long Will I Remain Norwegian?: The Never Achievable Adjusting

I just hope that they wouldn't suddenly approve a bill, by which they declare that we must give back these papers they have given us [the Norwegian citizenship]. (Aso)

Aso believed the Norwegian government could not provide enough employees to do different kinds of jobs in society if it did not use refugees. He interpreted it as a need for a "labor force,"

⁹ This is an old essay of Hagelund and we do not know how she would analysis today's situation in a new essay with the same problematizing.

¹⁰ This is my perception of Hagelund's essay so not necessarily what Hagelund means.

and understood it as the main reason for why Norway received refugees. Otherwise, “the refugees as humans, are in the second priority for the government,” Aso said.

Using the term “labor force” in Aso’s articulation is not associated with intellectual skills but rather relates to unskilled labor. When he discussed jobs that were filled by this “labor force,” he distinguished between working for an office and working in an office. In his articulation, some people work for offices, and others only work in them in the sense that they clean the offices. Hence, he associated Norwegians with those who work for an office and refugees with others who clean their offices. Thus, it is the muscles, not the intelligence, of refugees that are wanted by the government in this articulation.

Aso argued with persistence that the government wanted refugees to be a “submissive labor force to do what this society” imposed upon them. He claimed that rights, which refugees had here in Norway, were not essential or inborn. They had them because Norway needed them as an unskilled labor force.

Hiwa also discussed the notion of refugees as second class citizens, but with a different articulation. For instance, she stated there were some people in this society who had some problems and, because of that, could not integrate themselves, learn Norwegian and find a job. She argued the government should help them, but it would not and she complained, “They always look at us as minorities.” In Hiwa’s articulation, the government does not help, and is therefore indifferent. This resembles the term of “second priority,” put forth by Aso.

The government’s interest in refugees as unskilled labor (muscles rather than brains) in addition to the indifference of the government in relation to refugees implies that refugees are not portrayed as full citizens and human beings. In Aso’s and Hiwa’s articulations, refugees are not welcomed as a complete human. Not being a complete human will involve not being a complete Norwegian. Hiwa complained that the government always looked at them as minorities. There must be something wrong with being a minority, otherwise she would not complain. In my opinion, what that is wrong here (for Hiwa) is that *minorities are not as Norwegian as Norwegians*. She could not place herself in the same position as Norwegians: this was probably the reason that she not only complained about the concept “minority background,” but also claimed that her child, who was born and raised in Norway, was “ethnic Norwegian” and should be treated like Norwegians.

This articulation of integration that I presented here is probably the source of Aso’s fear, which was quoted in the beginning of this section. Aso was haunted by the idea that *he was not*

as Norwegian as Norwegians (I could use the concept of convinced instead of haunted, but it would not convey Aso's feeling). Therefore, he did not position himself where he could demand rights; instead, he just hoped the government would not revoke his citizenship.

I perceive Aso and Hiwa's articulation as very close to George Orwell's illustration of how pigs justified their special privileges: "ALL ANIMALS ARE EQUAL BUT SOME ANIMALS ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS" (2008: 90). If we understand pigs in that novel as subjects to be more equal, and the rest of animals (or sheep) as subjects to be less equal, then we can see how close this illustration is to my interpretation of Aso and Hiwa. I associate Norwegians in their articulation with pigs in the novel, and "minorities" (refugees) with the rest of the animals, especially the sheep.

This notion of not being equal in value is illustrated by Wikan: "Culture" has become a new concept of race in that it functions in a reductionist manner to make "them" lesser human beings than "us" (Wikan in Gullestad 2004: 177). Hagelund (2002: 413) argues for how "Politicians' celebration of the enriching aspects of multicultural Norway tend to be restricted to dancing and food or to general remarks about colorful and exciting urban spaces." This restriction also seems close to the illustration of not being equal or *as Norwegian as Norwegians*. As I discussed in "Influence," to be influential in the society and have power to affect the social and political processes is understood as complete integration by Ajwan and Rugkåsa but as Hagelund argues, politicians do not celebrate the real influence and power of refugees in multicultural Norway. That is probably the reason that Aso and Hiwa were so skeptical: I think they had encountered the threshold of their integration.

In Aso and Hiwa's articulation, refugees were invited inside, but retained the status of guests nonetheless. Fontanari (2015: 723) discusses non-belonging conditions as an aspect of the threshold of citizenship. However, she uses this concept in order to explain the conditions of asylum-seekers and not refugees who have received resident permission, and afterwards citizenship:

They live under the continues pressure of deportation and with the awareness that they cannot pass through the doors that give access to the City. They live in a law interstice – in the *threshold* of citizenship (Fontanari 2015: 723).

However, as the quote in the beginning of this section shows, Aso was afraid of losing his citizenship. He was a citizen of Norway, but he mentioned his citizenship as "papers" that he could lose, and not a permanent status. I think that "the continuous pressure of deportation" for

him was not removed yet, even after achieving citizenship, buying a house, having children, and living in Norway for decades. Aso and Hiwa's articulations tell us they could not "pass through the doors that give access to the" Norwegian society. These restrictions were probably the source of the unknown voice, which whispered in my informants' ears: *minorities are not as Norwegian as Norwegians*, and you might lose your citizenship someday.

4.1.2 Relating Articulations 1

Influence and skepticism are keywords for understanding how these informants articulated 'adjusting.' In "Collapse" and "The Fighter is Transformed" we can read how much emphasis was placed on influencing rather than mimicking Norwegians. Jila and Hetaw wanted to continue their loyalty to their collective dream to the degree that Jila even claimed she did not need to be integrated. Hetaw planned to continue to be herself, to be the same person, and to be loyal to the collective dream. This group was totally loyal to their collective dream in Komala, to the point that influencing Norwegian society was more important for them than becoming similar to Norwegians. This is the reason the concept of integration collapsed for Jila. Even when Xebat explained she wanted to have a simple and peaceful life in Norway, she did not comment that she wanted to be like Norwegians. Thus, they did not want to be like Norwegians because they were loyal to their collective dream, but not all of them directly or actually attempted to influence Norwegian society.

Influence is one side of adjusting for this group. The other side involves a deep skepticism towards the Norwegian authorities. Xebat was confused. She did not understand why authorities were always accusing refugees of not engaging in the labor market. She felt that refugees were over-accused. Hetaw felt a sort of threshold for integration. She did not think the authorities wanted refugees to have the same quality of life as Norwegians. She even claimed that dominant groups did not want refugees to threaten their dominance in Norway. In "Quiet Guests," I showed that some informants felt that this society (or authorities) did not want them to keep their principles. They stated that the system wanted them to obey it, but not criticize and challenge it. Ajwan explained the government wanted refugees to give up their principles and thoughts, and Hiwa articulated that she did not get the position she deserved at her workplace. They felt the government wanted them to be quiet, and not fight for anything. In "How Long Will I Remain Norwegian?" I showed that informants did not even feel they were equal to

Norwegians. They did not perceive themselves to be as Norwegian as Norwegians. They felt they were second-class citizens in Norway.

I used ‘whisper’ as a metaphor for conceptualizing their skeptical articulations and feelings. This was a group of refugees who lived within a discourse of integration that was not hegemonic. Their discourse and their nodal point were probably excluded from the hegemonic discourses in Norway. This group had lived in Norway for several decades, learned the language, studied, and worked so they must have a sort of understanding that their discourse was excluded and oppressed by hegemonic discourses. I cannot be certain that their discourse was oppressed but it must be theoretically, since they were not in a position of power. In addition, I perceive their skepticism about the system as hinting at oppression and exclusion. Therefore, I think hegemonic discourses talked to these people through media, education systems, managers and bosses at their jobs, white (or Norwegian) friends,¹¹ authorities and laws. During many years living in Norway, they had been convinced they were outsiders to those discourses. I think hegemonic discourses were the source of these ‘whispers.’ Hegemonic discourses whispered in this group’s ears: “You are not one of us, and this is not your country.” However, one must live inside their discourses to hear this whisper; unless you are an oppressed refugee, you are not likely to hear it. I call it a whisper because it is not possible to hear it from a power position. Hegemonic discourses whisper to the oppressed but smile to the oppressor. They whisper to the articulated but smile to the articulator.¹²

4.1.3 Desires

Fighting for many years in the mountains of Kurdistan was a result of strong ambitions for creating a better world, which was expressed in their collective dream. What happened to their ambitions? In this section, I turn to the second floating signifier. I will discuss how they articulate integration in relation to their desires, what they wanted to be, what they achieved.

¹¹ Friends with high-class positions who live in hegemonic discourses, or take the hegemonic discourses for granted.

¹² ‘Articulator’ is a person who has the power of defining and shaping “reality,” and ‘articulated’ is a person who is the object of defining and shaping (Laclau and Mouffe 2014). In this context, refugees are articulated in my view.

Retirement

When I saw the well-being of these people [In Norway], I felt sorry for my country . . . I decided to take care of my children . . . We tried to make a good life for our children.

If I could have a good life, if it would be economically possible, I wouldn't work at all. I would like to have children and make a good life for my children. (Xebat)

Xebat stated she was exhausted when she arrived in Norway. She did not care for herself, but she took care of her children. She commented that she only wished the opportunities here in Norway would someday be available for everybody in the world. Beyond that, the story had ended for her. She had chosen to focus on taking care of her children for the rest of her life.

Living as a freedom fighter for so many years emptied her of any wishes, ambitions or dreams. She retired in Norway. Although she still had to work fulltime, her employment in Norway served as a *retirement* phase for her. This retirement was mental. She worked in order to provide a living, but nothing more. She did not care to fight anymore. She had stopped fighting for her collective dream. In other words, she had stopped being ambitious.

