“The Moving Voices”
A case study of the Moving Voices Radio Documentary Course for young refugee journalists

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Author: Reeta Ylä-Jussila,
Student at MA Communication for Development
School of Arts and Communication (K3)

Thesis advisor: Magnus Andersson,
Senior lecturer and researcher
School of Arts and Communication (K3)
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Abstract

Five professionals who have been working as journalists in their home countries come to Scandinavia after different kinds of terrible experiences and difficulties and there their status is refugee. They all attend to a course of radio making, radio is a new media for all of them and during the course they learn more about the media and have all by the end of the course made a radio documentary about themselves. Their documentaries were short stories about the events of their lives. More and more immigrants and refugees are coming to Scandinavia and have to build a new life in a new society. This paper explores life stories of people when integrating and seeks answers to questions why it is important to share your life story with other and could sharing your story help with integration. The interest is also in radio as a media and as a media for storytelling, what are its strengths and weaknesses and what does future hold for radio in rapidly changing media environment. The research combines two qualitative methods which are supposed to complement each other: qualitative interviews and the narrative analysis for analysing radio documentaries.
Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Research inspiration

The Nordic Countries become a new home to many refugees each year. There have been discussions that the Scandinavian societies fail to offer these people good lives and help them to find their places in societies. Many refugees have university degrees and still they end up being cleaners or bus drivers. Both are very respectable professions, but we should not assume that jobs like that are the only things new residents can and are willing to do. After experiencing a war or a conflict in your home country and facing the force to leave that country behind, is stressful enough and new challenges wait with new language, way of life, values and adaptation. There are many stories Scandinavian societies could learn from their new residents and also how the resources they already have could be used for the benefit of refugee and society.

Rikke Houd, a project coordinator for The Moving Voices Course, gave an inspiring lecture for ComDev students in April 2013 in Malmö. She told us about 5 young journalists who had recently come to Scandinavia as refugees. I became interested about the subject and interviewed Rikke for the Research Methodology course. Rikke and I discussed about the goals they had for the course and she told that their main goal was to find talented young journalists who had recently come to Scandinavia and offer them a change to learn something new concerning their profession. Rikke said that they as organisers of the course were concerned that these young refugees get lost into system, end up doing something totally different from their profession. They felt that it was important to find them before they come unstimulated and loose time and knowledge. The aim for the Moving Voices to course was to get the young journalist to become connected to new media environment in their host countries and be able to practise their profession even as a freelancer, to get them connections so that their situation in new environment would not be that lonely.

Rikke and I established that it takes more than one course to achieve all those things but it was a beginning and the participants were given something professionally. During the course they all made a radio documentary and were encouraged to share their own story in the feature. We heard
parts of the documentaries during the lecture and stories course participants told in their features were very powerful.

This thesis will combine all things mentioned above. Why is it important to tell and share your story with others and what can we learn from each other’s stories. Also what is storytelling in radio, in a medium where you count on the voice in order to make the message powerful. Important is also if courses like the Moving voices that support participant’s profession help them to find their places in new societies, learn new skills and keep their professional identity.

1.2 Research questions

This thesis intends to give answers to two research questions.

I will explore the question about the identity of refugees, when they come to a new country and what it requires to build an everyday life there. What migratory experiences are about and how it is to live in a new cultural setting?

The other part of the research is about radio. Is radio a suitable medium for storytelling and giving a voice? What are strength and weaknesses of radio? In today’s media environment with several social media platforms and ever-changing technology, what the future holds for old mediums such as radio?

1.3 Thesis Outline

Following this introduction and research questions for this thesis, Chapter 1 gives more detailed information behind The Moving Voices documentary Course and its participants. It will give answers to the idea and purpose for the course by using the material gathered in interview with Rikke Houd who was one of the coaches in the course. It also elaborates further the aims of this thesis and its key point.

Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical framework that this thesis is built on, explanation of radio as a media and characteristic of radio documentary. Voice also has a role in this thesis in two different ways; as sounds we hear when listening to radio and in more abstract way of having a voice in
society. The importance of telling and sharing one’s life stories is also being elaborated, as are transnational aspects of this thesis.

Chapter 3 presents the methodological approach chosen for this thesis – qualitative in-depth interviews and narrative analysis - as well as an explanation why these methods were chosen for this thesis.

Chapter 4 aims to give answers to research questions and consists of an analysis of the gathered material in interviews and radio documentaries.

Chapter 5 concludes this thesis and summarises the analysis made in chapter 4.

1.4 Moving Voices Radio Documentary Course

In early 2012 the IMS-supported Moving Voices Radio Documentary Course provided a unique opportunity for young Middle Eastern and Afghan refugee journalists recently granted asylum in the Nordic countries, to learn how to produce professional radio features and documentaries.

For Research Methodology course I interviewed Rikke Houd who was one of the organisers and coaches of the course. Rikke and I talked about IMS, why this course was organised, what were the aims for the course and how Rikke felt radio as a medium for storytelling.

International Media Support (IMS) is a Danish based organization that works with journalists in conflict. With journalists that work in countries where freedom of speech and journalistic professionalism is threatened by political society. IMS is an organization that works on different levels, their help to journalist can be very practical, it can be legal help and like in Afghanistan were they have lawyers and safe houses which can help safe people’s lives, they also help to get journalist flee from countries in crisis if that is needed. It can also be “empowering people in the situations they are in, so skilling them with skills in the working situations they are in.” (Rikke Houd’s interview, 2013)
The Moving Voices Radio Documentary Course was a part time course where students work in close collaboration with experienced radio feature makers during intensive workshops. The aim of the course was to support the professional integration of young resourceful refugee journalists.

The course included networking activities and was designed in close collaboration with professional media. Students for the course were carefully selected on the basis of proven past experience within a range of fields, from film, radio and television, to newspaper journalism and blogging.

Rikke told me that they got the idea for the course when she worked in a short course with young refugee journalist from Iran and was her coach for making radio documentaries. The documentary that came from that collaboration was so good that Rikke and other people in IMS thought that they should have the same kind of course to a bigger group: “Imagine there are more people like her around with these fantastic stories and they are very skilful and very innovative and because how the world is today with all these possibilities.” (Rikke Houd’s interview, 2013) Getting in touch with possible participants was not easy though, some participants were found through Danish PEN (International organization that celebrates literature and promotes freedom of expression) and some from universities and some had earlier been in contact with IMS. One of the participants applied to the course while she was in refugee camp. Participants did not have much experience at working with radio, Rikke told me that they didn’t see radio as a medium for storytelling, it was more about news and music and the genre of radio documentary was not known to any of them when they started.

In 2012, Moving Voices collaborated with the national broadcasting corporations from Denmark (DR), Norway (NRK), and Finland (YLE).

The course took place in three intensive seven-day workshops from January to June 2012 and was hosted by the documentary and feature departments at the three countries’ broadcasting corporations. The course participants worked on their productions in between these workshops in close collaboration with a coach.

In my degree project I intend to find out why these young journalists want to tell stories and why do they think it important. They told their stories in radio and the intention is to find out how they
see radio as medium. The aim is to analyse radio documentaries the students of the course made and interview them. In their programmes they tell very openly about their experiences from refugee camps, their new lives in new countries, difficulties they have experienced in Nordic Countries, how much they miss their home countries and their families there. What telling their stories in radio meant to them and did they feel that radio gave them voice?

I also wanted to find out how they felt about the Moving Voices Course and its affect to their settling to their new home country. Does it help if the new society support the profession a refugee already has and there is something to offer for them in that field and not necessity to start from zero.

### 1.5 Refugee journalists

There were 5 participants in the course and those 5 were the ones who will be interviewed for this project.

**Iranian Leila Saadati** (1979) studied journalism at the Azad Teheran University and has worked as a journalist in Iran since 2001 writing mainly about social and cultural issues. She has worked with reformist newspapers and BBC Persia.

Threats facing reformist journalists after the election in 2009 led Leila Saadati to flee to Turkey in 2010 where she stayed for 14 months before receiving asylum in Norway in August 2011. While in Turkey, she participated in a multimedia course with International War and Peace Reporting (IWPR). Leila Saadati now lives in Steinkjær in northern Norway. She is studying Norwegian and writing a book about the situation for Iranian asylum seekers in Turkey.

**Shayaa Azizi (name changed)** (1985) grew up in Kabul, Afghanistan where she was trained as a documentary-filmmaker and camerawoman at the Aina Media and Culture centre. She also studied in Finland. She produced a number of documentaries before fleeing to Finland where she lives now as a refugee. Interested in women’s rights topics, her last documentary project in Afghanistan investigated the death of a female journalist and head of a radio station in Afghanistan. Shayaa Azizi has worked with documentary making, TV and radio in Afghanistan and Finland.
Palestinian Nehal Afana (1982) grew up in Gaza city where she worked as a film-maker together with Gaza International Documentary Film Festival. She has a BA in English Literature from Al-Azhar University in Gaza.

In 2009, Nehal Afana was the local manager for the Gaza-Tromsø city to city project, arranging workshops and collaborative activities. She is currently working on a documentary about life around the border between Gaza and Egypt. Nehal Afana moved to Norway in 2010.

Jan Pêt Khorto (1986) is a Syrian journalist, poet, writer and political activist who studied Journalism and Mass Media at the University of Damascus.

Jan Pêt Khorto is the founder and former editor in chief of two underground publications in Syria. He was arrested and jailed for 107 days after publishing his second poetry collection and a number of articles about the Syrian government. Jan Pêt Khorto lived underground travelling from Syria through Europe without a passport for more than a year before applying for political asylum in Denmark in 2008.

Noufel Bouzeboudja (1981) is a writer, performer and journalist from Algeria. He began writing his first novel Espoirs Déchus (Deceived Hopes) at the age of 17. Before leaving Algeria in 2009, he taught English and drama-techniques at the University Mouloud Mammeri Tizi Ouzou.

Noufel Bouzeboudja contributes to several newspapers and websites and hosted a literary radio program on Radio Numydia from 2009 until 2011. He has participated in collective and individual recitations in Algeria, Spain, France, Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway.

He is now living in Denmark as an ICORN (International Cities of Refugee Network) writer, collaborating with Danish PEN and European universities and institutions giving lectures and participating in seminars and debates.
Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

2.1 Radio and Documentary

Radio is the oldest of the broadcasting mediums. “Once the only form of broadcasting, then the victim of television’s success, reprieved as the natural voice of popular music and youth culture and now on the crest of the wave of more democratic, user-generated forms of audio, radio seems to be both ancient and modern; so yesterday and yet so tomorrow. In our visual culture, radio persists without pictures and the ‘blind’ medium but this invisibility it retains a special power to communicate. Important, even dominant, though the visual is, sound communication through chat, the phone, in music and on radio remains both different and extremely important.” (Chignell, 2009: 4)

Talk and sound to radio are as fundamental as visual images are to film and television. According to Chignell talk is often described as the “primary code” of radio. (Chignell, 2009: 9). In the context of radio talk is used to “refer to use of language (vocabulary and grammar) but also mode of address (including ‘direct address’ which uses ‘you’, ‘we’, ‘I’ and so on)” (Chignell, 2009: 9) Talk also includes the sound of someone talking, but we have to keep in mind that “broadcast talk” is different from everyday conversational talk. Talk on radio depends a lot depending on genre, format, and the audience the programme is targeted, the time of the day and the nature of radio station. Also the cultural background of the presenter has an influence on how they talk. Broadcast talk is very different whether it is news, documentary, sport coverage or music programme people are listening.

