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**Worlds Beyond the Metric: Arabic-Speaking Muslim Women
and the Finnish Integration System**

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Glossary

This glossary defines analytical concepts and Arabic terms as they are used in this thesis. Arabic terms are given in Arabic script, transliteration, and English gloss. The diagnostic vocabulary developed in Chapter 5 is marked with [D].

Arabic terms used in the analysis:

غربة (ghurba): structural estrangement [D]. The condition of living within a world not organized for one's presence, needs, or capacities.

أمان بلا حياة (amān bilā ḥayāh): safety without life [D]. A condition in which institutional safety is secured while meaningful participation, vitality, or futurity remain unavailable. Named by P7.

التغريب (al-taghrīr): broken promise [D]. The gap between what migration and integration systems implicitly promise and what they materially deliver. The initiating condition in the estrangement sequence.

تفريغ (tafrīgh): hollowing [D]. Cumulative depletion produced through prolonged institutional indifference. Refers to the gradual emptying-out of capacities, attachments, and expectations.

وطن (waṭan): homeland. An affective and embodied sense of home and belonging, distinct from the material dwelling.

بيت (bayt): house. The physical dwelling place; functional, material, and replaceable.

وطنية مؤلمة (waṭaniyya mu'lima): painful belonging [D]. Attachment to a homeland experienced simultaneously as sustaining and diminishing. Named by P2.

رخيبت (rakhīt): the slip [D]. A gradual process of relinquishment in which domains of life are abandoned incrementally and retrospectively normalized as exhaustion or necessity. Named by P5.

استسلمت (istaslamt): I surrendered [D]. The moment at which contestation ceases and institutional conditions are accepted as fixed. Used in relation to compound absorption.

مهودة (mahdūda): demolished [D]. A condition of psychic and material exhaustion associated with arrival after war and displacement.

ما صار نصيب (mā šār naṣīb): it was not apportioned to me [D]. A theological reframing through which institutional failure is interpreted as destiny rather than systemic limitation.

تلاعب (talā‘ub): manipulation [D]. A participant’s diagnosis of institutional conduct.

جربوني (jarribūnī): give me a chance [D]. A recurring demand for recognition, opportunity, and social trust.

تعليم الذات (ta‘līm al-dhāt): interior self-teaching [D]. A practice of inward self-formation maintained beneath outward adaptation to institutional demands. Named by P2.

قدر (qadar): what is ordained [D]. What sits outside both personal choice and structural necessity.

كرم (karam): generosity. Giving without expectation of repayment or return.

الأمانة (al-amāna): trust held in care. An ethical obligation of custodianship.

النية (niyya): intention. The ethical and spiritual orientation underlying an act.

Islamic practice terms:

istikhāra (صلاة الاستخارة): the prayer for guidance.

duā: supplication; personal prayer.

iftar: the meal breaking the daily fast during Ramadan.

suhor: the pre-dawn meal before the fast.

Ramadan: the month of obligatory fasting.

Eid al-Fitr: the festival marking the end of Ramadan.

Tarawih (تراويح): extended night prayers during Ramadan.

wuḍū (الوضوء): ritual ablution before prayer.

Analytical concepts (English):

Composed self / working self: Two registers produced by the dual-channel method.

Migrant arc: The full trajectory of life in Finland, from recently arrived to born here.

Ambient decency: Safety as default, accommodation without justification.

The gratitude tax: The structural expectation that critique be preceded by performed gratitude.

The closed loop: The integration system produces conditions it then reads as personal outcomes.

Estrangement sequence: التغيرير (broken promise) → تفريرغ (hollowing) → غربة (structural estrangement)

Compound absorption: The mechanism by which institutional harm is taken up into theological and personal frames, removing the system as a responsible agent. Named from P4's account.

Reception design: The capacity of a system to admit, interpret, and structurally respond to forms of knowledge produced within unequal conditions. A framework for reading institutional perception. Named in 6.6. The method is a worked example; the three obligations in 6.7 are its specifications; the reception audit is its assessment tool.

Abstract

The Finnish integration system monitors employment, language certification, and benefit dependency. It has no instrument for what a woman calls disappearing. This thesis investigates what Arabic-speaking Muslim women in Finland sustain beyond what the integration system is built to register, and what that gap obliges of design practice, research method, and policy architecture.

The study is a multi-stream focused ethnography conducted by a Tunisian insider researcher during Ramadan 2026. Eight women across the full migrant arc, from recently arrived to born in Finland, participated through sustained WhatsApp correspondence, live conversations, and a collective workshop. The researcher's autoethnography runs as a fourth stream beneath all three. Analysis was Arabic-first: coding and interpretation were carried out in Arabic before English rendering.

The dual-channel method produced a structural finding: integration monitoring reads a composed self (the resolved, legible account women learn to present) and has no channel for the working self (the conditions that persist beneath it). The data produced a diagnostic vocabulary in Arabic, including an estrangement sequence التغيرير (broken promise) → تفريرغ (hollowing) → غربة (structural estrangement) and the concept أمان بلا حياة (safety without life), naming the condition of welfare metrics succeeding while life is withheld.

The thesis identifies a closed loop in which the system produces conditions it then reads as personal failure. It names the framework that follows as reception design: the reorientation from moving people toward the system's categories to receiving what people already know and carry. Three design obligations specify what reception design requires of the Finnish integration system.

Keywords: integration; service design; design justice; Arabic-speaking Muslim women; Finland; ghubra; focused ethnography; insider research

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ABBREVIATIONS

PAR: Participatory action research

SQ: Sub-question

SWANA: South-West Asia and North Africa

TEM: Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö; Finnish Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment

TENK: Tutkimuseettinen neuvottelukunta (Finnish National Board on Research Integrity)

WPR: "What's the Problem Represented to Be?" (Bacchi, 2009)

If I Must Die

By Refaat Alareer

*If I must die,
you must live
to tell my story
to sell my things
to buy a piece of cloth
and some strings,
(make it white with a long tail)
so that a child, somewhere in Gaza
while looking heaven in the eye
awaiting his dad who left in a blaze—
and bid no one farewell
not even to his flesh
not even to himself—
sees the kite, my kite you made, flying up above
and thinks for a moment an angel is there
bringing back love
If I must die
let it bring hope
let it be a tale*

Refaat Alareer (1979–2023), Palestinian poet, professor, and teller of Gaza's stories, killed with six members of his family in an Israeli airstrike on 6 December 2023.

1. POSITIONALITY

The knowledge in this thesis did not arrive from nowhere. It was produced from a particular life in a particular moment, inside the Arabic-speaking Muslim community in Finland, inside the integration system this thesis examines, among women coming from Arab-majority countries in Southwest Asia and North Africa. That proximity is the epistemological ground on which every methodological decision in this research was built.

I am a Tunisian, North African cisgender woman in my mid-twenties, Arabic-speaking and Muslim, raised in Tunisia and moving through European institutions as a student and migrant. I arrived in Finland in January 2026 as an Erasmus Mundus scholarship holder. That position gave me access, resources, supervision, and a measure of institutional protection many of the women in this study do not hold.

Being Arabic-speaking looks different in different places. Tunisia carries a French colonial history that shaped its education system, its bureaucratic logics, and its relationship to Arabic. Modern Standard Arabic is taught in schools, Darija is spoken at home, French threads through both. The postcolonial state pursued a model of secular Arab nationalism that produced its own tensions around religion, gender, and public life. The 2011 revolution and the years of political turbulence and economic crisis that followed form part of the structural conditions that have driven recent Tunisian migration, including mine. This formation gives me a particular kind of critical distance inside the Arabic-speaking Muslim category. I am inside it and at the same time aware of its internal heterogeneity. Patricia Hill Collins (2000) calls this the outsider-within: someone at the collision point of margin and institution who can see both what the institution registers and what it was built to miss.

The women at the centre of this thesis share a structural condition. They navigate Finnish integration systems while maintaining Arabic-speaking and Muslim-practising lives. That shared condition made this research possible. They do not share a single world, a single practice of Islam, a single relationship to Arabic, or a single way of being in Finland. "Arabic-speaking Muslim women" is a policy frame and a research population I work with, and the women themselves describe their lives in far more particular terms. I name this distinction here, before the reader has reason to assume the community is more coherent than eight women navigating similar systems from quite various places.

Arabic is the language of my childhood and most of my adult life. In its Tunisian form, Darija, and in its written form, it is the language in which I talk to my family, make Duā (supplication to God), joke with friends, and dream at night. Islam shapes my sense of meaning, my principles, and the rhythm of my days, the pattern of prayer and fasting, the joy of Ramadan and Eid. I carry both into Finland. Finnish words still sit awkwardly in my mouth, the vowels long in ways that feel unfamiliar, the grammar organised by a logic I have not yet internalised. I move between Darija, Modern Standard Arabic, English, and the French that still threads through my writing.

Islam is an identity I carry with pride. It is also an epistemic framework, a way of understanding relation, trust, knowledge, and obligation, that runs beneath the design choices of this thesis and grounds my efforts to seek justice and to stand with people who are oppressed. The concept of النية (niyya, intention) holds that the purpose behind an act is inseparable from its value. I held this throughout the research design: what I was trying to do with the women's words mattered as much as the methods I used to gather them. الأمانة (amana, trust held in care on behalf of another) shaped how I understood the stories shared with me. Chapter 4 names how النية (niyya) and الأمانة (amana) shaped concrete decisions about recruitment, prompting, analysis, and post-submission obligations.

In Finland I am read primarily as an immigrant, an Arab, a Muslim woman. My name, appearance, and religious practice situate me on the racialised and religious margins of the societies I move through. I navigate visas and permits, employment rules, and the practical work of learning yet another institutional vocabulary. I am welcomed as a student and potential skilled worker, and at the same time repeatedly reminded that my belonging is conditional. I move through the world as able-bodied and neurotypical, which shelters me from forms of exclusion and exhaustion some of the women in this study face. My racialisation as an Arab Muslim woman is also distinct from the racialisation Black women experience in Finland, including Black Arab and Black Muslim women whose navigation of Finnish institutions carries forms of harm this research does not reach.

In my work, I use the term global majority to refer to people racialised as non-white in European contexts, who collectively constitute most of the world's population. I use it deliberately to trouble the language of "minorities" in Finland and to foreground how people

like me and the women in this study belong to a global majority whose lives and knowledge European institutions routinely marginalise. Naming us as part of a global majority is a political choice and a statement about where I locate the epistemic authority of this thesis.

This naming does not erase the differences within that "we". My position does not map neatly onto those of the women in this study. I am not a mother in Finland. I am not a refugee. I am not dependent on a spouse's permit. I have not experienced all the forms of bureaucratic or intimate violence they describe. I can, in principle, leave more easily than some of them. I am not the weaver of the futures they build. What I share with them is the political moment and the systems we move through. What I do not share is theirs, and that asymmetry is what this thesis tries to honour.

During Ramadan, a leaflet arrived in my dormitory mailbox from the Sinimusta Liike, the Blue-and-Black Movement, a neo-fascist organisation that had been de-registered as a political party in 2024 for its anti-democratic programme and was seeking re-registration at the time of the fieldwork. On one side it warned that only return migration can stop population change. On the other it told people like me that it was time to go home because Finnish children deserve a Finnish Finland. I include this as part of the circumstance in which this research was conducted: research about belonging, conducted by someone whose belonging is publicly contested, with participants who navigate the same contestation. In some encounters I moved with more institutional protection than the women I spoke with. In others I shared the same racialised precarity, with my own documents and future tied to the policies I was studying.

I write from inside the condition I study. Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (2021) insistence that insider research is a methodological choice with its own strengths and risks, and one that has its own epistemological integrity, grounds this position. To have entered this research as an outsider, in Finnish or English, across the social distance the integration system itself produces, would have generated different knowledge, filtered through a relation that did not exist. The meaning of iftar at the end of a winter day, eaten far from family and far from the Arabic-speaking world, would have remained outside the researcher's frame. I brought the opposite of that distance.

This position carried risks I could not see past by sitting still. Chapter 4 describes the reflexive practices I built to hold it accountable. My position also sets limits I cannot see past. I cannot know what was refused to me, what was softened to protect me, or what my presence made unsayable. It is likely that some women softened accounts of conflict with caseworkers, or emphasised our shared religious experience to sustain the sisterhood of the conversation. It is equally likely that there are forms of anti-Black racism, classed humiliation, or intimate harm kept from me entirely, either to protect themselves or to protect me. These possibilities do not invalidate what was said. They mark the horizon of what this thesis can claim to know. I also cannot know how this thesis will be taken up, or by whom, once it leaves my hands. It is a situated reading from a specific position, held accountable as far as I can make it, offered as one contribution to the collective work of naming what the system cannot see.

Methodologically, I designed the study to reflect this position through Arabic-first analysis, a multi-stream design that pairs asynchronous WhatsApp correspondence with live conversation as a dual-channel reading, and a clear distinction between what the women said, what I inferred, and what I argue. Chapter 4 sets out these choices in detail.

The obligations this position creates are to honour what the women withheld as much as what they shared, to refuse to translate their sentences into policy recommendations they did not ask for, to share this thesis with them before it enters the institutional frame, and to remain in relationship with them after it is finished. Some of these commitments extend beyond the timeline of this degree. The thesis ends and the relation does not.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1. Overview

This chapter opens the thesis on the worlds Arabic-speaking Muslim women in Finland are building alongside and beyond the Finnish integration system, and what it costs them to sustain those worlds. It introduces the research problem, names the questions, and orients the reader to the thesis.

2.2. Research problem and political moment

I write this on Sámi land, inside the Arctic Circle, on ground that carries its own history of colonial governance and the deliberate erosion of Indigenous ways of knowing. I name it before anything else.

Every weekday, somewhere in Finland, a woman sits in a fluorescent room and practises saying words she already knows in a language that is not hers. The integration plan says she is progressing. She says she is disappearing. She has a degree the Finnish labour market does not recognise. She holds knowledge the system has no category for. The integration plan sees a language level. This thesis attends to what the plan does, and to what the woman holds.

Arabic is the third most spoken foreign language in Finland. As of 2025, there are 44,956 Arabic speakers in the country, a number that has nearly tripled since 2014 (Statistics Finland, 2025). It is a large and growing community, geographically dispersed across municipalities, largely invisible in the demographic data that drives policy, and clustered in ways the national integration programme does not name.

On 16 January 2025, the Finnish Government adopted the Government Integration Programme 2024–2027, a resolution containing 32 measures, four objectives, and a monitoring framework built on employment rates, language test scores, and benefit sanctions (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment [TEM], 2025). It named Finnish and Swedish as the languages of integration. It did not name Arabic. It did not name the 44,956 people who speak it as their mother tongue. The programme's declared intent is unambiguous: the focus of the system is to be shifted away from the rights of newcomers towards their obligations and own responsibility (TEM, 2025, p. 4).

The Programme's design treats women from "religious and cultural communities" as objects of two operations. Their employment is to be raised so that the national rate climbs. Their vulnerability is to be managed so that parallel societies do not emerge. Chapter 3 reads these architectural choices as a designed object through Bacchi's (2009) 'What's the Problem Represented to Be?' approach. The word *belonging* appears once in thirty-seven pages, in connection with sports clubs, conditional on available resources. The monitoring framework registers employment, language scores, and benefit use. There is no instrument for what the woman in the fluorescent room calls disappearing.

The TEM document was adopted in January 2025. By the time the fieldwork began, the legislative tightening it named had moved through four further rounds. Family reunification conditions tightened in June 2025. Citizenship requirements tightened in December 2025, introducing financial resources tests and integrity requirements that exclude anyone who relied on unemployment or social assistance for more than three months in the preceding two years (Finnish Immigration Service [Migri], 2025). Permanent residence requirements tightened from five to six years with mandatory Finnish or Swedish language proof and employment history, entering into force on 8 January 2026, three weeks before the research began (Finnish Government, 2025). In March 2025, Finland's Non-Discrimination Ombudsman found that the Interior Ministry had acted in a discriminatory manner in preparing the quota refugee plan for 2025, having provided instructions designed to prevent Muslim refugees from entering Finland (Yle News, 2025). By April 2026, a further parliamentary proposal was under review, projecting EUR 46.8 million in savings through additional obligation requirements entering force in January 2027 (Helsinki Times, 2026).

The fieldwork took place inside this accumulation. The political context was actively narrowing, measurably and documentably, in the direction of fewer rights, more obligations, and explicit legislative preference against Muslim entry. The woman in the fluorescent room is the product of that narrowing.

This thesis is submitted to a master's programme in service design. As a field, service design has built its practice around human-centred methods: user research, journey mapping, service blueprints, and co-design, developed to make a person's experience of a system visible and designable (Stickdorn et al., 2018). The Government Integration Programme operates on recognisable service design logic. It names a user, assigns a

journey, measures an output, and calls the output integration. The destination it names is a person who takes responsibility for her own integration, meets her obligations, and requires no further support (TEM, 2025). It is a user journey toward a self-sufficient subject.

What the integration programme cannot see is a question of epistemology before it is a question of technique. The field has been producing knowledge about these women in Finnish and English, from outside the condition the women are inside. A field that claims human-centred practice as its foundation, and produces systems that cannot see the humans at their centre, has a contradiction to resolve from within. This thesis positions itself inside that contradiction and argues from there.

2.3. Motivation

In the autumn of 2023, in Kuldīga, Latvia, I learned how to carry a genocide quietly. The calculation I made, dozens of times, was whether to name it and whether to be the one who made the room uncomfortable. I learned how to produce the acceptable self in spaces that required it. I smiled. I went to class. I held Gaza inside.

That fracture between what I carried and what I showed is not unique to me. It is a structural condition of being an Arab woman in European institutions in this political moment, welcomed as a student, a potential skilled worker, a resident, but never with the grief, the politics, or the sense of justice that make a person whole. Gaza did not create that fracture. Gaza made it impossible to ignore. It gave me a question I could not put down: what does it demand of a person to exist inside a system that requires her to hide the very things that make her whole?

That question is this thesis's animating diagnostic. By the time I arrived in Finland, I knew this fracture from the inside, and I did not want to research it from the outside. I found, instead, a structural community I already belonged to, Arabic-speaking Muslim women in Finland, navigating the same system, carrying versions of the same weight. Using the access my scholarship gave me to attend to their worlds, rather than extract from them, felt like the only honest way to do this work.

2.4. Research scope and context

This study focuses on Arabic-speaking Muslim women in Finland. As Chapter 1 established, what these women share is a structural condition: they navigate Finnish integration systems while maintaining Arabic-speaking, Muslim-practising lives. They do not share a single world, a unified practice, or a common lived identity. That distinction is held throughout.

The study follows eight participants across what this thesis calls the migrant arc: the full trajectory of life in Finland, from recently arrived to born here. I am the ninth voice, positioned as recently arrived. The arc is an analytical structure that holds each woman's position as structurally distinct. One was born here. One has already left. Between them sit six more, each navigating the integration system from a different location on the trajectory. Chapter 4 develops the arc as a methodological instrument and introduces the participants.

The research was conducted in relationship with Mirsal ry, an Arabic-speaking, migrant-led civil society organisation in Finland whose community embeddedness and Arabic-language capacity made parts of this research possible. The primary data collection took place during Ramadan 2026, the Islamic month of fasting and intensified spiritual practice. The overlap was not planned. Data collection began in February 2026 as did Ramadan. The design adapted to the month once the timing was set, and what the research absorbed from that adaptation is described in Chapter 4. I was based in Rovaniemi during the fieldwork. Participants were distributed across Finland and, in two cases, had left the country. The research was conducted remotely as a circumstance of my location at 66 degrees north and the geographic dispersal of the community. WhatsApp is the channel through which this community already functions across that dispersal, and meeting participants inside an infrastructure they were already using was part of what made the method workable.

The scope is deliberately narrow. This thesis does not claim to represent all Muslim women in Finland, all Arabic speakers, or all immigrants. It does not evaluate a particular programme or compare Finland to other countries. It follows one structurally defined population in one national context, and attends closely to how integration policy, welfare structures, and everyday life intersect there.

2.5. Research aim and questions

The aim of this research is to document what Arabic-speaking Muslim women in Finland sustain beyond what the Finnish integration system is built to receive, and to examine what the gap between these two reveals about the design paradigm that produced the system. The aim is diagnostic. This thesis reads the integration system as a designed object, documents what the women sustain beyond its frame, and names what the distance between those two readings obliges of research method, design ethics, and policy architecture.

Three objectives organise the work. The first is to produce a portrait of what Arabic-speaking Muslim women in Finland carry, build, and refuse across the full arc of life in Finland, in their own words and in Arabic where possible. The second is to read the Finnish integration system as a designed measurement apparatus, examining what its instruments count, what they require, and what the encounter leaves unregistered. The third is to articulate the diagnostic vocabulary that emerges from these women's experiences of belonging in Finland, and to name the obligations that vocabulary places on those who design integration policies and services, at the level of encounter, trajectory, and evaluation.

Main research question:

What does the Finnish integration system systematically fail to register in the lives of Arabic-speaking Muslim women, and what obligations does that failure produce for design practice, research method, and policy architecture?