The Fighter is Transformed into a Preacher: A Strong Desire to Convince Others

I felt that they [some acquaintances] had a type of knowledge that was very important for being a political activist in Europe, and I was missing it.

I felt that we couldn't even convince our teachers [at the Norwegian language course]. I mean, however we had much [to say], which we thought it was important, but we didn't have the political knowledge. They [the teachers] had a different type of argumentation. Then, I realized quite early that I should study something so that I could at least be a good political person. I mean not [studying] for finding a job. It was not my motivation at all. [My motivation was] studying to learn a language [the Norwegian language, the academic language], to be able to work systematically on something, to be able to have a role in the society. (Hetaw)

Hetaw told me she was the type of person who was never satisfied with what she had, or with the present situation. Moreover, she stated she did not want to be a normal person in Norway. She wanted to be a “spokeswoman for oppressed people.” She told me that she was proud of her past and of the collective dream she shared with Komala (she was still a Marxist), but she knew the situation was different in Norway. Hetaw explained how she had gained a role in this society, after completing higher education, with this rhetoric:

For instance, the first person [where she was working] who protested against diagnosing children of refugees with learning disabilities was me. Then, when we examined this more in

detail, we discovered that they [children of refugees] couldn't understand Norwegian, but they didn't have learning disabilities. In fact, it was me who started a project for solving this problem.

Using the word “convince” is very central in Hetaw's articulation of her desires. We can understand her articulation and even her practice (studying in Norway) in relation to convincing others. She desired to fight again for the collective dream since she was still loyal to the values she shared with Komala. She had fought for those values in the mountains of Kurdistan in a military context. Now, the context was different. She did not need military weapons anymore, but she needed to convince people, for instance her teachers. After failing to convince her language teachers, she perceived very soon that the power of convincing people lies in higher education. Her perception of the difference between military fighting and convincing led her to study. She understood that in Europe language was power. Hence, we can perceive better how *her identity started getting closer to that of a preacher¹³ than a military fighter.*

Wylie (2003) explains that some people have a sort of sense, a feel for the game, and they can see better than others because they have gone through systems of oppression. Their experiences have made them more sensitive to seeing different aspects and more details.

Standpoint theory is an explicitly political as well as social epistemology. Its central and motivating insight is an inversion thesis: those who are subject to structures of domination that systematically marginalize and oppress them may, in fact, be epistemologically privileged in some crucial respects. They may know different things, or know some things better than those who are comparatively privileged (socially, politically), by virtue of what they typically experience and how they understand their experience (Wylie 2003: 26).

It gives us a good explanation for why Hetaw desired strongly to continue her fight, legitimate her knowledge, and be a preacher. I interpret it, according to standpoint theory, in relation to Hetaw's social and political position. She had always been systematically marginalized and oppressed; as a woman everywhere, as a Marxist in Iran, and as a refugee in Norway. She was epistemologically privileged to see things that others did not. It was probably the source of her ambition to fight, but this ambition *transformed her into a preacher.*

Ugly Duckling: Education is the Power for Convincing

My mom was always whispering in my ear school, school, school. When she visited me while I was a Peshmarga, she lamented over why I was a tramp in those mountains despite of all her

¹³ I use 'preacher' only as a metaphor and not in a literal meaning.

pain and trouble for me. She complained why I didn't study. I was a good pupil. Teachers admired me and my mom hoped that I would be somebody in Iran. However, I believed in the path that I chose, but since my mom had whispered school in my ear that much, I had guilty conscience those years I was a Peshmarga. My teachers were always saying that I would have a brilliant future . . . I felt that I had really disappointed them, both my mom and my teachers. When I arrived [in] Turkey, one of my pleasures was that I could realize my mom's and my teachers' wish and continue studying. (Jila)

Jila said she perceived life as a fight. She had fought as a Peshmarga for those who needed her, and now, after completing higher education, she was doing the same in Norway. She was working with disabled people. Here, she repeatedly observed the staff was not treating them fairly. She tried to talk to the staff about this, but to no avail. One day, she observed something extreme.

Someday, I went out with one of the patients. When I came back, I saw that they [the staff] were dragging one of the boys, who were half-body disabled. He was crying and holding the chair [not to fall down]. I told them [the staff] "Come to have a meeting in that room, right now." I said, "Listen to me! I have been fighting for justice my whole life. I can't sit around watching injustice being done to somebody who is disabled and weak!" (Jila)

She claimed she could finally convince and induce the boss to send the staff to many courses and seminars to learn how to treat weak and disabled people where they were working.

A combination of two factors constituted Jila's desires in Norway: She had a guilty conscience because she disappointed her mom and teachers while she was loyal to the collective dream. She fought for the collective dream, but she missed the opportunity to study. She studied in Norway, but still was a fighter for weak people's rights. Her desire to study in Norway came from many years ago, when she disappointed people around her. Her desire to fight for weak people also came from many years ago when she chose her path. She studied in Norway, and she used it to help weak people – to preserve the collective dream.

She used the metaphor of *ugly duckling* to describe herself. The combination of higher education and fighting had made an *ugly duckling* personality of Jila. She explained she was not like others. She perceived herself as always bold and different among people around her.

Do Not Aspire to Much!: The Threshold of Convincing

This quote from Xebat pictures a chasm between the refugee's desire and the counsellor's expectation of the refugee. In this example, the counsellor underestimated the refugee's aspiration.

Specifically, one of them [a colleague's daughter wearing hijab], was advised by the counsellor at her high school, to be a nursing assistant. She said, "You can't say that to me, I want to be a doctor, why are you saying this to me?" (Xebat)

Aso also pointed out that refugees were not supposed to *aspire to much* when he claimed that many Norwegians did not expect refugees to be psychologists that one day would examine their children. In addition, he articulated lower position jobs (like nursing, taxi driving, cleaning) as what the government had prepared for refugees. His articulation implies that *aspiring to much* is an antagonistic situation that is in contrast with the governmental expectations of refugees. This articulation fills up the constitutive outside of 'desires' with being ambitionless and humble when he commented, "be thankful and do not demand more!" The real ability of refugees and their desires are ignored in the constitutive outside of this floating signifier.

In their opinion [many Norwegians], we were not supposed to be here, to be a psychologist and examine their children . . . [The government implies] you were dying of hunger. You have a shelter now, be thankful and do not demand more! (Aso)

[Integration for the government means] how much they can prepare you, as fast as possible, for being engaged in the jobs, which this society needs [lower position jobs like cleaning or nursing] . . . But if you say that I'm a person with experiences, I have my needs, I wish to study further, I wish to get higher education, I wish to become an engineer, I wish to become a political scientist . . . They don't see it as a part of their politics. (Aso)

Xebat and Aso complained that refugees in this society were positioned where society required them, not where refugees wished or desired. Hence, ambitions, motivations, and interests of refugees are excluded. This articulation is very close to Rugkåsa's (2008: 85, 90) that minorities (refugees in my thesis) must follow the majority's premises, and that their employment in leading positions and education institutions is almost at zero.

The Glint in Her Eyes Was Gone: Since Her Desires Were Oppressed

When Hiwa talked about her past:

I was a teacher in Iran in 15 years. I was the headmaster of a high school in Sna. 300 pupils were studying there. 13 teachers worked for me.

Yeah, to be honest, because of my [influential] political reputation, I had actually different positions in Komala. [Hiwa named many positions and responsibilities she had in Komala, traveling to different villages, and being a spokesperson for Komala in many cases.]

When Hiwa talked about her present situation:

For my part in this society, like all others, I have a normal life. There has been no pressure on me. I have just the mortgage for my house. Otherwise, I have no other debts . . . You know what? This is anyway my situation. I should expect as much as my part. I can't expect more than that. If I was educated, if I had a master [degree], if I had a high-position job, maybe I would have more expectations, but at this part in the society, it's a working-class life, well I'm satisfied.

“. . . we will call *articulation* any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice” (Laclau and Mouffe 2014: 91). By using the word “practice,” Laclau and Mouffe argue that discourse is not only a matter of language for them. “Any practice” can be an example of articulation only under one condition; that it establishes a sort of relation. There was a relation between Hiwa's quotes and her body language. I observed a *glint in her eyes* when she was talking about her past, while this glint was gone when she explained her present situation. This glint in my analysis is a signal (more technically defined, an element) for happiness and pride, which was gone in her perception of her existing situation. Another signal, which represented her lack of happiness, was the way she kept her head. Her neck was more crooked when she was talking about her present situation, but more straight when she was talking about her past.

“مل كه چ” (Mil kech) is a Kurdish phrase, which literally means “crooked neck.” Kurds use this phrase in particular contexts about humble people. The way Hiwa kept her head while she was talking about her present situation was close to this description, while it was not in that shape when she talked about her past. She turned her eyes away from me, looking at the other side of the coffee bar, when she said: “I don't see it now, ethnic Norwegians don't take my job.” I think she was convinced – and consequently humble because of the contradiction with her past – that her job had a low position in the society, and it had affected her body language. This is more understandable if we put her last quote in context; more people would probably

have desired to have her social position back in the Kurdistan (Iran), but now she was convinced that her social position was not that desirable. Thus, we understand better why her body language had been so humble, and why *the glint was gone*. She walked slowly. She talked slowly. She had a dream “I dream often at nights that I have come at university and have started studying.” This articulation tells us she was missing a failed desire, going to university and studying. Thus, I perceive a relation between her present humbleness and this failed (oppressed) desire. This relation is obvious when she clarified that since she was not educated in Norway and did not have a high-position job, she did not expect more. She was satisfied with her life, but she was not content. She was missing happiness in Norway.