As previously noted, radio is often called a blind medium. Radio relays on auditory “codes” such as speech, music, sounds and silence. Blindness can be seen both as weakness and strength. Andrew Crisell, the writer of one of the most ground-breaking radio texts Understanding radio, explains why radio is defined by the need to compensate for its visual handicap by saying that is because of a ‘hierarchy of the senses’ in which sight is top and hearing comes second. According to Crisell hearing can often lead to confusion. (Chignell, 2009: 68). Crisell goes on explain that radio compensates the lack of pictures by informing listeners what is happening, what is going to happen next, what radio station the person is listening. Crisell calls those signpost and they can
be different kinds of jingles before news and other programmes. As noted before, blindness should however not been seen just the weakness of the radio, because people cannot see a moving picture as in TV or film they have to use their imagination more and this creates more intimate relationship between listener and presenter. Chignell also points out when summarising Crisell’s points of view that because the lack of pictures in radio, programmes are fairly easy to produce and radio does not require same amount of attention as TV, it is a medium that can be received while doing something else. (Chignell, 2009: 68) Radio can be called a secondary medium, you can do other things while listening to radio and be able to concentrate on both. When compared to television production, radio programmes are easier and also more inexpensive to product. One of the interviewees mentioned to me in her interview: “Basically all you need is a recorder to gather the sounds and talk and some equipment for editing the programme.” Crisell’s theory on radio as a blind medium has received criticism from Crook who especially criticised a hierarchy of the senses. Crook asks: “What is the philosophical difference between seeing with the eye and seeing with the mind?” and also wonders why vision is placed ahead of sound. (Crook, 1999: 54) Crook sees that radio stimulates in the imagination not just crude visual representations but the full range of emotions and feeling and called radio drama the theatre of the mind, where imagination can create the same kind of spectacle we usually associate with TV or film. “The theatre of mind is an emotional theatre, where feelings are the primary currency, mixed with mood, memories and imagination.” (Crook, 1999: 61) Crook expresses his concern that by calling radio as a blind medium it is implied “that the radio medium is handicapped by some kind of limited and disabled method of communication. The radio communicator and listener are in danger of being marginalised by the medium’s perceived limitations.” (Crook, 1999: 62) Shinglar and Wieringa agree with Crook and in their opinion radio is very much visual medium because it stimulates the imagination and challenges the listener to play active role in making the programme. (Chignell, 2009: 69-70) Using your imagination while listening to radio also creates certain intimacy between radio and its audience.

### 2.1.1 Radio documentary

“Radio is a very good medium for storytelling, because you can work with the words, so if you can write, you can apply that skill to radio. If you have a visual mind, you can learn to create and construct pictures, sound with words and make the mix things, so there are lots of techniques that
are interesting. People that have that background as well. And then the third reason I think is good that there is a possibility of anonymity...you know it can be used differently than the show media where you are exposed in a different way. And then there is that it is also very easy. The technical side of it and it is cheap, so it’s for any kind of...I mean with podcasts today and with all the online possibilities...if you have time and if you have access, you can buy a relatively good recorder, you can make things yourself. So it’s not like that you need a TV-station etc. And on the other side, the difficult side of radio is that it is very language burden, you need to be quite creative if you want to do it in several languages. TV is easier that way; you just put the text on.” (Rikke Houd’s interview, 2013) A radio documentary is an acoustic performance devoted to covering a particular topic in some depth, broadcasted on radio or published on audio media. What differentiate radio documentaries from news reports is that they are lengthier although consist the same kind of straightforward, journalistic-type reporting. Smith explains in his article that radio listeners don’t often realize they are listening to radio documentary but are thinking it just as program or a story. Radio documentaries are often based on interviews and observation; they are narratives of real life. Chignell makes the difference between radio documentary and news about current affairs by saying that radio documentary “is more likely to exploit the possibilities of sound, often in the representation of an aspect of everyday life.” (Chignell, 2009: 22) Both Chignell and Hendy see the radios blindness to be an advantage when making radio documentaries. Hendy says that because radio doesn’t have to concern visibility like TV does, it can “take seemingly bland, everyday phenomena and create something ‘rich in meanings’” (Hendy 2004: 173 quoted in Chignell, 2009: 22) Smith defines radio documentary as follows: “A documentary possesses a depth of research or proximity to its subject that distinguishes it from a long feature or enterprise story. Length is not the defining quality; a documentary can last hours or five minutes. Documentaries convey a rich sense of character and detail- or a substantial body of original investigative material- that simply aren’t heard in the majority public radio news reports”. (Smith, 2001: 1) In Smith’s opinion what is characteristic to radio documentary is how the story on tape unfolds in front of the listener and function like in a TV or film documentary. One of the strengths of radio documentary compared to film is that in radio it is easier to tell stories of people want to stay anonymous and don’t want their faces shown. David Isay explains in Melissa Ludtke’s interview: “Radio is a wonderful medium to tell emotional stories. That interests me. It’s a great medium for getting into dark corners of this country and telling stories that can’t be
told on film.” (Ludtke, 2001: 1) Isay says one of radio’s good qualities is that it is fairly inexpensive to make radio programme and documentaries and radio is a suitable medium to tell stories of people “who don’t want photographs. Many times they communicate best through talking.” (Ludtke, 2001: 2) Ehrlich argues that use of actual recordings on-site as opposed to sound effects and actors brought stories told in radio documentaries nearer the audience and also made them more real. This trend towards realism has been called by historians the imagined community. Historian Susan J. Douglas explains that “listeners were united not only by hearing the same thing at the same time but also by engaging in the same cognitive and emotional work: to create a mental representation of a speaker, news, a story.” (Douglas quoted in Ehrlich, 2011: 157) It is also said that occasionally one word or one sound is worth a dozen pictures. Writers see that there is still future for radio documentaries, although the audience is not very wide. Ehrlich writes: “Relatively inexpensive recording technology and editing software have made radio documentary an increasingly democratic and accessible medium.” (Ehrlich, 2011: 4)

Inexpensiveness and easiness in radio making are the advantages and new technology offers new, different ways to distribute programmes. Rikke Houd also spoke about the easiness and flexibility of radio in my interview: “I think that there is the flexibility of the media that is easy to learn, so you get results quite soon, you know if you are not a total technical disaster, you learn to make quite good recordings and you can learn to edit and of course to become good at it you have to practise with anything else, but you get that fast. Fast results and I think that’s why it is very satisfying, it’s fun when you have that interview and you have that music and you can put them together and you suddenly have the story. “(Rikke Houd’s interview, 2013)

2.2 Voice and sound

It was said by David Isay that radio is a great medium for storytelling for people who do not want to show their faces. What we can conclude of this is that radio can give voice to people who otherwise might stay silent. But what is voice? Voice can mean the sound of a person speaking, but according to Nick Couldry, voice can also been seen in more political way. When speaking about voice politically, we usually refer it in a way of expressing an opinion or “more broadly, the expression of a distinctive perspective on the world that needs to be acknowledged.” (Couldry, 2010: 1) Couldry explains the meaning of voice as a process; the process of giving an account of one’s life and its conditions. Philosopher Judith Butler calls this “giving an account of oneself” in other words telling a story. (Couldry, 2010: 7) It is often said that telling and sharing stories or
narratives is what makes people human and denying that from another person is denying her potential to voice. Couldry argues that having a voice requires resources; language is a practical resource, a way to express you, but also status is necessary if one is to be recognized by the others as having voice. Without both of these, voice is impossible. You have to have other people around you in order to communicate and exchange narratives. (Couldry, 2010: 8) Voice as a social process involves interaction, having a voice means both speaking and listening. Voice can also be seen as a way to effect on fault in society. This of course requires that people living in society have freedom of speech and freedom of expression. One of the interviewees said to me when I was interviewing her that in her new society that it is easy to make your voice heard. “You feel yourself that you have freedom to do, to express yourself, to say what you want. So it’s not difficult to let your voice to be heard here while it’s not easy in my country, especially if you are a woman.”

Voice and sound go hand in hand. Sound is what we hear when listening to radio. There can be people taking, music, special effects and even silence which is one of the rhetorical devices used in radio. Recordings on site, sounds the documentarist has experienced and captured, give listeners experience that is more real than just using sound effects created in studio. Through these sounds people can identify themselves to different places. Crook explains effects described by Lance Sieveking one of the first radio producers who attempted to define rules of sound production. When sounds we hear are easily identifiable, for example the sound of Big Ben, sound “conveys by way of cultural codification a mood, idea or feeling. It could be a feeling of nostalgia, patriotism, nationalism or ‘sense of belonging’”. (Crook, 1999: 71) Hearing a sound which is easily identifiable, gives us mind image of the place or of a happening, but can also signify other ideas of the issue which depend on overall context. Crook explains Sieveking’s ideas further and writes how people immediately associate sounds and sound effects when hearing them. For example we can associate sound of the water differently depending the narration around it. If we hear someone saying they are about to have a bath, the association is warm and pleasant, but if the story is about fishing in Arctic Circle, our association is automatically cold or even freezing. Cleverly created, timed and edited sound effects and intonations in speech voice are vehicles to make radio programmes more alluring to listeners, programmes that invite to be heard and imagined.
2.3 Life stories and a need to share

Richard Kearney (2002: 3) says that “Telling stories is as basic to human beings as eating.” He goes on by arguing that stories are what make life worth living. People tell stories in order to explain “themselves to themselves and to others.” (Kearney, 2002:3). Telling your story is a part of people’s everyday life and stories are principal way of understanding the lived world. (Lewis, 2011: 1) When someone asks you who you are, you tell your story; who you are today is the sum of what you have experienced in the past and what your anticipations for future are. This is way for you to introduce yourself and share your insights of life. The person listening to you will likely to learn something not just about you but about different views of life and most definitely of experiences. Kearney points out that storytelling may be said to “humanise time by transforming it from impersonal passing of fragmented moments into a pattern, a plot, a mythos.” (Kearney, 2002: 4) Personal narratives, as Ruth Finnegan calls life stories, are everyday experience of ordinary people who tell them in their own words, there isn’t any formal structure in personal narratives. (Finnegan in Mackay, 1997: 67) So what is a story or a narrative as it sometimes is called? According to Kearney “every story shares the common function of someone telling something to someone about something”. (Kearney, 2002: 5) Finnegan explains that in a story there is always some kind of plot that makes sense to both the teller and the ones who are listening. A story manifests an accepted “conventions about form and content” so to say it constitutes a culturally recognized genre. (Finnegan in Mackay, 1997: 72) When comparing reading news or articles about some historic event or hearing about it from someone who was somehow involved, you cannot help to think how much more vivid and deep the insight is, when hearing a narration of how it was experienced by someone involved. Finnegan also argues that personal narratives can be seen as a way of constructing life not as a reflection of it. She goes on to explain that personal narrative does not just “reflect or report experience but also shapes it. (Finnegan in Mackay, 1997: 75-76) Storytelling is a relational activity that encourages others to listen, to share and to empathize. It is a collaborative practise and assumes that tellers and listeners/questioners interact in particular cultural milieus and historical contexts, which are essential to interpretation. Storytelling is interaction but it is can also be seen as a way of self-understanding and to strengthen one’s identity. Lewis says: We use the story form and the story forms us”. (Lewis 2009 quoted in Lewis, 2011: 2) Finnegan explains this further that people are nowadays concerned to remake their identities, to somehow modify their life stories. Through sharing stories we also learn to understand
each other and the world. If there were no stories how would we know about other people, other cultures and happenings that matter?

2.4 Transnationalism

In terms of migration and exiles, transnationalism means ‘being connected to several places at once – or “being neither here nor there”’ (iom.int). This is something almost all my interviewees said during our discussions. They now live in Nordic countries and mostly their everyday life is good, they feel safe and plan their future, but underneath there is still longing to the country where one was born and also concern for those who were left behind. It was not easy for them to give an answer to my question: “Where do you belong?” People are more mobile than ever and there are many reasons for that, it is sometimes voluntary but unfortunately increasingly involuntary because of the circumstances. Transnational lives are characterized by the exchanges of beliefs and values, practices, etc. within social, cultural, economic, political fields of homeland and other countries; this helps to maintain ties between people in countries of origin and countries of destination. Transnational connections can create social and cultural exchange between societies become exchanges within arts, education, research, medicine, businesses, investment, trade, ideas (social remittances) which could be related to human rights, raising funds communities in their countries of origin or just raise awareness about their home countries. By telling about different social, political and cultural practices migrants also help create better understanding between two societies. Transnational existence can also be seen as personal development for migrants, this can be made in terms of ’educational, professional and lifestyle opportunities and language abilities’, in other words getting to know different cultures and learning from them. (Ibid). These can be seen as positive aspects of transnationalism for migrants, their families and societies both home and away. Challenges for transnationalism are for example is to get migrants to understand how the new society work and how to get them involved and part of that society in order to for example access health insurance and pension. One of the challenges is also the sense of identity and belonging, in some families this can cause troubles if children feel attachment to other country than their parent. And not just families, also within migrants communities; if the community hold too much into traditions of the country of the origin, then these strong transnational ties can be seen as “detrimental, representing an inability or unwillingness to integrate into the new society.” (Ibid) In some of the interviews we talked about what my interviewees do to keep connection
strong between their countries of origin and host countries and also increase knowledge of the cultures of those countries. By change of one the interviewees lives now in a town that is twin city to her original home town and cultural exchange is very rich and also support to the struggling city. It was encouraging to hear about that kind of cooperation.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Choice of Methodology

Cottle, Hansen et al remind that although selecting the right research method is important, the problems to be investigated should not be determined by the methods, methods are means to enable the research (Cottle and Hansen et al, 1998: 2).