SQ1: What do Arabic-speaking Muslim women in Finland carry, build, and refuse as they make lives here?

SQ2: In these women's lives, what do the integration system's instruments count, require, and fail to register?

SQ3: What diagnostic vocabulary and analytical framework does an Arabic-first, insider research practice produce that existing integration discourse does not hold?

SQ4: What conditions, at the level of design ethics, research method, and policy architecture, does the integration system require in order to register what it currently cannot see, and what obligations follow from the failure to create them?

SQ4 addresses designers of integration policies and services, beyond service design as a disciplinary field alone. The widening is deliberate. Finnish integration as a designed system is the accumulated work of many hands: civil servants, policy writers, programme managers, municipal service designers, training providers, consultancies. The demand this thesis carries applies to anyone whose work produces the system the women encounter. Chapter 6 answers SQ4 through three design obligations grounded in the empirical material, each operating at one of three levels: what design ethics must hold, what design research must do differently, and what policy architecture must change.

2.6. Philosophical stance and research design

This research is positioned, qualitative, relational, and Arabic-first. It works within standpoint epistemology, decolonial design scholarship, feminist ethnography, and the right to opacity and refusal. These traditions are developed in Chapter 3. The method is a multi-stream focused ethnography conducted by an insider researcher, using four data streams across Arabic and English, with analysis that is abductive and Arabic-first. Chapter 4 documents the design in full.

2.7. Ethical considerations

This study works with a community I am already part of, in a language I share with participants, during a month in which that community's spiritual and social life is concentrated. The relational ethics underpinning that proximity are grounded in the amana (الأمانة) framework described in Chapter 1. Formal ethical review was not required under the University of Lapland's current thresholds, as confirmed with my supervisor. Chapter 4 describes the consent architecture, anonymity practices, and ethical obligations in full.

2.8. Contributions

This thesis addresses gaps in Nordic welfare studies, diaspora studies, design justice discourse, and service design methodology. It asks whether the integration system's measurement architecture produces structural blindness, whether غربة (ghurba, structural estrangement) is better understood as a structural output than a psychological condition, and whether the people being designed for are already doing the design work the system has not done. Chapter 6 develops each question against the evidence and names the framework the answers add up to.

2.9. Thesis structure

Chapter 1 establishes where the knowledge in this thesis comes from and what my position makes possible and limits. Chapter 2, this chapter, opens the research problem and names the research questions. Chapter 3 introduces the four intellectual traditions the thesis works within: the integration system as designed object, what the women sustain as autonomous design, the Arabic vocabulary of belonging, and the epistemological commitments that make this research possible.

Chapter 4 documents the methodology: a focused ethnography conducted by an insider researcher across four data streams (WhatsApp correspondence, live conversations, a collective workshop, and autoethnography), with Arabic-first analysis and Ramadan as temporal frame. Chapter 5 presents the findings across the migrant arc, introduces the diagnostic vocabulary, and closes with what the women are asking. Chapter 6 answers the research questions, names contributions, develops the framework the thesis builds, and translates the women's brief into three obligations of that framework. Chapter 7 states what the thesis opens and what it cannot close.

The woman in the fluorescent room is not waiting to be seen by the integration system. She already knows what she carries. This thesis is an invitation to the people whose work produces systems like the one she encounters: come and see what she is building in the space the system cannot reach. Then decide what your work is for.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The integration system has a word for what it intends to produce. The women in this study have a vocabulary the system does not. The gap between those two vocabularies is what this framework is built to hold.

This chapter introduces the thinkers whose work made it possible to ask these questions in this way: to read the Finnish integration system as a designed object with assumptions about persons and belonging built into it, to read what Arabic-speaking Muslim women build alongside it as skilled political practice, and to treat what participants chose to withhold as data. The framework was constructed before fieldwork ended and tested against what the women produced. Where their words went past it, the framework extended to meet them. Some of those extensions moved substantially beyond what the original literature anticipated. Where that happened, Chapter 6 names what the data produced.

The chapter is organised around four questions: what the integration system is doing; what the women sustain alongside it; what vocabulary belonging requires that the system does not hold; and what epistemological commitments make this research possible. Figure 1 maps how these four traditions converge in this thesis.

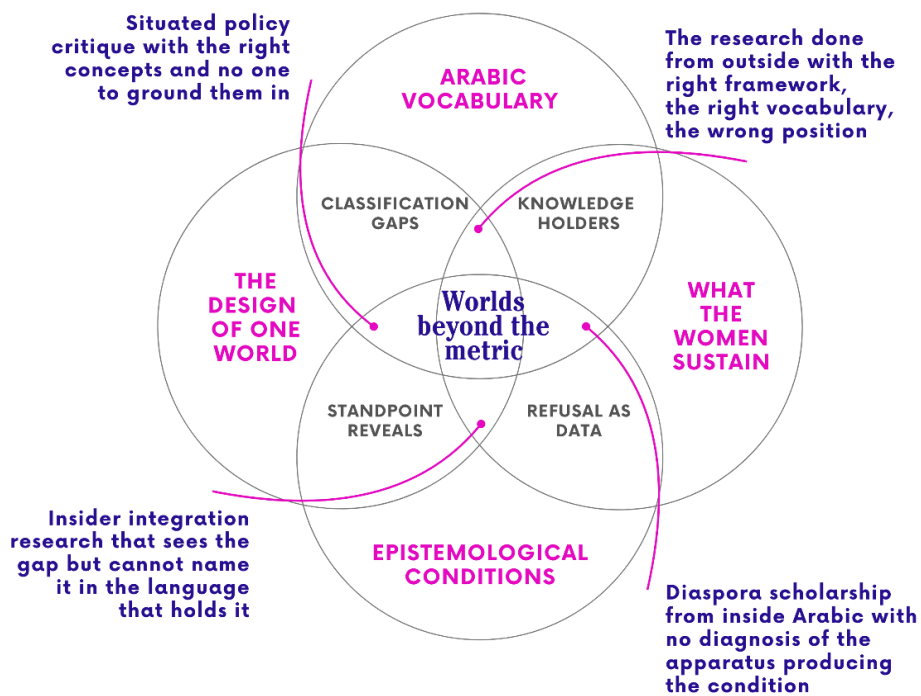


Figure 1. Four intellectual traditions and their convergence in this thesis.

3.1. The design of one world

Finnish integration policy names the problem it is solving. The Programme's design is a problem it does not name.

Chapter 2 set out the Programme's surface: its objectives, its monitoring framework, its placement of immigrant women across two distinct policy registers. This section reads the same text as a designed object. Carol Bacchi's (2009) *Analysing Policy: What's the Problem Represented to Be?* (WPR) approach provides the analytical method. Bacchi's foundational question is what a policy text constructs the situation to be. How a problem is framed shapes who is held responsible, what solutions appear obvious, and what the document cannot think (Bacchi, 2009, p. 2). Applied to TEM 2025, the answer is in the architecture.

Three architectural choices carry the framing. First, the immigrant addressed by the Programme is constituted from the outset as a risk to public finances and to social cohesion whose integration must be earned. The Programme's stated shift away from rights and toward obligations and own responsibility (TEM, 2025, abstract) tells the reader what the document is doing before any measure is described. Second, immigrant women appear as instrumental subjects of two operations. Their employment is to be raised so that the national rate climbs (Measure 15). Their vulnerability, framed as honour-based violence and female genital mutilation, is to be managed inside the Programme's third objective on combating the emergence of parallel societies (Measures 29 and 30), placed structurally next to the Government's action plan on youth and gang crime (Measure 31; TEM, 2025, pp. 28–30). The placement is the analytic. By siting protection inside parallel societies rather than under welfare or human rights, the document frames the safety of women from specific religious and cultural communities as a question of social cohesion risk-management. The woman addressed in this register is at no point a person. She is a set of outcomes to be produced. Third, the monitoring framework names what counts. Measure 27 states that employment, level of education, and the use of social benefits will be used as indicators of integration (TEM, 2025, p. 27). Section 4 tracks employment rates of people with a foreign background by gender and country of origin, improvement in Finnish or Swedish test scores, reliance on integration support and benefits, participation in integration plan services, and the share of children with immigrant backgrounds in early childhood education (TEM, 2025, pp. 32–33). Every indicator measures either distance from a labour market outcome or cost to the welfare system. There is no indicator for

belonging, for community connection, or for subjective integration experience. The architecture is designed to be satisfied by its own measures. That choice guarantees the system cannot detect failures that lie outside what its measures can reach.

Geoffrey Bowker and Susan Leigh Star (1999, pp. 5, 35) establish why this matters structurally. Classification systems are integral to any working infrastructure, and what a system cannot classify it cannot act on. TEM 2025's monitoring framework has classifications for housing, employment, and language. It has no classification for the felt conditions that Arabic carries in words the monitoring architecture does not hold. Section 3.3 develops the vocabulary. What becomes visible here is that the classification architecture is where the problem is already operating.

Arturo Escobar (2018) names the inherited logic in *Designs for the Pluriverse*. Modernity, he argues, operates as a one-world world, a design project that asserts one viable trajectory for human development and works through policy, planning, service provision, and welfare design to absorb, domesticate, or render invisible every alternative (Escobar, 2018, pp. 4–5). Finnish integration is an instance of this logic. It is also a particular kind of instance. Escobar's territorial cases, Afro-Colombian communities defending Pacific rainforest and Zapatista autonomous governance in Chiapas, were developed through spatial dispossession. The women in this study do not lose land. What they lose is legibility: the capacity to be registered, classified, and acted upon by the system's instruments. Whether autonomous design holds when the worlds being sustained are linguistic, relational, and religious rather than territorial is a question this thesis takes to the data. If what makes a world a world is the capacity to sustain it, and if the women in this corpus are sustaining worlds the system has no category for, then Escobar's framework may require extension beyond its territorial starting point. Chapter 5 tests this. Chapter 6 names what the data produced.

Ameera Masoud (2023) names the figure that architecture produces. Across her dissertation and three constituent publications, Masoud develops the integrateable refugee and immigrant, using ethnographic data from integration training in Finland to show how integration policies and practices produce, enable, and constrain this subjectivity. Her work demonstrates how integration operates through mechanisms of inclusionary exclusion and exclusionary inclusion, where participation in training and work practice makes people appear included while leaving them structurally marginalised (Masoud et

al., 2019). She shows that refugees and immigrants are confined to a continuous state of being and becoming integrateable, always in need of more skilling and reskilling, without a clear point of arrival (Masoud et al., 2019; 2020). Integration becomes a racialising mechanism. EU and Finnish policies officially promote equality and even anti-racism, while in practice placing the responsibility for dealing with racism and other injustices on refugees and immigrants themselves (Masoud et al., 2023). In Publication III, Masoud and her co-authors name this arrangement racialised integration, in which Arabic-speaking refugees and immigrants are expected to be endlessly resilient in navigating a system that never resolves into full membership (Masoud et al., 2023). The earlier section described what the architecture does. Masoud's work names what the architecture makes. The women in this study live inside that same regime. They are people around whom Masoud's integrateable subject was constructed and whom it refuses to describe. This thesis takes up where that figure reaches its limit.

Sasha Costanza-Chock (2020), in *Design Justice*, identifies the implication. Design decisions carry consequences distributed along existing lines of power, and are made by a narrow group that does not represent those who will bear those consequences (p. 6). Applied to integration design, the system has never had the women in this study in the room where its instruments were designed. Design justice asks not only how to include marginalised communities in future design processes, but how to acknowledge that they have been designing all along.

Design distributes risks and harms alongside benefits. When a welfare system is the designed object under examination, this principle has a specific implication. Integration programmes, monitoring instruments, and classification architectures are choices about whose lives are legible, whose needs count as needs, and whose worlds can register as worlds. Building on Broom et al. (2023), administration can generate harm by design rather than by accident. When institutional systems produce harm as a structural, predictable, and reproducible outcome, the language of unintended consequences no longer holds. Iris Marion Young's (2011) social connection model offers a parallel framework. Those who participate in structural processes that produce unjust outcomes share responsibility for the resulting injustice. The responsibility holds without anyone having to have intended the harm. It holds because they are part of the conditions that make it systematic (p. 105). Bowker and Star's (1999, pp. 5, 35) argument gives this institutional weight: the absence of a category for a condition is already an active design

choice, producing effects that accrue to the people whose experiences the category cannot hold.

Guy Julier and Lucy Kimbell (2019) examine how social design oriented toward welfare and community benefit can reproduce rather than interrupt structural inequalities when it operates within neoliberal frameworks, improving efficiency without changing the conditions that generate need in the first place (pp. 13–15). A service design paradigm that moves users through pathways toward predetermined outcomes of employment and language acquisition may be technically well-executed and structurally insufficient at the same time, if those pathways were designed around a subject who does not match the women this study followed. Markus Miessen (2010) identifies the mechanism that sustains this. Genuine negotiation of power has been replaced by a form that performs inclusion without enacting it. Community knowledge is brought in without changing who decides, and the arrangement is cooperative in form and extractive in substance.

Ahmed Ansari (2025) names the specific gap this thesis responds to. Writing in *Third World Quarterly*, Ansari argues that issues including the relation between the local and the global, multicultural cosmopolitanism amidst globalisation, and migration remain undermined in the present scholarship, and that the figure of the migrant has not been opened up to critical interrogation in decolonial design discourse (Ansari, 2025). The migrant continues to circulate through design discourse as an object of concern, beyond any capacity to be a co-author of the problem-space. This thesis addresses that gap by changing the starting question. The question is no longer what the system should do for these women. The question is what the women have already built.

3.2. What the women sustain

Every community practises the design of itself. Escobar (2018, pp. 110–112) states this as a foundational claim. The integration system was not built to see it. In this thesis, "community" is used in a structural sense: women who share a position in the integration system and sustain one another through care and knowledge networks, without sharing a single world or identity.

The work of this section is to name that sustaining as skilled, deliberate, and sometimes reluctant political practice. Resilience and coping are the words the integration literature reaches for. Neither describes what is actually happening when an Arabic-speaking woman

holds Ramadan together in a town with no mosque, sustains a relationship with her mother in Tunis through a phone screen, and tells her colleagues she is fine.

TEM 2025's third objective, Finland is determined to combat the emergence of parallel societies, frames certain forms of community life as a risk before it looks at what those communities are actually doing. The Programme defines a parallel society as groups or communities that have become segregated or marginalised from the surrounding society and have fallen outside the structures and opportunities provided by it (TEM, 2025, p. 11). Risk factors include growing wellbeing gaps, the socioeconomic and ethnic segregation of neighbourhoods, and issues relating to gender equality such as social control and honour-based violence (TEM, 2025, p. 11). When Arabic-speaking Muslim women build spaces of religious and cultural support with one another while navigating Finnish institutions, those spaces sit under a category the document has already named as a risk. Chapter 5 shows how these networks sustain women as they move through everyday life in Finland. They are part of how the women live here. They are not, in any meaningful sense, an alternative society standing apart from it.

Three lines of thought build the analytical vocabulary for that sustaining. Each does different work.

Maintenance as creative practice. Mierle Laderman Ukeles (1969/1971), in her Manifesto for Maintenance Art, names maintenance work as the condition of possibility for everything the institution values, done largely by those the institution does not see. Her declaration that she is artist, woman, wife, and mother, in random order, doing the daily work of washing, cleaning, cooking, renewing, supporting, and preserving, targets art's attachment to novelty and its disregard for the labour that keeps creation possible. The same pattern appears in integration design. The day-to-day work Arabic-speaking Muslim women do to keep family routines intact, to keep language and prayer present in their children's lives, to hold one another through hardship, is maintenance. It keeps their worlds intact while they navigate Finnish institutions. None of this appears in the indicators that judge integration as successful.

People as infrastructure. AbdouMaliq Simone (2004) describes how, in settings where formal systems do not deliver what is needed, social relations and shared practice become the channels through which life is organised. Simone shows how people create provisional, often improvised combinations of objects, spaces, persons, and practices that take on

infrastructural functions when official infrastructures fall short (Simone, 2004, p. 407). The women in this study use their relationships in similar ways. They share information about which Finnish-language courses actually fit around working hours, which events are safe to attend with hijab, when new permit rules are coming. These exchanges connect people to services, to opportunities, and to each other when formal structures are hard to read or slow to respond. They are one of the infrastructures through which these women make lives in Finland, and one the document might read as a parallel society.

Building beside institutions. Stefano Harney and Fred Moten (2013) name the political logic of what happens when communities build alongside institutions that were not built to hold them. In *The Undercommons*, they describe a mode of relation that is adjacency rather than opposition, refusing the institution's terms while continuing to think, build, and hold each other (pp. 9–11). Their work emerges from the Black radical tradition and a specific political context. The structural argument transfers here for a specific reason. The online channels that run in parallel to integration services, the Ramadan gatherings that carry conversations no official meeting can hold, and the horizontal knowledge networks through which women orient one another toward or away from particular services occupy the same structural position. They are building beside an institution that invited them in without making room for what they carry.

To summarise the three: Ukeles names the labour. Simone names what that labour does structurally. Harney and Moten name the position from which it is carried out.

bell hooks (1990), in "Homeplace: A Site of Resistance," argues that building spaces of care and affirmation under conditions of racism is a political act. Creating homeplace is a way of resisting erasure and reconstituting dignity (hooks, 1990, p. 42). hooks writes from Black women's domestic practice in the United States, and the borrowing here is structural. When a woman in this study hosts others for iftar in a small apartment far from where she grew up, when friends check in around Eid because none of their Finnish neighbours knows the day matters, when women organise to bring someone to a difficult appointment so she does not go alone, they are making homeplaces in this sense. They are creating spaces where they can be whole. The work goes past reproducing culture; it makes conditions for dignity.

Lila Abu-Lughod's work explains why the migrant arc, the collective portrait across the full span of life in Finland described in Chapter 2, is the structure this thesis uses to hold

that worldmaking. In "Writing Against Culture" (1991), Abu-Lughod argues for ethnographies of the particular: staying with specific lives in depth in order to see how wider structures operate, without reducing people to examples of a culture (Abu-Lughod, 1991, p. 138). In *Writing Women's Worlds* (1993), she follows particular Egyptian women's lives closely, showing how law, kinship, and politics shape them in diverse ways. The migrant arc in this thesis works on the same logic. The eight women are not presented as representative of "Arabic-speaking Muslim women in Finland" as a category. Structural knowledge becomes visible because the analysis follows each woman's life in detail, in her language, over time, and holds those lives in relation to the same integration system.

3.3. The Arabic vocabulary of belonging

Language sets the limits of what institutions can recognise as a problem. Finnish welfare institutions and design practice work in Finnish, Swedish, and English. A community's needs are usually articulated in the language closest to them. This thesis follows the Arabic in which the women describe their lives.

Three Arabic concepts organise how this thesis talks about belonging. They carry long histories in Arabic literary studies, diaspora theory, and Arab feminist thought. Bringing them into Finnish service design and integration research makes analytical language available that broad notions of integration are unable to accurately reach. Chapter 5 shows how the women in this corpus use, extend, and add to these concepts.

وطن (waṭan) in classical Arabic referred to what a person carries inside: an embodied, emotional, and temporal sense of home prior to any geopolitical meaning. Yaseen Noorani (2016), in "Estrangement and Selfhood in the Classical Concept of Waṭan," traces how waṭan in the pre-Islamic and early Islamic poetic tradition operates as a chronotopic concept, organised around time and feeling. It names what a person holds within, before any claim made on a map (pp. 16–42). The later nationalist use of waṭan, layering territorial and geopolitical meaning onto the older sense, came as a historical development in the Arabic lexicon. What persists beneath the nationalist layer is the earlier register: waṭan as the world the body and memory hold.

بيت (bayt) is the house: material structure, acquirable and losable, functional. Where waṭan is felt, bayt can be rented, furnished, abandoned. Avtar Brah (1996), in *Cartographies of Diaspora*, makes the distinction between being at home (the spatial fact of bayt) and feeling

at home (the relational and affective condition that *waṭan* names) central to diaspora theory. Her concept of homing desire names the desire to feel at home as something practised anywhere, built through prayer, food, language, and gathering, without requiring return to origin. Home, in the diasporic imagination, is a mythic and longed-for place distinct from the everyday locations where life is actually lived (Brah, 1996, p. 192).

The distinction Brah names in English is the distinction Arabic holds in two words. TEM 2025's monitoring framework can register *bayt* in the form of housing and address. It does not have measures for the felt condition that *waṭan* names. In its indicators, integration appears as employment, education, and benefit use, never as a sense of being at home. *Waṭan* is missing because the measurement architecture does not ask for that kind of experience. That absence is what Bowker and Star (1999, p. 5) describe as classification as infrastructure: categories decide in advance what a system can and cannot see.

This thesis asks how that *bayt/waṭan* distinction might alter what integration services think they are providing.

غربة (ghurba) is the condition Nadine Naber (2012) documents in Arab America as a structural feature of Arab diasporic experience. Homesickness presumes a home that would repair the person if they returned. *Ghurba* names something else: the condition of living inside a world not built for what you carry, and meeting its systems daily without being met back. It travels with the person. It is experienced when someone is legally present, employed, or even born in the country where the estrangement happens. Naber's contribution is to locate *ghurba* analytically as a diagnostic of a designed condition, beyond a cultural trait of the people who experience it. This thesis uses it in that diagnostic sense.