Hegemonic Whisper: An Explicit Message to Those Who Desire to Much

I quoted previously from Hetaw (see 4.1.3 the Fighter is Transformed into a Preacher) saying she had protested against diagnosing refugees’ children with learning disabilities because she thought it was an incorrect diagnosis. She explained that after her complaint, she could prove the diagnosis was wrong. She also recalled that she and her colleagues were granted funding from the authorities to work on this. Hetaw noted that the authorities could have refused to grant the money, but they did not. The articulation of this history is constituted in a way that it involves the possibility of structural amendment. Hetaw believed she could amend the system. However, she challenged this perception later in the interview when she articulated her loyalty.

I have always said it at my workplace that my loyalty is for those who need me [poor people, oppressed, victims of the system]. I have no loyalty for those who sit with the money and are wondering how they should spend it.

She said her loyalty was to poor people who were diagnosed with learning disabilities. Then, she explained why she did not get the leadership position she had applied for at her workplace.

For example, I applied for a leader position in my job sometime. They said, “However you are very proficient, but unfortunately we don’t trust you. One who is a leader should be loyal to our system.”

She explained they were not sure if she would be loyal to upper leaders after getting that leadership position.

Hetaw’s desire to amend the system was stopped somewhere. I interpret this situation as a whisper that my informants heard during the process of integration. This whisper, “You are not

one of us and we do not trust you,” was articulated by all my informants (citizens of the world), with different words, but same the content. Somewhere in between, hegemonic discourses whispered in my informants’ ears that they were not one of them, and they did not trust them. I discussed it to an extent in “4.1.2.” I will also discuss this notion, which is my informants’ perception of their situation, in the conclusion chapter on a more theoretical level, and will argue for how it is a *hegemonic* whisper.

This example of Hetaw is the most direct example of this whisper, in this discourse. When the nodal point of the discourse Hetaw was living within (citizenship of the world sutured with loyalty to the collective dream in Komala), encountered the nodal point of a *hegemonic* discourse that was practiced officially, Hetaw heard the whisper, “unfortunately we don’t trust you.” This sentence was not only commented in a conversation; this was always living with her: now, I understand better why she told me, “My job in Norway was a continuation of my political project in Kurdistan, but I think if I had called it political at work, they would fire me immediately.” She did not feel secure enough to reveal her ambitions. She had heard the whisper that she was not trustworthy to them. She was living within a dominated discourse and *hegemonic* discourses were talking to her, whispering in her ears.

4.1.4 Relating Articulations 2

What my informants wanted to do in Norway was highly related to what they were in Kurdistan. Xebat wanted to retire herself and take care of her children not because she did not believe in the collective dream anymore but because she was mentally exhausted and had lost her ambition to fight. On the contrary, Hetaw desired to continue fighting for the collective dream. She had to choose another way to do it. She chose to go through the education system and obtain the power of ‘convincing’ people. Jila had disappointed her mother by joining Komala and not studying, so she followed her mother’s dream by studying in Norway. Consequently, she obtained the influence of fighting for Komala’s collective dream (weak people’s rights) again in Norway because she was educated and had attained a high position in her workplace. Hence, ‘desires’ for integration is articulated in relation to their past and their reputations as freedom fighters (Peshmarga).

Believing in the collective dream in the Norwegian context directed some of my informants to fight through convincing others. While the nodal point in this discourse relates ‘adjusting’ to

'influence,' it relates 'desires' to 'convincing.' Informants desired to convince others of their values.

Another side of adjusting was a deep skepticism toward the Norwegian authorities; now my informants were skeptical toward their opportunities. They were not certain if they could follow their desires. In "Do Not Aspire to Much!" they expressed a feeling that their ambitions were not welcome in Norway. They felt they were not supposed to be ambitious in Norway, and they were already placed somewhere at the bottom of the society before they arrived. In "The Glint in Her Eyes Was Gone" Hiwa had internalized the humiliation of this condition so that her desires had fled to her dreams. She was dreaming of going to university and studying while she was asleep – otherwise there was no glint in her eyes anymore except when she was talking about her past. The hegemonic whisper had told her, "Do not be ambitious!" and it had even affected her body language. Hetaw articulated the hegemonic whisper with her own words: "unfortunately we don't trust you."

4.2 Integration for Refugees Who are Members of Nations

So far, we have seen how informants that identified as citizens of the world perceived integration. I am again going to hunt for articulations and practices of integration, which are perceptions of my informants. This time, I turn to those among my informants who recognize themselves as members of one or more nations (Kurdish, Iranian, Norwegian). Here too, the articulations are related to adjusting and desires.

4.2.1 Adjusting to a New Environment

Trust: Existence of Natural Troubles

Beroxodan stated the Norwegian authorities needed time to improve their integration program. For him, this was about learning and experience so that when authorities had better knowledge and experience about refugees and their needs, integration would improve. Therefore, governmental integration was always going to get better and better in his articulation. He commented the authorities wanted refugees to integrate, but they had not had a good integration program when he was new in Norway. Thus, a good plan would improve the situation in this articulation.

The government of Norway is better now. That time [when he was new in Norway], it didn't have a national plan. Now, they have created this introduction program, which is systematic. It teaches the language, it puts people in internships. They have staff, who work [particularly] on that field. But, we didn't have it in our time. (Beroxodan)

Beroxodan was optimistic. He thought the facilitation of integration would gradually get better. For those who were allowed to stay in Norway, then, it would become easier over time. Simultaneously, he did not think the situation would get better for asylum-seekers. He explained that the Norwegian authorities had learned much about refugees, but at the same time they did not want to act in the interest of asylum-seekers. He said that the authorities only had a short-term plan for asylum-seekers that in Norway. "Let's make it difficult [for asylum-seekers], hopefully they will run away [from Norway]."

Befrin also told me that there was scope for improvement of the government's integration programs. Befrin claimed that when she came here, her teachers were not experienced. She

continued by noting that there were few refugees in her town. “We were first refugees in the municipality,” she said. This, she argued, was the reason that the authorities did not know how to teach Norwegian to those who could not speak it whatsoever. She said the authorities had no experience with this, and that they had simply brought Norwegian literature teachers from Norwegian schools to teach Norwegian to adult refugees.

Berxodan and Befrin were obviously optimistic. They did not claim that Norwegian authorities were perfect in relation to integration, but they were learning from their experiences in relation to refugees. They had critiques toward Norwegian authorities, but they had also observed the situation was gradually getting better. Therefore, they did not have much to complain about. They knew that Norwegian authorities were learning from their experiences. They put their *trust* in the Norwegian authorities and the operators of integration.

This *trust* was much stronger in Hawre’s articulation. He said Norway had something he did not have in his country. It was the reason that his life was good here from his perception. “The point is not just having a good life here, we should learn how they have come so far,” he said. Then he continued, saying, “learning the rules was not enough. We should know this society. We should study it.”

How people have thought. How they could reach this phase. It helps you both here [Norway] and in your country. How they [Norwegians] have thought until they could reach this phase. Why couldn’t we reach this phase? (Hawre)

He explained this cognizance was not possible without having a network among ethnic Norwegians. He said information transfer would take place when there would be a sort of friendship among people. He argued that having a job was not enough for that purpose. “Man should be friend with persons to learn the delicacy [details] in the community,” he said.

The very fact that Hawre used the word “phase” in his articulation about Norway implies something crucial. I analyze it as meaning that his perception of the welfare state in Norway was based on a linear progression. It means that some have gone further in the line of progression, and some others are still behind them. In this context, obviously, Norway has gone further than refugees in their countries. That was clearly articulated when Hawre said that studying Norway would help them both here and in their country. What Norway has, which homelands of refugees are missing, is that phase in a linear progression. Norway has gone further. Therefore, his *curiosity* was about why they did not reach that phase. I think this *curiosity* is because Hawre put his *trust* in how well the Norwegian authorities perform.

Emancipation: The Situation is Still Better than Other Places

In my opinion, one should be a bit generous on this. In fact, if one has some values that collide with Norwegian values, one should try to bury one's own values. Because whether I want it or not, I'm living in Norway. (Rebwar)

When Rebwar talked about his new life in Norway, he explained a lot about learning. He told me a long story about how he learned to use the telephone kiosk in Norway. He said everything was new for him, totally different. In addition, he could not speak Norwegian, so he had a lot to learn.

Learning was not only about everyday life for him. It also involved Norwegian values, and the Norwegian system. Hence, he did not discuss loyalty to the collective dream; he discussed adopting Norwegian values instead.

He expressed how he could not find a place for his child at kindergarten. It was an example of learning for him. His language was not good enough to argue that his child needed a place at kindergarten, and he did not even know how to make his case for this within the Norwegian system. Somebody suggested to him that if he could obtain a diagnosis from a psychologist, he could find a place for his child at the kindergarten. It was insulting for him. "It was very difficult to me, psychologist meant you were mad, in our mind," Rebwar said. Now he knows that having a diagnosis from a psychologist is normal in this society as he commented. Learning how the Norwegian system functions was also part of the learning process for him.

Rebwar described how he started learning the new values, traditions and systems. He understood this process as just being a matter of time. Beyond this, he had nothing to complain about. "I mean it was really the heaven we came to," Rebwar said. He explained that what he got here; food, rest, clothes etc., was so comprehensive and all-inclusive that he lost faith in the collective dream. Life in Norway was so stunning to him that it ruined the positivity of his collective dream.