For this project it felt most natural to choose Qualitative interviews as a primary research methodology. It has sometimes been said that qualitative interviews are not as valid or reliable as quantitative methods because the material gathered through research is not as easy to measure and get exact information as when conducting quantitative research. Because the aim is to analyse also the radio documentaries made during the course, the secondary method for this project was chosen to be semiotic analysis combined with hermeneutical analysis, because documentaries are considered as texts and the aim is to understand them.

Both individual interviews and focus groups interviews produce relevant and detailed data and the choice between these two depends on the nature and aims of the research, resources and the advantages and disadvantages of each method. (Pickering, 2008: 73) For this study individual interviews were chosen because the purpose was to go deeper into conversations with people and get them to open more. Also participants were in three different countries so focus group interviews would have been difficult to organise and I believe those would not have produced valid data for analysis. Interviews were “semi” narrative interviews, in interview situations the purpose was to find out why interviewees feel storytelling is important and after interviews analyse stories they have already told in their programmes. Kvale explains that narrative interviews can serve multiples purposes, in this case it “concerns the interviewee’s life story as seen through the actor’s own perspective, and it’s then called a life history.” (Kvale, 2009: 155)
3.2 Methods

3.2.1 Qualitative interviews

Kvale describes qualitative analysis as an “attempt to understand the world from the subjects’ point of view, to unfold the meaning of the experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations” (Kvale, 2009: 1). Qualitative analysis is both observational and narrative in nature and relies less on the experimental elements normally associated with scientific research.

“In social sciences, interviews are a key method associated with qualitative research. “ (Platt 2002, in Pickering, 2008: 70) The purpose of the interviews is to gain better understanding on particular topics by asking relevant questions. Mayer explains that “interviews produce in-depth and complex knowledge of the human world by focusing on meanings and interacting with research participants and their life-worlds”. It is important to see the interviewees as active meaning makers not just people who provide information. (Pickering, 2008: 70)

Davis points out that one of the practical challenges in conducting a qualitative research is selecting participants. Who and how many people should be interviewed in order to gain enough information that can be said to successfully reflect the chosen topic? Davis advises to consider the broadness of the study, where the study is focused. The larger the parameters, the larger are the amount of interviewees needed. (Pickering, 2008: 59) Davis goes on to explain that if there is a particular case study, then the participants for the study are more easily identified and the amount is limited. It is important in order to gain good quality material that participants could offer alternative perspectives to the research. (Pickering, 2008: 59)

Identifying interviewees

When narrowing this research choosing individuals to be interviewed turned out to be easy. In the beginning one option was to include people from IMS and the national broadcasting companies to this research and then it would have been natural to interview them and participants of the course but when it was decided to concentrate more on storytelling and refugee journalists life stories, it was quite obvious that those five where to interview. I had also interviewed Rikke
Houd for the Research Methodology course and that interview proved to be useful for background material.

Making and Maintaining Contact with Interviewees

I emailed with Rikke before contacting the interviewees. Rikke actually contacted all of them in order to get a permission to give their contact details to me. After getting contact details, I emailed all of them and everyone was happy to agree for an interview. Interviews (see appendix for questions) were conducted in late October – early November 2013, two in person (one in Helsinki and the other in Copenhagen), other three were Skype-interviews. If there had been more time and resources, it would have been ideal to have face-to-face interviews with all participants, but Skyping turned out to be a suitable method too. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed a couple of weeks after the interviews were conducted. (Extracts from the interviews can be found on appendix.) That was the phase when it felt that it would have been ideal to have all the interviews in person, because there were some problems with the sound and clarity in some interviews. All the interviews were conducted in English and most of the time we understood each other well but in some cases there was a language barrier which was unfortunate, because the discussions were good and informative. I as a researcher was also very happy to notice how open all the interviewees were and during our discussions it became evident why they thought that storytelling and sharing stories with other people is important. Contact is being maintained with the interviewees if there is a need to ask follow-up questions or get clarification.

It was an intention to have more a conversation with interviewees rather than “I ask and you answer” and in my opinion that was accomplished and also the purpose which was to get answers for questions. It was estimated in advance that each interview would take about an hour and that was quite well kept, the shortest was 42 minutes and the longest 86 minutes. I believe the conversational nature of interviews was a reason why some ended up being longer than the others.

Choosing questions for interviews

In the beginning of each interview the interviewees were asked to tell their life story, geographically and professionally. After that followed a set of open-ended questions, the purpose for that was to get the interviewees to talk more freely and explain what they meant, also maintaining a possibility for follow-up questions. By keeping conversational atmosphere and having open ques-
tions, it is more likely to get more truthful answers and to get interviewees to explain their opinions. Also that way there was no fear of giving a “wrong” answer. Questions touched The Moving Voices Course and their feelings about it, radio as media in general and for storytelling, storytelling and why interviewees see it is important to share stories and what sharing their own story meant to them. At the end their everyday lives in Scandinavia was discussed and we also talked about their hopes for future in personal and professional level.

**Ethical Aspects**

When first contacting the interviewees they were all given a brief background on the intention of the thesis, about what is being investigated, and if they would mind having their name published. As the interviews were very intimate and about private matters was discussed with each of them, it was important that during the interviews the interviewees knew when the recorder was on. There was also a great emphasis to keep the interviewing situation and conversation as equal as possible, this was also to ensure that the answers given were as honest as possible. As the interviews were conversational rather than following a strict questionnaire, it allowed for more flexibility during the interviews. I did not feel that any of the interviews was difficult to control or that there would have been need to be strict and try to force the conversation back to topic. As the atmosphere was conversational and there was a change in that moment and afterwards for follow-up questions, I have as a researcher a reason to believe that all the answers given during interviews were sincere.

**3.2.2 Narrative analysis**

The other method used in this thesis is narrative analysis. The motive to use this method is to get deeper into the documentaries which the participants of The Moving Voices Documentary Course made. The programmes the students of the course made are stories of their lives. Another word which can be used instead of stories is narrative. People’s lives are full of stories, stories are constantly present in our lives. We grow up by listening stories, first stories are bedtime stories or nursery rhymes our parents tell us when we are children before we start telling our own stories. Asa Berger says that through narratives we learn about the world and about ourselves and Lawler goes on arguing that although the stories we hear are not simple reflections of ‘facts’ but rather organizing devices through which we interpret and constitute the world. Asa Berger claims that
narratives are very important to us, because “they furnish us with both a method of learning about
the word and a way to tell others what we have learned.” (Asa Berger, 1997: 10 & Lawler in
Pickering, 2008: 32)

In narrative analysis the object of investigation is story itself. It is often called a text but can be
anything from a real written text to audios, films or just communication between people. Reiss-
man points out that when analysing narratives, it is not just analysing the story and the content,
but also why the story was told the way it was. Because it is individuals who tell stories, not na-
ture and the world itself, according to Reissman “interpretation is inevitable because narratives
are representations.” (Reissman, 1993: 2) When analysing someone’s life story or other personal
narrative it is good to keep in mind that they are told in very subjective way and as Reissman
points out, in personal narratives the subjectivity – how narratives are rooted in specific time,
place and to one’s personal experience from their own perspective- that makes those narratives so
valuable. (Reissman, 1993: 5) Interpreting something always includes the aspect that we have
prior knowledge or expectations of the text or piece of art in front of us. These prejudices if they
can be called that can have both positive and negative effects on our interpretation. As a re-
searcher it is important to knowledge how our own views, prior knowledge and culture we come
from affect to our analysis.

Reissman gives an interesting opinion concerning the “power” of narratives. It is often said that
sharing your story with others gives you a voice, gives you a change to possibly affect to some-
one’s opinions about something or just to widen his or hers knowledge of something. Reissman
says that she does not share this opinion wholeheartedly. She argues that “we cannot give voice,
but we can hear voices that we record and interpret.” (Reissman, 1993: 8). After listening to doc-
umentaries made during the Moving Voices course and interviewing the participants of the
course I have to disagree with Reissman because some of the interviewees felt quite strongly that
this opportunity, which gave them a change to share their life stories with the audience being
people of the new home country, did indeed give them a voice.

The researcher who is analysing narratives has to accept that he or she does never have direct
access to another’s experience. We rely on what we have been told about it or what we have read
or heard. It is also good to keep in mind that the way narrative is told might differ depending on who is listening. It is different to tell a story to someone who is close to you than someone you may never even meet. Reissman discusses of the fact that when sharing an experience with someone, one “is also creating a self – how he or she want to be known by the people listening the narrative.” She points out that “her narrative is inevitably a self-representation.” (Reissman, 1993: 11) Narrators themselves also indicate how they want their stories to be interpreted, they do this by choosing how they narrate. If something is whispered instead of saying loudly or if the narrator emphasis or repeats something it can be an indication what in the story is important. Also listening to emotion changing in narrator’s voice, pauses and so on indicate points which the researcher should take into account when analysing. (Reissman, 1993: 20)

Lawler discusses basic elements she feels are helpful when analysing and researching narrative and finding a meaning in them. According to Lawler (in Pickering, 2008: 34), narrative has three main constitutive elements: character (human or a non-human), action (movement through time), and plot. Lawler sees that the plot, which is a key element of the narrative, is produced through processes of emplotment, in which events are linked to each other in a causal relationship. (ibid.). This means that earlier events cause later ones, but as Lawler herself points out, there is no narrative which can tell everything and share all the earlier events. Only events which are believed to have a meaningful place in the narrative are selected and every shared event is given a meaning through its place in the narrative.
Chapter 4: Analysis and discussion

4.1 Analysis of the documentaries

4.1.1. Presentation of radio documentaries

Before beginning to analyse I will give a short presentation of each radio documentary and then go on analysing them together. The documentaries are all different from each other but also very much alike. In the analysis, I will use Lawler’s three basic elements for narrative: character, action and plot.

Shayaa

The programme is called “Constant search” which is a quite descriptive name for the piece. The story is very honest, Shayaa admits she doesn’t understand Finland and feels that Finland doesn’t understand her and she is tired of playing a happy person. Sometimes she just wants to disappear, but then again, it feels that there is hope, because she on the other hand says that she does not want to disappear and her aim is to find her place in Finland. The structure of the story is fairly simple, Shayaa herself is the narrator, she tells about her life in Afghanistan with her family, why she had to flee from there and her life in Finland. There is also another person in the programme, her friend Maija. There is an unlikely friendship between two very different women: Maija who is “Finnish, tall, blond and loud, who used to be a man, now she’s a woman and a lesbian.” and Shayaa who is: “a political refugee from Afghanistan, not lesbian, not very tall, dark-haired and rather reserved.” They have both had their difficulties in life, although very different and during the programme they somehow compare their experiences and say that they would not have survived from what the other has went through. This is a story about them both and their constant search in life.

Programme is structured clearly. It starts with a dialogue between Shayaa and Maija and Shayaa as narrator gives the listeners more information who they are and what this programme is about. She then starts to tell about her childhood in Kabul, there is quite joyful music playing on background when she memorises how her life was with her family and visits from her cousins. After that Maija starts to tell her first memories from childhood, which she describes of feelings of remembering, feelings of not fitting in and a feeling of being an outsider. The same music as in Kabul scene plays in background when Shayaa tells about her moments she spends with Maija;
everyday life situations such as walking around Helsinki, having a coffee and talking about life concentrating more to the future. This music marks good moments in her life. Music is again used a sound effect when Shayaa describes how the conditions were in Kabul during the war. There are also sounds of guns and bombs exploding. But what is the most powerful in this scene is her voice, her calm and sad voice explaining the horrors of the war:

“What I remember is the sound of the war, that horrible sound. Seeing people running, hiding themselves, seeing our neighbours dying, being scared. The city was so empty.”