Dakkak (2023) gathers contemporary Arab scholarship on *ghurba* as a literary and political concept, showing that the term continues to be theorised across Arabic-speaking contexts as a structural condition of dislocation that exceeds the psychological frame Western diaspora studies typically apply to it.

Relational selfhood. Suad Joseph, in the introduction to *Intimate Selving in Arab Families: Gender, Self, and Identity* (1999), names an architecture of selfhood that individualist frameworks systematically misread (p. 6). Her central concept is relational connectivity: a condition in which persons understand themselves as deeply implicated in one another, so that care, obligation, kin, and community are part of what selfhood is. The

self is not prior to relations. It is partly formed through them. A service design methodology that treats each woman as a self-contained unit of integration need has already misunderstood the entity it claims to serve. Relational selfhood is therefore a starting point for this research, the ground from which a more holistic account of women's lives becomes possible.

The politics of belonging. Nira Yuval-Davis (2011), in *The Politics of Belonging*, provides the distinction that clarifies why legal membership does not resolve ghurba. Belonging is the emotional and affective experience of feeling at home in a social location. The politics of belonging is the explicitly political project through which collective membership is constructed and policed (Yuval-Davis, 2011, pp. 10–18). Citizenship operates in the register of the politics of belonging. Ghurba concerns belonging itself. The integration system is designed to act on the first and has no instrument for the second.

Piety as practice. Saba Mahmood (2005), in *Politics of Piety*, treats piety as something people do rather than something they are. In her account, ethical self-cultivation is deliberate, skilled, relational work on the self toward a set of virtues, enacted through bodily practices (Mahmood, 2005, pp. 134–139). This thesis does not assume in advance that participants' Ramadan practices work in exactly the way Mahmood describes. Whether they do, or function differently in this diasporic, welfare-navigating context, is a question the material has to answer. What this framework takes from Mahmood is one claim, held open as a reading possibility: piety is practice. It makes specific demands on time, space, and institutional accommodation. Chapter 5 uses this frame where it clarifies what is happening, and names the differences where the data produces something else.

3.4. Epistemological grounding: situated knowledge, opacity, refusal

Centring the experience of Arabic-speaking Muslim women is an epistemological commitment. It rests on the claim that knowledge is always produced from somewhere, and that naming where it comes from strengthens the analysis. Chapter 1 set out the position from which this thesis is written. This section sets out the theoretical traditions that hold that position to be legitimate ground for the work.

Sandra Harding (1991), in *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?*, argues that research starting from marginalised lives can be more rigorous than research starting from dominant positions, because marginalised positions reveal what dominant frameworks tend to

overlook. She calls this strong objectivity: treating the researcher's social position as part of the evidence base (Harding, 1991, pp. 138–163). Patricia Hill Collins (2000, pp. 11–13) names the double vision of someone at the collision of margin and institution, the outsider-within position Chapter 1 described. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2021), in *Decolonizing Methodologies*, completes the line. Insider research is a deliberate epistemological choice with specific advantages (pp. 137–141). Trust built through shared experience, over Ramadan, over a shared language, over the particular kind of conversation possible between women navigating the same systems, produces knowledge that research conducted at a distance cannot replicate. Each scholar names a different aspect of the same claim. Harding names what starting from the margins makes analytically possible. Collins names the outsider-within position. Smith names insider methodology as a productive choice with its own integrity.

Donna Haraway (1988) names what these positions are positioned against. In "Situated Knowledges," she calls it the god trick of seeing everything from nowhere: the claim that knowledge can be produced from no particular body, no particular language, no particular set of relations (Haraway, 1988, p. 581). The claim does not dissolve a position. It conceals one. What gets concealed is usually a position with enough institutional power to present itself as neutral. This research does not make that claim. The conditions that made it possible, Arabic, Ramadan, the kind of trust that builds between women navigating the same systems, are named openly. Naming them is what makes the knowledge here accountable.

Édouard Glissant (1997), in *Poetics of Relation*, argues for a right to opacity: the right not to be fully explained or made transparent to others, and not to be reduced to the categories that make a person legible to them (pp. 189–194). In this research, what was withheld carries weight equal to what was said. The composure that kept difficult material beneath everyday exchanges until a live conversation opened something different is part of the data. So is the structural analysis offered freely while the personal was protected. Both show what this population has learned protection requires. Opacity is treated here as a form of knowledge.

Audra Simpson (2014), in *Mohawk Interruptus*, works through what this means methodologically (pp. 104–105). A participant's choice to withhold is a choice about something, and that something is analytically significant. Simpson develops this argument

in the context of Haudenosaunee sovereignty and Indigenous refusal in settler-colonial North America. The structural claim that carries here is that the terms on which sharing becomes possible are shaped by the system being studied. One woman in this research gave structural analysis with care and precision and protected the personal entirely. What she chose to withhold is part of what this research found.

3.5. The gap this thesis addresses

The four traditions converge on one operation. Figure 1, at the opening of this chapter, mapped the convergence. The four circles overlap at what the figure titles worlds beyond the metric. The four intersections name what the traditions produce together when held in combination: classification gaps, knowledge holders, refusal as data, standpoint reveals. The annotations outside the circles name what happens when only some traditions are present. Situated policy critique with no one to ground it in. Research from outside with the right vocabulary and the wrong position. Insider work that sees the gap but cannot name it in the language that holds it. Diaspora scholarship from inside Arabic with no diagnosis of the apparatus. Each fails in a specific way. The convergence is what makes the inquiry possible.

What converges is not four literatures but four conditions for a single operation the integration system does not perform. The system was diagnosed in 3.1 as a measurement architecture that cannot receive what falls outside its classifications. The women were named in 3.2 as people already building what the system has no instrument to see. The Arabic vocabulary in 3.3 holds what the system would need in order to name what it is missing. The epistemological commitments in 3.4 are the conditions under which those worlds, that vocabulary, and that building become researchable at all. Separately, each tradition names a problem. Together, they describe a system that was not built to receive what the people inside it carry, and the conditions under which a different practice becomes possible. Figure 2 maps how each theoretical tradition generated a specific methodological requirement for this research, and the forms of inquiry the project built in response. Together, they produced a methodology capable of studying what the integration system could not fully receive.

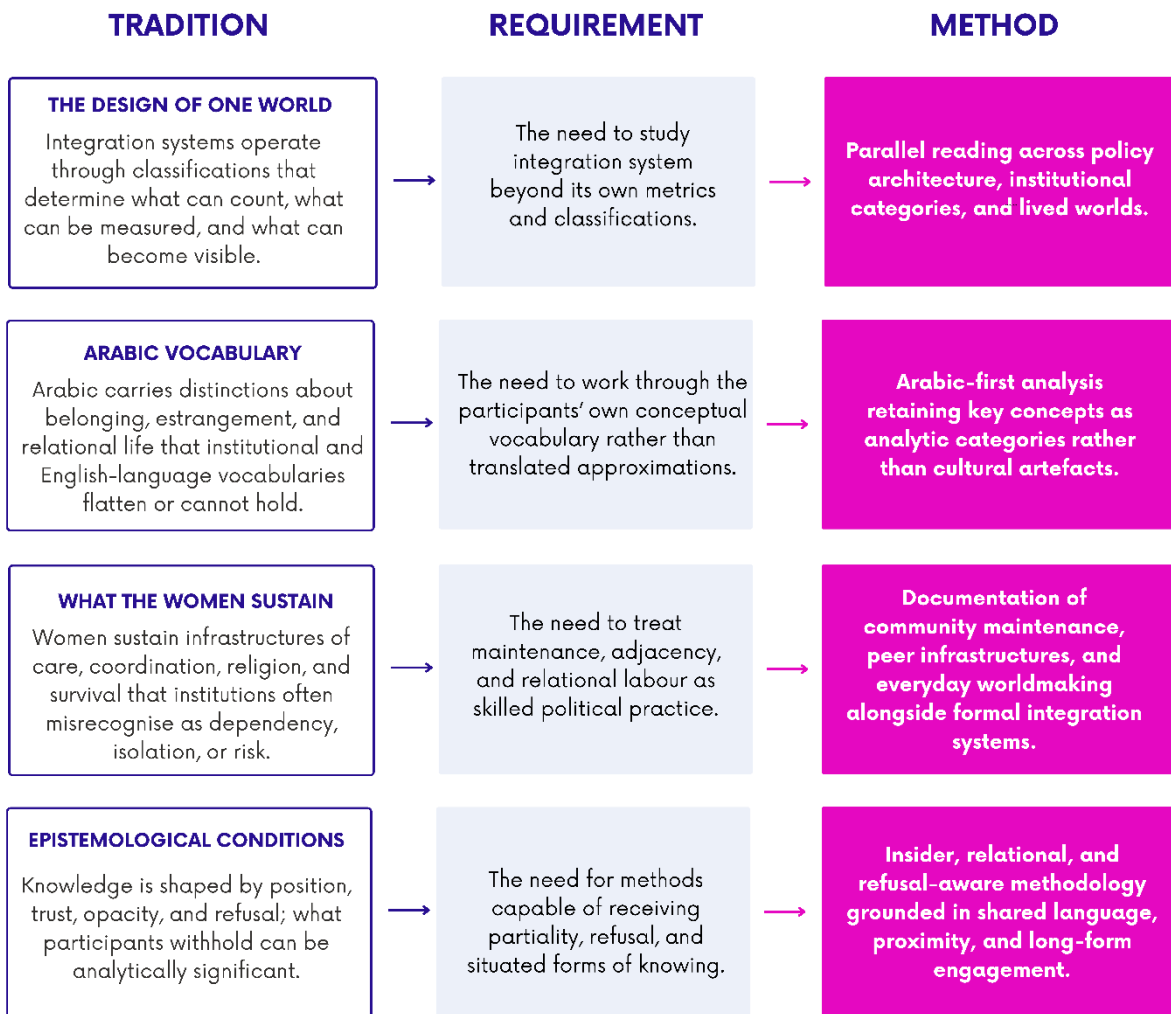


Figure 2. From theoretical requirement to research design.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. What shaped the method

Every method I used in this thesis was shaped by what I was trying not to do.

I did not want to arrive with a pre-built instrument and see how well it performed on a group of women. I did not want the research to compress each participant's life into a category the integration system had already named. I did not want to gather material, translate it into English, and produce findings that had no relationship to the people who produced them.

What I wanted was specific. A particular relationship with particular women over a defined month, in Arabic where possible, and a method robust enough to hold what the relationship required and flexible enough to follow where it led. This chapter describes the research design I built to do that, the decisions I made when the design met conditions I could not predict, and the limits it could not reach.

This chapter describes the research design. Findings are reserved for Chapter 5. Where findings are named in this chapter, they function as forward pointers. Chapter 6 names the framework the methodology choices add up to.

4.2. Research design

This is research about design and into design (Crouch & Pearce, 2012; Frayling, 1993). The Finnish integration system is the designed object under examination: a set of services, policies, measurements, and classifications whose assumptions Chapters 2 and 3 set out and whose effects this chapter's method was built to make legible. The research asks what the system is structurally able and unable to see, and what the women sustain beyond its reading.

The research works from two commitments. The first is that belonging, integration, and غربة (ghurba, structural estrangement) are meanings produced through language, relation, and power, and this research seeks to understand how the women interpret, negotiate, and build against those meanings. The philosophical tradition for this is interpretivism (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln et al., 2011). The second is that knowledge is co-constructed between researcher and participants, which is the reason Arabic-first analysis, relational fieldwork, and insider positionality operate as requirements in this thesis. The philosophical tradition for this is constructivism (Crouch & Pearce, 2012). Figure 3 maps

the relationship between these philosophical commitments and the methodological choices they produced, following Crotty's (1998) framework.



Figure 3. Research philosophy, following Crotty (1998).

Three axiological commitments organise the research practice. I am identified and accountable as the researcher. The question of whose knowledge the thesis serves is held open across the design and answered through the consent, review, and post-submission obligations described in Section 4.9. The relationship with participants extends past the moment of data collection.

The research is positioned, qualitative, and multi-stream. It is a focused ethnography (Higginbottom et al., 2013; Knoblauch, 2005) conducted by a researcher who already lives inside the conditions she is studying. Focused ethnography concentrates time. It takes a defined temporal interval and a defined community, and attends closely to what becomes visible inside a specific practice at a specific moment. The approach suits insider researchers who arrive already knowing how the community moves, so that the concentrated period can be used to attend to what is particular, fragile, and only visible from inside (Knoblauch, 2005). Ramadan 2026 is that moment. Arabic-speaking Muslim women in Finland are the community. My position inside both is what made the strategy appropriate.

The research drew on four data streams: asynchronous WhatsApp correspondence during Ramadan, live conversations in the weeks that followed, a collective online workshop held after Eid al-Fitr (the festival that marks the end of Ramadan), and my own autoethnographic field notes. Each produces material the others cannot. A fifth source, the

Government Integration Programme 2024–2027 (TEM, 2025) and the Finnish Integration Act (Laki kotoutumisen edistämisestä, 1386/2010, as amended), enters the study as a designed text. Section 4.6 describes each data stream in full; Section 4.8.5 describes how the policy text was read.

The analytical logic is abductive (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012): theory and data held in iterative dialogue, with the framework extended where participant language produces concepts it cannot yet accommodate. Section 4.8 describes how this worked in practice.

My initial intention was participatory action research (PAR). PAR is rooted in the tradition of Freire (2005) and developed by McTaggart (1991), Fine and Torre (2021), and others. It positions participants as co-researchers, sustains inquiry across cycles of action and reflection, and is built on months of relational immersion and trust. The timeline of a master's thesis did not allow for full PAR. What it allowed was a multi-stream design that approximates what PAR establishes: weeks of relational pre-investment before any formal data collection; an everyday communicative medium already inhabited by participants; live and collective encounters built on a foundation of correspondence; and a commitment to continuing relationship after the research is bound. This is what a student researcher can build while refusing the one-off interview as an acceptable default, and it shaped every decision described in Section 4.6.

A word on extraction. Extraction in research can be understood as a set of orientations: treating participants as sources of material to be converted into findings that belong to the researcher and her institution; measuring the encounter by what it yields; ending the relationship once the data is collected. This research was designed against those orientations. Where I fell short of my own intentions, I name where in the sections that follow.

4.3. Positionality as methodological consequence

Chapter 1 established my position. This section names what that position required of the method.

Sharing language, faith, diasporic condition, and Ramadan rhythm with the women in this study made specific registers immediately accessible: spiritual language, the labour of fasting in a Finnish winter, the particular weight of an iftar held far from family. The same proximity introduced specific risks. Over-identification meant I was likely to assume I

understood what I was hearing because the experience matched my own. Selective hearing meant I was likely to register material that confirmed what I already thought and miss what cut against it. Reluctance to press meant I was likely to soften questions on material I recognised in myself or in the relation forming in the conversation.

Wendy Pillow (2003, 2010) provides the working frame. Reflexivity in this thesis works in three registers at once. As validity practice, it makes transparent how knowledge was produced, by whom, and under what conditions. As ethical practice, it shapes how I entered the research relationship, what I held in the field, and what I left there. As data, it constitutes the autoethnographic thread described in Section 4.6.5, analysed alongside participants' accounts. The Chapter 3 scholars (Harding, Collins, Smith, Glissant, Simpson) ground positionality epistemologically; Pillow grounds it as a working practice.

Three procedures address the risks. Over-identification is held by the three-category protocol described in Section 4.8.3, which marks every analytical claim as said, inferred, or argued. Selective hearing and reluctance to press are held by reflexive memos written before any code structure was open, and by the disagreement log described in Section 4.8.4, where a parallel reading of each participant's material is logged against my own. None of these dissolve the risks. They make them auditable.

4.4. The migrant arc as analytical structure

Chapter 2 introduced the migrant arc. This section describes how the arc organised the analysis.

The migrant arc has a genealogy. Avtar Brah (1996) writes about the arc of diasporic formation, attending to how belonging takes different forms at different moments of presence in a receiving country. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) develop the narrative arc as an instrument for holding plural lives together without collapsing them into each other. Lila Abu-Lughod (1991, 1993) argues that attending to particular lives is more rigorous than generalising across categories, because specificity itself carries the analytical contribution. This research extends the arc to the structural trajectory of presence in Finland, from women born here to a woman who has already left, treating temporal position as structurally distinct rather than continuous. Different positions along the trajectory make different material available to the inquiry. Figure 4 positions the eight participants across the arc.

The migrant arc

Eight participants and the researcher positioned across the trajectory of life in Finland

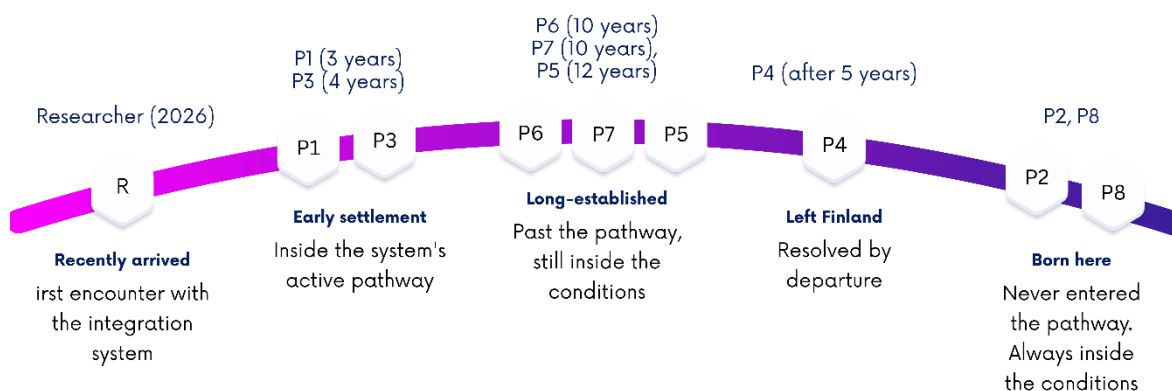


Figure 4. The migrant arc.

Eight women participated in the study. Together with my own position, the research holds nine voices across the arc. Eight is a positioning choice. A broader sample would have produced population-level patterns of the kind Finnish integration monitoring already produces, and those patterns are precisely what this thesis argues fail to register what the women sustain. A smaller sample would not have held the structural range the research questions require. Eight women, each in a distinct arc position, give the corpus enough reach to show cross-position patterns while keeping each account specific enough to refuse composite treatment. Patterns that hold across multiple arc positions are claimed in Chapter 5 as structural to the condition; singular findings are kept with the women who produced them.

The arc has gaps. Not all Arabic-speaking countries of the SWANA region are represented. No woman was in her first weeks in Finland, so the initial shock of arrival is not captured in real time. All participants are Muslim; non-Muslim Arabic-speaking positions are absent. These scope limits constrain what the thesis can claim.

As shown in Table 1, participants are identified throughout the thesis as P1 to P8. The researcher is included as the ninth voice (R). Arc position, broad regional origin (SWANA = South-West Asia and North Africa), and data streams completed are shown for each. "no" indicates the participant did not take part in that stream; "brief" indicates the WhatsApp exchange functioned as relational context for the live conversation rather than a full correspondence phase; "n/a" indicates the row does not apply. Fuller case context

lives in Chapter 5.

Table 1. Participants summary.

ID	Arc position	Origin	WhatsApp	Interview	Workshop
P1	Early settlement	SWANA	✓	✓	✓
P2	Born here	Finland / SWANA	✓	✓	✓
P3	Early settlement / Left during research	SWANA	✓	✓	✓
P4	Departed	SWANA	✓	✓	no
P5	Long settled, 12 years	SWANA	✓	✓	no
P6	Long settled, 10 years	SWANA	✓	✓	no
P7	Long settled, 10 years	SWANA	✓	✓	no
P8	Born here	Finland / SWANA	brief	✓	✓
R	Researcher	Tunisia	n/a	n/a	n/a

P8 completed a brief WhatsApp exchange in the days immediately before her live conversation. The exchange marked the start of the relationship and is treated in the analysis as relational context for the live conversation. It is not read as a parallel data stream of equivalent depth. All eight participants completed the live conversation phase. Four took part in the collective workshop. Section 4.6.3 describes the workshop.

4.5. Ramadan as temporal frame

Data collection started in February 2026. Ramadan started a week later. The overlap was a circumstance of the academic calendar. What the research became because of it was a series of decisions I had to make in real time.

Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar, the month in which the Qur'an was revealed, and the month of obligatory fasting for Muslims. From dawn to sunset, observant Muslims abstain from food, drink, and other acts. The fast is broken each evening at إفتار (iftar, the meal that breaks the fast), which carries enormous social and spiritual weight. تراويح (Tarawih, extended night prayers) extend the month's rhythm into the late hours. سحور (Suhoor, the pre-dawn meal) begins the day. For Muslim women in diaspora, Ramadan is also the month when distance from home is most felt and most actively worked against, through calls across time zones, gatherings with women who understand the rhythms without needing them explained, and rituals that carry forward what home once provided up close.