A socialist society is where everybody has enough food and clothes. And everybody has a place to live in. They gave us all of this at the same moment we arrived here, at the airport . . . I realized that we didn't aspire to achieve much. (Rebwar)

Therefore, integration for Rebwar was mostly about learning the rules, learning social codes, and understanding how this society had achieved so much.

Befrin also discussed this with me. She mainly repeated Rebwar's point. She wanted every country around the world to achieve as much welfare as we have in Scandinavia. She even said that if every country on the planet would achieve half the welfare in Scandinavia, it would be sufficient to *emancipate* all people on Earth.

Learn the Rules and Play the Game!: Individuals Can Solve Their Problems Themselves

They [underage refugees] have suffered from so many troubles and traumas. They have suffered from so much poverty and loneliness until they arrive here. It has psychological impacts on them. Moreover, when you look at their background, they have not studied. They have not been at school. At best, they have studied two chapters of the Quran with a Mullah in their village, and listened to two khutbahs [religious preaching in Islam]. Well, they come here, and the Norwegian system puts them into the class that suits their age from the moment they arrive here. They [Norwegian system] don't have a bad intention, but the system is like that. (Rebwar)

In this representation of integration the “Norwegian system” (the authorities) still needed to learn. Although he did not doubt the good intentions of the system, Rebwar was not sure if it was enough to help “underage refugees.” It was clear to him that the system wished to help “underage refugees.” He explained there were actually many opportunities and laws, which would protect refugees who had suffered from troubles and traumas if those opportunities and laws had been practiced, but it was not easy to get to know them and practice them. He claimed somebody needed to help this situation. Thus, his articulation resulted in confirming the sufficiency of laws and opportunities for protecting refugees. Simultaneously, he stated that the laws and opportunities were not available for everybody. Somebody needed to help to access them.

According to Rebwar, a refugee needed a network in order to access the rights and opportunities in practice. He explained that after 20 years living in Norway he had built up a sort of network, which helped when he needed it. He explained this network was crucial because it helped him learn the rules of the system. Hence, the system was represented as a game that had some rules. From his perspective, these rules were not essentially against or for some particular groups. He understood them as being for the whole society. The only concern he had was about knowing them, to learn how to apply them to his life and how to use them. He explained that the system or the government did not do things spontaneously for people, including refugees. Consequently, he had to learn the rules as he did and found out how to play the game. He clarified through the interview that learning the rules interrelated closely with

speaking Norwegian. Without speaking the language, it did not help to know the rules. In fact, it was not possible to learn the rules if a refugee did not speak Norwegian. In this articulation of integration, learning the language of Norwegian and having the network went hand in hand with learning the rules.

Learning the rules implies a sort of harmony in society: “In fact, I don’t understand what you ask about, and I don’t know what I should answer,” Rebwar said when I asked him what integration meant for the Norwegian authorities. He explained integration was a kind of harmony and cooperation between refugees and the authorities. Therefore, it was not relevant to talk about different qualities of integration. Integration was only one thing for him, but tasks and responsibilities were different for the government and for refugees. It was a matter of division of labor.

The interrelation between learning, language, and network reveals a crucial logic, which seems like a thread (foundation) for suturing this articulation of adjusting. This thread is time. Integration is something that takes place during a lifetime. It is a harmony-oriented perception of the relation between the authorities and the refugees. It was probably the reason that Rebwar did not separate his perception of integration from the authorities’ perception. It was mostly like a game for him. *Learn the rules and play the game!* He had heard this whisper: “You do not know the rules.”

Annette Lareau is a sociologist who works on “rules of the game” from a Bourdieuan perspective (2015; 2016). She explores the importance of learning the rules and playing the game, and emphasizes the crucial role of cultural guides and parents in teaching someone to learn the rules of the game. The opportunity of consulting with parents to find the way to secure desirable class positions is what young adults with lower class positions are missing, while the middle class youth stand to benefit from free advice (2015: 17-20).

In contrast to the working-class and poor young adults, who appeared to be in charge of their own lives, at the age of 19 or 20 the middle-class youth remained heavily dependent on their parents, speaking to them regularly, and consulting them on decisions large and small (Lareau 2015: 17).

Tough life experiences had taught Rebwar the point of Lareau’s studies and he had an attractive metaphor to explain it:

This country is like a dish of cake in front of you, on which there is a top. Nobody takes off the top, asking you to take some pieces. If you find out by yourself [that there is a cake], you can ask for the cake. The cake is for you, so they give it to you by an open heart.

In my view, “a dish of cake” is a metaphor for “rules of the game” since you have to “find out by yourself.” In the way that knowing rules of the game secure desirable class positions, a knowledge about the existence of the cake is necessary “to take some pieces” in this metaphor. If I argue with Lareau’s terminology, I can articulate that adult refugees naturally take fewer pieces of this cake because they are missing parents who they can consult regularly.

Do Something, Man!: An Individual Option for Adjusting

When I’m living in this society, I should take responsibility, and the society should as well take responsibility for me. And I should be able to live up to the expectations the society lays in front of me. (Beroxodan)

Beroxodan chose a market-oriented education. He said that he did not care to have a complex or conflicted life in Norway. He wanted to have a job, occupations and a normal life like other Norwegians.

He told me he had plenty of free time in the beginning of his life in Norway. It was something that made him mad. He had so much free time that he started to have problems sleeping. “I fell asleep with alcohol,” Beroxodan said. He explained he tried hard to find something to do, any kind of job, just having something to do, some occupation. Having something to do outside his house, and not being stuck at home, was most of his concern related to this floating signifier (Adjusting to a New Environment).

I understand Beroxodan as a pragmatic person in the sense that he did not discuss general ideas or concepts when he explained what he meant by adjusting. He talked about being like others in a very pragmatic way. *Doing something* for the society, and getting something back, was the core of his articulation. This meaning was reflected when he discussed how he ignored his interests and chose a study programme according to the market’s needs. It showed again that he was a pragmatic person with a pragmatic approach to integration when I asked him if he regretted that he did not study what he really wanted to study: “I’m happy with everything I have, enjoy your life!” Beroxodan said. What Beroxodan defined as integration is very close to the approach the Brochmann commission represents – the importance of “incorporate refugees in work-life” (NOU¹⁴ 2017: 11), which is the main discussion in the report. That report is concerned with how refugees can immediately engage in the labor market so that even

¹⁴ Official Norwegian Reports

education for refugees is aimed to getting them jobs (2017: 188). *Doing something* is very close to that dominating economic perspective in the report.

Beginning of Freedom: Restriction of Individuals' Options

Befrin said the system's method for helping refugees was justified "according to the Norwegian context." She said that they (the authorities) wanted to help them (refugees), but in the way that they used to help Norwegians. "They [the authorities] worked according to their own system," she said, "We were free to choose. We could decide what we wanted to do." Befrin clarified that the staff in the Norwegian welfare agency (the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration, NAV) who worked with refugees did not stop them from doing anything, but they also did not do anything for them. They preferred to have the refugees talk about what they needed, as articulated in this quote:

They didn't know . . . they asked what we wanted, well, I didn't know which opportunities were in this country. What is here? How could I know what was here?! You ask them gimme a job. Do something for me. Do something! But they say great, what do you want? What do you do? Well, one wouldn't know what it was about.

Because it's like this for Norwegians, themselves. You discuss your request, yourself . . . You have plan from the first day . . . From the secondary school, they teach you what you want, what you want to be in the future . . . (Befrin)

She discussed that the authorities had no perception of what integration looked like, but there was a well-established system for Norwegian people. Then, Befrin complained that the authorities simply imposed the pre-existing system upon the newcomers of refugees. She argued that the system was missing goals and paths, in that the system did not provide goals for refugees and show them how to reach those goals.

"We can perhaps say that today we are at the end of emancipation and at the beginning of freedom" (Laclau 2007: 18). *The beginning of freedom* in Norway was articulated alongside confusion in Befrin's interview. The Norwegian authorities had no plan for them, but it wanted the refugees to make plans. It was a good system for Norwegians, but it did not have the same advantages for Befrin. This freedom made her so confused that she could not finally choose what to do. In her interview, Befrin regretted that she did not study in Norway. She did not choose it because she was not familiar with the Norwegian context and did not know what was best to do in this context. For instance, she said she did not want to take out student loans since

she was afraid of repaying them. She had heard this whisper: “You are not from this country so some troubles are inevitable,” so she insisted it was a good system for them (Norwegians), and authorities really wanted to help refugees, whose troubles existed because they were not from this country.

My interpretation is that she probably mixed the conditions of repaying student loans in a Norwegian context with repaying loans in an Iranian context. Therefore, she did not understand the function of student loans in Norway, so she did not use this opportunity. My point is, freedom in a context that is not based on refugee’s preconditions and perceptions does not lead to actual freedom. It just makes them more confused. *The beginning of freedom* (the freedom that started in Befrin’s life in Norway) did not lead to freedom for Befrin. It confused her. She did not argue that her choices were made out of freedom, she argued that her choices were made out of confusion. Marianne Rugkåsa understands a sort of majority-minority relationship with this rhetoric:

As a consequence of it, minorities must mostly adjust or conform to majorities premises. Ethnic minorities are therefore, relatively, powerless in the big society (Brochmann mfl. 2002). Ethnic minorities with background in another culture than the majority culture, must often learn a new language and other ways to conform to another society; new ways to organize the life and everyday life. What was taken for granted previously, cannot be taken for granted anymore, maybe you even experience it has become invalid. In many contexts, knowledge and abilities would acquire again, and one must learn new cultural codes and interaction forms (2008: 81, 82).