Another very emotional scene in the programme is the description of wearing burka for the first time. The same, calm and sad voice tells the horrors of that moment, where you are not able to see anything or even breath properly, you just hear peoples voices around you, feel them bumping into you and try to decide where to go. Shayaa describes that it feels like being in prison and the sound of quick and almost asphyxiated breath, which has been used a sound effect, accentuates how distressing that experience must have been.

Interesting rhetorical device used in the programme is when Shayaa is telling how the situation in Afghanistan became so severe that she had to flee is that when she is talking about her own experiences, Maija is at the same time telling about hers. It’s not a dialogue between two women but both somehow reinforcing each other’s experiences.

Maija’s character is very supportive. Although she tells about her life and is still clearly affected by them, she is quite analytical about feelings and how everyone deserves to be happy. She is supporting her friend when Shayaa is struggling to find her place. And as stated earlier, despite horrible experiences told and the feeling of despair, it feels that underneath there is a hope for the better.

Nehal

Nehal’s programme has been built around The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We hear a woman’s voice from old recording reading articles of the Declaration and Nehal tells her own life story around the Declaration and describes how the rights listed haven’t happened in her life.

“A freedom for me, it means that to do whatever I want, however I want, whenever I want and wherever I want but without harming anyone, without harming anybody from me.”
This sentence really crystallises what the programme is all about. The programme is a life story that seems to give an honest picture of Nehal: she wants justice to herself, to women and to Palestine. Her programme is called “Freedom to me” and it is a suitable name for the programme, Nehal describes the barriers she has been forced to encounter as a human being, as a woman coming from country where women’s rights are far from men’s rights and as a citizen of the country that has been sieged and many things have been ordained by the other country, in Palestine’s case Israel.

When Nehal is narrating her story, it’s almost like listening a poem or a fairy tale. Her way of speaking is exhilarating and leaves the listener to want to hear more. She tells very honestly how the ill-treatment at the refugee reception centre in Norway was a huge disappointment to her and at the same time her marriage changed because her husband started to order her in traditional Palestinian way. Problems she faced in Norway felt that she was in another prison again, that all the effort for changing her life has been in vain. But Nehal is a fighter, she is not ready to give up, she is determined to make things better for herself, for her family, for women and for her beloved Palestine.

Nehal’s programme begins at the beach in Gaza where she is watching the sea and says that in sea she sees freedom. She then recites a poem like verses how in Palestine even the powers of nature such as rain and river need permission to do their “job”. Nehal ends the programme similarly by telling how these powers keep doing what they have always done in countries unlike her own. In Nehal’s programme there was one particular scene which was beautifully captured for the radio and really lived for its promise to be theatre of minds. It is a scene where Nehal went skiing for the first time. In this scene we hear people talking and laughing and when Nehal actually skied for the first time, she was almost screaming with laughter. The whole event came perfectly across just by listening the voices of people and the sound of snow scrunching, one could almost feel the sunbeam on her face and there was no need for pictures or film.

Leila

Leila’s programme was different from the others because it was narrated in Persian language. Other people in the programme spoke Norwegian but Leila spoke mainly Persian. There is how-
ever a transcript in English and the content of the programme is analysed based on the transcript and sound effects, music etc. by listening Leila’s documentary.

The theme of Leila’s documentary is finding a friend from her new hometown Steinkjer. Her documentary has two names, in transcript is called “In search of a friend” and the audio was named “Surviving Steinkjer”. Leila herself says:

“Friendship has a deep meaning for me. I’m trying to find friend and to enter into a new society. In my idea the depth of the word friendship is all about expanding my life and being alive.”

She has a mission and she is very determined to find a Norwegian friend. It is not easy though, at the beginning of the document, Leila still needs interpreter in order to speak with Norwegians and is a bit lost in Steinkjaer, a small town with population about 21 000 people. Leila is not even sure that she can survive in such a small town. She is from Tehran, a capital of Iran with population considerably bigger than whole Norway. Leila’s contact from Steinkjaer municipality recommends her to meet a retired teacher who has always been interested in other cultures and might have good tips for Leila in order to meet Norwegians. They meet and Solbjørg suggest that Leila tries skiing, which is a big part of Norwegian society. Leila does that and also tries billiard, but it is not easy to find friends. Both Solbjørg and the Mayor of Steinkjaer highlight the importance of learning and knowing the language, when you can speak Norwegian, it is easier to integrate and make contacts. Leila finds out about Norwegian traditions such as celebrations of 17th of May and she doesn’t want to give up, not even when her last hope, The Red Cross, says that it might take months to find a suitable contact for Leila. The documentary ends to Leila’s wonder of finding a friend: “But is this ever going to happen - in such a small town?” A listener is left to desire a conclusion, did she find a friend?

When listening a documentary and being able to understand only some sentences, one is not able to go very deep into programme, although there is an English transcript (in appendix). It affects to the experience of enjoying the documentary, it is not so easy to capture Leila’s emotions and feelings she has during the process.

Jan
Jan’s programme is called “A revolutionist confession” is a cruel and almost brutally honest story of his life in Syria and Denmark and about the events that forced him to flee from Syria. Jan talks very straight about the secret meetings he had with his friends in order to plan an underground Kurdish magazine and demonstrations, how he was arrested and tortured over and over again in prison, his journey through Greece and Germany to Denmark and his everyday life in Copenhagen. There are two other people in this document with Jan, his girlfriend in Denmark with him and his very good friend in Damascus, who he calls via Skype every week.

Jan says that his everyday life in Denmark is “easy, cosy and no worries” and he is constantly torn in two and has bad conscience because he is now safe and living a good life but his friends are still in Syria in the middle of all the horrors. Jan is constantly in touch with his friends and follows intently news from Syria, he helps his friends to organise demonstrations and getting medicine to those in need. Jan gets information from his friends who tell that atmosphere is Syria is changing, the secret service is still spying nonconformists, but people seem not to care that much anymore, there is no full functioning government and people are living like there are no rules anymore. This is not a good option either, but those who care continue to fight, continue to organise demonstrations and call for justice.

Like in Nehal’s documentary the longing for justice and a change for better is very present in Jan’s programme. He is revolutionist who is ready to fight for his people, the Kurds. It’s not an easy fight, because everything Kurdish is illegal in Syria. In Jan’s case it lead to prison where he was tortured over and over again both physically and mentally. When Jan describes his 107 days torture in prison it is very difficult to listen to. A calm voice describing the cables the guards had made just for torturing purposes. Jan’s way of telling his story is very straight, there is only one moment in the hole programme, when he shows how he feels, otherwise he is just stating the facts of all the horrible events he has experiences. The calmness must be his way to survive. When he was floating in the Mediterranean, his only thought was “I have to survive!”

Jan’s girlfriend who he shares his life in Denmark with supports and tries to calm Jan as well as she can when he has a dark moment in his life. They lead a normal, calm life and make normal things such as cooking and shopping. Happenings in Syria are however constantly present in their
life. Via Skype the listeners meet Jan’s friend from Damascus. The dialogue between him and Jan is almost like an interview. Jan is asking questions and the friend gives updates of the situation and is determined to continue the battle. There are also some news flashes from Syria and music is used as a sound effect. One of the most moving scenes where music is used is when Jan is feeling sad and down and traditional music is playing on background. His girlfriend asks where Jan learned to play music when he is sad and Jan tells her a story how his father encouraged him to learn to play music when he was a child.

_Noufel_

Noufel has named his programme “A Voice in Motion”, quite a suitable name for ICORN (International Cities of Refugee Network) writer, who is at the moment living in Denmark, but does not know what his next destination will be.

When listening to Noufel’s documentary, it is clear that this person is working with words. He has very rich language and he is skilful in describing things. One can almost see the landscape Noufel sees from his window, a landscape under the white blanket of snow.

In one scene Noufel is out in the woods with his friend Ole, who is hunting. There is also a sound of helicopter to be heard. Noufel explains what these two sounds mean to him, what they remind him of. Helicopter and gun shots are the sounds from childhood, sounds of terror and bombing which his family and friends had to flee. They also remind him of the end of a great friendship. Noufel’s friend Asis, a popular ladies man began to change, grew a beard and ended up killing one of their best friends in order to convince a terrorist cell that he deserves a place among them. Noufel tells this story with a sad voice and continues that it had an effect on his writing which is very much inspired by his society. It also made him feel even stronger that he wants to believe that there can be understanding between different religions, because we are all human. Noufel sees that if you want to change things for better, ending up to prison is not a way to do that. This is why he decided to flee from Algeria.
Life in Spain was not the way he expected, he was there as an illegal immigrant, living on the
beach. His friend, his spiritual family, rescued him from there and after that Noufel’s life has
been adjusting to Danish way of living. Noufel has friends in Denmark and through his lecturing
trips he has very active social life. Still there is a feeling of uncertainty, a feeling of not belonging
there, perhaps because he only has place there for 2 or 3 years, one dares not to become too at-
tached, since there is always the next, unknown destination waiting.

4.1.2. Radio Documentaries as narratives

I shall base my analysis of the documentaries to what Lawler (2008: 34) wrote about the three
basic elements of narratives: character, action and plot. I will try to look all the five documen-
taries together rather than concentrating on each individually.

The main characters in the radio documentaries are of course the refugee journalists who have
made the features. Each of them is the narrator in their documentary, which is natural, because
these documentaries can be seen as autobiographical. All the five of them are telling the audience
their life story, where they themselves are in the “leading role”. There are however other chara-
ters in each story; friends, family member and other acquaintances. In some of the documentaries,
the other characters are more present, the narrator is having conversation with the person and
these conversations are tied to the narrative in different ways. They can be just moments from
everyday shared with two people such is the case in Leila’s programme or more philosophical
conversations like it is in Shayaa’s programme where she and her friends Maija are discussing
how it is have been difficult for both of them to find a place in their live where they feel they tru-
ly belong.

Other characters listeners do not hear are people told in narratives, in these documentaries they
are usually families the refugee journalists have left behind. Those people are link to their lives in
past, but also people who have helped them to build and define their identities. In many docu-
mentaries these absent people are referred and they are clearly missed without a doubt for many
reasons, but one might be that those people were very present in documentarist lives when they
defined their identities. As Lawler says: “No-one lives in an eternal present and the past – both
individually and socially—inform and impacts on people’s present.” (Lawler, 2008: 38). This is also the case with these “absent” people in narratives; they have had and continue to have an impact in their love one’s lives when they are as Finnegan describes it “remaking one’s identity”. Jan is in constant contact to Syria and Nehal also discusses how much she misses her family and how concerned she is about the happenings in Gaza. They know that there might never be able to go back home again, but their home countries and families, which are an important part of their identities are present in their lives.

As have been mentioned in theoretical framework of this study, storytelling is interaction. In Kearney’s words it is “the common function of someone telling something to someone about something” (Kearney, 2002: 5) There is interaction in documentaries between narrators and people they have decided to include to programmes but one of the character which shouldn’t be forgotten is the audience. Although not all the documentaries made during the course were broadcasted, emphasised the participants of the course when I interviewed them how important interaction with the audience is and in order to reach the audience in their new countries and be able to interact with them, they have to learn the language of the country. This was particularly important if they decided to do radio, because they felt that people, who listen to the radio most, do not know English and to reach them, knowing Finnish, Danish and Norwegian would be important.

The second basic element for narrative that Lawler presented was action. Action in the documentaries can be seen of story’s movement through time. All the documentaries happen in present time and all but one includes parts from the past. Leila’s documentary is mostly happening in present and she does not bring to her listeners that many glimpses from past. In other stories the documentarist narrates present happenings, but there are transitions to the past. These are usually marked with music and other sound effects. Lawler writes that because the past is in the past, it lives only on people’s dreams, memories and especially in stories people tell to each other. According to Lawer experiences and what have happened in the past rely very much in interpretation, because we no longer have access to the past. Also memory is reconstructive and in narratives people often remember things that make sense in the context of the wholeness of narrative. (Lawler, 2008: 39) The transitions to the past in the four documentaries are justifiable for each story. The narrator tells about his or her experience that has been significant to his or her life and
has clearly affected to how they see the world now. These experiences are for example when Jan described how he was tortured in prison or how Shayaa felt when she was wearing burka for the first time. Glimpses to the past are told the way the narrator remembers them and there are also sound effect included as it was in Noufel’s case. When he is in the forest with his friend, they hear the sounds of gun shots and helicopters. To Noufel those sounds represent memories from his childhood and then they meant that something serious was happening and he had to flee danger with his family. And whenever Noufel hears the sound of helicopter he is going back to his childhood. Transitions to the past were important parts of the whole narration and afterwards listeners were told how they affected to narrator’s life and how the story developed from there. Experiences from the past together with what is presently going on in their lives gave not just construction to stories, meaning that new things were built on experiences from the past but were also a way for the narrator to introduce themselves to the audience.