I was fasting too. The symmetry was material. I could not schedule a conversation at an hour I knew a participant would be preparing for iftar, because I was preparing for iftar at the same hour. I could not ask a woman to find time for a long voice note before suhoor without thinking about what the request would have cost me if she had asked it of me. The research was located inside the women's Ramadan, and that location shaped every contact I made.

When I began inviting participants into the WhatsApp exchanges, I asked each woman about her schedule during the month, her preferred times to read and respond, which formats felt most natural, and what boundaries she wanted to set. Section 4.6.1 describes how that initial outreach was built.

Ramadan made specific registers available: spiritual language, communal obligation, interior life in Arabic, and the heightened generosity that fasting together produces between people who share it. Diaspora literature on Ramadan as a site of concentrated religious and relational practice (Aouragh, 2011; Mandaville, 2001) supports this at the level of design rationale. The same timing also constrained the research. Fasting days compress the late afternoon and evening around iftar and prayer, and participants navigated the research alongside the month's obligations. The design absorbed the constraint by

holding the WhatsApp channel participant-paced and by scheduling most live conversations after Eid al-Fitr.

4.6. Data streams

The research drew on four streams of data: asynchronous WhatsApp correspondence, live conversations, a collective online workshop, and autoethnographic writing. Each stream produced material the others could not. Read together, they form a corpus whose analytical strength comes from those categorical differences. Figure 5 maps the temporal sequence across which the four streams unfolded.

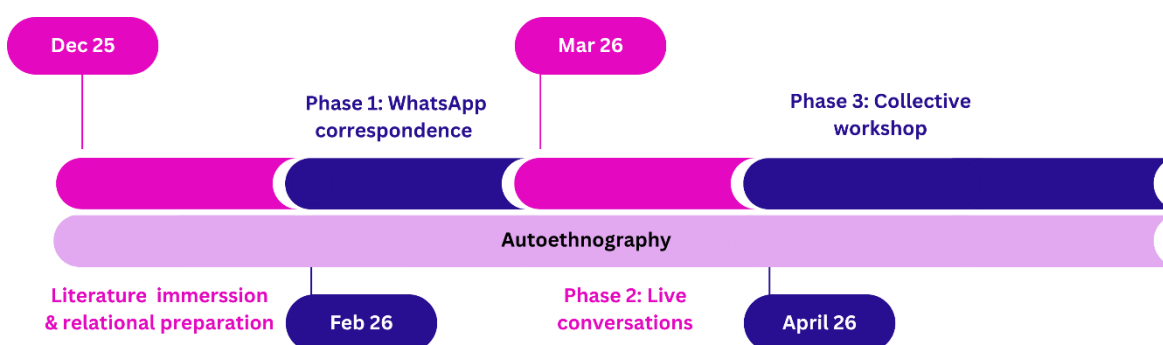


Figure 5. Research process overview.

Data volume. Across the four streams, the study generated approximately 140 WhatsApp voice notes, text messages, and image responses across eight participants and eleven prompt rounds; approximately eight hours of recorded live conversation across seven participants (one participant completed the exchange in written format only); one collective workshop of around 90 minutes with four participants; autoethnographic material including field notes, reflective journal entries, and voice recordings produced continuously from December 2025 through May 2026; and close reading of the Government Integration Programme 2024-2027 (TEM, 2025) and the Finnish Integration Act (1386/2010, as amended).

4.6.1. WhatsApp as asynchronous correspondence

Participants entered an asynchronous WhatsApp exchange with me. They received short prompts in Arabic, French, or English, in the language they had indicated was most comfortable, on belonging, everyday life in Finland, and what they build and sustain here. They responded in whatever format felt right: text, voice notes, videos, photographs. For some women this meant carefully composed written messages. For others, voice notes recorded on buses or in kitchens, in a fluid mix of languages.

The prompts were not prepared in a single batch. The initial set was grounded in the theoretical framework and the research questions. From the second exchange onward, prompts adapted to what each participant had offered in the previous round. The protocol was to follow the participant's lead on content, timing, and format. Before the first prompt, I sent a voice note introducing myself and the project. Hearing my voice gave the participant something to respond to before any text-based exchange began. That self-introduction was part of the design. It was also how I wanted to meet them and to be met.

The early exchanges were deliberately oriented toward the everyday. How was your day? How is Ramadan going? What did you eat for iftar? Arriving with analytical prompts before a relationship exists is itself a form of extraction. The everyday was where the conditions for disclosure were built.

WhatsApp carries methodological, ethical, and epistemological weight in this study. Methodologically, it is already the everyday medium through which many Arabic-speaking women in diaspora maintain relationships with mothers, sisters, friends, and communities elsewhere (Aouragh, 2011; Costa, 2018). This was reinforced by early conversations with the founder of Mirsal ry, the Arabic-speaking migrant-led organisation that shared the call for participation. Mirsal had built its community infrastructure on WhatsApp because that is where Arabic-speaking women in Finland were already gathering. Ethically, WhatsApp gave each participant control over timing, tempo, and what she made visible in ways a scheduled interview format does not. Epistemologically, its asynchronous structure created conditions for a register of self-presentation whose analytical implications are addressed in Section 4.6.4.

The WhatsApp phase is closest to what qualitative researchers call the correspondence method (Harris, 2002; Letherby & Zdrodowski, 1995; Milligan et al., 2005): asynchronous, participant-paced iterative exchange over time, where relationship builds through writing. It shares features with diary studies in HCI research (Carter & Mankoff, 2005) and with cultural probe methods (Gaver et al., 1999) in its use of open, evocative prompts that invite multiple response formats. This research does not claim the method formally as either: diary studies typically impose temporal structure, and cultural probes are generative design instruments. What I was doing sits closer to the correspondence method, adapted for a community whose correspondence already lives on WhatsApp.

4.6.2. **Live conversations**

I invited each participant to a live conversation of forty-five to sixty minutes, conducted online via Microsoft Teams or Google Meet depending on participant preference. Cameras were optional. I recorded audio only where the participant had consented at the start of the study. For conversations I could not record, I took notes in real time and wrote a full reflective account immediately after. All conversations were remote. I was in Rovaniemi; participants were distributed across Finland, and two had left the country before the conversation took place.

The live conversations were designed to invite a different register of speaking. Section 4.6.4 describes the analytical reading this difference produced. Each conversation moved between languages following the participant's lead.

I called these encounters live conversations. The term interview carries extractive defaults this research was built against (Kvale, 1996): a designed instrument, a researcher as extractor, a participant as source. These conversations were semi-structured in the technical sense, since I arrived with themes drawn from the WhatsApp exchanges and the research questions, and they were also relational encounters shaped by the Ramadan rhythm and the pre-existing WhatsApp thread. Where technical terminology is required, I use semi-structured interview. In the chapter body I use live conversation.

A number of conversations took place after Eid al-Fitr, in April. Participants led the scheduling and I followed their availability.

The sequential relation between WhatsApp and live conversation matters analytically. The live conversations arrived after weeks of written exchange. The women knew what the research was about, had responded to prompts in their own time, and had formed a sense of who I was. This pre-existing relationship is part of what the method was built on.

4.6.3. **The collective workshop**

After Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr, I held a collective workshop online via Microsoft Teams, with visual materials hosted on FigJam. Four women took part. Three had completed both the WhatsApp and live conversation phases. The fourth joined through an adjacent community connection; her individual contact with me before the workshop was a shorter WhatsApp exchange and a live conversation. The session ran approximately ninety minutes and was conducted in Arabic, with code-switching natural to the group.

Holding the workshop online was part of what made it accessible. No woman was required to travel. No single city was designated as the centre of the encounter. Access was not gated by geography, childcare, employment, or cost. The session was built to put emerging readings into the women's hands. I brought observations from the WhatsApp and live conversation phases into the room and asked the women to respond, complicate, agree, or refuse. I was looking for friction, and for a register where things could be said that could not be said elsewhere.

The design drew on participatory and decolonial design practice (Costanza-Chock, 2020; Escobar, 2018): small, women-only, Arabic-speaking, with refusal always available, no requirement to surface a finding or produce an artefact, and no Finnish institutional voices in the room. I joined as a participant alongside the women, attending the encounter rather than running it from outside.

Two facilitation choices shaped the live time of the workshop. The first was that I let go of planned segments when the group's own movement produced its own direction. The second was that I had brought additional material I was unsure whether to introduce. When the conversation took the group into territory the material spoke to, I shared it and the group worked with it. Fine and Torre (2021) call this facilitation as epistemic practice: knowledge produced through decisions made in real time. The specific instance and what the participants produced in response are read in Chapter 5.

In a small group of Arabic-speaking Muslim women, mutual recognition can produce a register of collective agreement that feels like analysis but is sometimes relief. I asked, more than once, where the women did not see the same thing. When one woman contradicted another, I held the contradiction open until the group had worked with it. I also brought in the perspectives of women I had spoken with earlier who were not at the workshop. I named those positions in the room as the absent women's, and I did not speak on their behalf.

Workshop material was coded with an additional layer that distinguished collective utterances from individual ones. The mechanics are detailed in Section 4.8.3.

4.6.4. **The dual-channel reading**

I use the term stratigraphy, borrowed from geology where it names the study of layered deposits, to describe the gap between what a participant composed in asynchronous form

and what she produced in live spoken interaction. The term arose during the parallel reading of the first participant's material across both formats, when it became clear that the gap itself was data.

The dual-channel reading produced two registers per participant. The WhatsApp channel produced what I came to call a composed self: revisable, oriented toward the prompt, with time between draft and send. The live conversation produced something closer to a working self: real-time, uneditable, arriving before composition could smooth it. These are two genuine productions of a person navigating different conditions for speaking. One is no more honest than the other. The dual-channel design holds both as data.

The WhatsApp voice notes occupy an intermediate position between text and live speech. They preserve tone, pace, laughter, and code-switching, and they are self-produced recordings made at the participant's initiative, with her own editorial control. They are already composed before I receive them. The live conversation carries spontaneity. The participant could not un-say what arrived in real time. The analytical question the dual-channel design opens is how to read the composition itself as data.

What each channel produced and what the gap between them makes visible are developed in Chapters 5 and 6.

4.6.5. **Autoethnography as thread**

The research was happening to me while I was conducting it. The field notes held what I needed to remember about my own condition, because that condition shaped what I could hear. My experience of arriving in Finland, fasting in Lapland, searching for work across Europe, navigating the integration system, and sitting with grief from across the Arabic-speaking world constitutes the fourth data stream. I am the ninth voice in the arc, in the position of recently arrived.

The autoethnographic material includes field notes, screenshots of institutional encounters, voice recordings made while walking or processing, and journal entries during and after Ramadan. The notes move between languages spontaneously. I did not impose a discipline on the writing that the rest of my life does not have.

The autoethnographic stream runs alongside the eight cases as a thread rather than as a ninth case. In Chapter 5 it contributes the recently arrived position to the cross-arc reading without standing as a separate section.

4.7. Language as epistemic access

The research happened across Arabic and English, with regional dialects of Arabic, French, and occasional Finnish appearing in specific places. Modern Standard Arabic and the dialects each participant brought were the primary registers in the WhatsApp and live conversation material. English entered the corpus where participants moved into it: in policy-related material, in some live conversations more than others, and in two cases as the participant's primary register.

Two participants engaged primarily in English. One found English the more comfortable register for the interior material the research was asking about. The other shifted across format, with more English in the written WhatsApp exchanges and more Arabic in the live conversation. Their language choices are data about how each woman inhabits her languages. The Arabic-first commitment organises how the analytical work moved across the corpus. It does not hold authority over which language holds a particular woman's truth. Where Arabic fragments appear in English-dominant material, they are coded where they do analytical work. Chapter 5 takes up what these cases made visible at the edge of the Arabic-first commitment.

Arabic-first analysis means the analytical work was done in the language the data arrived in. Coding and interpretation were carried out in Arabic, including dialectal material, before any English rendering for writing. Where no English equivalent carried the conceptual weight, the Arabic term was kept, transliterated, and used as a stable analytical unit. Chapter 3 introduces several of these terms, including the distinction between *وطن* (*watan*) and *بيت* (*bayt*) and the concept of *غربة* (*ghurba*). Other terms emerged in the data and are introduced in Chapter 5.

Following Walter Mignolo (2000), Arabic-first analysis is epistemic access: a sequencing principle through which cultural, spiritual, and diasporic worlds become visible in the data. It is a sequencing principle. Translation came at the end. The worlds at stake in this research are only legible when the data is held in the language that carries them, and the conceptual work Chapter 3 develops depends on refusing the flattenings that early translation produces.

The commitment also operates at the level of the sentence. The women in this study move between languages in ways that carry meaning. A participant describing her social life in Modern Standard Arabic may switch to a regional dialect to name an emotion, to English

to cite a residency requirement, to French to report a professional credential. Each switch carries meaning about which part of her life is institutionally legible, which is personal, and which is inherited from a specific colonial history. The analytical practice was to attend to the full sentence as it arrived, in whichever combination of languages it arrived, and to ask what each language was doing inside the utterance. Code-switching is analytical material; the coding protocol for register-shifts is described in Section 4.8.3.

Transcription was a multi-stage process. I attempted automated tools (OpenAI Whisper v3 and TurboScribe) at the start. Given how spoken Arabic dialects vary and how each participant code-switches, the automated output was not accurate enough and required extensive manual correction. I shifted to manual transcription. The labour became part of the analysis. Every decision about how to render a phrase, how to handle a code-switch, how to mark a pause, was an interpretive choice, and the hours it required were hours inside the data.

Each participant's material was transcribed into a single file with the spoken language in the left column and an English translation alongside, since the thesis must be reported in English. Dialect was restored where meaning required it, drawing on my Tunisian Darija and on contextual cues. For participants whose dialect was not Tunisian, this restoration carried a cross-dialectal interpretive layer. Where I was uncertain about a word or rendering, I flagged the uncertainty in the transcript itself. Where the uncertainty mattered analytically, I named it in the analytical files for that participant rather than smoothing it.

Translation into English for excerpts in the thesis is deliberately conservative. Where meaning does not cross cleanly, the approximation is annotated. Where a term does essential conceptual work, the Arabic is retained with an explanation.

4.8. Data analysis

4.8.1. Approach

Analysis ran alongside data collection from the beginning. I began reading the first WhatsApp exchanges while later prompts were still arriving, kept the analytical files open while live conversations were still being scheduled, and stayed unwilling to close my reading around what earlier participants had produced. The work was built to hold eight participants across four data streams in two languages without collapsing any of them.

The approach across the analysis was abductive (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012): theory

and data held in iterative dialogue, with the framework extended where participant language produced concepts it could not yet accommodate. Coding was done in the language of the source material first, with deductive codes from the framework arriving in their own language alongside the inductive Arabic-generated codes. The sections below describe the tools (4.8.2), the coding (4.8.3), the per-participant analytical files (4.8.4), the policy reading (4.8.5), and the trustworthiness criteria the work was built to meet (4.8.6).

4.8.2. **Tools**

The analytical work moved across three tools. The movement itself was an analytical act.

I began in FigJam at the problem-framing stage, before any participant material had arrived. The task at that point was understanding the scope: the integration system, the theoretical framework, the research questions, the methodological commitments, and how they related to each other. FigJam's spatial structure supported giga-mapping (Sevaldson, 2011), a mode of problem-space exploration that keeps many things in view at once without forcing premature categorisation.

Once participant material started arriving, I moved the corpus into NVivo 14. NVivo's hierarchical node structure helped impose order on the volume at first: participant codes, thematic nodes, and nested subcodes. Over time the architecture began to constrain more than it enabled. The bilingual, code-switching, cross-referential nature of the material did not sit comfortably in a tree of nodes. Whether this was a limit of the tool or a limit of my capacity to make the tool serve the material, the effect was the same. The structure of the workspace was beginning to shape the structure of the analysis in ways that did not match how the data wanted to be read.

I migrated the analysis to Obsidian, a markdown-based note system with bidirectional links. Obsidian's graph structure permitted non-linear connection, lateral cross-reference, and the density that close reading of Arabic-language material required. Codes could be linked across participants without being forced into a single hierarchical taxonomy, and per-participant files could hold narrative and coded material side by side. The migration was a decision to align the architecture of the workspace with the epistemological commitments of the study.

4.8.3. **Coding**

Coding was abductive, Arabic-first, and ran in two passes.

The first pass was open. For each participant, I began with a holistic reading of the full transcript with no software and no code list. Immediately after, I recorded first impressions as reflexive memos, sometimes as a voice note because spoken reflection captured what written reflection would already have started to organise. Then I read the transcript again, highlighted every analytically interesting segment, and coded everything into open nodes in Arabic wherever the data produced Arabic. The deductive codes from the framework were closed during this pass.

Only after the open pass was complete did I apply the deductive codes from the framework: worldmaking, integration system encounters, costs, refusal and opacity, demands. Following directed qualitative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), the coding moved from theory-derived nodes at the start to inductive expansion as new themes emerged. Every inductive code was logged with its first appearance in the data, the participant from whose account it came, and the Arabic term or phrase that produced it. The codebook is a living document holding both the code structure and the genealogy of each code's emergence.

Alongside the deductive and inductive codes, I maintained a theoretical watchlist of concepts I was watching for and held open as to whether I would find them: غربة (ghurba), the وطن/بيت (homeland/house) distinction, طمأنينة (ṭuma'nīna, deep settledness), misrecognition. Watchlist concepts were dual-coded, with the participant's own language preserved in an open code alongside the theoretical tag, so that the presence or absence of the concept in the data would function as a finding and not as an assumption built into the method.

A second coding cycle tested every code applied in the first pass against its segment. Where the first code misread the material, by absorbing it into a framework category it did not fit or missing the distinction the participant's account was drawing, a new code was generated before the reading was finalised. Recodings were logged alongside the original codes, with the reasoning preserved. The moments of analytical excess, where the data exceeded the framework, were identified in this second cycle, and Chapter 5 develops what one of them produced.

Code-switching was treated as analytical data. Each moment where a participant shifted languages mid-sentence was coded as a register-shift, with the question of which language held which register held explicitly in the file. Silences, absences, and refusals were coded

as meaningful, following Glissant (1997) on opacity and Simpson (2014) on refusal: topics present in one channel and absent from another, pauses that followed specific prompts, moments where a participant redirected. The protocol distinguished, where possible, between opacity as choice and opacity as format-produced. Where the distinction was not resolvable from the data, the silence was retained under both readings.

Workshop material was coded with an additional layer. Where the group produced something together, or where one participant built on another's contribution, the material was attributed to the workshop, and the distinction between individual and collective register was tracked as a separate variable.

The three-category protocol introduced in Section 4.3 ran as a structural guard across all coding. Every analytical claim in the per-participant files is marked as said (verbatim, with location), inferred (flagged explicitly), or argued (attributed to me). The three categories make the level of each claim auditable.

Three moments across the fieldwork involved my position becoming visible inside an encounter and shaping what the encounter produced: a reframing I offered of a participant's comment, a piece of data I introduced into a live conversation, and a self-disclosure about my own educational background that elicited a disclosure in return. Each moment was noted in the transcript, flagged in the analytical files for that participant, and retained in the analysis as jointly produced material. The moments and what they produced are named in Chapter 5.

4.8.4. **Per-participant analytical files**

I built a dedicated set of analytical files for each participant. Together they formed the working archive for that case: where the original-language material lived, where my reading was made, where alternative readings were tested against my own, and where the case-level synthesis was assembled before any cross-participant work began. The architecture had several components, each doing a distinct piece of analytical work.

Original-language transcript with parallel English translation. The transcript held the participant's WhatsApp text and voice notes, her live conversation, and any workshop contributions, in the original language with English alongside in a parallel column. Dialect, code-switches, pauses, and points of uncertainty were preserved in the transcript itself.

WhatsApp compilation. Every prompt I sent and every response the participant gave, in

chronological order, with metadata about format (text, voice note, image, link). Reading the WhatsApp thread as one continuous arc, in place of fragmented messages, made the rhythm of disclosure visible: when the participant moved into the everyday, when she moved out of it, where the live conversation later sat in relation to the asynchronous record.

Reflexive memo file. First impressions written immediately after the holistic reading, before any code structure was open. Voice notes from times when the analysis was running in my head before I sat with the text. A running record of what I recognised from my own life, where my reading was likely to be shaped by recognition, and where I had pushed past or stopped short of pressing on something.

Tense-and-time file. For each participant, I tracked whether key experiences were narrated in the past tense (events the participant marked as concluded) or in the present tense (conditions she experienced as continuing). The distinction matters because integration monitoring registers many conditions as resolved once they are coded as past in institutional records: a course completed, a benefit ended, a permit granted. Participants continued to describe the same conditions in the present tense. I am still waiting. I am still shrinking. I cannot breathe in this. The gap between institutional tense and participant tense became its own data, and the file held both columns side by side. Chapter 5 develops what this grammar makes visible. Chapter 6 names its potential beyond this study.

Eleven-dimension structured reading. For each participant, I worked through eleven dimensions of her material in writing.