The confusion which Befrin articulated is articulated as powerlessness and a kind of inability in Rugkåsa’s discussion – that freedom is not enough to claim there is an equal competition between minorities and the majority population in Norway; equal rights do not bring equality for everybody if it is based on the “majorities premises.”

4.2.2 Relating Articulations 3

The floating signifier of ‘adjusting’ in the previous discourse was sutured with ‘influence’ but in this discourse, it was sutured with ‘trust.’ We can see that the meaning of a floating signifier is different in relation to another nodal point. The nodal point of this discourse is ‘membership of nations.’ It involves another group being the incarnation of the empty signifier of integration. ‘Members of nations,’ not ‘citizens of the world,’ are those who tell us what integration means in this discourse. There are two main distinctions between these two groups. The former

belonged to nations and had lost their faith to fight for the collective dream they shared in Komala, while the latter belonged where they lived, were cosmopolitan, and still believed in fighting for the collective dream.

Berxodan and Befrin in “Trust” illustrated a very optimistic picture of the Norwegian authorities and stated things were gradually getting better. They put trust in the authorities and believed that experience would help the authorities to become even better at integrating refugees. Moreover, they believed the situation was much better now than before. Hawre was curious about Norway. His trust in Norwegian authorities was so strong that he recommended that refugees study Norway and discover why Norway is a such a well-functioning country. Rebwar brought the trust to a higher level. He believed if a refugee had a value which was incompatible with Norwegian values, the refugee should bury her own value and adopt the Norwegian one. Rebwar and Befrin did not imagine a better society than Norway. It was emancipation for them.

Relating adjusting to ‘trust’ results in different meanings than relating it to ‘influence.’ If we compare Rebwar’s articulation of adjusting with Jila’s articulation in previous discourse (see 4.1.1 Collapse), we recognize how far these two discourses are from each other, and how differently they articulate adjusting. Rebwar talked about burying his own values and adopting Norwegian values since he trusted the society, while Jila did not want to adjust herself since she believed many things were wrong in Norway and she wanted to influence Norwegian society.

In my opinion, my informants’ trust in the Norwegian authorities and society (in this discourse) was so strong that their dissatisfaction and troubles seemed natural for them and not a reason for distrusting authorities. In “Learn the Rules and Play the Game!” Rebwar explained that integration was like a game and the more you knew about the rules, the more you could use them in your interest. Rebwar clarified that if somebody has not grown up in this society, she is naturally not familiar with those rules, and she is naturally not able to use them. Rebwar was convinced that because he and other refugees had not grown up in Norway it was natural they were missing knowledge, language, and network. It was not a critique against the Norwegian authorities or society, but rather only some complaints about the natural difficulties refugees faced.

In “Beginning of Freedom,” Befrin was confused in the Norwegian context. In her articulation, this confusion was avoidable if the authorities had more experience or if she had more knowledge and was familiar with the context. It implies again that the confusion she faced was

natural. She lacked knowledge and the authorities lacked experience so it was natural to be confused. This confusion was observable in “Do Something, Man!” when Bexodan complained he had plenty of free time. It was again natural to be confused and fall asleep with alcohol. He did not have something to do, and he had too much free time. The confusion that I discuss in this discourse is articulated as natural and differs from confusion I discussed in “4.1.1 Confused.” There, Xebat articulated her confusion as a skepticism about authorities. It was not a natural confusion. On the contrary, it was completely artificial and human-made (authorities-made).

In the previous discourse, adjusting was related to influence and the other side of that articulation was skepticism about the Norwegian authorities (and sometimes society). In this discourse, it is related to trust and the other side of this articulation was naturalizing dissatisfaction with the process of integration. The complaints of informants in this discourse seemed to be a natural part of adjusting, and difficulties improved afterwards.

I conclude so far that since the nodal point in this discourse is different from the previous one, the way that hegemonic discourses communicate with refugees living within this discourse is different from refugees within the other discourse. They heard the whisper I conceptualized in the previous discourse but the articulation is different. I think the hegemonic whisper refugees hear is articulated in relation to the nodal point of the discourse they are living within. That is probably the reason that in this discourse the hegemonic whisper is articulated differently: “You are not one of us so it is natural that you have troubles.”

The nodal point in this discourse was ‘membership of nations.’ Those who had lost their faith in fighting for the collective dream used this discourse and they recognized themselves as members of nations. It implies they were closer to nation-states and were more prepared to trust the Norwegian authorities than the previous group. Consequently, the way hegemonic discourses communicated and whispered to them was different. In my analysis, the closer a non-hegemonic nodal point is to hegemonic nodal points, the more hegemonic whispers are convincing, and the less they are provoking. “My feeling was that if not 100 percent but 80 percent they looked at me like themselves. I won’t be 100 percent [Norwegian] but let’s say two third I’ve been, and it’s something natural,” said Bexodan.

The authorities reflect “a desire to admit within the state only those who have rejected their previous identity” (Fuglerud 1997: 443). Members of nations had rejected their previous identity by losing their faith in fighting for the collective dream. Therefore the hegemonic

whisper was more convincing for them than for citizens of the world who did not reject their previous identity and still believed in fighting for the collective dream.

4.2.3 Desires

Contentment Pretends Similarity: Fall of the Collective Dream

Rebwar only talked about a struggle for finding out how the system functioned in Norway. That was all refugees needed to do from his point of view.

The amount of food I got here [when I came here], the time that I could rest, the amount of clothes I got, I hadn't seen in many years in depth of my dreams.

Then, they built up a system gradually, now it's excellent. They have made very good systems for including refugees, integrating them gradually, but in my time, there weren't existing, in addition to those difficulties I discussed, you're alone and you know nothing. (Rebwar)

Using the word "excellent" about the integration system in Norway implies more than that Rebwar was optimistic about the integration system. He discussed integration in Norway from a position of contentment. Making a relation between "depth of my dreams" and the welfare state (what he got here), expressed the state of contentment in his articulation. The situation was good for him.

Talking about economy and the quality of life, we got a lot here. We actually came into a very good situation. I mean the difficulty of integration wasn't because of that. It was difficult because we came to a 100 percent strange and unfamiliar society. I was a foreigner inside a society, which I knew nothing about. I knew nothing about its culture, administrative system, language, norms, neither its rules. (Rebwar)

All he desired was to learn the rules of the new society. Hence, his complaint was about an "unfamiliar society," where "you're alone and you know nothing." In addition, he had nothing left to fight in this articulation: "I realized that we didn't aspire to achieve much" (see 4.2.1 Emancipation).

I raise my children in Norway. I hide cultural or national things in my heart, if they would be a reason that my children would grow up in an antagonistic situation with this society, however they [cultural or national things] would be sacred for me. It doesn't work if [my children] feel they are oppressed from the very first day they grow up here. They must feel that they are a part of this society and have rights. (Rebwar)

Therefore, he tried to learn the rules and be like others, or at least to pretend he was like others in Norway. Pretending comes from his articulation that he avoided “antagonistic situation[s]” by “hiding” something. Thus, *his desires fell in pretending similarity*.

The Middle Class Needs Muscles: Norwegian Middle Class Fills the Collective Dream

When I asked Berxodan what integration meant for him, he answered:

It means that you be a part of the society like other members in the society. Then you be able to work, to communicate, to make a life, and have a normal life like others.

Then I asked Berxodan if he had any sort of grievance when he was studying. He answered:

I hadn't time to think about grievance, I was so busy. I mean I was reading the syllabus while I was going to school in the bus . . . When I came home [after school], I was either working or spending time with my family [and did not have time for anything else].

He said he was quite proud of himself since he could buy his own house while he was studying.

When I asked if he was missing anything in his life in Norway, he answered:

When I look at it totally I have not missed something, I have achieved something. Because it wasn't about missing, everything was new for me, and I have achieved all I have tried for. It is a positive point.

Who were those “others” to whom Berxodan referred? Two moments in his articulation will help us to find out, who he was referring to; “normal life” and “I have achieved all I have tried for.” He was perhaps not identifying himself with the elite in Norway, otherwise he would not use “normal” in his articulation. Simultaneously, he was not comparing himself with those who failed to have a good life, otherwise he would not claim he achieved all he tried for. He was positioning himself between the top and the bottom, which is close to the Norwegian *middle class*. His pride in buying his own house while he was studying is another moment that positions him in the middle – he represented himself as neither poor nor rich, but in the middle.

He had a family in Norway, a wife and children. He wanted to take care of them. It implies he was more concerned with pragmatic plans than ambitions and did not desire to achieve something different. He desired to be a member of the Norwegian *middle class*. He articulated his desire with this rhetoric:

I didn't have the aim of being number one in my class. My aim was to pass my exams and leave [the school]. I just tried as much as to pass [exams], however, it was still difficult.

I studied engineering for one year [what he actually wished to study]. I found out there, if I study engineering, according to my age and the market conditions in Norway, which wasn't that good in that time, I wouldn't find a job. After wondering for a while and doing some researches, I changed my study programme [to something available in the city and easier to find a job doing].

I asked him why he did not study what he actually wished. He answered:

I found out that I wouldn't get respond [in the future] from engineering. I wouldn't find job, then it would be a trouble and [mental] complex for me.