This brings us to the third of the Lawler’s basic elements of the narrative, plot. All the five narratives have in common that there is a story of someone who is new to Nordic society. These are stories of people who have been forced to leave their own country because of difficulties there and have come to Scandinavia and are beginning a new life. They all share the experience of being “the other” in society, where your status is different from what it was previously and where life is not as easy as one might have thought. Shayaa and Leila have named their documentaries The Constant Search and Surviving Steinkjaer and also these names describe well the feeling of otherness. It would have been interesting hear more what kind of feedback course participants got from their documentaries. Nehal said that she felt that making this documentary and having it broadcasted in Norwegian radio gave her voice and was a change for her to introduce herself to people who she continually socializes with. Jan listened the programme with a group of friends after his documentary was broadcasted in Danish radio. He told me that afterwards his friends were quite emotional; they hadn’t had a clue what Jan had been through. Possibly a change of sharing your life story with people you are in contact with through radio or other media might be easier than telling it face to face to someone. With both Jan’s and Nehal’s case, there was interaction with audience afterwards, but telling it to “faceless” audience was a change to be possibly more honest than it would have been in a normal conversation.
Reissman points out that narrators themselves make the choice how they choose to tell their story and this also indicates how their narrative will be interpreted. (Reissman, 1993: 19) These five narrators share an experience on being a refugee in a country which is different from their home countries. They are also background in journalism, so they use storytelling techniques they have learned in university and also in the Moving Voices course. They have all chosen a different angle to their story, what they want to give from themselves but the feeling listener gets, is that their narratives are honest and give a perspective of how life is in Nordic countries for a young refugee who is trying to adapt to a new society but wants to continue have contact with people and society they have left behind. Jan told me that many people had asked him what happened to the little girl he told about in his documentary. Jan has planned to tell the story of the girl in his book, which he had wanted to write for many years. Other documentaries were also produced the way that listener was left to think what parts were left untold and wanting to hear more about life stories that were told in documentaries. All the participants of the course are skilful in storytelling and building compelling stories.

4.2 Analysis of the interviews

As noted earlier one purpose of this thesis is to study what migratory experiences are about and how it is to live in a new cultural setting? The interest is also to find out how the participants of The Moving Voices Radio Documentary Course see their identity after coming to a new culture and how is their everyday life in a new society? Al-Ali et al (2001) suggest in their study that refugees can and do engage in a wide range of transnational activities (p. 616) and that was also the case within the interviewees for this study. When thinking about the interviews conducted for this study, it was found that the group of five was kind of bifurcated. The answers two men gave me were in some points very different from what three women told me. Among women, there was more interaction with other immigrants and refugees and also with issues that concern migration due to the profession as it was in Shayaa’s case. She has done documentaries about immigrants in Finland and worked with Finnish Refugee Council or due to personal interest as it was in Leila’s and Nehal’s case. They are both active in organizations working with refugees, immigrants and human rights. The answers also gave me a perception that women are more involved with their home countries, but of course this is something we need to consider with respect to the
situation in the home country now and when the person left the country and additionally the situation the individual is at the moment in his or hers host country.

*The Moving Voices Radio Documentary Course – both professional and personal benefit*

Everyone was happy to have had a chance to participate to the Moving Voices Course and when considering if courses that offer something that can be seen as strengthening individual’s professional skills can help people settle better to a new society the results were good. The course was seen both educational and a change to learn new professional skills but was also very welcome on personal level. To Shayaa the course was the first professional course she took after becoming a refugee in a country she had lived several years as a student.

“Oh actually this was a first course I took like a long term course I took after my fall down of these deep thinking of being a refugee and searching for myself here. This was the first thing I got up with. Yeah it did, I mean it brought up thoughts this is my profession and this is what I’m doing so probably I was a bit distant and it brought me back to the way I am. I woke up with it… I did few short films actually for the theme about refugees living in Finland again but this was like more to do with me you know, very personal.”

Nehal tells that the course was the end of something she calls her “black year” after living in a refugee reception centre for a year and being refused practically everything she and her husband asked for.

“But at that time I knew that I had the residence permission in Norway so it was the first candle light I got in that black period, which was…it was a light for going back to my active life.”

She also told that the course was though a great challenge but also very good thing for her and her husband as a family. She told that when they were at the refugee reception centre, her husband started to act like a traditional Muslim man and ordering her around. This was new to her and had not happened in their marriage before. When Nehal got a place on the course, it was natural that his husband and baby boy would travel with her. It was a struggle for them as a family because in their culture it is a woman who takes care of the children and home. When Nehal was on course, was his husband taking a new role and looking after their child. Al-Ali et al. (2010) speak about increased equality between spouses in their study. They argue that it can be at least partly be explained by the promotion of gender equality in the host countries. Nehal said that her
attending to the course was good for them as a family; she learned new professional skills and her husband proved himself to be able to take care of his son.

Only some of the participants had worked in radio before attending the course and radio documentary was a new genre for all of them. The participants were unanimous that the course was very useful for them professionally and thought them new skills.

Participants who had written for living, either articles or books, told that the skills they now have after attending the course has helped them in their work. Jan told me that making a radio documentary, telling his story in documentary form has helped him to find a link from the start to the end for the book he has been planning about his journey and now writing is much easier, the story is once told and finishing the book is now adding new material and producing. Storytelling skills can be useful also if one lectures a lot. Both Rikke and Noufel told me that he now uses storytelling techniques he learned in course in order to make his lectures more alive and interesting. Also for Leila who is working in a newspaper an exercise of explaining details of a picture to others who cannot see it was helpful for her job. She feels now that she has more skills to portray situations and happenings with more described details and says that she is now able to answer better to reader’s questions and requirements.

What the participants found particularly interesting and useful for their future were the skills they learned about sound and using sound differently. Nehal and Shayaa had worked as filmmakers before and for them new perspectives of sound were particularly alluring; how to work with voice, how to express different feelings and atmospheres only by using sounds. The course also helped them to make good sound recordings, because in the past it had happened that the picture told a good story but the quality of the sound was so lousy that it could not be used.

“They realized the beauty of the sounds. And the …of the sound and how much you can do with the sound. And because I have hundreds of stories I want to tell but then I know that not lots of people want their face to be seen so if we have radio documentary. It was good, it’s hard to play with the sound and tell your story… And definitely that course has brought me now to thinking of this that sound…the radio is also a thing I want to do in future and then… it’s beautiful, it’s very beautiful you can make any kinds of programmes with the sound.”

They also emphasized the difference between making documentaries in TV and radio. As noted also on theoretical framework for this thesis, radio is a good medium for telling stories of people
who don’t want to show their faces. When a documentarist also has skills for storytelling in radio, there are countless of stories to tell, especially stories of people who want for some reason or the other stay anonymous. For this purpose the “blindness” of radio is welcomed. It was also stated that people you are nervous to be in front of the camera, could more easily and relaxed be part of programmes. Shayaa said that she herself does not feel comfortable to be in front of camera and is pleased she now has more tools to supply stories via another medium. Nehal described the differences of the process of making TV and radio documentary as follows:

“When you make a radio documentary, it’s more difficult, because in a film the camera just talks, if you’re filming in a good angle in a good location, you can just tell things only by camera. But when you’re making a radio documentary, you are just leaning in the voice and it’s not easy. How to be ready, how to be ready with this recorder all the time, to take a good story, to find a good story, to find a good scene, to find a…and I found that it is difficult and easy at the same time. While you only have this recorder with you and when you have a camera, you should handle the camera all the time and clear in your location and things, but with this radio documentary, you just have this recorder with you and you can just move, in the street, in the bus and so it was easy tools to use it. So I learned about making stories in radio, only depending on voices”

*What telling one’s story means and what there is to learn about life stories and sharing them?*

During the course the participants were encouraged to make their radio documentaries about themselves. To tell their life story one way or the other. When I asked how it felt to share their stories with others, the participants agreed that at first it was very difficult to invent a topic for their radio feature and when they were urged to make it about themselves, was choosing the right angle even harder. And although it was said that they hoped that they would have had more time for documentaries, they seemed quite happy for the opportunity to be able to share their stories. Sharing a life story in a radio documentary was described for example as a change to introduce oneself to a new society, when fellow students for language course, a teacher and other acquaintances heard the feature from the radio. It was a way to gain respect in new system and among new people.

I was told that because the participants originally come from a culture which is more collectivistic than individual it was a challenge to actually use word I and to make the whole documentary about them.
“It was hard to starting say I and speak about myself and my experience and kind of who am I and. It was difficult to actually really allow the feature be about myself, my life, my country, my struggles and my objectives, my work, what happened in my country.”

Finnegan argues that self-narratives can be helpful when formulating one’s identity especially in culture one is part of. By storying self and structuring experiences in narrative form it may be easier to create some order to chaos, give meaning to what have happened and increase self-understanding (1997: 76-77). This happened also the participants of the course because they saw that focusing on talking about oneself was a journey to oneself, an opportunity to “understand yourself better, understand decisions you have taken better. And also you improve yourself. Life aspects, your reactions, your aspect of life.” Concentrating on making the documentary was seen a change to face your past and yourself, somehow leave the past behind and decide which is the way to take in future.

Sharing stories in general was seen very important, because that is the only way people can learn from each other and from other cultures. Telling your story to someone was also seen as an indication that you trust the other person and know that he or she values you and your story. Couldry points out that you have to have other people around you to communicate and tell and listen stories. This way both parties of the conversation recognise one another of having a voice. (Couldry, 2010: 8)

It was also said, that it feels important to be able to help those who want to tell what has happened in their lives. As it was said before, telling your life story in a radio documentary, was a way to introduce yourself to a new society. It was considered important that refugees and immigrants would have an opportunity to share their stories in their host countries but also hear stories of the other people. This way interaction could be educational and benefit parties. This way understanding other’s aspect and choices of life would be easier to understand.

*Everyday life and thoughts about being a refugee – hindrances along the way*

All the participants have now been in Scandinavia at least 2 years and none of them live at the refugee reception centre anymore. They have been to language course and given the basic information of the new societies they now live in. Settling to a new system hasn’t been very easy. It is quite shocking to come to a small town where no-one walks on the streets after the darkness has fallen in the evening and where it’s hard to get a smile from your next door neighbour after you
have lived in a city with millions of people, a city that has totally different climate than the town you now live in.

Language is one thing we talked a lot during the interviews. Learning a language of your host country was seen one of the biggest challenges that affects the most to how easy it is to integrate and does one feel part of the society. One of the participants said that he does not care that much if he is part of the society or not, the most important thing for him was to be able to aspire things that are important to him; studying a new profession and get on with his life, to be safe and happy. But others said that while they had been on language course, in order to for example make radio documentaries in Finnish, Norwegian and Danish would at the moment be too challenging and that if you want to reach the audience, the features should be made in the official language of said country. In many discussions it was brought out that when their language skills become better, they can also start working with things they are interested in and have an education. With Nehal we talked about the language issue from the other perspective. She has a small child and she feels it is important that her son learns not only Norwegian but Arabic too. Every Saturday Nehal is a teaching Arabic for Muslim children. Al-Ali et al. (2010: 625) discussed about the importance of refugee children knowing also their mother tongue. They state that language skills are valued highly with regard to children’s education and parents make special efforts such as organise cultural lessons to promote their native language to their children to learn the language but also include lessons on history and culture of their home countries.