1. **Portrait.** A sketch of who the woman is in her own self-presentation, written before any analytical claim is made about her.
2. **Body and materiality.** What enters her account through the body: fatigue, illness, weight, food, prayer, fasting, walking, and the texture of physical environments.
3. **Silences and absences.** What is not said, what is redirected, what is present in one channel and absent from another. Each instance is held against more than one possible reading.
4. **Contentions.** Where her account contradicts itself, where her stated position and her practice diverge, where she pushes back on something I have said or asked.
5. **Language.** Which languages she uses where, when she switches, what each switch

is doing in the utterance.

6. **Connections to other participants.** Where her account shares ground with another woman's, where it diverges, where the two cases sit on the arc relative to each other.
7. **What remains unresolved.** Material where I cannot land an interpretation with confidence and where the reading is held open.
8. **What the participant's account did to the theoretical framework.** Where the framework absorbed her account without strain, and where her account exceeded what the framework could hold.
9. **Naked-read section.** A reading with all frameworks set aside, written to surface what the material produces when analytical bias is suspended.
10. **Remaining questions.** Things I would ask if I had another conversation with her.
11. **Methodological implications.** What working with her case taught me about the method, including the limits and adjustments her material made visible.

The naked-read section is the structural counterweight to directed content analysis. Hsieh & Shannon (2005) name the risk that a researcher working with theory-derived categories becomes more likely to find evidence supporting the framework than evidence cutting against it. Setting frameworks aside for one section produces a record of what the material makes visible when analytical bias is actively suspended. It does not eliminate the bias. It creates a second point of reference against which the coded reading is checked.

AI parallel reading. After completing the manual reading for each participant, I ran the same de-identified English summary through the eleven-dimension prompt with an AI system, Claude (Anthropic, 2024), with explicit instructions to identify patterns, tensions, and alternative readings, and to disagree with my framing where it could. The AI worked on translated text only. All primary interpretation and coding remained in Arabic. Its role is documented here in line with the University of Lapland's guidelines on AI-assisted research, which require transparency about the use of AI systems in the research process.

Disagreement log. The two readings, mine and the AI's, were held in a dedicated file per participant. Agreements were noted as confirmations. Disagreements were worked

through in writing. Some divergences I accepted after testing them against the data. Some I rejected and documented why. Accepting a reading required articulating what it held; rejecting one required articulating why my own reading was better supported. The log did not solve analytical fatigue. It created a structure that required articulation for every divergence between my reading and the AI's, and that articulation became part of the analytical record. Automated readings cannot capture code-switching nuance or the full weight of Arabic terms, and they work on text stripped of prosody. The log was useful within those limits. It did not extend beyond them.

Case synthesis. A short document gathering the per-participant work into a single readable case, oriented toward the cross-participant work that followed. The synthesis is what enters Chapter 5 as the case material for that woman.

4.8.5. Policy analysis

The Government Integration Programme 2024–2027 (TEM, 2025) and the Finnish Integration Act (Laki kotoutumisen edistämisestä, 1386/2010, as amended) were read using critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2010), alongside Bacchi's (2009) "What's the Problem Represented to Be?" (WPR) approach introduced in Chapter 3. The reading moved across Fairclough's three levels: text (linguistic choices, lexical patterns, grammatical structures, who appears as subject and who as object, what is named in active voice and what in passive); discursive practice (how the text produces and circulates meaning, which discourses it draws on and which it excludes); and social practice (the conditions the text helps reproduce, including the figure Masoud (2023) names as the integrateable subject). Running through the reading was Bacchi's question of what the problem is represented to be, treating the policy as a site where the situation itself is constructed.

The questions put to the documents were specific. What assumptions about persons, belonging, and success are built into the language? What does the text constitute as the problem, and how does that framing distribute responsibility? What does the text choose to measure, and what does it render invisible? What kind of subject is the text designed to produce? Where does the text name women, and where does it not? The policy analysis ran in parallel to the participant analysis throughout. The two were brought together only in Chapter 5.

4.8.6. **Trustworthiness**

The work above was built to meet the four standard qualitative trustworthiness criteria (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The dual-channel reading, Arabic-first coding, and the collective workshop together support credibility: each participant's account was read across two registers, preserved in its linguistic ground, and tested with participants directly. The four-stream design supports data triangulation (Denzin, 1978). Thick description of arc positions and method conditions supports transferability. The per-participant analytical architecture, codebook genealogy, and eleven-dimension reading maintain the traceable record dependability requires. The three-category protocol (said, inferred, argued) and the disagreement log support confirmability by fixing the level of each claim and preserving rejected interpretations.

4.9. **Ethics in practice**

Ethical considerations are threaded through this chapter. I gather them here.

This study works with a community I am already part of, in a language I share with participants, during a month in which that community's spiritual and social life is concentrated. The proximity created forms of access and responsibility that exceeded the standard ethical templates. Ethics here is held as ongoing relational practice. It is not a checklist completed at the start of the project. The study followed the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK) guidelines for responsible conduct of research and the EU General Data Protection Regulation. Formal ethical review was not required under the University of Lapland's thresholds, as confirmed with my supervisor.

Participation was voluntary and informed. Recruitment ran through the three channels described in Chapter 2: Mirsal ry's WhatsApp community, Arabic-language Facebook groups in Finland with a bilingual interest form, and direct outreach. I introduced myself and the research in a voice note before any formal exchange, offered written information and consent forms in Arabic, and confirmed consent verbally at the start of each live conversation. Participants could withdraw at any point, decline any question, and request that material be excluded. Several women exercised these rights in substantive ways that shaped the research.

Anonymity and confidentiality were handled conservatively, given the small size of the

Arabic-speaking community in some Finnish cities. Participants are referred to as P1 to P8. Pseudonyms were not used. Details that could enable identification are generalised or withheld. Specific nationalities have been generalised to 'SWANA' in Table 1 to reduce recognition risk in a small Arabic-speaking community in Finland. Some material that would have strengthened the argument is deliberately omitted because the recognition risk was too high. Workshop material is attributed to the workshop as a collective voice. Data is stored on encrypted university systems. Only anonymised excerpts were shared with my supervisor with prior participant approval.

Two ethical commitments described in Chapter 1 ran through the design from recruitment forward. النية (niyya, intention) holds that the purpose behind an act is inseparable from its value. It shaped what I was trying to do when I sent the first call for participation, what I was trying to do with each WhatsApp prompt, and what the analysis was for. الأمانة (amāna, trust held in care on behalf of another) holds that the women's words are not data I own; they are something held on their behalf. It shaped how I responded to material that arrived with weight, what I asked permission for before quoting, and the obligations I am committed to once the thesis is complete. Sharing preliminary readings with participants, offering them the thesis when it is bound, and the post-submission outputs developed in Chapter 6 are the obligations that follow. They are the ethics of this research, extended in time.

After submission, the thesis will be shared with all participants in a form they can access. Summary findings will be translated into Arabic.

4.10. Limits of the method

Three limits are particularly significant.

First, the research was conducted remotely. As Chapter 2 describes, this was a circumstance of my location and the geographic dispersal of the community. The design met women inside the actual infrastructure of their community life, WhatsApp and online platforms. It could not carry the ethnographic immersion I had wanted: shared iftars in the same physical room, the texture of kitchens and living rooms, the embodied sense of place that comes from moving through a participant's city alongside her. The trade-off is named openly. Remote methods captured the infrastructure these women actually rely on. In-

person observation would have produced material this design did not reach.

Second, the focused ethnography's concentrated timeframe means longitudinal processes are inferred from narrative rather than observed across years. The women's accounts hold trajectories that span a decade or more. The research reads those trajectories from what was said about them, rather than from observation across the decade itself. Chapter 5 develops these findings as diagnostic models that invite testing elsewhere.

Third, the insider position, while a methodological strength, carries irreducible risks. Over-identification, selective hearing, and the temptation to centre my own experience are managed but not eliminated by the procedures described in Sections 4.3 and 4.8. The thesis is transparent about where these risks are most acute and does not claim to have solved them.

4.11. What the method makes possible

This chapter described how the research was built and conducted: the philosophical commitments that shaped it, the temporal and spatial frame, the four data streams, the analytical work, and the limits. Chapter 5 turns to what this design produced. It presents the women across the arc, holds their words closely enough to show what the integration system cannot see, and names the diagnostic vocabulary their material produced.

5. FINDINGS

5.1. What the chapter holds

The integration system produces the conditions it then reads as personal failure. The women in this corpus gave the thesis the vocabulary to name what the system cannot see.

This chapter presents the empirical material across the arc. Sections 5.3 and 5.6 carry most of the work for SQ1, on what the women carry, build, and refuse. Sections 5.4 and 5.8 carry SQ2, on what the integration system counts, requires, and fails to register. Sections 5.7 and 5.8 produce the diagnostic vocabulary SQ3 asks for. Section 5.11 carries the empirical answer to SQ4, which Chapter 6 develops into design obligations.

Patterns that hold across four or more positions in the corpus are claimed as structural. Singular findings are kept with the position and woman who produced them.

5.2. What the method saw

What the method made available, and what it did not, sets the conditions for everything that follows.

Two selves

Seven of the eight participants wrote to me on WhatsApp and spoke with me live. The two formats did not produce the same person.

The WhatsApp exchanges returned a composed self: spiritually articulate, anchored in gratitude and endurance, ordered around faith and survival, presenting a legible and resolved account of life in Finland. The live conversations returned a working self: materially precise, institutionally critical, willing to name harm without softening it. P7 wrote on WhatsApp that she had started her life, studied, remarried, and was living in safety and faith. Weeks later, in conversation, she said: "هسا صار عشرة سنين، لكن ما أحس إني" (it has been ten years, but I do not feel I have truly lived). Same woman. Same decade. The gap between these two statements held across all seven dual-format cases, even at the end of fieldwork. It is a structural feature of how each format conditions what becomes sayable.

WhatsApp is the channel through which many of these women carry their closest relationships: mothers, friends still in the country they left, communities to which they remain accountable. The composed register is the one they already inhabit there. The live

conversation offered a different contract: a contained exchange with a researcher inside the same condition, where the composed self was no longer required.

What integration services read on a survey, on an onboarding form, at a welfare check-in, sits closest to the composed self. The gratitude, the reported progress, the legible forward narrative. The working self has no formal channel. The system reads the composed self and names that person integrated. The chapter that follows reads from both layers and treats the difference between them as structural evidence.

The women as co-analysts

The women at the centre of this thesis are not research subjects whose meaning has been extracted and translated upward. They are co-analysts whose concepts the thesis works with.

P2 arrived to her live conversation with the distinction between *وطن* (*waṭan*, the homeland carried in the body) and *بيت* (*bayt*, the material house) already worked through, in full paragraph form, with sub-categories. P6 arrived with an account of structural estrangement that took me longer to reach. P4 named her own absorption of the system's failures before the analysis did. P3, inside the research encounter itself, mentored me on how the Finnish system works.

The diagnostic vocabulary the chapter develops was given to the thesis by the women. At each point where a participant's concept does analytical work, the attribution is made visible. The concepts arrive as the data earns them, named inline where they first emerge and gathered in Tables 2 to 5 across the chapter.

At the edge of Arabic-first

Two participants engaged primarily in English. Their language choices are data about how each woman inhabits her languages, and about what the Arabic-first commitment makes visible at its own boundary. P1's PTSD existed only in English: "ما عارفاش PTSD كان عندي" (I had PTSD. I do not know how to say it in Arabic). Her family had no protocol for the diagnosis because it had no Arabic. P6 worked primarily in English and analytical purchase on her case required reading the English as data about which conditions her Arabic could not yet hold. The Arabic-first commitment surfaced these as findings

about how diagnostic language is distributed across the languages a person carries, and where the institutional vocabulary lives when Arabic does not have it.

The cohort caveat

The women who agreed to speak are a particular cohort. The most analytically articulate among them are doing work that women under heavier depletion may not have access to. The participant who declined the live conversation and the workshop was tired, not unavailable. Her WhatsApp material is in the study. Her absent presence in the other formats is itself a finding about the limits of any participatory method, including this one.

The eight women do not occupy the same position along intersecting axes that further shape how integration is lived. Education and class, racialisation (including who is read as white-passing and who is not), municipal geography, and labour-market sector all shape reception before any form is filled. Where the data permits a structural claim, the claim is made. Where it permits only a portrait, that is what is offered.

5.3. Who arrived

The integration system has recorded 44,956 Arabic speakers in Finland. It did not process the same person that many times. It encountered that many distinct situations, each with its own history and its own conditions. The corpus for this thesis contains eight of those situations. The space between the category and what it holds is the starting problem.

What they arrived carrying

P7 arrived مهودة (mahdūda, demolished). That is the word she used, in the feminine. War, and before that a marriage that was its own form of violence. She arrived with very little of herself intact and met a system that had no protocol for that condition. "إحنا جينا من بلدان فيها حرب. واجهنا الموت... الإنسان المهود هو بده يشتغل على نفسه و على نفسيته (we came from countries at war. We have faced death. The demolished person needs to work on herself and her mental state).

P1 arrived after her father's death and a hospitalisation. She did not come to Finland with migration plans. She came because she could not stay in the place where he had been. "تكسر القلب: توفي بابا، الله يرحمو. ما قدرتش نبقى" (heartbreak: my father passed away, God have mercy on him. I could not stay). Her estrangement had a pre-migration origin. Finland did not produce it. It inherited it.

P3 arrived through academic recruitment. The promise that reached her was specific: a degree, a pathway, a country marketed to international students. What she found was not what was marketed.

P6 arrived because her partner was here. The reason for coming shaped the terms of arrival in ways the integration system does not ask about: which city she came to, what she already knew about how things worked, who held the first map.

P5 arrived in her twenties, with her life working in the Mediterranean rhythm she knew. She was not fragile at the point of entry. What the system did to her came later, and the fact that she arrived whole matters for how that later narrowing is read.

P4 arrived into a life that had already been built around her: a Finnish university post, an academic community, a career to pursue. The integration system barely touched her during the early years.

P2 and P8 did not arrive in the same sense. Their parents arrived. They inherited the conditions of migration without having made the choice.

Conditions the system does not see

The reasons for coming differed: refuge from violence, the death that made home unbearable, marriage, a partner's relocation, academic recruitment, a migration read as an answer to prayer. Each produces a different kind of newcomer. The system's single model accommodates none of them.

The conditions of arrival differed too. Timing: which government was in office, where the labour market was. Education level. Whether they read as white-passing. Whether their English carried an accent the institution recognised as competent. Whether someone who had been through the system before them could tell them which door to stand at, and what they themselves called luck or destiny.

The scaffolds that did the work the system did not

Several women arrived into existing support. P4 stepped into a department where her professional life was already arranged. P5 had a recommendation from a friend who had already been through it. P6 had her partner. P7 had family already in the country, including a brother who became her translator, navigator, and rights-educator. " أخوي كان وياي و علمني... "

"حتى يترجم لي. روح للبوليس (my brother was with me and taught me... he even translated for me. Go to the police). She names his absence for others as the reason they fail: " لكن اللي ما " "يعرف — لا راح يوصل لهذا (but those who don't know someone, they won't reach this).

These were the integration process in practice: the knowledge, the housing lead, the first number to call. When the scaffold held, the women appeared, on paper, to be doing well. When it failed, what looked like individual misfortune was structural. Together, the women's accounts describe an informal integration infrastructure: the practical and emotional support the formal system does not provide.

The scaffolds the women describe, a brother who translates, a friend who explains which door to stand at, a community that grows you and then releases you, confirm Joseph's (1999) claim that selfhood in these lives is relational. The integration system's instruments were built for an individual who arrives, is assessed, and progresses alone. They misread the entity they are designed to serve.

What was promised, and what arrived

Several participants named a gap between the Finland that was described to them and the Finland they encountered. The jobs, the timelines, the welcome. None matched how it had been advertised.

P3 said it directly: "They marketed it to me so well that I want to sue them. They told me: when you get to Finland you will directly find a job that pays you even more." She tracked 647 job applications in a spreadsheet. The arrival was a different country. P6 lived the same gap across a decade: years of precarious work culminated in a permanent contract offered at the moment she had decided to leave.

Eight women, eight situations, none of whom arrived empty. The integration system received each of them through the same instruments: a plan, a language course, a set of obligations. The instruments do not ask about the conditions of arrival. They do not distinguish between a person who was demolished before she came and a person who was recruited. They assume a single kind of newcomer and produce a single kind of pathway. What the varied arrivals in this corpus reveal is the first structural mismatch: the system was built for a subject who does not exist. The next section documents what that mismatch produces in practice.

5.4. Designed for one subject

The architecture Chapter 3 read through Bacchi produces specific effects in practice that this section documents. What those designs produced in the women appears in 5.5. What the women built around them appears in 5.6.

The metrics it counts by

In the integration system's own documents and dashboards, success is recorded through a narrow set of indicators: employment status, participation in language courses, completion of an integration plan, absence of sanctions, limited benefit dependency. These are the numbers that appear in annual reports and policy briefs.

None of the structures the women describe as keeping their lives together appears in those indicators. Faith. Transnational care networks. Creative survival practices. Intra-community labour. The private money and time they spend to remain functional. The system reads people through markers it knows how to count.

Recruitment to abandonment

For several women, the first encounter with "Finland" was not through an integration office but through recruitment: marketing of degrees, jobs, or a safe and orderly society. Finland was presented as a place that wanted them. Once they arrived, the part of the system that had reached out to them either changed or disappeared.

P3 was recruited as an international student and worker, with a degree programme and a job that formed a coherent pathway on paper. She arrived to a university and workplace that needed her presence. When the job ended and her residence permit approached expiry, no structure had the mandate to re-orient her or to keep her. "No one told me there were places I could go to for support. I had to discover everything by myself." P6 lived this across ten years. Precarity was not incidental. It was built into how the sequence operates.

The pathway that loops

In policy language, integration is framed as a pathway: a sequence of steps through which a newcomer moves toward participation. In the women's accounts, this pathway often loops back on itself or stops short of where it is meant to lead.

P7 followed the plan she was given. Finnish language course, then work trial, then a return to the employment office when the trial ended without a contract. She had reached B1 in those first six months. Another course followed, and the quality was so poor she came out with nothing: "الكورس الثاني كان تابع لوزارة العمل وكان جداً سيء... قالوا: لا، ما نقدر نغيره... أخذته وطلعت" (the second course was under the employment office and was very bad... they said: no, we cannot change it. I took it and came out at zero). She asked to switch and was refused. Health, childcare, and the pandemic cut across these steps. Each time, the plan restarted as if she were fresh. Her own summary: "نفس الدوامة ويا مكتب العمل" (the same loop with the employment office).

P2 described her integration course as well designed in content and pedagogy and insufficient in duration: "A2 is not enough you need at least B1 B2" (I reached A2 and then, okay, A2 is not enough, you need at least B1 or B2). The system delivered A2. The labour market required B1 or B2. There was no continuation. She also named the absence the system will not examine: it asks "are you applying?" but never asks "why aren't you being accepted?"

Across the corpus, this looping has three recurring shapes: forced repetition of the same step without structural change, discontinuation at the threshold where support is most needed, and the absence of any feedback loop that would adapt the path when it does not work.

Siloed institutions

The integration system is not a single coherent thing. It is a set of partially connected institutions: the employment office, Migri, Kela, municipal services, schools, healthcare providers, NGOs. Each has its own mandate, forms, and performance indicators. The woman is expected to move between them as if they were one.

P1 named the moment she encountered the silos directly. She had asked the employment office about a step Migri controlled. The reply: "مؤسسة Migri ما نقدرش نجوابك. أنا مؤسسة و" (I cannot answer you. I am one institution and Migri is another. We have no connection to each other). A change in work affects a permit. A permit decision affects benefits. A health episode affects the ability to comply with a plan. No institution carries responsibility for the connections. The work of stitching those connections together is displaced outwards, onto the woman.

Temporal mismatch

The integration system operates on institutional time: permit renewal cycles, benefit sanction deadlines, language certification windows, integration plan reviews. The women's lives operate on a different temporal register: Work time, family time, Ramadan time, the slow accumulation of trust, the time a body needs to recover from what it carried before arrival. The two temporalities do not align, and the system does not adjust. P1's work permit ties her right to stay to a continuous income requirement. Any interruption (illness, bereavement, the need to rest) threatens the legal basis of her presence. P7's integration plan restarts as if she were fresh each time an interruption occurs. P3's visa expiry compresses her decision-making into a window the system set. Across the corpus, the system's clock produces urgency that the women's lives do not match, and the mismatch is itself a source of the depletion 5.5 documents.

The non-functioning recognition system

On paper, there are subsystems designed to recognise what people already know: foreign degree recognition, validation of prior learning, supplementary training. In practice, the participants who tried to use these subsystems describe them as present in documentation and absent in operation.

P7 collected certificates, completed training, and applied for recognition. Her applications disappeared into silence. A year later, she still had no answer. "أجيب حقيبة كاملة بشهاداتي " (I bring a full bag of my degrees and certificates of merit. Nobody looks at them. Nobody counts them for anything). She names Germany as a working comparison through her own social network: "صديقتي بألمانيا تعلمت " (my friend in Germany learned the language and worked. She has been working for seven years... and I am here sitting at zero). Same kind of person. Different system design. Measurably different result.