The desire to be a member of the Norwegian *middle class* had affected his approach to education. This approach led Berxodan to a pragmatic articulation of integration from which ambitions and dreams for affecting the Norwegian society were excluded. (He never discussed these concepts in relation to integration.) He only pursued education in order to find a job to take care of his family, not for the ambition of being influential in the society and having the power to affect social processes (in contrast to the informants in 4.1.1 Influence, 4.1.3 The Fighter is Transformed into a Preacher and Ugly Duckling). Therefore, he avoided “trouble and [mental] complex” in relation to education.

Marianne Rugkåsa (2008: 84) discusses that equality is defined as similarity in the Norwegian context, and security is obtained through similarity. Thus, it is a premise in Norway that minorities (refugees in my thesis) should be similar to the majority in order to be equal to them (2008: 85). “Others” in Berxodan's quote, which I interpret as Norwegian *middle class*, are this majority in Rugkåsa's discussion. An internalization of the mentioned premise is probably the reason why Berxodan was pragmatic and motivated to be like “others,” like the *middle class*, like the majority; he wanted to be equal to them. In other words, he desired to be equal to “others” when he said that he wanted to be like “others.”

What the Norwegian authorities should expect from refugees is well articulated in this quote from Berxodan:

The plan is to make this person [the refugee] to take responsibility. At first, they [authorities] will send them to school. They say you must go to school. They pay them salary, if they [the refugees] are absent [at school], they cut their salary. [In this way] they learn the system of working. They send them to internships. In these internships, you learn the system of working – how to work, how to communicate with people, how to present yourself, these are training. It means that it's not just learning the language, it is learning the culture as well.

Berxodan was concerned about “practical jobs” and argued the authorities should control asylum-seekers more strictly.

They [Norwegian authorities] should prepare some working places for that people who come here, according to their potentials, get training, do some practical jobs, be paid wages out of that. She [the asylum-seeker] will be familiar with the Norwegian society. She learns the language. She learns the culture.

He was not articulating integration with concepts like ambitions or wishes. He did not even problematize refugees and asylum-seekers who desired to do something great (not normal) in Norway. The fact that he excluded ambitious refugees (and asylum-seekers), who would have dreams, is meaningful in itself. When something is excluded, in a relation among elements, it implies that it is not represented, and therefore not recognized. There is no need to take care of that because it does not exist without a kind of representation. What existed in his articulation were authorities that should take care of refugees and asylum-seekers. Who should take care of whom involves a hierarchy: the fact that authorities were the leaders and the refugees and asylum-seekers were the followers. Thus, the refugees and asylum-seekers were not positioned as individuals, but they were positioned as a low-competence group. A low-competence group not only needs to “learn the language” but also needs to “learn the culture.” Their culture, their ambitions, their desires, were not a matter of concern here, but their *muscles*, their youth, were the matter of concern, meaning they should be taught “the system of working” and trained for “some practical jobs.” His articulation performed a sort of emphasis on refugees’ and asylum-seekers’ *muscles* if I compare it with articulations within the other discourse: for instance, in “4.1.3 Hegemonic Whisper,” Hetaw had an ambition to amend the system – however she was stopped, as she claimed. In “4.1.3 The Glint in her Eyes Was Gone,” Hiwa was not happy with her low-position job since she desired more and she had a failed dream, but Berxodan’s articulation justifies low-position jobs for refugees by ignoring the chasm among jobs’ positions in society. In addition, he ignores the relationship between one’s job and one’s desires, in contrast to Hetaw and Hiwa. This approach is very close to the NOU’s (2017) concentration on job and employment (see 4.2.1 Do Something, Man!).

George Simmel’s (1950) conceptualization of “stranger” helps us to understand this situation more abstractly. According to Simmel (1950), “strangers” are understood as a group and not as individuals. Normal members of the host society cannot find anything particular in common

with them. They understand “strangers” as a group and generally as humans, therefore the relation they have with “strangers” is a sort of relation they can have with everybody on the planet and it is therefore not a particular relation they have with a particular individual. Hence, the content of these individuals is removed, and their existence as a group is recognized. In this context, we can understand better why refugees’ *muscles* were so central in Bexodan’s articulation, and why their desires were ignored; because *muscles* represent them as a group, but desires represent their content. In NOU (2017), also, refugees are perceived as organic members of a group and are studied in order to engage in the market and employment, but a refugee “as the individual bearer of certain objective contents” (Simmel 1950: 408) is ignored in that report.

Move Your Ass!: The Refugee Speaks for the Norwegian Middle Class

I asked Befrin if the authorities (official places refugees were in touch with in the first years they were here) had any expectations for them, she answered:

No, they hadn’t it that time. For example, if you had applied for a course, they would send you there, so you could finish a course. But, after the course they didn’t have something else for you. That time, they would never force you to do something, whatsoever. If you were just sitting at home and taking social benefits, they wouldn’t ask you why you didn’t come out of home, and they wouldn’t demand it that you must come outside. Now it’s not like that. Now they press people [refugees]. Now they don’t let anybody sit at home, but that time it wasn’t like this. I mean, if you would just sit at home, they would anyway give you the social benefits. If you were satisfied with the social benefits, they wouldn’t care [that you were just sitting at home and using social benefits].

In this articulation, Befrin separated two groups of refugees from each other. One group was those who sit at home and the other was those who go out and find something to do. In this way, she demonstrated the present authorities’ desire, that they expect refugees to go outside, and not just be reliant on social benefits. Befrin implied the authorities did not want refugees to be *lazy* and spend their time at home without having any occupation. That is why I chose “Move Your Ass!” as the title of this section. This phrase conveys the authorities’ desire in this articulation comprehensively. The authorities want refugees to physically go out of their homes. Simultaneously, I interpret “they don’t let anybody sit at home” to mean the authorities want refugees to work and pay taxes, particularly when I relate it to “social benefits” in Befrin’s quote. “Move Your Ass!” can implicitly mean one must work and have a job, instead of being a burden to the society, which is largely the concern of NOU (2017).

4.2.4 Relating Articulations 4

‘Desires’ in the previous discourse (citizens of the world) was a continuation of informants’ past. There, we needed to know the informants’ history to understand their desires. In the current discourse, this is different. Here, we do not need that because their desires were not shaped in relation to their past. It is probably a consequence of losing faith in fighting for the collective dream. Rebwar desired to be like others in Norway, and if he could not become similar to Norwegians, he would at least pretend to be like them. Bexodan had the same desire, to be like the others. ‘Desires’ was also related to the use of muscles in Bexodan’s articulation. It was a pragmatic desire. Working was at the center of that desire. Befrin articulated it with not sitting at home and just using social benefits. Therefore, one side of ‘desires’ in this discourse is similarity, probably with the Norwegian middle class, and another side is to be a good person, not lazy, and to work in a pragmatic way, using muscles.

This articulation of desires for members of nations differs from the previous discourse: there, ‘convincing’ others of their values and thoughts was desired. Here, however, it is ‘similarity’ to others that is desired. Another side of desires for citizens of the world was skepticism to opportunities, but for members of nations it is manual labor, i.e. working with muscles. My informants were skeptical to refugees’ opportunities in the previous discourse while they desired that refugees work and use their muscles in this discourse. Thus, this articulation was more Norwegian-friendly or authorities-friendly than ‘desires’ articulated in the previous discourse, since ‘similarity’ involves a sort of obeying others instead of challenging them and trying to convince them. This articulation was not skeptical toward refugees’ opportunities in Norway. On the contrary, Bexodan desired authorities to organize refugees more strictly, and to control them even more. Befrin also conceptualized this organizing as a development since she implied the authorities do not allow refugees to be lazy and stay at home anymore. This supports my claim in “4.2.2” that the nodal point in this discourse – members of nations – was closer to the hegemonic nodal points in Norway than the other discourse.¹⁵

These informants were already convinced they should try to be like others in Norway. They were convinced they should obey others, work, be useful, and be a good refugee. They had heard the hegemonic whisper: “Do not be ambitious! Be a good refugee who is similar to me.” They were listening to this whisper. They desired strongly to show they were useful and good,

¹⁵ Simply put, hegemonic discourses are those discourses that are practiced by authorities.

and this desire went so far that they wanted the authorities to organize them even more effectively. An overview of the two discourses and the different moments attached to the floating signifiers can be found in table 2 below. In the next and final chapter, I summarize my discoveries and discuss them on a more theoretical level.

Komala Represents Integration

Discourses of Integration by Refugees	
Nodal Point: Citizenship of the World	Nodal Point: Membership of Nations
Floating Signifier: Adjusting Moments: Influence, Skepticism to Authorities	Floating Signifier: Adjusting Moments: Trust, Natural Troubles
Hegemonic Whisper: You are not one of us, and this is not your country.	Hegemonic Whisper: You are not one of us so it is natural that you have troubles.
Floating Signifier: Desires Moments: Convincing, Skepticism to Opportunities	Floating Signifier: Desires Moments: Similarity, Working with Muscles
Hegemonic Whisper: Do not be ambitious! Unfortunately we do not trust you.	Hegemonic Whisper: Do not be ambitious! Be a good refugee who is similar to me.

Table 2

5 Conclusion

In this thesis, I set out to discover refugees' own understanding of integration. Through interviews with individuals that had come to Norway as refugees, I studied how they experienced integration, how integration looked like from their own perspective. Specifically, my research question focused on how (former) members of a Marxist Party – Komala – experienced and perceived integration in Norway. In the second chapter, I presented an alternative reading of Laclau and Mouffe (particularly Laclau), which differs from Jørgensen and Phillips' reading. Moreover, I have written my thesis according to my own perception of Laclau and Mouffe. This final chapter discusses the findings on a more theoretical level.