Life in Scandinavia is mostly good, normal everyday life and the most important thing is that you feel safe and don’t have to be afraid. It also helps if your own values are near the values of the host country, as one of the interviewees pointed out. Although it was said that you have to be very active yourself in order to find friends and people to socialize with. After all the ordeals they have been through, it takes time to be able feel true happiness but there is also awareness that

“I can survive in many situations, even bad situations, even danger situations. Oooh, aaah. When I can walk, when I can write, when I can help people, when I am safe, that’s enough.”

For most of the interviewees it is not at the moment, if ever safe to go back to their homeland but they had a desire to do something for their societies there. Al-Ali et al. speak about social remittances (2010: 624) which they describe to be ideas, values and cultural artefacts. These could be
seen for example a journalist working on a freelance basis for the media of his/her home country but also to establish themselves in their host country by giving people an insider’s insight of the events in their home country. Nehal had an idea that she would one day love make radio documentaries about everyday life and tell stories of people living in Tromso and Gaza. Those documentaries could be used as educational material for citizens of twin cities.

The question of where they belong was not an easy one to answer. Some of the interviewees said immediately that they belong to their home countries, but mostly they said that it is hard to say and they don’t know yet. Jan said that while he is emotionally in Kurdistan to be able to have a life in Denmark, he feels that he has to be practical and build his life there as satisfying as possible and make wise choices for future. Nehal had the same opinion and she said that while she is very actively in contact with her family in Gaza, she has to concentrate on her life in Norway. She said that she has found a home there, though she is not sure this will be her permanent home.

Belonging somewhere was clearly emotional thing to the participants, but they were all quite practical about it. Shayaa said:

“I have put it on myself that I accept that Helsinki is my home, because I know the home I had in Afghanistan doesn’t exist anymore, of course my family is there but a lot has changed and the biggest thing that my mother is not there and for me it’s better I don’t see, I just know it’s there. And in Finland I’m in the process on finding me. I like have accepted to myself that this is home, but the feeling is not, because still when I talk I’m between immigrant or something I don’t know. So you don’t feel home if you’re in the circle of people and then you’re called as an outsider or this circle is happening the way you feel like an outsider, you don’t belong …”

When I asked “Where do you belong” from Noufel, he recited his poem that portrays their situation of all then interviewees well:

“I am out of space. I’m out of space, an outsider. I’m between in and out. Out of space, outsider, between in and out, and what left behind and actual here and now.”

Radio as a medium

When asked their opinion how they see radio as media and how is the future for radio, all the interviewees said that although radio is and have been a good media, the future does not look particularly bright. TV was the first to take room from radio and nowadays internet with it’s different social media channels has affected to the importance of the radio and people do not listen to it that much. Many said, that they see radio as a media for older people, young people don’t
listen to the radio particularly much, because they have other mediums to choose from; you can create playlists to Spotify etc. so radio is not even used for listening to music among young people.

Although it was said that radio is not very used medium anymore, it came forth that radio was seen somehow a beautiful medium, there is something very special, when you have to lean on just the voice and the power of it. Noufel described radio as a medium:

“Feeling for example through radio, you are not as limited as you are when you’re watching TV. Why because you are hearing for example a story of someone talking and imagining you know. So you are kind of taking part in this process. You are taking part of the lives of those who are speaking and are spoken about. Because in TV you are limited by the director’s perspective but in radio you are not. … And you know, when you hear the voice etc. it’s a new aspect. It’s a sensation, a new emotion also. … It is of course imagining is an active participation, not passive, you are not just watching a film, reading a book or hearing in passive way, because you imagination is working.”

Radio was described more challenging medium than TV or internet, which were both seen more entertaining and more informative than radio. When you have just voice and sounds to work, it is challenging for both radio maker and listener. For listener it is about using your imagination in order to be able to enjoy it and truly throw yourself to the story. And for radio maker there is a challenge of creating programmes people want to listen to, to create the excitement and to use voices, sounds and silence in right balance. There is clearly something they saw fascinating because 4 out of 5 said that they would like to work with sounds and voice in future and tell important stories in radio and perhaps make more radio documentaries.

The language was again a hurdle to get over, because it was said that if you want to make radio documentaries in Scandinavia, you should speak the language of the country well. In order to get audience to your programme, you should not make it in English but use the language of the country the feature is broadcasted. This was also a link to their assumption that it is elder people that listen to the radio, not the youngsters.

What was interesting when we talked about radio’s role in a society was how the answers I got varied. Leila told me that she did not listen to the radio almost at all when she was in Iran, because she felt that the whole society and media field was very corrupted and said exactly what the government wanted it to say. So she thought that radio was boring and quite useless. But when she came to Norway and started to learn Norwegian, she noticed that radio is actually quite dif-
different in Norway that in Iran, she now listens to the radio and finds it interesting. Nehal on the other hand told a different story. She said she used to be a good radio listener while living in Gaza, but does not listen to the radio that much in Norway. She said that internet is her primary source for information. But in Gaza, radio still has a very strong role among people.

“But in my country, yes. We need it. Because in Palestine, especially in Gaza, people love to hear radio, radio is on all the time, especially at night time. We don’t have electricity all the time in Gaza, so we have more darkness than light, we don’t have electricity and especially at the night time, people they don’t want to go early to bed, so what they do, they just switch on the radio on their mobile phones and they are hearing radio. … And when I was in a war area, radio was the first thing, the first resource where you go to hear truth, to hear what happened around you. If you heard a bomb, if you heard just an airplane, we were just opening the radio. That was the first reaction, because in Gaza it still, it’s like this now. It’s the first resource you will go to hear truth, to hear what happened around you. What is happening at the war? That is in the war area in Gaza. It’s a place the radio is what you have, if you don’t have electricity.”

Nehal also said that she thinks radio documentaries have future in Palestine. She has a dream that if she has a change to make more radio documentaries in Norway and learn more about radio work, she could go and make more features in Palestine, a place she described as “the environment where it’s very rich with the stories and documentaries and at the same time you know that you have an audience.” Her former and current home towns are twin cities and her dream is to make documentaries about the two cities as a way to introduce two towns to people living in those cities and tell stories of town residents.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Radio is good medium for storytelling, it can give much needed protection to those who do not want their faces to be shown, but still want their stories to be shared, their voices to be heard. There are however many challenges for radio in today’s media environment. Media has always has many years been a secondary medium, you can do other things while listening to it. This can be seen both positive and negative to radio; radio can be on while doing household work, but while concentrating other issues, one can easily miss something important. TV and especially
internet dominate the media environment especially in Western world and it is not easy to get people to concentrate and stop to just listen to a radio show. It can also be that people nowadays get so many different stimulus and many things they get from media are given ready analysed that people do not feel the need to challenge their imagination what you need when listening to radio.

As it was stated, radio and radio documentaries have a future and audience in countries that are struggling and the situation is for one reason for the other difficult. Due to war or a conflict there might not be electricity all the time and then radio is a perfect pastime. Nehal’s idea of making radio documentaries about people in twin cities Gaza and Tromso would be good way to introduce a different way of living, a new culture to both Norwegian and Palestinians.

Sharing your life story with someone is introducing you to other people. You are telling them your experiences, your point of views. As mentioned in most of the interviews made for this thesis, sharing a story with other people is important. It is important because it is a way for others to learn things about you and that way also give them a chance to possibly understand you and your life choices better but also a possibility to learn new things about culture, the way people are living somewhere else. It is also a great way of opening a discussion. Telling your story is not important just for other people, but probably most important to yourself. As interviewees said, making a documentary about yourself and your life was a journey to yourself, a change to reflect on how your life has been so far, what things have affected you and life choices you have made and think what is the way you want to take in life. When the story is ready to be told, it can feel soothing to get it out. When I was making the interviews and listening the radio documentaries, I couldn’t help thinking that there was a reason why teachers in The Moving Voices Course wanted people to tell their own stories.

Introducing yourself to a new society is never easy, many things are new and there are so many issues to find out about, so many offices to visit. In many interviews and particularly in Leila’s documentary it was made clear that learning a language of your host country is one of the most important things which can help you to settle. When understanding what people around you are speaking about, what is told in news etc. are keys to gain understanding how the society works
and how one is supposed to live there. For the participants of the Moving Voices Course learning host country’s language is also a way to find a job they have been educated to, if you want to write articles, make TV or radio documentaries, the participants saw that in order to get audience, you need to know the language.

The Moving Voices Radio Documentary Course which aimed to find young skilful journalists before they disappear to the system and give them new skills for their job was in many ways success. It did not change participant’s lives considerably but it gave them hope in their dark moments, new contacts which can be valuable in future, teaches them new skills and for many gave a new medium to work with. The course was also supportive in sense that they got a change to tell their stories, which for some was almost like a therapeutic experience. They felt that they were seen and supported as people and professionals, not refugees. Courses that support refugee’s profession or give them a change to learn something new, should be organised more. It is important to help people to integrate, but supporting their special skills that already are there is equally important.
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Books:


Articles:

Smith, Stephen (2001) “What the hell is radio documentary?” Cambridge: Harvard University
Internet sources, 7th January, 2014:
Rikke Houd’s lecture in Malmö on 5th April, 2012: http://bambuser.com/v/3490777
Home page for Moving Voices radio documentary course: http://www.i-m-s.dk/movingvoices/
Pen International: http://www.pen-international.org/
Appendix:

- The question form for the interviews
- The interview transcripts are made and extracts of the interviews with Nehal, Jan and Shayaa are included in the appendix
- Transcript of Leila’s documentary
- Unfortunately the radio documentaries are no longer on the website of The Moving Voices Radio Documentary Course. Programmes have been given for listening to examiner and supervisor of this thesis

Questions for interview

Basic information:

- Please, tell me about your journey to here and now, ‘geographically’ and professionally”.

The Moving Voices course:

- How did you find about the course?
- Why you wanted to attend to the course?
- Did the course achieve what it promised?
- What did the course give you?
- Has your life changed after the course? If, how?
- Was the course helpful for you: professionally and personally?
- You came to a new country as a refugee? Do you feel that the course helped you to settle to a new society?

Radio documentaries:

- What is your documentary about?
- How did you choose the topic for you documentary? Was it easy to choose the topic, did you instantly know what you wanted to make a documentary about?
- Why this topic: why it was important to you to tell this particular story?
- How telling this particular story made you feel?
- What do you feel you have achieved by telling this story?
- What kind of feedback have you gotten of your documentary?
- How do you see the future of radio documentaries; in general and for your career?

Radio and other medias & storytelling:

- How do you see/feel radio as a media?
- What in your opinion are the strengths and the weaknesses of radio and radio documentary? In relation to other medias such as TV, writing etc.
- Through which media it is most natural for you to express yourself? Why?
- Why do you have a need to tell stories?
• What you feel can be achieved by sharing a story with other?
• What sharing your own story or some other important story means to you?

Integration:

• How does your everyday life look like?
• Who do you socialize with?
• Where do you belong?
• Do you feel part of the society?
• What things have surprised you most?
• What has been most difficult and what has been easiest when finding your place in your new society?

Extracts from interviews with Nehal, Jan and Shayaa

NEHAL:

RY: Do you feel that the course achieved what it promised? Do you feel that you got what you wanted from the course?

NA: I will say yes. Because I learned a lot from this course to be honest. I was a film maker so I felt that it’s just the same as making a film, but I found out that no, no, no, it’s not easy. When you make a radio documentary, it’s more difficult, because in a film the camera just talks, if you’re filming in a good angle in a good location, you can just tell things only by camera. But when you’re making a radio documentary, you are just ending in the voice and it’s not easy. So I learned techniques about the voice, I learned a lot from these things: how to work with the voice, how to give this feeling, atmosphere, only by sounds, only by sounds, and it was not easy. How to be ready, how to be ready with this recorder all the time, to take a good story, to find a good story, to find a good scene, to find a…and I found that it is difficult and easy at the same time. While you only have this recorder with you and when you have a camera, you should handle the camera all the time and clear in your location and things, but with this radio documentary, you just have this recorder with you and you can just move, in the street, in the bus and so it was easy tools to use it. So I learned about making stories in radio, only depending on voices only and I learned about this recorder because I had never held recorders and be careful about these mobile phones, variations and echo on the space so I learned about techniques about this but the most important things which I learned from this course, when I met this teacher of the techniques. When I went to Oslo and I this workshop in NRK I found out that it’s amazing, these people are so intelligent. And when we met these radio documentarist, radio programme makers I was really very amazed and impressed when I knew about these stories, how they make…it’s nothing, it’s nothing when you hear about these old ladies just knitting. A normal story, but these small things, they just make a story, they make a documentary, a long documentary. So I found out we have stories around us, we have many things to tell about but we should find a way
to tell these small things. So I found out that I’m from Gaza and we have a lot stories that really need to be told to people about. More than these small stories we have here in Norway, so it was just like wow, I wish now if I can go back to Gaza and record more and more. So that’s when I went to Oslo, I found myself that I have learned a lot. Then in Helsinki it was…yeah…not that much. I wasn’t interested in hearing one story about this old lady and Denmark was just: you have to work, you have to work. Because one week of intensive working days is so to edit and to get you final programme. Yeah.