Penalties for exit

Running alongside the non-functioning supports is a clear and enforced penalty structure around work. Leaving a job without reasons the system accepts as valid can trigger sanctions: cuts to benefits, negative marks on a record, difficulties in renewing a permit.

P5's case makes this visible. She left an exploitative job that violated labour law and damaged her health. "Le système finlandais est très dur, surtout si vous sortez sans une valide raison concernant le travail" (the Finnish system is very hard, especially if you leave without a valid reason concerning work). Doing so risked her right to stay and her ability to access support. The policy assumption is that the threat of penalty will keep people attached to work. In contexts where work is exploitative, that threat keeps them in harm.

Employment closes the file

Within the system, employment is treated as both a key indicator and a closing condition. Once a person is employed and no longer drawing certain benefits, the integration case can be closed. The presence of a job stands in for the presence of a livable arrangement.

P1 came on a work permit and was counted as integrated from the start. She was excluded from services because she already had a job, from language courses because of her schedule: "يعطي دروس لغة في الليل لأولئك اللي خدامين — TE شي سهل بزاف يقدر يديره مكتب" (something very easy TE could do: give language classes in the evening for those who work). The same permit that gave her access to the country tied her to an arrangement she could not easily leave, and the system treated that arrangement as sufficient. P3 experienced the inverse: "Even though I had a job, I couldn't make it my home."

What happens inside the job (the conditions, the exploitation, the precarity) is invisible to the metrics.

Healthcare calibrated elsewhere

Healthcare is nominally part of the welfare structure that supports integration. In practice, the diagnostic frameworks the system works with were built for other bodies and other histories. P6 described the pattern: "There's a downplaying of my pain, of my symptoms — just a lack of belief, trust, or care, maybe." What does not fit those frameworks does not get diagnosed. It does not, however, go unfelt. The full evidence sits in 5.5.

Table 2. Operations of the system.

What the system does or fails to do	Mechanism name	Anchor participant(s)
Reads people through countable indicators and treats them as the whole	<i>The metrics it counts by</i>	Cross-corpus

Markets welcome, then offers little reception once people arrive	<i>Recruitment to abandonment</i>	P3, P6
Sends women through pathways that loop or stop short	<i>The pathway that loops</i>	P3, P6, P7
Splits responsibilities across institutions, makes the woman stitch them together	<i>Siloed institutions</i>	P1, P3, P7
Operates on institutional time while users live on different temporal logics	<i>Temporal mismatch</i>	P1, P3, P7, Cross-corpus
Keeps recognition structures on paper while they fail in practice	<i>The non-functioning recognition system</i>	P3, P7
Punishes leaving harmful work, making exit risky	<i>Penalties for exit</i>	P1, P5
Treats employment as closing condition for support	<i>Employment closes the file</i>	P1, P5
Uses diagnostic templates calibrated to other bodies and histories	<i>The body the institution cannot read</i>	P1, P3, P6, P7
Amplifies exceptional success and uses it to stand in for everyone	<i>Exception as alibi</i>	P1, P4
Generates friction between groups through unequal rules	<i>Structural friction</i>	Cross-corpus
Relies on informal kin, partner, and friend networks for core integration work	<i>Informal integration infrastructure</i>	P4, P5, P6, P7

5.5. What it cost

The previous section named what the system does. This section names what those designs produced in the women who absorbed them.

The body

The body that cannot rest. P1's body knew what was wrong before any institution did. Gut collapse, immune failure, nightmares and hallucinations arrived before a diagnosis, before any professional put a word to what was happening. By the time PTSD and ADHD were named, her body had been carrying them for years. The work permit she arrived on tied her right to stay to a continuous income requirement. Losing the job would have meant losing everything. Rest was not available to her. The structure she was inside did not permit it. "I couldn't rest. I was on survival mode for a long period."

The body the institution cannot read. P7 has lived with leg pain for six years. No doctor has diagnosed it. "صارلي ست سنوات أنا وياها المشكلة الصحية... وتشخيص؟ لا تشخيص واضح" (six years I have been living with this health problem... and a diagnosis? No clear diagnosis). She cannot get through her day without painkillers. She has to count how far she walks: if it is more than ten minutes, she cannot manage. The Finnish climate makes it worse. The pain dictates her geography. None of this is acknowledged as a variable in any plan.

P3 broke a tooth and was told she would have to wait six or seven months in the public system, or pay 500 euros to go private. She bought a flight back home and had it treated for nothing. The Finnish healthcare system was something she could not afford to use.

Warmth. P1 named it without softening. "I like physical touch. I don't know about you, but for us we hug each other. Here, they don't have physical touch. You can't even handshake them. This is also something I suffered from."

She did not adapt to the absence. She suffered it. The social world she came from is built partly through physical warmth: the greeting, the closeness, the casual touch that signals you are inside a shared space. The deprivation is part of what emptying looks like at the level of the body: what is emptied is not only professional capacity or social confidence but the everyday tactile register through which belonging is physically felt. No integration plan measures this. It is not the kind of cost the system was built to detect.

P4 named a related cost in academic life. Her Finnish supervisor walked past her without acknowledgement, day after day, in a corridor where she had said hello and received nothing. The non-greeting accumulated. It was the texture of a working life calibrated against her, even when no one had decided that was what was happening. What P4 experienced in this corridor is the inverse of what she names as ambient decency in the

department where prayer was accommodated without question. Both operate at the same micro-scale. One sustains. The other hollows.

The psychological cost

The slip. One participant uses the word رخیت (rakhīt, the slip) across several parts of her account without flagging it as significant. Taken together, what it maps is a sequence: first the YouTube channel she used to run, then singing, then the gym, then going out entirely. Each loss is small enough to narrate as tiredness or busyness. Together they describe a person who is consistently spending more than she is replenishing, whose life has narrowed to what the bare minimum of staying functional requires.

The slip is not the participant's failing. It is the cumulative cost of operating without adequate support, without rest, without recognition. The slip is the mechanism by which depletion shows up as a series of small, individually unremarkable abandonments.

The personality cost. P6 describes herself before Finland as loud, social, and unafraid. She organised friends, filled rooms, was the person others leaned on. "I'm a very loud and active person, and that's not taken well in Finland." "That's when I really started developing social anxiety, because I felt like I was doing something wrong." The accumulated weight of precarious work, racism, institutional misreading, and years of not being received have narrowed who she is. Less willingness to go out. Less capacity to trust. Less energy to initiate anything. She shrank.

The grammar of the persisting condition. The women's tense use is itself a finding.

P5 narrates the life she built in her home country almost entirely in the past tense, as if those years are complete and closed. When she speaks about her life now, she shifts to the present simple only to describe routines: what she does to keep going. P7 describes her leg pain in the present simple. It hurts. It is there. No endpoint visible in the grammar because there is none. P4 uses استسلمت (istaslamt, I surrendered) in a completed past form, as if naming a resolved event, while the arrangement that followed the surrender continues unchanged. P1 says "me now is not the same as last year" and means it as ongoing information.

The integration system is organised around closeable events: courses completed, permits renewed, cases resolved. The women's grammar names conditions that do not close in that way.

The three verdicts. When sustained contact with an unmoving system reaches a certain point, the language the women reach for is small. A single sentence.

P6, in English: "I don't care anymore." Flat. A withdrawal of expectation. The decision to stop asking the system to be different and to redirect energy elsewhere.

P7, in Arabic: تعبت وتركت (ta'ibt w tarakt, I am tired and I have left it). She is naming the moment she lifted her hands off the pathway she had been following for years. Exhaustion and decision together, in one sentence.

P4, in Arabic: استسلمت (istaslamt, I surrendered). A completed act, spoken in a voice that carries no bitterness. The absence of bitterness makes it harder to hear than bitterness would be.

These are the rational endpoints of sustained contact with a system that does not move. Each one names a position the integration pathway was not designed to produce, and does not measure.

The gratitude tax. Listen to the women critique the system and a structure repeats. Before criticism is permitted, a deposit must be paid.

P1 interrupts her own account with بس بس بس (bas bas bas, enough enough enough), checking herself, pulling back from how critical she is sounding, assuring the listener she is not ungrateful. What makes this moment analytically significant is its context. P1 is not addressing a caseworker or an integration officer. She is speaking to a researcher who shares her language, her faith, and her structural position. The trust has been built across weeks. The Ramadan rhythm is shared. And she still pulls back. The gratitude tax is not only performed for institutional audiences. It has been internalised. The self-policing operates in the absence of the institution that installed it. When a woman checks her own critique in a space designed to receive it, the tax has moved from the encounter to the interior. That interiority is part of what compound absorption produces: the system's requirements are no longer external. They run inside the person.

P5 prefaces a naming of harm with "c'est mauvais à dire" (it is bad to say), as if the problem were her saying it. P3 inserts "please don't take me as just negative" before describing discrimination and exhaustion. P2 follows her most positive statement about the welfare state with بس بس, still, before naming inadequacy.

Each of these is a tax. Before the critique becomes receivable, the speaker must establish that she knows her place, that she is aware she is supposed to be grateful. The deposit costs emotional labour and softens the critique before it has landed.

Compound absorption. P4 reflects on a sequence of institutional exclusions and personal losses and arrives at a position that uses three framings at once. استسلمت (I surrendered). ما صار نصيب (mā ṣār naṣīb, it was not apportioned to me). And the orientation of her energy toward her daughter's stability. Each of these is coherent in her ethical world. Together they have a particular effect: the system disappears as a responsible agent. What could be named as a design failure becomes surrender, fate, and redirection. She names the mechanism herself: "like it was a personal choice."

The grammar is one of survival. Analytically, what matters is that institutions benefit from these absorptions. The mechanism by which harm is taken up into personal and theological frames, removing the system as a named responsible party, is what I refer to as compound absorption.

Safety without life. After ten years inside the system, P7 reaches for a phrase to name where she has arrived. أمان بلا حياة (amān bilā ḥayāh, safety without life). She is physically safe. Her children are not under immediate threat. She has a roof and an income. These are not nothing. "But," she says, "I have not truly lived."

The welfare state's indicators register her situation as a success. أمان بلا حياة (amān bilā ḥayāh, safety without life) names the precise experience of being fine in the ways the system can see and not fine in the ways it cannot. Safety delivered. Life withheld. This formulation is introduced here as cost. Its full diagnostic weight develops in 5.7.

Table 3. What the system produces, psychological and affective mechanisms.

What the system produces	Mechanism name	Anchor participant(s)
Hollows the self gradually through accumulated unmet conditions	<i>تفريغ (hollowing)</i>	P6
Benefits from comparative gratitude that softens critique	<i>Gratitude tax</i>	P1, P2, P3, P5
Allows harms to be absorbed into theological and personal narratives	<i>Compound absorption</i>	P4
Returns its own failures to individuals as personal responsibility	<i>Self-blame</i>	P3, P5, P6, P7
Provides safety while leaving people without a sense of life	<i>أمان بلا حياة (safety without life)</i>	P7
Depletes a person until bare functioning is all that remains	<i>The slip</i>	P5, cross-corpus
Produces conditions that do not close while recognising only closeable events	<i>The grammar of the persisting condition</i>	P1, P4, P5, P7

The material and social cost

The surface read. P3 names the texture of being read before being known. "People are very Islamophobic. Not because of me and you specifically, but because there are a lot of refugees, and they've built a very negative image of Arabs and Muslims." The clearest scene in the corpus is hers. A man approached her in a supermarket, saw her headscarf, and told her she was paying for her groceries with his Kela money. She replied that she pays his pension with her taxes. When she later removed the scarf in the same spaces, the dynamic shifted. Same body, same groceries. The system reads the marker. The person stays unread.

P7 was told she could have a work placement on one condition. "واحد منهم قال: إذا تنزعين " (one of them said: if you remove the headscarf, okay). The marker was again the gate.

Intra-community costs. One register of cost that compounds what the system already extracts comes from within the communities the women turn to when institutions fail. Exploitation by co-ethnic employers, harassment, social judgment, surveillance of behaviour and appearance, gendered control over how time and autonomy are used. P2 wrote on WhatsApp: "بيتحكم فيكي" (it controls you). She did not repeat it in the live conversation. The format she controlled allowed the disclosure. The format she shared with another Arab woman in real time did not. These costs are named here. The full dialectic of community as both scaffold and constraint sits in 5.9.

The private economy of survival. Across P1, P3, P5, and P7, the work of staying functional is financed privately. P1 pays 700 euros for a studio she cannot afford on her salary, draws constantly from her savings, and pays for the gym membership that keeps her body moving: "ديالي savings ديالي 700 يورو. والراتب ديالي ما يكفيش. ديما كنجوس من Studio" (my studio is 700 euros. My salary is not enough. I keep dipping into my savings). P3 watched 40,000 euros in savings disappear in six or seven months. P5 spends on cooking ingredients, art supplies, and the practices that stand between her and depression. P7 pays nine euros a month for the crafts workshop that has improved her mental state more than any formal therapy.

These are not luxuries in their accounts. They are survival costs paid from their own pockets and time. The system is free-riding on migrant women's private expenditures.

Cross-cultural educational labour. P1, P3, P6, and P8 all describe versions of the same experience: having to explain themselves into legibility for people who should already have the tools to understand them. The labour of making a Finnish colleague understand what discrimination feels like. The labour of teaching a caseworker why a credential from a particular country means what it means. The labour of explaining why you wear hijab and why you pray every day. Specific instances appear in the per-participant analysis files; what matters at this scale is the cross-arc pattern.

P6 named the position she has reached: "It's not really my responsibility or my project to help them understand. It's something that's completely about them." She had once been

willing to do this work. She stopped when the surrounding infrastructure failed and the cost became unsustainable. This is ongoing, unpaid educational work extracted from people who are already stretched.

Table 4. What the system produces, material and structural mechanisms.

What the system produces	Mechanism name	Anchor participant(s)
Extracts labour, taxes, compliance, and patience from people it does not fully serve	<i>The extracted subject</i>	P1, P3, P6
Relies on women's own money and time as de facto support system	<i>The private economy of survival</i>	P1, P3, P5, P7
Makes refusal of harmful arrangements practically available only to some positions	<i>Refusal as uneven resource</i>	P2, P4, P5, P6 (contrasted with P7)
Requires unpaid explanation of racism, credentials, and basic context	<i>Cross-cultural educational labour</i>	P1, P3, P6, P8

The researcher's composed self

I am not outside this. During fieldwork I maintained my own composed self: prepared, organised, fasting, answering WhatsApp messages at hours that were not working hours. There were moments when the gap between the composed self I brought to the fieldwork and what I was actually carrying nearly closed. One participant, near the end of her live conversation, stopped and asked how I was doing. Not as a formality. She had heard something in the question I had just asked. I answered honestly. The conversation shifted for a few minutes into something else entirely. I name this as a structural fact. The conditions this research describes are conditions I am inside, and the composed self I maintained to do the work was costing something in the same register as what this section has been tracing.

Three moments across the fieldwork involved my position becoming visible inside the encounter and shaping what the encounter produced. All three landed in the live conversation with P2. In one, I offered a reframe of her structural-racism analysis toward shared precarity, and the racism thread did not return. In another, I introduced a data point about Finnish unemployment that foreclosed the analysis she was building. In the third, an incidental mention of my time in Estonia unlocked the substantive disclosure that her Estonian degree is unrecognised in Finland, material that had not surfaced in the WhatsApp phase or earlier in the conversation. The first two closed something. The third opened something no planned prompt would have reached. All three are held in the analytical files and marked as jointly produced material. The three moments cluster with P2 because she was reading the research encounter as a peer, and the instrument became most visible to itself in the encounter with the participant who was reading it back.

The costs documented above are real. What follows is also real, and the two cannot be separated.

5.6. What they built

Chapter 3 named the sustaining Arabic-speaking Muslim women do alongside institutions as skilled political practice, building on Escobar, Ukeles, and Simone. What the women in this corpus built took specific forms. The shape of the building is itself diagnostic of what each had been through. P6 named it most directly: there is a difference between building by choice and building because the surrounding structure leaves no other way to live.

Business as refusal

For some, freelance careers and small enterprises are not the realisation of an entrepreneurial dream. They are responses to doors that would not open.

P6's freelance path is anchored in this refusal. After years of being underpaid, misrecognised, and sorted into roles below her training, she carved out a way to work that did not require convincing employers to see her. "There's been constantly, every year, new articles and research about how non-Finnish names get discriminated against in open positions." She speaks about freelancing as the least bad option left: "It's lovely to be freelance, but of course I want just, like, a salary and a boring nine-to-five job." P6 named this the nine-to-five desire: to be received by a structure that functions, instead of having to build around one that does not.

P2 describes her own business in similar terms. She used the verb لجأت (laja'tu, I took refuge in) for the decision. "لأنه كثير صعب ما بتلقي وظائف. لجأت أني أحاول أفتح." (I took refuge in trying to open my own business because it is so hard to find jobs. I mean, what do they even provide you with?). P1, who works full time, sells handmade jewellery in the time she has left and dreams of opening a shop. P5 and P7 use social media with the hope of growing their creative work into something sustainable.

Read together, the women's accounts suggest that migrant entrepreneurship statistics may be measuring exclusion, not aspiration. The businesses these women built function less as entrepreneurial self-expression and more as the only viable architecture left when institutional doors do not open. The size of what they built is visible precisely in how much they wish they did not have to.

Creative practices as survival infrastructure

Across the corpus, creative practices intensify in Finland. Cooking, painting, writing, music, crochet. They are not hobbies in the light sense. They are infrastructure.

P5 made the function explicit: "Je me suis donné quelque chose pour ne pas entrer dans la dépression totale" (I gave myself something so I would not fall into complete depression). Cooking elaborate meals, making sweets, painting, the YouTube channel, Instagram. Each is a structure that came in to fill the space her social life and prior capacities had occupied. They gave her competence over something when the labour market had sealed off. P7's crochet sits in the same register: "شي كلش حبيته لأنه ساعدني وغيّر نفسي" (something I really came to love because it helped me and changed my mental state). The crafts workshop at nine euros a month, two days a week, sitting with her leg elevated making things, is the only intervention she describes as changing her mental state. P1's gym practice, her journaling, the gardening described by others belong here too. None of this appears in integration plans. All of it is part of how they stayed functional.

Read alongside the private economy of survival documented in 5.5, these practices reveal a structural arrangement. The welfare system is designed to provide support. The support it provides does not reach what actually keeps these women functional. They fill the gap themselves, privately. The system benefits from their expenditure: it has users who remain functional without having to account for why. If P5 stopped cooking elaborate meals and painting, the system would encounter the depression and deterioration it currently avoids.

The creative infrastructure is subsidising the welfare system. It does not appear in the system's accounts because the system does not know it exists.

Faith as infrastructure

Faith appears in this corpus as central structural support. It reorganises time, provides social connection, and makes decisions legible.

P7 says directly that she practises more Islam in Finland than she did back home, where religious observance was ambient and assumed. Here she fasts, prays, makes handmade Ramadan ornaments, enrolls her daughter in Islamic school, teaches her son Quran word by word, and goes to the mosque. Islam in her account is a living infrastructure she is actively assembling.

For P1, صلاة الاستخارة (ṣalāt al-istikhāra, the prayer for guidance in which one asks God to choose between two paths) was the causal architecture of her migration. "قلت يا ربي، أنا تهت. " (I said God, I am lost. On the beach, an email came from a company). The prayer made the email legible as an answer.

For P4, faith was spatial. The dressing room with a shower where she could perform الوضوء (al-wuḍū, the ritual ablution before prayer). The room downstairs where she prayed in peace for years, made possible by a Finnish university that chose accommodation over interference. A colleague told her: "واو، حجابك كثير حلو — أشياء صراحة ما شفتها بمحل ثاني" (wow, your hijab is beautiful, I have not seen anything like that elsewhere). None of this required programming. It required a department willing to make a small space available.

For P8, the Arabic-Islamic home was already there. Her father built it deliberately inside a Finnish apartment before she was old enough to choose it. She grew up inside a pre-made infrastructure that held her steady. In her own account, she is now constructing the equivalent online, with other Arab and Muslim women she has never met in person: setting goals during Ramadan, running challenges, keeping each other accountable.

In all of these accounts, faith is a central architecture.

Pedagogical transmission as worldmaking

In several accounts, the women convert what they have endured into knowledge they hand to someone else.

P3, in the middle of our live conversation, switched roles and started mentoring me on how Finnish CVs work: what to omit, what to highlight, how to format so the right responses are triggered. She was teaching me how to move through the system that had misread her, in real time, while telling me about that misreading. The mentoring she offered me was the mentoring no Finnish institution offered her when she arrived. This was also one of the moments where the research encounter exceeded its own design: the participant became the expert and the researcher the newcomer being oriented.

Mothering appears in the same register. Teaching children Arabic, transmitting Quran, explaining racism and how to survive it, orienting them toward both Finland and elsewhere. These are وصية (waṣīyya, an entrusted duty) for several of the women, and the duty is forward-facing: building worlds their children can inhabit with more knowledge than they themselves had. What gets transmitted is also what was missing. The mothers in this corpus are passing forward orientations they had to assemble alone.