Integration is an empty signifier that has no meaning in itself. The word integration does not mention anything concrete or even abstract in itself so we need a nodal point to produce meanings for integration. This nodal point is a central and privileged point that stabilizes a particular relation to every other point in the discourse. This means that these other points find their meaning only in relation to the nodal point. Moreover, each nodal point needs a concrete group to be empirically represented. In other words, you cannot say what integration is until you choose a group that represents a nodal point for integration. Nevertheless, the relation between this group and integration is arbitrary. There are no claims in Laclau and Mouffe's texts that the relation between an empty signifier and its representation/incarnation has any system – it is only arbitrary.

In my view, Laclau's understanding of nodal point slightly changed after his book with Mouffe in 1985 where he thought that the competition between discourses was just a game and everybody could have a role. In a later book (1996), by introducing empty signifiers, Laclau discusses the importance of particular groups in the society and the fact that they stand as incarnation/representation for society. Therefore, it is not a game anymore, where everybody has a role, or can have a role. The meaning of nodal point is dependent on the group that represents it and stands as its incarnation.

For instance, the meaning of nodal points in my thesis is dependent on their incarnation, the group that represents them. These groups are my informants. 'Citizenship of the world' has this particular meaning and it fixes meanings of the other points in the discourse in this way, only in the context of Komala. If we choose another group who constructs a discourse with the same nodal point (citizenship of the world), they will articulate different meanings since the context is different.

For example, there is a pub in Oslo called The Dubliner, where a group of native English-speakers is working. If I had done the same project there, the results would be different even though they would use the same nodal points: citizenship of the world, or membership of nations. This is because the groups that represent nodal points are different, so the context and the content is different.

Once I asked ‘citizens of the world’ what integration is, another time, I asked ‘members of nations’. Thus, I had two groups of Komala, which represented two nodal points: ‘citizenship of the world’ and ‘membership of nations’. Each nodal point partially fixes meanings of all elements in the discourse. I have presented two elements that are common between the discourses: ‘adjusting to a new environment’ and ‘desires.’ Theoretically explained, they are floating signifiers because different discourses compete with each other to fix their meanings. In my project, I have shown how two different discourses, give different meanings to these floating signifiers.

In “4.1.2,” I explained that informants articulated adjusting with having influence in the society and being skeptical about Norwegian authorities (and sometimes society). It differs from how members of nations articulate adjusting since they put trust in the Norwegian authorities and society and recognized natural troubles in the process of integration. Hence, adjusting has a different meaning when we articulate it with influence and skepticism as opposed to when we articulate it with trust and natural troubles (see 4.2.2).

Citizens of the world desired to convince others in Norway of their thoughts, values and principles. They used education as an instrument to be able to convince. They were so eager to convince others in Norway since they still believed in fighting for the collective dream they shared in Komala. Simultaneously, they were very skeptical about their opportunities in Norway. They did not think they had real opportunities to aspire to much in Norway. They illustrated a sort of threshold for their desires – how much they could aspire to (see 4.1.4). In contrast to citizens of the world, members of nations desired to be similar to ‘others,’ probably the ‘Norwegian middle class’ (see 4.2.3 The Middle Class Needs Muscles). They also had a desire for Norwegian authorities to organize refugees more strictly. Hence, it was something both promising and positive for refugees (in this discourse) that the Norwegian authorities made plans for them and assisted them into the labor market. This sort of organizing refugees by authorities that Berxodan and Befrin articulated was mostly expressed in a very pragmatic way because considering the labor market as the main goal for refugees and asylum seekers implied that refugees and asylum seekers were mostly supposed to use their muscles instead of their

brain in this discourse (see 4.2.4). Informants' desires in the first discourse were articulated with convincing others and being skeptical about opportunities while it was articulated here with being similar to others and using (working with) muscles.

Both desires and adjusting have been articulated differently in these two different discourses. Hence, I have demonstrated that they are floating signifiers and they get different meanings in relation to different nodal points. In other words, they have different meanings in different discourses and different discourses compete with each other to fix their meanings.

In this thesis project, I show how nodal points can be contextualized. The way I demonstrate them shows that they are highly connected to the context they arise from. Both citizenship of the world and membership of nations are strongly related to the history of Komala, informants' past, and the collective dream they shared in Komala. Citizenship of the world interrelates with fighting for the collective dream and membership of nations interrelates with losing faith in that fight. Therefore, understanding nodal points requires a deep understanding of the context they arise from; they are not simply some replaceable points with the same functions everywhere. On the contrary, they have a history behind themselves, which is vital to perceiving the relation they establish to other points in the discourse. Nodal points are not independent points. They are also dependent on a context and their relation to other points.

5.1 Hegemonic Whisper

Empty signifiers do not have any essential contents. Laclau concludes from the emptiness of these signifiers that a totality and fullness called society is impossible (Laclau and Mouffe 2014: 108; Laclau 2007: 43). Hence, hegemony is possible since this fullness is impossible. Any content that sits instead of this emptiness makes a hegemonic relationship since the content can never represent all the members in a society. In that sense, a totality called society is just a myth for them. Theoretically, every group in the so-called society attempts to establish their content (themselves) as the representation of those empty signifiers insofar as they manage to hegemonize the society.

These two discourses in my thesis are not hegemonic since the groups that represent their nodal points do not have the power of hegemonizing society, so, these discourses are not hegemonizing the empty signifier of integration because they are not influential enough to be

practiced by institutions or authorities. Thus, I have discovered two non-hegemonic discourses in this project.

A major question that came from this study was; how do hegemonic discourses in Norway communicate with these non-hegemonic discourses? In other words, how do hegemonic nodal points communicate with non-hegemonic nodal points? In other words, how do hegemonic groups communicate with non-hegemonic groups? Another question that arose was; how do refugees who are living within these non-hegemonic discourses hear this communication?

Interestingly, I have not found any concepts by Laclau and Mouffe that are related to these questions. However, Laclau discusses hegemonic relationship (2007: 43), but he does not cover the other side of this relationship – how a hegemonic relationship appears for non-hegemonic groups – which I found in “Privilege” (Khan 2011). This is a book about how the old elite reproduce themselves in democratic contexts. It is particularly about ST. Paul’s School (London), where descendants of the old elite still stand to benefit from their privileges. It is argued that the old elite do not vanish, but only change their shape and exist in another way.

Khan (2011: 18-22) discusses hegemonic relationships from a non-hegemonic position attractively. He discusses how Chase Abbott, son of an elite Anglo-Saxon family, communicates with him, the child of immigrant parents. Chase does not tell Khan directly that he owns ST. Paul’s school, and Khan is just visiting it, but that is what Khan understands from the relationship. Khan uses the movie “The Good Shepherd” as an example for his point there an Italian immigrant asks an elite member of the American government what he and people like him have in life, he answers, “The United States of America. The rest of you are just visiting.” Khan regards this answer as an expression for Chase’s communication. Khan thus presents how the hegemonic relationship is perceived from the non-hegemonic side. This sort of perceiving hegemonic relationships is what is absent in Laclau and Mouffe’s problematizing of discourse analysis. In my view, Laclau does not recognize that non-hegemonic groups are able to hear something from hegemonic discourses that others are not able to hear. Chase did not say that Khan was just visiting the school while Chase owned it. Nevertheless, it was what Khan heard. I think Khan heard it because he was communicating with a hegemonic discourse within a non-hegemonic discourse. I call it a *hegemonic whisper* since not everybody is able to hear it and the whisper comes from hegemonic discourses.

We can illustrate it by using a quote that is attributed to Nietzsche:¹⁶ “And those who were seen dancing were thought to be insane by those who could not hear the music” (Goodreads 2018). The whisper that I am talking about is like this music. Hegemonized groups hear it and respond to it – it makes these groups dance. However, hegemonizing groups do not hear it and think they need a psychologist. This dance can be fighting for the collective dream as citizens of the world discussed, trying hard to be similar to Norwegians as members of nations discussed, becoming humble like Hiwa, turning into a preacher like Hetaw, or becoming convinced that it is natural that the system is not for them like Befrin and Rebwar. They had heard the music, the *hegemonic whisper*, “You are not one of us, and this is not your country.” “You are not one of us so it is natural that you have troubles.” “Do not be ambitious! Unfortunately we do not trust you.” “Do not be ambitious! Be a good refugee who is similar to me.”

In my opinion, the reason Befrin and Berxodan were so pragmatic and mostly concentrated on a sort of working, which needed refugees’ muscles, is that they had heard the *hegemonic whisper* that their brains were not important for hegemonic groups in Norway. Moreover, they had heard it in a convincing way. It was natural for them. For instance, Rebwar explained if someone would not help a teenage refugee, “This kid is really condemned to not be successful, she is condemned to drop back in class and be marginalized.” Then Rebwar commented that “This kid” would end up becoming a cleaner. It was a natural and individual process for Rebwar – somebody should help the kids.

This whisper is much more provoking for citizens of the world than members of nations. For instance, Hetaw stated:

I think, now, the government’s project is to do something that these groups [refugees] in this society form a life for themselves without being able to be a danger for the main groups, which are in the government.

In this quote, Hetaw had a very provoking perception of the *hegemonic whisper*: “main groups” did not want refugees to be a danger to their influence and power. In my view, “main groups” are what I mention as hegemonic groups and whom Khan mentions as elites to which Chase Abbott belonged. It is not an accident that Khan was also a child of immigrant parents since not everybody can hear this whisper.

¹⁶ It is unclear if this quote is really from Nietzsche. I use it because the metaphor is very helpful in this context.

Another important question that arose from my analysis was; why is the *hegemonic whisper* much more provoking for citizens of the world, and much more convincing (natural) for members of nations?