RY: Have your life changed after this course? Do you feel that it has affected you professionally and personally. You said that you learned a lot but what happened after the course?

NA: To be honest, not that much for me in the career life. Because I’m still learning Norwegian and I don’t think myself that I am qualified to work in NRK, to make a documentary film in NRK, because of my language. It will be more easy if you have more Norwegian, you can Norwegian and you just go to NRK and propose them a project or a programme. So I don’t feel myself that I’m ready now to make a radio documentary in Norwegian. It will more interesting to have a Norwegian version, not an English version.

RY: Yes, because then people will be…they will listen it, it will be easier for them

NA: to understand. Precisely! When you’re living in a Norwegian society, so it is more clever to broadcast in Norwegian programme than English. Especially with the radio, you know the radio integrity, it’s more like it’s now more and old people are still hearing radio documentaries, radio programmes and radio. Not the youth, because youth here can all English but not the old people so I’m still finding out that my language is a barrier, if I will make a project and…so nothing happening in my career life, like I didn’t make any radio programmes yet, but before two months exactly I met a Syrian woman. And she had newly moved to Tromsø and you know how the situation is in Syria and she just came from Syria. She started to tell me stories and when she was talking with me, I just remembering how to make…you know when you make a scene, when you’re just telling a story but you can imagine all these small details when she’s talking with you about the war, about the Syrian refugees in Turkey, how they live, how is the situation there, so when she was talking with me, I was just remembering…it was kind of making a story on my mind. Then automatically I was, I told her that, her name is Maria. I told her: Maria, I’m thinking of making a programme, a radio documentary about this life, about Syrian refugees in Turkey, the Syrian refugees here in Norway. And she told me that: yes, Nehal, I don’t feel myself that I am…that I don’t have the courage to tell the story. I told her: you don’t have to be strong, you don’t have to…just talk with me like right now, because when she was talking, we were just talking friend to friend, friendly way. I found out that I started to cry when she was telling me this story, because she told me things I had never known about and I felt that it’s not fair that…such a bad situation is happening that Syrian refugees in Turkey, while at least I myself I didn’t know about that. The media doesn’t show all these small details, they have showed us something but not details. So at that time I started to think that yes, I can use the mic again, I will use the mic again. But still I said that oh, I can’t go to Turkey, I cannot travel to Turkey, because you need to, because I felt that if you have to have the credibility, you should be there, you should get sounds from there, how the people are living, you can’t just get sounds from here all from. So travelling cost is a barrier, because I can-
not go to Turkey, also because I don’t have the Norwegian passport yet, if I had the Norwegian passport, I could travel to Turkey, but with my Palestinian passport, it’s quite impossible. It is possible but I should travel first to Oslo to get the visa and I have to wait for minimum 3 weeks, that’s what I heard, if I’m lucky to get a visa, so I can travel to Turkey. But still, it’s expensive, if you want to make a programme, you should get financial support and who will finance someone who cannot Norwegian here. I can little, but yeah, if you want to tell a story, it’s nice to have it in Norwegian version, not in English or in Arabic, because all the Syrian people, most of them come and cannot speak English even. So when you will move there, you hear Arabic sounds. But still I…so this I…So if I haven’t participated in this Moving Voices workshop, I will never think that I want to make a story about these Syrian refugees. But it is still, I myself I feel that I want to do this, I want to do this, but when I don’t know. Because I’m still not familiar with making projects here in Norway, I knew about projects, when I was in Palestine and there I knew where can I get funds, but here in Norway, it’s still new, this society. So yeah.

And about then about my personal life. I will say yes, yes, yes. It had such a big, big change on my husband’s life. And well, this project was a big challenge to our marriage life that Arab man, he doesn’t accept the woman to travel and to take this decision alone. So maybe you will talk more with Rikke and you found out that with these three trips I have travelled with all my family. I travelled with my child and with my husband. So and…the last trip to Denmark I was just on that time I said to Rikke, I am sorry, I want to stop, I cannot continue. But she was encouraging me: no, you should continue, you should tell your story, you should…and the reason why I thought at that time that I want to stop, it was because of my child and my husband. He said to me, no you cannot travel with a child, no you…you cannot just neglect us as a family and do what you want to do. But after that workshop we found out that, now we can do it and he changed, he found out…because he was looking for my child while I’m busy and doing the workshop. So he found out that yes, Arab man can carry that responsibility and do some of the women’s work. Because in our culture insists that the woman’s task is to look after the family and children. But when we moved to Norway and I had been part of this workshop, things changed and he has carried that responsibility and looked after our child and now…so we…in my personal life I got my family life.

RY: That’s wonderful.

NA: And we had a change. And still also I had created a work with NRK. I know that I have a woman, two women if I want to talk to NRK, I can talk with them, and I can send emails to them.

RY: And that’s good for the future.

NA: Yes, this is what I’m thinking but I have to be strong enough with my Norwegian before I propose a project to them.

JAN:

RY: And how do you see the future for radio documentaries in general and for your own career?

JPK: Well, I have two canals (???) in my life lately and I have decided to change the path of my life. I have been trying to do a dream for many years, more than eight years and I was trying to do it through journalism because I couldn’t do it other
ways, I couldn’t which is filmmaking to be a director. And I have been rejected many places here in Denmark, Dansk Film school and other places and I written many series, 7 drafts I have, 7 stories, one of them directed to Dansk Film school offered to make a short movie. I said no, because I wanted to do it myself. And yes, at some point it was just all black so I decided to change everything. Therefore I decided to go the academical life, which I just started. I starting now from bachelor, from bottom and I’m studying International Business and Politics. My aim is to an academic in the sense of PhD or professor sometimes. In international politics. 

RY: ok

JPK: So when it comes to writing or to documentaries, radio documentaries. Writing I think depends on a time, documentaries, it will always have its place but I’m not sure if I will be working on it again.

RY: So it didn’t feel your thing?

JPK: Aaah, I liked it very much but if I was focusing on it, I would be missing something else. And for now, I’m trying to be more practical. Like study something I will get a career from in the future. But if I will be going something for example only documentaries for the radio and I have done one, if I want to do something I can like work on it and I can in another way to produce more. Aaaah, but it’s a bit risky. It’s not that certain if you go through that path. That can be a bad thing. So I need to be practical now. I’m engaged, I’m planning for a family, so I need to be practical at the moment. *laughing*

RY: And how do you see radio as a media? And what are the strengths and weaknesses?

JPK: It’s weak comparing to other…what’s called…media

RY: TV, film

JPK: yeah, it’s all on the internet now for example most of the things I hear about or read about, it’s from Facebook and I think most of the people do. At least lately. With the TV or internet, radio I don’t see so many people just sit for, if now is the time to listen to the radio. I that is missing slowly. And it’s disappearing in time, I’m not saying it will disappear at all the rule or as before like radio which was strong having its place. I don’t think it’s going to be like that anymore.

RY: So it’s sort of…

JPK: Fading

RY: dying or fading media

JPK: yeah

RY: because you can also listen to music from Spotify or internet and yeah….maybe the time is that people don’t want to stop and concentrate on something that much anymore.

JPK: I think it has its own age.

RY: hmmm. Yeah

JPK: it depends which age you are

RY: yes it is. When I for example think about my parents, my dad , he’s quite old already, so he is the radio person, whenever he’s doing some housework there is always radio on.

JPK: Same thing with my mom. Whenever she is in the kitchen doing something, the radio is always on. And my father is in front of the TV.

RY: And radio is somehow…when you compare it to TV somehow secondary media. You can cook or clean or do something
JPK: Like in the background

RY: Yeah, yes and when you hear something interesting then you just stop.

JPK: I have radio here at home, it’s an old radio and I think listened to it last time since my programme. More than six months or something like that. And otherwise my girlfriend, she I think…we’ve have it like 2 years now and we’ve played it like 4-5 times. I don’t know why we bought it *laughing* There is a point…we cook, we clean but we can play the music from the computer. So it’s very rarely we listen to the radio and it also depends on the age.

RY: And also again for example from the Spotify you can choose the music you’re listening to, so you don’t have to listen to any special station

SHAYAA:

RY: yes. So how did you find Finland when you first came from Afghanistan, how did you decide: Oh I will go to Finland.

SA: Oh, I didn’t decide because the place we worked, it was like girls…we travelled a lot. So it wasn’t my first time coming to Europe, I had been before this to France and Germany, these European countries, so all the girls will get a change to do some kind of work outside so for me came to Finland and then Tikke, who we met there, she was also teaching in Afghanistan

RY: ok

SA: She was my teacher because she is a journalist and a filmmaker and then she found me a place here to do my practice work. But that kind of work that I get also salary but also was learning on the xx-learning so I can rent a place and things. So it was offered to me like…where I was studying in Afghanistan and that way I got to Finland. I don’t know but I had no much idea about Finland, how it is, but the process was that I’m going there to learn something new and I was 19 and I was so happy. So I didn’t think anything else just that I’m going to Finland. So I just ended up…it was 6th of October when we arrived here in Helsinki I think it was afternoon, it was quite darker than this. Then after that because I’m Muslim, so few weeks after that came this Ramadan, I had to fast and then I was wondering why there is no days…

*laughing*

RY: When I have to eat…yes…

SA: And the first week were quite difficult for me to get up because it was so dark and then Tikke was like shaking me up: “Shayaa, we have go”. It was quarter to eight o’clock and then I had to say: “Oh why do you have to go so early”.

*laughing*

SA: And she said: It not that early, it’s 8 o’clock already. I’m sorry the weather is like that. The thing was that I didn’t probably felt that much of…expect those few days that it’s always like that but it didn’t affect me so badly because I was going to new place and I was getting all these equipment and this TV and all you know. I could have my own computer and plan my own programmes and what I’m going to do and then that I can ask for help.

RY: yes

SA: so it was wonderful and I was lost in those things and then I did three programmes about Afghans living in Finland and then Iranian lady because they have common language with us and then refugee children summer camp and then…

RY: yes
SA: yeah, it was a good experience to do all those things and then I had to travel to other cities to film those. Like of one films, people lived in Jyväskylä and I had to go. I mean I was only 19 – 20 when I came. I had to travel a lot for these, I had never been travelling alone anywhere, I have to travel from here to. Of course I guess one time Tikke went with me to Jyväskylä and then I remember an incident when I came back from Jyväskylä , I took the wrong direction train.

RY: Oh no!

SA: And suddenly people told me that you’re on the wrong, I asked where is it going and I didn’t speak that much…I mean I spoke English but not as good as I speak now. I didn’t understand a word of Finnish.

RY: Ooooh!

SA: And then they told me it is going to wrong direction and then I got panicked and I got this tripod and camera and everything with me and ooooh what happens. And then the conductor took me to his place and told me: calm down, calm down, everything will be fine. And when they stopped and he put me to another train and told that I should get off. But somehow I survived.

RY: yeah

SA: I survived

RY: And I guess it’s always when you go to a new place…It just feels that I have so many possibilities and I’m going to experience something new…

SA: yeah

RY: so then of course it feels a bit…you’re homesick or you’re uncertain but then you just think that’s ok I have so much to do and so much to learn that you are just really excited.

SA: yeah, it is true, I mean because when I came to Finland of course it was…I never planned to stay in Finland, probably one thing…I have lived here for 9 years but I don’t speak that much Finnish. The reason is that the five lived here, I never had a plan to live here, like forever here in Finland so I was more concentrated what I was studying and the study was in English.