Belonging through mobility

Some of the most intact belonging in these accounts is not tied to institutions at all. It is tied to embodied movement and to specific places.

P2 speaks about going into the Finnish forest to forage. She describes it as one of the few places she feels uncomplicatedly well in this country. "بحب كثير إنه ألقط الأشياء" (I love picking things up). Mushrooms, berries, what grows where in summer. On Lapland's landscape: "والله هاي جميلة كثير سبحان الله" (by God this is so beautiful, glory be to God). Nothing in this requires permission, mediation, or a caseworker. The belonging it produces is direct and relational, between her body and the place.

P8 feels most herself when she travels somewhere unfamiliar, where no one has an image of who she should be yet. In neither Finland nor her father's country does she feel the same. P6 visits her parents' country twice yearly, travels to her sister, and refuses to make Finland her only normal: "Not putting my eggs all in one basket, but investing in multiple things around me." What these moments share is structural. They are not provided by the system. They cannot be revoked by it. They require nothing from it.

Ambient decency

P4's years in Finland were shaped not by targeted integration programming but by something I name ambient decency: basic safety, fairness, practical accommodation of her religious practice as a matter of course. A prayer room no one questioned. Colleagues who treated her as an equal. A department that chose accommodation over interference. " ما عملت شي special" (they didn't do anything special) and "ريحتني" (they put me at ease). When ambient decency is present, transformation can happen without heavy programming. When it is absent, no programme compensates.

What they refused to build

Alongside what they constructed, what they declined to assemble matters. Refusal in this corpus is an active mode.

P2's *تعليم الذات* (ta' līm al-dhāt, interior self-teaching) is one such refusal. " بتعلم وبعلم حالي انه " (I learn and I teach myself that my view of myself is more important than others' opinion). She did not refuse learning. She refused to be shaped by structures she did not trust.

P4's pre-emptive refusal of a doctoral jury that demanded she remove her hijab is another. The encounter took place before she ever reached Finland. She declined to enter the door of a defence that insisted on her unveiling. She cut the scene short before it could complete itself on those terms.

P5's refusal is quieter. After being recognised in public by co-ethnics whose presence she experienced as surveillance, she avoids speaking Arabic in public: "Si j'écoute quelqu'un parler en arabe, je change subitement de langue" (if I hear someone speaking Arabic, I suddenly switch languages). She prefaces it: "c'est mauvais à dire" (it is bad to say). The language that ties her to home and family became, in certain contexts, a liability.

P6's strategic opacity sits in her written register. She composes messages that redirect requests and refuse demands without naming the refusal as such. The composed self named in 5.2 is, among other things, a refusal: a withholding of the working self from institutions that have shown they cannot be trusted with it.

P7, at year ten, is still trying. Still going back to offices. She cannot afford to refuse. Her position is the corpus's clearest evidence that refusal is not an equally distributed option. It is easier to step back when there are other resources to stand on.

These are what Glissant's opacity and Simpson's refusal look like inside this corpus, distributed across the women according to what each can afford to withhold.

5.7. The diagnostic vocabulary

The integration system has a word for what it intends to produce: integration. The women in this corpus gave the thesis a different vocabulary. Each term in this section is attributed to the participant who articulated it. Table 5 at the close of this section gathers the concepts in one place.

The estrangement sequence

For women who arrived with expectations the system did not meet, the corpus shows a recurring movement through three stages:

التغريب (al-taghrīr, broken promise) → تفرغ (tafrīgh, hollowing) → غربة (ghurba, structural estrangement).

This sequence is offered as a diagnostic model. It makes the system's effects legible at the structural level and is testable across populations and contexts. Figure 6 visualises the sequence.

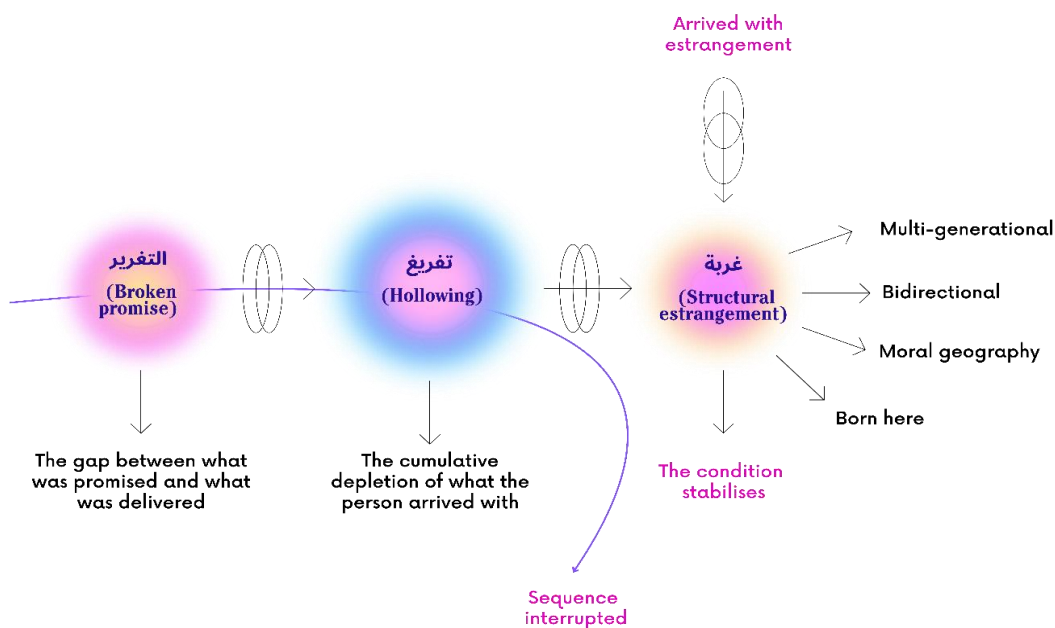


Figure 6. The estrangement sequence.

التغريب (al-taghrīr, broken promise). P3 and P6's cases trace it most clearly. The recruitment, the promise, the months and years across which delivered reality and marketed reality diverge. P3 was sold a country that would directly hire her. She tracked 647 job applications. P6 was offered a permanent contract at the moment she had decided to leave. التغريب names the mechanism by which a system that markets welcome delivers indifference.

What follows التغريب (broken promise) is تفرغ (hollowing). This is the mechanism P6 names when she says she shrank. It is what the slip points toward, what P1's ninety-percent-different self-description marks. Exclusion requires a hostile act. Hollowing requires only sustained indifference from a system that invited you in. The person who arrives with surplus (relational ease, ambition, confidence) is gradually emptied of the qualities she arrived with. P6 broke up with the partner who had been her main support during this period. The Finland she had imagined did not arrive. The Finland she met emptied her of the qualities she had brought.

This is the point in the chapter where the data exceeded what the theoretical framework in Chapter 3 anticipated. Escobar's autonomous design framework accounts for what communities build. It does not account for what sustained indifference takes away. تفرغ (hollowing) is where the data exceeded what the framework in Chapter 3 anticipated. Section 6.3 develops what this means for autonomous design theory. Once تفرغ (hollowing) stabilises, غربة settles in, the structural estrangement Chapter 3 defined. In this corpus it has several forms, and the women gave each one a distinct word.

Ghurba is contingent

The estrangement sequence is not inevitable. P4 and P1 and P7 together show this from opposite directions.

P4's case is the contingent one. She carried غربة (ghurba, structural estrangement) with her before she ever reached Finland. A doctoral jury had demanded she remove her hijab. The exclusion was structural before it was interpersonal. In Finland she stepped into different conditions. A university that accommodated her prayer. A city where she could move without constant fear. Colleagues who treated her as an equal. These were the conditions 5.6 named as ambient decency. Under those conditions, her غربة did not deepen.

She did not stay. Her field required a postdoc abroad. She married. She moved. In her own account, she experiences غربة (structural estrangement) in the next country. Finland was a chapter in which غربة did not deepen. The departure was driven by career structure and marriage.

Her case carries a diagnostic argument. If غربة can stop deepening under identifiable conditions, then its persistence elsewhere is not cultural or personal. It is produced. The specific conditions that prevented her غربة from deepening in Finland are the same conditions whose absence produces the estrangement sequence in the lives around hers.

Her case proves the sequence can be interrupted. It also proves the system can point to a life like hers and call the architecture sufficient. Both readings are grounded in the same evidence. Section 5.8 takes the second forward.

P1 and P7 work the argument from the other direction. For both, غربة (structural estrangement) does not begin at the Finnish border. P1 locates its origin in her father's death. P7 uses غربة to name what she was fleeing before she moved. She arrives into أمان (amān, safety), and a decade later names أمان بلا حياة (amān bilā ḥayāh, safety without life). The wound the system now holds was not one it produced. In both cases, the system's failure is the same: it had no protocol for a person who arrived already carrying the wound.

Ghurba's textures

Bidirectional and permanent. For P2, غربة (structural estrangement) works in two directions at once. She was born in Finland. She is in غربة here, not received as Finnish, read as other despite legal status and fluency. She is also in غربة from her parents' country, attached to a homeland she cannot fully inhabit, whose current condition injures her even as she loves it. She names this وطنية مؤلمة (waṭaniyya mu'lima, painful belonging). English does not carry this word easily. Patriotism implies a relatively uncomplicated devotion. It does not hold the internal fracture of loving something that also does violence to you. "مهما " (however much it contradicts you, diminishes you, fails to respect you the way you deserve, there is no escape from it, it is something carved inside you). وطنية مؤلمة names a form of attachment in which home is both refuge and wound. For P2, the integration system's foundational metaphor (a journey from outsider to insider) describes nothing in her actual life.

Born here. P2 and P8 mark a position the integration system does not imagine. The programmes are built for arrivals; women born inside the system still meet it as strangers. The structural claim is developed in 5.8 under post-integration, pre-belonging.

Moral geography. غربة in these accounts carries a moral expectation about how people will behave toward one another in distance. Co-ethnics in غربة hold a particular obligation: to make the distance survivable. P5 was exploited in her first fifteen days in Finland by an employer from her own community. She named the breach: in ghurba, she said, we are supposed to stand by each other; what she found was the opposite. The harm was material. It was also the demolition of a moral code that is supposed to hold in distance. The system enables these breaches by not seeing what happens inside the workplaces it has counted as employment.

Multi-generational. P7 imagines a hypothetical trip back to her home country with her daughter. A child who would be treated as a foreigner in the place that should have been home. "إذا رجعت لبلدي رح تكون غريبة أيضاً — أكيد." (if she returns to my country she will be a stranger there too, certainly). Past غربة (structural estrangement) and future غربة sit together in one sentence.

Table 5. The diagnostic vocabulary.

Term	Transliteration	English	Anchor participant(s)	What it diagnoses
التغريب	al-taghrīr	broken promise	P3, P6	Recruitment-to-abandonment as structural sequence
تفريغ	tafrīgh	hollowing	P6	Cumulative depletion under sustained indifference
غربة	ghurba	structural estrangement	Cross-corpus	Living inside a world not built for what you carry

وطن	waṭan	the homeland	P2	The felt sense of home, prior to address
بيت	bayt	the material house	P2	The dwelling, separable from watan
وطنية مؤلمة	waṭaniyya mu'lima	painful belonging	P2	Loving a homeland that also diminishes you
أمان بلا حياة	amān bilā ḥayāh	safety without life	P7	Welfare metrics succeed; life withheld
تعليم الذات	ta' līm al-dhāt	Interior self- teaching	P2	Behavioural compliance with interior refusal
رخيبت	rakhīt	the slip	P5	Depletion as small, unremarkable abandonments
مهدودة	mahdūda	demolished	P7	Pre-arrival condition the system cannot register
استسلمت	istaslamt	I surrendered	P4	Compound absorption of structural exclusion
ما صار نصيب	mā ṣār naṣīb	it was not apportioned	P4	Theological framing that removes the system as agent

قدر	qadar	what is ordained	P2, P3, P8	What is placed outside both personal agency and survival
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The terms in Table 5 are not isolated concepts. They map onto positions along the migrant arc, with different terms emerging at different stages of the trajectory. Figure 7 shows this distribution.

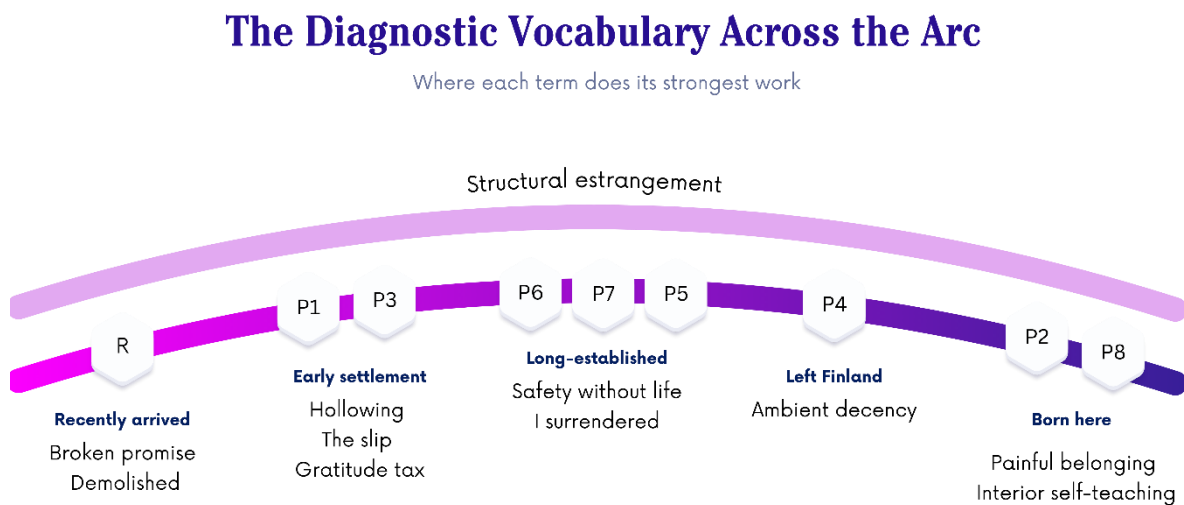


Figure 7. The migrant arc with diagnostic vocabulary mapped onto positions.

5.8. The gap

The diagnostic vocabulary in 5.7 named what the women carry. This section names the structural distance between what the system sees and what those terms describe.

Visible and invisible

What is visible to the system fits its metrics: employment status, language test scores, course attendance, benefit dependency. By those measures, several of the women appear to be on track.

What is invisible is what they name as central: the faith infrastructures that organise their days and decisions, the care networks stretched across countries, the maintenance labour that keeps households and children stable, the creative practices that prevent collapse, the intra-community harms that shape where they dare to go, the psychological and bodily

costs traced in 5.5. None of these are counted. Much of their actual integration sits in what the system cannot see.

What the system reads

The composed self named in 5.2 is what the system reads. It fills forms, answers surveys, attends appointments. The working self has no official channel.

The same surface logic operates at the level of the body. P3's account shows how the headscarf changes how she is read in the same corridor by the same people. The system responds to the marker first and to the person, if at all, second.

The extracted subject

Several women are doing everything the welfare state asks of them and more, while feeling that they are not held in return.

P3's account is the corpus's most concrete. "My tax level was 45%. So as much as you get richer, you stay poor." Combined with: "I don't have access to Kela. I am not a refugee or a Finn." She works, pays at one of the highest brackets, and is excluded from almost every instrument the welfare system offers. Others describe the same pattern. They are taxed, they provide labour, they comply with requirements, and when they need something beyond the minimal, nothing answers. The system extracts work, compliance, and patience from people it does not fully serve.

Across the corpus, the women contribute taxes (P3 at 45%), labour (all eight are or have been employed), cross-cultural educational work (P1, P3, P6, P8), care labour (the mothers in the corpus), community infrastructure (P2, P7, P8), and privately financed survival practices (P1, P3, P5, P7). They receive a looping pathway, non-functioning credential recognition, diagnostic templates calibrated to other bodies, and language support that ends before it is useful. When these contributions and returns are held together, the accounting inverts the welfare state's self-presentation. The state is not their benefactor. It is the net beneficiary of their presence. This inversion is not visible from inside the system's metrics because the metrics count only what the system provides, not what it receives.

Exception as alibi

There are lives in the corpus that look, from the system's point of view, like success: stable employment, degrees completed, relative ease in navigating institutions. They are real. They are also structurally exceptional at the point of entry.

P4 arrived into a university post and a partner with an established position. P3's English and prior professional experience gave her leverage many others do not have. When states and institutions amplify these stories in policy communications and public narratives, they use exceptions as alibis. They do not say that these cases rested on pre-existing scaffolds, on luck, or on unusual resilience. The cost is borne by those whose stories do not fit the exception.

The mechanism operates at the level of public narrative. When the Government Integration Programme reports rising employment rates among immigrant women (TEM, 2025), the aggregate number includes P4's university post and P3's years of precarious contract work under the same headline. The indicator does not distinguish between employment that was scaffolded by prior privilege and employment that was extracted under duress. It treats both as evidence that the pathway works. P7, who has been inside the pathway for a decade and describes *أمان بلا حياة* (safety without life), is invisible inside the same statistic. The alibi does not require bad faith. It requires only a metric that cannot distinguish between the conditions it aggregates.

Structural friction

What the system reads as inter-migrant tension (bitterness between newcomer groups, competition over categories, resentment within the Arabic-speaking community), the women's accounts describe as the predictable result of unequal rules.

P1 named the moment her own resentment surfaced. A woman from another country, sitting in the same waiting area, receiving Kela support P1's work permit excluded her from, while P1 paid the taxes that funded it. "كل مرة كنتكلموا على نفس الموضوع... وأنت اللي خدامة" (every time we talked about the same topic... and you are the one who is working and paying the taxes). P3's exclusion from Kela despite her tax bracket sits inside the same architecture.

Some participants spoke warmly about Finnish individuals who took political stances they recognised, while naming the institutional position with one word: تلاعب (talā'ub, manipulation). The friction runs through institutions and through everyday encounters, and the population the system reads as one community is split across it.

The system reads the friction it produces as evidence that integration is failing because of cultural incompatibility. The women's accounts show the reverse. The friction is structural, generated by the rules they live under.

Post-integration, pre-belonging

P2 and P8 occupy a position the integration system does not name. Post-integration by every formal measure. Pre-belonging in how they are treated.

They are citizens. They speak Finnish. They do not fit the newcomer category. At the same time, they are not read as Finnish in everyday interactions. The integration system's foundational metaphor is a journey from outside to inside. P2 and P8 have completed that journey on every measure the system possesses. They hold citizenship. They speak the language. They were born here. The monitoring framework has no instrument for their condition because their condition begins where the programme's logic ends. The system was designed to move people from outside to inside. It has no category for the person who arrived inside and was never received there. That is not a gap in the data. It is a gap in the design. The programme declared its work complete. The belonging did not arrive.

P2 names it directly: " حتى انه أنا معي جنسية بس مازال انه أنا مش فنلندية وهم يعرفوا هذا الاشي أكيد — " (even though I have citizenship, I am still not Finnish, and they know this for sure, the treatment is not the same). They live in a condition where the journey policy imagines (from outside to inside) has already completed on paper and has not completed in practice. The system has no instrument for the condition it has helped produce. Its frame ends precisely where P2's and P8's lives begin.

Finnish people, Finnish institutions

P1 and P2 both distinguish between Finnish people and Finnish institutions. They can talk warmly about neighbours, colleagues, and friends they have met as individuals, while being sharply critical of how systems operate. P6 offers the structural diagnosis: "Finnish people, maybe now it's changing a bit, but historically, they've had things quite easy after

the war. They've had the social structure. So they haven't had to fight for their voice to be heard or for their basic needs to be met. They just follow the path as it's made for them. And for me, that's just not my reality." The distinction matters. A structural critique of the system does not require hostility toward individuals. The necessary register is systemic.

Self-blame

When the system's pathways do not work, the women describe blaming themselves first.

P3, P5, P6, and P7 each blame themselves first, in different words: maybe I should have tried harder, maybe my Finnish is still not good enough, maybe my CV needs to be different, maybe I am asking for too much. P7, after years of being mispositioned and underused, wonders aloud whether she has somehow failed the country. P3 internalises rejections as personal shortcomings before, slowly, she begins to see the pattern: "المشكلة المشكلة انه في مش صح مش منصف system مش فيك — المشكلة انه في" (the problem is not in you, the problem is that the system is not right, not fair).

When the system only tracks individual inputs and outputs and never names its own pathway failures, it leaves people with one place to locate the problem: themselves. Compound absorption and self-blame operate together.

The category the system cannot hold

A familiar claim in design justice is that those most affected by design should be central to the design process. This presumes a stable "us" that policy can name and invite in. Here, the policy category ("Arabic-speaking Muslim women in Finland" or "third-country nationals" or "global majority") does not cohere at the level of lived identity.

P2 and P8 are born here; they do not recognise themselves in "immigrant." P4's position is shaped more by being an academic and a hijab-wearing woman than by Arabic alone. P5 rejects being folded into a generic migrant story that does not fit her. P1's and P7's trajectories diverge radically despite sharing language and faith. When a category does not match how people understand themselves, inviting representatives of that category into co-design will not close the mismatch.