“Nationalism is deeply exclusionary” (Bosniak 2001: 248) and the authorities’ discourse in Norway “tends to focus specifically on the loyalty of individual immigrants towards the country in which they have settled” (Fuglerud 1997: 459). Members of nations were not critical to this discourse. The Norwegian state has been founded on a notion that Norwegians constitute a nation, and the hegemonic discourse about Norway as a nation-state implies that the state’s first responsibility is to protect Norwegians. While citizens of the world reject the notion of nation states, the members of nations identify themselves with nations. Therefore, the nodal point of citizenship of the world has more distance, than membership of nations, from the hegemonic nodal points. The authorities’ desire to have refugees who reject their previous identity (Fuglerud 1997: 443) convinces members of nations while it provokes citizens of the world. Membership of nations is closer to this desire than citizenship of the world.

The greater the distance between a non-hegemonic nodal point and hegemonic nodal points, the more the *hegemonic whisper* will be provoking and the less it will be convincing.

Why do we need the term ‘hegemonic whisper’? There are some non-linguistic existences in our society that we cannot categorize or study as long as we do not have a term to recognize them. New concepts help us “to reveal things that are already there” (Bourdieu 1989: 23). Pierre Bourdieu calls this process a ‘revelation’:

In fact, as a constellation which, according to Nelson Goodman (1978), begins to exist only when it is selected and designated as such, a group, a class, a gender, a region, or a nation begins to exist as such, for those who belong to it as well as for the others, only when it is distinguished, according to one principle or another, from other groups, that is, through knowledge and recognition (*connaissance et reconnaissance*) (1989: 23).

Hence, it is crucial to be aware of which concepts we use to “reveal” non-linguistic existences we wish to study. At the same time, it is important to know how we define these concepts because our definition includes, as well as excludes, existences. Marianne Gullestad (2002a: 79-119) argues that the majority approach in Norway has constituted a dichotomy between “Norwegians” and “immigrants.” At the same time, she criticizes both terms (2002: 91, 93, 98), for there are not any social homogeneous phenomena with total similarity called “Norwegians” or “immigrants.” The *hegemonic whisper* makes it possible to give an upside down approach to this dichotomy, which I will now explain.

Through the two discourses I have presented in this thesis, I have demonstrated how the idea of “Norwegians” is constructed. This has been shown through the articulations about Norwegian authorities, and in some instances, Norwegian society. What I have presented here about Norwegian authorities and society are still socially constructed articulations and meanings. I do not claim that this is the true reality. Instead, it is the upside down of the concept of “Norwegians.” In other words, *hegemonic whisper* is the non-hegemonic perception of the hegemonic dichotomies. With this concept I “reveal” the non-hegemonic constructed dichotomies, which may be neglected otherwise.

5.2 Concluding Remarks

This thesis discovered two discourses about integration that were not discussed in previous Norwegian literature about integration – at least I could not find anything of relevance to my research topic. However, Norwegian researchers have not been totally uninterested in immigrants’ political beliefs. They have studied immigrants’ voting in Norway (Bjørklund and Kval 2001; Bergh, Bjørklund, and Aalandslid 2008) but that is still far from categorizing refugees according to their political background and present political views as I have done in my thesis. Thus, it is novel in a Norwegian context to focus on (former) Marxist refugees and discuss different groups among them.

My project is contributing to our understanding of integration by presenting a new perspective to integration that is to let the objects of integration tell us what integration looks like rather than taking a majority perspective. However, as an approach, it can be used for other groups as well. What do other Marxist refugees in Norway think about integration? It may also be used to study refugees with other types of political identities in Norway: How do refugees with other political identities configure integration? Moreover, I identified two floating signifiers for integration among my informants. Can these floating signifiers have different articulations for other groups? Do we have other floating signifiers? More broadly, is there any interaction between political identities and religious identities as to the understanding of integration? These are empirical questions that my thesis provokes for future research.

During illustrating of the discourses, I noticed that hegemonic discourses communicate with my informants through media, authorities, job, police, Norwegian friends etc. I could not find any concepts in particularly Laclau’s work for conceptualizing this communication so I made

a new concept (hegemonic whisper) to help us to interpret the material more abstractly and make sense of it theoretically. However, this concept provokes other questions. If we accept this concept, which changes does it drag into the discourse analysis framework? In which other contexts can we discover the hegemonic whisper? How much scope for variation is there between messages that are transmitted via hegemonic whispers? To what extent can we distinguish between those who hear the hegemonic whisper and those who do not? These concepts and questions my thesis provokes are theoretical contributions to develop Laclau and Mouffe's discourse analysis and future research.

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All sources used in this thesis have been referenced above.

Word Count: 34407

Appendix 1: Invitasjon til et forskningsprosjekt om: Integrering av tidligere medlemmer i Komala

Mitt navn er Emdjed (Hejir) Kurdnidjad, og jeg er masterstudent i sosiologi ved Universitetet i Oslo. Jeg skal skrive masteroppgaven min om hvordan gamle Peshmarga i Komala har opplevd integrering i Norge og hva de synes om det.

Jeg har valgt å undersøke integrering av gamle Peshmarga i Komala fordi dette partiet var et marxist parti etter 1979, og det ikke finnes så mye forskning på integrering av marxister i Norge. Men du trenger ikke å fortsatt være marxist for å delta i dette intervjuet.

Jeg kommer til å stille spørsmål om dine politiske meninger, opplevelsene dine i Norge, om du er fornøyd i Norge, hva du synes om rasisme og hvordan integrering har påvirket din identitet. Intervjuet vil vare mellom én og to timer. HVIS DET ER GREIT FOR DEG, VIL JEG TA OPP SAMTALEN OG SENERE LAGE EN UTSKRIFT AV HVA DU HAR SAGT.

Hvis jeg stiller spørsmål du føler deg ukomfortabel med å svare på underveis, kan du unnlate å svare. Deltakelse i prosjektet er helt frivillig. Du kan når som helst trekke deg fra undersøkelsen, uten noen konsekvenser. Dersom du trekker deg, vil alle opplysninger om deg bli slettet. Jeg vil behandle all informasjon konfidensielt, både med tanke på selve intervjuet og i den endelige oppgaven. Jeg har taushetsplikt, og det er bare jeg som har tilgang til informasjon som kommer frem underveis. Når masteroppgaven er ferdig, vil alle lydopptak slettes, og all informasjon som kan identifisere deg destrueres, senest januar 2019. Prosjektet ventes å være ferdig innen juni 2018.

Studien er meldt til Personvernombudet for forskning, NSD - Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS. Den endelige oppgaven skal skrives på engelsk. Alle personer som deltar anonymiseres.

Dersom du ønsker å delta eller har spørsmål til studien, ta kontakt med meg på telefonnummeret: 92 55 5251 eller e-post: kurdnidjad.emdjed@gmail.com. Professor Anniken Hagelund ved Institutt for Sosiologi og Samfunnsgeografi i Universitetet i Oslo er min veileder i dette prosjektet, og du kan også ta kontakt med henne på e-post: anniken.hagelund@sosgeo.uio.no.

Jeg setter stor pris på at du deltar i intervjuet.

Samtykke til deltakelse i studien

Jeg har mottatt informasjon om studien, og er villig til å delta

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

Appendix 2: Interview Guide

1. *How old are you?*
2. *When did you participate in Komala?*
3. **Exploring How Strong their Identity/Self-Image was in Komala**
 - *Why did you choose to be a member of Komala?*
 - *What did you like about Komala?*
 - *What did you aim for? What was your goal?*
 - *What could you do for your goals?*
4. **Exploring Experiences of Life in Norway**
 - *What does integration mean for you?*
 - *Tell me the story of your first five years in Norway*
 - *How has your family life been in Norway?*
 - *How has your relation with your homeland been since you moved to Norway?*
 - *How has your educational life been in Norway?*
 - *How has your economic life been in Norway?*
5. **Exploring Integration for the Norwegian State from the Informants' Perspective**
 - *What does integration mean for the Norwegian state?*
 - *How do you know that?*
 - *Where was the first organization, which took care of you in Norway? What did they expect from you?*
 - *Is there any other organization with which you got to be in touch in your first years in Norway? Did they expect anything from you?*
6. **Exploring Grievance**
 - *What did you want to achieve in Norway?*
 - *How far did you achieve them?*
 - *What are you missing here?*

- *What did you do for reaching them? How?*
- *What did you do for replacing them? How?*
- *Did you give up finally? (If yes) Well, why didn't you give up in Kurdistan?*
- *If I ask you again what integration mean for you, how do you answer me? (try to make them comparing it with the governmental ideas of integration as well)*

7. Exploring Marginalization

- *How has your social life been in Norway?*
- *What do you do in your free times? What is your hobby(ies)?*
- *How have you been politically involved/active since you have moved to Norway?*
- *Have you ever seen anybody in Norway who has the same approach to life (the world) as you have?*
- *Where were they from? Did you get any kind of relation or friendship with them? How?*
- *Do you have any feelings of being marginalized in Norway? May you tell me about them?*
- *If I ask you again what integration mean for you, how do you answer me? (try to make them to compare it with the governmental ideas of integration)*

8. Exploring Racism

- *How do you understand racism?*
- *Do you think there is any kind of racism in Norway? Explain it.*
- *Have you experienced any kind of that? Tell me about it.*

9. Exploring identity-transformation

- *You recognized yourself as a Marxist sometime. Why?*
- *Are you still a Marxist? Why?*
- *Who do you think you are now? What is your identity?*
- *Where do you think you are from?*