RY: yes

SA: So I didn’t…Of course I went to the Finnish classes to learn these funny words from another language you want to learn but I never took it seriously that I’m going to live here, why should I put my energy on these if I’m never coming back and things. And then things in life change and I went back and then suddenly I had to leave. To myself it was a shock I mean I was born in Kabul, I grown there, I have been there during all the wars in Afghanistan and Taleban time, which was the worst time. And then suddenly when the country is better now I was abandoned and I was shocked. There was of course the European police and the International media support who took care of me, otherwise I wouldn’t have managed myself what happened in my home in my country how can this happen. So that’s a…then I didn’t feel homesick because I had an idea that I’m going back. But then I turned out from a normal student living here to this “pakolainen” refugee, then life changed.

RY: yes

SA: I had to give up my Afghan passport, I had to go to the interviews, and I had to tell them why…I spent two days there in Lappeenranta in interview process of the refugee and those things like make you…

RY: So your status just changed?

SA: Completely changed, I mean before I was here on my own. I mean I worked, I earned money, I studied, we had this free housing at school but the rest I worked during the summer and I earned my money and before that when I worked in YLE I got money. And then in between I was doing some talks about Afghanistan so I had enough money, I was very independent, I could go where ever I want…be on my own but suddenly it changed that for few months or
half a year I had no idea what will happen to me. Will Finland accept me or not and what should I do and of course it was hard to give up my Afghan passport…They give away and then they took…I understand it was a process of course and everybody does but then again if I would have come as like a normal refugee…I don’t know what is normal refugee but other people who come through waters and mountains and see so many difficulties…maybe it wouldn’t have affected me so much but today I’m Shayaa, a filmmaker from Afghanistan and tomorrow I’m this refugee woman who has escaped death. That was quite…it took me some time to come down and realised that ok, this is what happened.

RY: Yes, and especially when you have already been sort of a free citizen in a country and the suddenly you have to go through that process

SA: yeah. Of course I didn’t live in a refugee camp because…they asked me if I want to live in Kontiolahti and I said, ok if I’m a refugee now, let’s go and experience it, I want to see. And then I went to this…I asked one person from my school to go with me to this Kontiolahti refugee centre and then she took me to a bus and said: you have to go and go and go and then it was in the middle of the forest and so far away. And then the funny other thing they told me it has been a mental hospital and now they turned it out to a reception centre.

Transcript of Leila’s radio programme:

In search of a friend
by Leila Sadaati

Consultance: Sheida Jahanbin with Krister Moltzen and Tim Hinman, Editing: Sheida Jahanbin, Mix: Tim Hinman

Sounds of airport


I arrived at Værnes airport in Trondheim from Turkey after I had spent 14 months there as a refugee.

Leila: At the airport, I found out that I wouldn't be living in Trondheim, after all. The advisor who came to airport from the Immigration organization told that I must go to the north of Trondheim, to a small town called Steinkjer.

The first question that came to my mind as a journalist who has lived 30 years in Tehran with a population of 12 million, was this:- Where is on earth is Steinkjer?

….And I started thinking: How can I survive in such a small town?

Sound of walking

Else: I know a woman that was teacher before and I think you can easily talk to her. She is interested in people from other countries. I think she is the one who you should talk to.

Leila: I asked my adviser from Kommune to suggest me an old Norwegian woman.

I always think that old women are full of awareness and they have lot of experience to share.

Leila: what is her name?

Else: Her name is Solbjørg Musum. I can call her and ask her.

Leila: OK. Thank you Else.

Leila: It's 10 Feb. I sent an email to Solbjørg with my advisor's help. Then I got this answer via email: Hi Leila, weekend will be all right. 5'o clock this Sunday afternoon is OK. Best, Solbjørg.

It's almost 6 months since I came to Norway. And I still need someone to help me as a translator. Davood is my Afghan classmate. He will help me.
We get lost in the streets and Solbjørg’s husband says he will come and pick us up.

Davood: We get lost in streets and we don't know the address. Her husband will come and pick us up. It's snowing.

Leila: Hi my name is Leila. Sorry.

Husband: It is a long way to drive.

Davood: Yes we didn't know.

*Leila: says something in Persian*

Davood: What is the name of this? Is it ocean or lake?

Husband: It's the ocean. The biggest ocean in the world.

Davood: OK. But what is this? Is this a lake?

Husband: No, we call it a sea. It's a fjord. Trondheim's fjord.

*Arrival at home*

Leila: Hi.

Solbjørg: Good day! Good day!

Leila: Sorry.

Davood: Sorry.

Solbjørg: Solbjørg. And Leila.

Leila: It was interesting for me to meet Solbjørg. Such friendly behaviour.

Solbjørg: OK. Leila, Are you journalist?

Leila: Yes. Iranian journalist.

*Leila: says something in Persian*

Davood: You were a teacher before. Are you retired now?

Solbjørg: Yes. I’m a pensioner.

*Leila: says something in Persian*

Davood: If new person come from other countries, in the beginning it's hard get connected to Norwegians …

Solbjørg: ...I have lot of experience with that.

Davood: …. How can they connect to Norwegians?

Solbjørg: We Norwegians are not so open. You can't see any activities like going to cafés and going out for meeting people we almost go to each other’s homes to meet each other.

*Leila: says something in Persian*

Davood: It's opposite for Iranians. Iranians are not like this!
Solbjørg: All people who come here from all over the world have to learn how to be like Norwegians! Language is the number one for this. Therefore if you start talking in Norwegian they say: Oh, she is talking in Norwegian!!

I asked Solbjørg to suggest me some ways to find friends.

Solbjørg: The thing that is important is finding an activity where you can meet some Norwegians. It could be theatre or music, or for example going for walk, going for skiing and grilling sausages …

Leila: Yes grilling …

Solbjørg: Yes these things are typically Norwegian …Just go and go and go and go …

Leila: Yes, yes

Davood: Go på tur aldrig sur.!!

After two hours talking I left Solbjørg's home with a some hope.

Leila: Good bye

Solbjørg: Good bye

Music

Leila: Going to ski was my first experience of entering Norwegian society.

Leila: Hello. What is this?

Else: This is ski. Do you want to go to skiing?

Leila: Yes. I want to try to go to skiing.

Else: It’s good to try it.

Leila: Yes.

Else: when you want to go to skiing you cannot use your normal shoes. You should have skiing shoes.

Leila: Skiing shoes?

Else: That lock the ski to your shoes.

Leila: In Tehran there is a big area for skiing and I was there just 2 times and skiing was not my favourite sport at all. Actually I think it's a bit boring. But because skiing is one of the important parts of Norwegian life, I did it …but I didn't like it!

Leila: Should we rent clothes or not?

Leila: NOT!

teacher: We don’t have any extra clothes here.

music

Leila: Hello. Are you teaching Billiards?

teacher: Yes. I'm trying.

Leila: Going to billiard and learning it was my second step into Norwegian culture. But, again, I didn't find any friends here.
Teacher: It's hard to start it but it’s lots of fun.

Leila: Yes. I like it.

teacher: number 3.

Leila: Number 3?

Teacher: Yes.

Teacher: NO!

Leila: OH…

*Sound of walking*

Leila: I went to the shopping centre to find out - as Solbjørg's said, if any young people in the town know anything about some social groups in the city or not?

*Leila: says something in Persian*

Davood: Can you suggest me some groups to join,... to go to skiing and walking with?

Man: I don’t know these kinds of groups but what I suggest is maybe training gym, it’s is a good area to find the people who going to skiing and …. Going to Damsaga is a good way to get in contact with people. There is a nice busy area …

Davood: Are you from Steinkjer?

Woman: No I am from ????? but she’s living in Bergen.

*Leila asking the same questions.*

Leila: It was interesting when I found out that a small town like Steinkjer is actually like big city in area. Seven out of 10 people who I talked to, came from other small towns around Steinkjer ...to go shopping.

Leila: Around the time I was trying to enter to Norwegian society it was soon to be the 17. May. That is national day in Norway. That is one of the most important days for Norwegians, the shops started to sell special clothes, and people talked a lot about that. It was interesting for me and I went to one of these shops to find out more about those clothes called ‘Bunad’.

Leila: Hey!

Leila: Is it Bunad?

Woman: Yes it is Tronde Bunad in different colours.

Leila: in different colours. How much is this?

Woman: Without ????? it’s almost 20000

Leila: It’s so expensive!

Woman: No! it’s very reasonable - the other Bunads are more expensive!

Leila: After some months trying, I still wasn’t getting any results. I still couldn't find a Norwegian friend. I thought the person in the highest position in this city is the Mayor. He should know all about the city and its people. I found the email address of Bjorn Arlid Gram, the Mayor of Steinkjer and I sent email to him. He answered quickly and we fixed a date.
Leila: My name is Leila. I came to Norway in August.

Mayor: In August. Yes. It's not a long time.

My Norwegian language had become a little better and now I can talk alone.

Leila: I'm a journalist and I'm making radio documentary

Mayor: OK

Leila: About how can I find contact with Norwegians?

Mayor: Where are you from?

Leila: Iran.

Mayor: Iran?

Leila: Yes.

Mayor: One thing, the most important thing to find good contact and become integrated in some part of Norwegian society is the language. Language is so important. Schools and work places are central to become integrated. Red cross is an organization that also works with this area - they have their own methods - and they are working with integrating immigrants. They have something like a guide for refugees. That connects Norwegians with immigrants.

Leila: Red cross was the new way that mayor suggested to me. A new way that I should try.

Leila: It's 17th of May. Celebrations and sounds of people are all over the city. The children who are eating ice creams are playing and they are happy. When I look at people I'm wondering if they are all living in Steinkjer too? Where were they until now?

Leila: First congratulation for 17th may. Why you come to the streets on 17th May?

Woman: All the people come out in the city and we celebrate Norway with balloons and children come out and we are eating ice creams and we enjoy it.!

Leila: Good day ...have a good day! Thank you!!

Even on the 17th of May I tried to be and enjoy with people and to find a connection but it was unsuccessful.

Leila: I searched to find social groups but I couldn’t find.

Solbjørg: No.

Leila: but I couldn't find.

Leila: After 4 months I met Solbjørg again to say: I tried your suggestions but it didn't work and now I want to give myself a chance to go to the red cross to find a friend.

Leila: After that I went to skiing but I couldn’t find friend.
Solbjørg: No!

Leila: After that I went to the billiards club but I couldn't find friend.

Solbjørg: ...no!

Leila: ...after that I went to mayor and he said that I should first learn the language and after that I should go to red cross and that they will help me and they can maybe find a friend for me!

Solbjørg: I know that red cross arrange trips like ‘Saturday trips’ and everybody can be invited via email. And with a refugee guide you can get to know Norwegian culture and to find some activities. So go and try it.

Leila: I will try and try and try!

Leila: What do you want to drink?

Solbjørg: To drink? Oh. Cappuccino!

Leila: cappuccino?

Music

Leila: As the mayor said, I went to the red cross and I met Katrine who worked there. Some weeks ago I met her at school and then I asked her to help me to find a friend via red cross.

Leila: Hi Katrine.

Katrine: Hi.

Leila: How are you?

Katrine: Sorry that you had to wait.

Leila: Do you have time?

Katrine: yes yes yes.

I asked her - ‘what can a refugee guide do to help?’

Katrine: You need to know where are things in Steinkjer. You were in many places and you know Steinkjer well and you know where things are. Friend guide can help you to get to know more. Like, Where the post office is, Where the city hall is, Where you can go for training, Where the cinema is and so on. I have a form that you can write your name on.

Leila: Aha

Katrine: and your email and your telephone. And your interests.

Leila: Aha.

Katrine: Then I can find a person that is good for you.

Leila: The form that Katrina gave to me had some questions: ‘Why do I want to have a Norwegian friend?’ ‘What is my personal information?’ ‘And what am I interested in? I answered all the questions.

Leila: I'm alone here and I …

Katrine: Don't know
Leila: Don't know

Katrine: Many people

Leila: Also I don't have friends!

Katrine: exactly now we don't have any women who are available. So I will be in touch with you when I find a person who can be your guide. But it takes time. It takes some months!

Music

Leila: Friendship has a deep meaning for me. I'm trying to find friend and to enter into a new society. In my idea the depth of the word friendship is all about expanding my life and being alive.

But is this ever going to happen - in such a small town?

The End