The deepest mismatch this chapter names is therefore not the one between what the system measures and what the women carry, although that mismatch is real and has been documented in full. It is the one between the category the system uses and the people it

claims to be designing for. What follows from this is not a call for better representation within the existing category. It is a question about whether the category should be the organising principle at all. Which categories would have to be retired? Which metrics decentred? What would qualify as success if *أمان بلا حياة* (safety without life) is recognised as failure? Chapter 6 takes these questions forward.

The gap mapped here, named through the mechanisms gathered in the tables across this chapter (Table 2 in 5.4, Tables 3 and 4 in 5.5, Table 5 in 5.7, and Table 6 below), is the starting condition for Chapter 6's question: what would it take to build a system that can read these lives on their own terms.

Table 6. What the system cannot see.

What the system cannot see	Mechanism name	Anchor participant(s)
Counts addresses and assumes housing solves belonging	<i>وطن / بيت</i> <i>(homeland / house)</i> <i>confusion</i>	P2
Fails to register people who arrived already estranged	<i>Pre-arrival ghurba</i> <i>unrecognised</i>	P1, P7
Leaves long-term residents structurally outside despite years in country	<i>Duration without</i> <i>belonging</i>	P5
Declares people integrated by its measures while they remain unreceived	<i>Post-integration,</i> <i>pre-belonging</i>	P2, P8
Works with a policy category that does not match how the people inside it understand themselves	<i>The category the</i> <i>system cannot hold</i>	P2, P4, P5, P8

5.9. Community: scaffolding and constraint

The women in this study share language and faith but do not form a single community. What matters here is not what the community is. It is what it does.

The double edge

In their accounts, community supports and constrains, sometimes the same person at the same time.

The constraint side is heavy. P5's first employer in Finland was from her own country. Within fifteen days, he had destroyed the trust structure she thought she could lean on. P1's employer in another sector exploited her labour and blurred the lines between help and abuse. P1 articulated the mechanism herself: "الوحدة لما كتفرغ — ما كيجيش واحد يطرق الباب" (when loneliness empties you, nobody comes knocking on your door... so when someone comes and gives you just a little attention, you lose yourself). Others describe being watched and commented on by co-ethnics in public spaces, their clothing and movements policed, their mental-health struggles minimised or reframed through stigma.

The scaffolding side is also real. P3 found her first close friends ten months in: immigrants from Nigeria and Pakistan. P6 built her community through political alignment: "Most of my friends are also people of color or underrepresented in some form in society, and we're quite honest with each other about what we go through." P2's NGO connections and community-organised solidarity events scaffold a different register of belonging. P1's international friends form a global microcosm. P8's online community of mixed-origin Arab and Muslim women provides what her father's home-built world does not give her on its own. P7's mosque community holds her children steady. P4 was received into an Arabic-speaking community in her university town, scarce, informal, and domestic: كرم (karam, generosity offered without expectation of return) she names with gratitude.

The model P4 named

P4 articulated the clearest model the corpus contains for what community, when it works, is for. It should grow you, and then release you. The goal is not enclosure or permanent dependence. It is scaffolding. You learn language, norms, and strategies inside a group that understands you. You receive advice, resources, and care. When you are ready, you step more widely into the society around you with that backing. Permanent presence inside it is failure on the model's own terms.

P4's experience in two different contexts confirmed this. In the country where she had lived before Finland, the Arab community was dense and rooted in one nationality, and

she felt enclosed: "محصورة بالناس اللي يعرفهم" (confined by the people I knew). In Finland, where Arabic speakers were scarce, she expanded: "بتتوسعي... كل ناشناتي بتحسي في باب جديد" (you expand... every nationality, you feel a new door opening). Same person, different density, opposite outcome.

This reframes what policy documents call parallel societies. Seen from inside, what looks like a closed co-ethnic world is often the temporary structure a person builds when the surrounding system is unreceiving. It fills in for missing structures. The community does not exist to keep people out of the mainstream. It exists because the mainstream has not been built to receive them. Chapter 6 returns to this as a design question.

What the workshop made available

The workshop was held online, after Ramadan. Four of the eight participants were present (P1, P2, P3, P8). The session produced several kinds of collective work: shared quantification of asymmetry, collective acknowledgement of an unnamed condition, peer-to-peer recognition of a policy silence, and peer-to-peer reallocation of blame. None of these were available through individual encounters with the researcher.

The most generative analytical moment of the workshop was unplanned. I had prepared a slide displaying the parallel societies clause from the Government Integration Programme but had not decided whether to use it. Mid-session I read the room and showed it. The participants produced nine stickies in response, more than any other analytical board. No sticky defended the legislation's framing. Every sticky either named the isolation that precedes community formation or placed the problem back on Finnish society: "it's very hard to find a community here," "we cannot make friends easily," "stick to those who are similar to you," "think about how a Finn can accept others." One sticky said it most sharply: "generalization!" A participant naming what the policy was doing analytically before I had said it. The decision to introduce material I had been uncertain about was the most generative facilitation move of the session, and it produced its yield because the trust was already there.

They also quantified something the chapter had been circling. On the naming-gap board, one sticky read: "meeting us: 90% / them: 10%." Two words completed alongside it: "them accepting." Two more outlines were started and left blank. The absence of a word was placed on the board as data alongside the words that arrived.

One sequence made the abstract gap concrete. Before the session reached the observation that the policy document contained no mention of belonging, P8 named belonging in Arabic. The mismatch between what she had just said and what the document had never said was felt in the room. The researcher did not have to deliver it.

In a different moment, P3 began blaming herself for not learning Finnish. P8 interrupted, gently and firmly: "Even when you learn the language, and you are still a Muslim, they can still discriminate against you. I lived here all my life. It is not your fault. The system failed you." Coming from another woman in the same condition, without institutional authority and without researcher mediation, that sentence carried a weight my voice could not. It was a peer-to-peer reallocation of blame, in real time.

In another corner of the board, قدر (qadar, what is ordained) was placed on a category the facilitation had not labelled. The category was added by a participant. It lived alongside the cat she had named as entertainment. Both refused the facilitation's framing of choice and survival.

Several participants named the workshop itself as something they had not had before. A space where they could speak in front of each other, compare notes, and do analysis together. One sticky named it plainly: "Engaging with others who went through the same experience."

What the workshop could not reach

One absence hung over the workshop. P5 was not there. She had declined the live conversation as well. She was tired. Her WhatsApp messages are in this study. Her most inhabited estrangement, twelve years of partial life here and the lucid refusal to invest further, is present in the corpus and not in the collective moment. The method reached those who still had some energy to gather and speak. The most complete estrangement remained at home.

5.10. What the chapter holds without resolving

The chapter has named what the integration system does, what it costs, what the women build in response, what غربة (structural estrangement) means when the women themselves define it, and what they are asking. It has not resolved everything it has opened. Five tensions remain active at the chapter's close.

Resolution and refusal. P4's غربة (structural estrangement) did not deepen in Finland under specific conditions. It re-emerged elsewhere when those conditions changed. P5 is still here, and her غربة has not moved. These are different structural positions, with different design asks. Collapsing them into a single account of "how integration works" would erase the fact that success for P4 required leaving, while P5 cannot leave and has stopped asking the system for anything. The design question is what counts as success when the only options available to some positions are survival structures.

Inherited and produced غربة. For P1 and P7, estrangement preceded Finland. For P6 and P3, it was produced here, incrementally, through التغير (broken promise) and تفرغ (hollowing). The thesis cannot collapse them. If it collapsed inherited into produced, it would treat all غربة as the system's doing and miss the wound the person arrived with. If it collapsed produced into inherited, it would treat all غربة as portable and let the system off the hook for what its conditions are doing here. The two readings carry different design obligations and Chapter 6 has to hold both.

Worldmaking by choice and worldmaking by necessity. P5's YouTube channel, P7's crochet, P1's 700-euro studio, P6's freelance career are real constructions that held real lives together. They are also what people do when the option of being received by an existing structure has been removed. Celebrating worldmaking risks celebrating the conditions that forced it. Naming worldmaking as compensation risks erasing what the women actually built. Chapter 6 has to hold both at once, and develops the triad of choice, necessity, and fate to do so.

Refusal as uneven resource. P2, P4, P5, and P6 all refuse something in this corpus. P7 is still attending courses, still returning to offices, still answering calls. She cannot afford to refuse. Any design method or political strategy that depends on participants saying no will structurally exclude the people who cannot afford to say no. The design question is how to build approaches that do not require refusal as a precondition for being heard.

Post-integration, pre-belonging, and ambient decency. P2 and P8 inhabit the post-integration, pre-belonging position. P4's case shows what ambient decency can make possible. If ambient decency can only be recognised and never designed for, the system has no tool for this condition. If it can be designed for, the question is how, without turning it into a programme that destroys what makes it ambient. Chapter 6 takes this forward.

This is what an honest reading produces. Chapter 6 takes it forward.

5.11. What they are asking

The women did not only absorb what the system does or describe what it cost. They named, in their own terms, what they want. This section gathers those demands with light framing. Chapter 6 takes them as the starting point for three design obligations.

جربوني (jarribūnī, give me a chance). P4. The irreducible demand. Not a programme. Not a policy. The request to be tried on her own terms in work, in study, in life. P2 named the same demand from a different angle: back home, employers test your skills for two months and then decide whether to keep you. A trust architecture built on trial. Credentials and presentation reach the door; trial is what gets a person inside it.

Set expectations honestly before arrival. P8. Do not sell a Finland that does not exist. Do not promise integration pathways that collapse on contact. Tell people what they are coming into so they can decide with open eyes.

Stop making us carry all the explaining. P1, P3, P6, P8. They are tired of teaching colleagues, caseworkers, neighbours, and even researchers how racism works, what their degrees mean, what hijab is, which contemporary political situations matter to them and why. The demand is for systems that internalise this knowledge through training and staffing, instead of extracting it from users. P6 named the shift: she was once willing to do this work, and she stopped when the cost became unsustainable.

Remove nationality from job applications, or at least delay its disclosure. P3. A specific design intervention. She has lived what it means to send out CVs with a name and passport that trigger rejections before anyone reads her skills: "بحس هذا الاشئي كثير غلط... طالما " أنت you're in Finland خلص are you eligible to work in Finland خلص yes or no" (I feel this is very wrong... as long as you are in Finland, are you eligible to work here, yes or no). Let employers see the person and the competence before they see the category.

Curiosity that is intentional, ethical, and respectful. Workshop, multiple participants. They are not opposed to questions. They are opposed to being treated as exotic, as case studies, as opportunities to display tolerance. The form of curiosity they are asking for comes with accountability.

Emotional safety. Workshop sticky: "feel safe: emotionally, I do not need to fight." Integration programmes speak of resilience. The demand here is simpler: stop making resilience necessary all the time. This stands inside a country whose welfare state is publicly committed to wellbeing. The women are asking the institutions to live up to what the state already says it stands for.

Meet us halfway. Even ten percent. Workshop sticky: "meeting us: 90% / them: 10%." In the discussion that followed, one participant said even ten percent would be enough. They are willing to learn the language, navigate the systems, adapt. They are asking for institutions and the society around them to move at all. To adjust schedules, learn names, question defaults, carry some of the span.

Recognise faith infrastructure as infrastructure, and entrust it to people who know it. P7 organised the response when a Finnish religious studies teacher showed violent anti-Muslim war videos to Muslim children, causing nightmares. She demanded a meeting with school administration. She got her daughter transferred. She then tried to organise other parents collectively. The episode sharpened the demand: one careless lesson in a position of institutional authority can dismantle what a parent has spent years building. The ask is that institutions with the standing to teach about Muslim lives be staffed by people who actually know them.

Receive me. Don't just orient me. P6. The nine-to-five desire becomes a demand. She does not want endless courses and programmes. She wants a workplace and a system that will take her in as she is, use what she knows, and stop requiring her to build everything around them.

Longer, deeper, more available integration support. P2: "يكون أطول integration بتمنى إنه ال" (I wish integration would be longer, deeper, and available to more people). She names the pressure directly: "ما في داعي لهذا الضغط كله على الناس" (there is no need for all this pressure on people).

Design for those who have stopped asking. P5's case. She has effectively stopped asking the system for anything. She goes to work. She cooks. She creates. She carries on. She does not expect Kela, Migri, or any integration office to offer her anything she can count on: "J'ai pas aimé le pays, ni ses gens. Je ne m'imagine pas un futur à long terme ici" (I have not liked the country, nor its people. I cannot imagine a long-term future here). Her

most important demand is no demand at all. To design for someone who has stopped asking is to design without the orientation of being asked. That is a different problem from the one service design usually answers.

What cannot yet be said. The workshop left two outlines on the naming board blank. Participants felt there was something they needed to name and could not yet find words for. P8, asked what support a mixed-origin person needs, said she did not know: "I've never really thought about that. Maybe because no one ever asked." The condition that exceeds current vocabulary needs time and spaces for its naming before design can claim to be responding to it.

6. DISCUSSION AND DESIGN OBLIGATIONS

6.1. Overview

Chapter 5 documented what the women carry, what the system does to them, what they build in response, and the vocabulary they gave the thesis to name what the system cannot see. This chapter asks what those findings mean, and what must change.

6.2. The main research question answered

The integration system reads the composed self and names it integrated. This thesis reads the working self and finds a person sustaining worlds the system has no word for. The gap between those two readings is not a measurement problem. It is a design assumption built into the classification infrastructure from the outset.

What the system reads

The system reads employment status, language test certification, benefit dependency, course attendance, and absence of sanctions. Across the eight positions in this corpus, these indicators confirm progress. The monitoring framework closes cases accordingly.

What it is reading is the composed self documented in 5.2. The composed self is a survival literacy: the women learn, across their years of contact with the system, which framings work and which create problems. Integration monitoring is single-format by design. Every one of its formats produces the composed self.

What the women sustain and what the distinction costs the framework

Section 5.6 documented what the women sustain. This chapter does not re-list. What it adds is an analytical distinction across three registers, and what that distinction does to the framework.

The worldmaking operates as choice (P2's forest foraging, P4's academic world, P8's online Ramadan community), as necessity (P6's freelance career, P7's crochet practice, P1's privately financed survival infrastructure), and as fate (P1's migration through *istikhāra*, P8's inherited Islamic home). The workshop confirmed this when participants worked with choice and survival and then began placing things outside both: *قدر*, conditions inhabited in a register that exceeds the binary. That space was the corpus's own refusal to be flattened.

The distinction matters because autonomous design theory can recognise the first register and struggles with the other two. Section 6.3 takes this forward as a framework extension.

What the gap reveals

The system was built around Masoud's integrateable subject. Bacchi's question returns here with an empirical answer: the problem is represented to be the newcomer's deficit (of language, of employment, of compliance). The findings show that the newcomer is sustaining worlds the system has no word for while being hollowed by the system's own indifference. The problem is not what the policy says it is.

P4's case (5.6, 5.7) produces the sharpest design argument in the corpus. Under conditions of ambient decency, estrangement responded; under their absence elsewhere, it deepened through the sequence 5.7 documented. The claim is a design claim: estrangement is responsive to designable conditions. Its persistence is an outcome of conditions that can be named and changed.

The post-integration, pre-belonging position documented in 5.8 challenges the concept of integration itself. If the system's foundational metaphor does not describe what P2 and P8 live, then integration as currently conceived has an internal contradiction the system cannot see from inside its own frame.

One further finding holds across the corpus and matters for how the critique in this chapter is read. Multiple participants, unprompted, distinguished Finnish people from Finnish institutions. They spoke warmly about individuals they had known while being sharply critical of how systems operate. The structural critique this thesis makes is about the design and operation of systems. The mechanisms in Table 2 describe design behaviours. They can be changed at the level of design.

The closed loop

The thesis's central structural finding is that the integration system produces the conditions it then reads as personal failure. The claim is about circularity in the design.

Trace the circuit. A woman who has been failed by the system tries to name the failure. Before the critique can be received, the gratitude tax requires a deposit: a prefatory acknowledgement that she knows she should be grateful. The deposit softens the critique before it lands and signals that complaint is conditional. The structural cause stays

unnamed because the format that would have received it has already adjusted what is sayable inside it. Meanwhile, the system's pathway design produces cycles of effort with no structural payoff: the looped applications, the work trials that lead nowhere, the language courses that end at the threshold where support is most needed. These cycles deplete her domain by domain. The slip records the order. What remains, when most domains have gone, looks like personal withdrawal. Compound absorption then takes the institutional harm up into theological and personal frames. The system disappears as a responsible agent. What could be named as a design failure becomes surrender, fate, or redirection toward a daughter, an arrangement she came to accept. The system benefits from the absorption by never appearing in the account of what went wrong. Self-blame closes the circuit. When the system tracks only individual inputs and outputs, never naming its own pathway failures, the woman has one place to locate the problem. She locates it there.

Each mechanism's output becomes the next one's input. The loop is closed because the system never appears as cause at any point in the sequence. Critique enters and is metabolised into compliance, depletion, absorption, and self-blame. The system reads the output (an integrated subject who is not complaining, who is fine on paper, who has accepted her circumstances) and confirms its own design. Figure 8 traces this circuit.

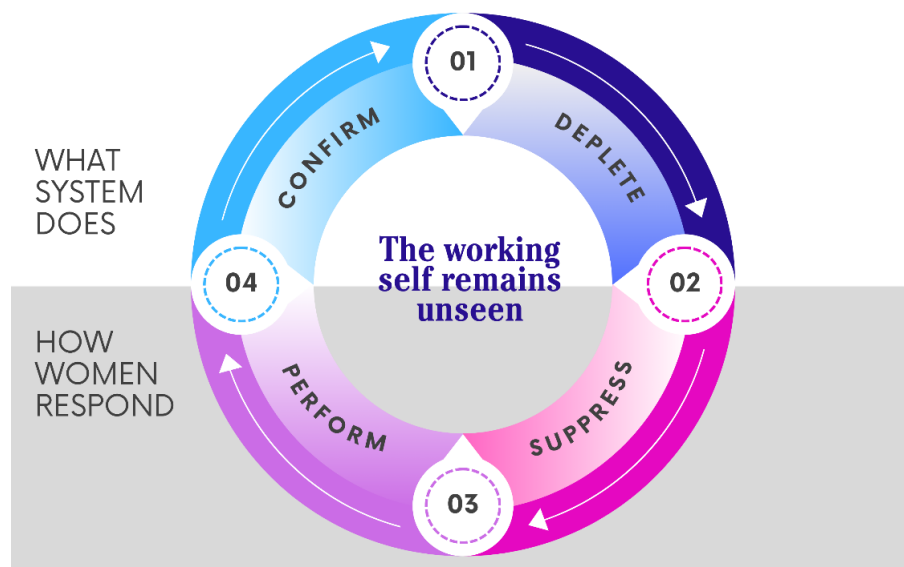


Figure 8. The closed loop.

The diagram distinguishes two sides of the loop. The system's actions are CONFIRM (reading the composed self and validating its own design) and DEplete (producing تفریح

(hollowing) through looped pathways, the slip, and sustained indifference). The women's responses are SUPPRESS (compound absorption, where institutional harm is taken into personal and theological frames and the system disappears as a responsible agent) and PERFORM (producing the composed self through the gratitude tax and the formats the system makes available). The working self remains unseen at the centre because neither side of the circuit creates a channel for it.

The loop is interruptible. P4's case shows it was interrupted under identifiable conditions. Where it is not interrupted, the system's design is what is running. The person's character is not the variable in motion. The findings above sit against a theoretical framework Chapter 3 set up. What follows reports what the data did to it.

6.3. Extending and testing the theoretical framework

Chapter 3 committed to holding the framework accountable to what the data produced. This section returns to that commitment.

Escobar: from worldmaking-as-choice to worldmaking-as-condition

Escobar's claim held: what makes a world a world is the capacity to sustain it. Possession of land is not what defines a world. This is confirmed across the arc.

The extension the thesis requires concerns what the framework cannot yet see. Escobar's autonomous design foregrounds worldmaking as choice: the deliberate, collective design of a community against an imposed system. His empirical cases are territorial struggles in which a people is defending or building a world they have chosen to inhabit. The framework is built for that register.

The corpus shows worldmaking occurring across three registers, and autonomous design theory can recognise only the first. The choice/necessity/fate distinction documented in 6.2 is the empirical basis for this extension. Autonomous design theory has no vocabulary for the necessity or fate registers. It either misreads them as lack of agency or romanticises them as entrepreneurial resilience without acknowledging the structural conditions that made building necessary.

The reformulation the data requires: Escobar's autonomous design is a theory of worldmaking-as-choice. This thesis extends it toward a theory of worldmaking-as-condition. What is transferable from Escobar is the capacity to sustain a world at all, across

whatever register that sustaining takes. The extension is offered as a contribution: Escobar built his framework from territorial Indigenous struggles his empirical context required him to see clearly. The non-territorial, welfare-state-embedded, variously agentic context of this corpus exceeds that starting point. Chapter 3 held the territorial question open. The data answered it. None of the worlds the women built in 5.6 require territory. All are worlds: linguistic, relational, religious, sustained inside a welfare state without land. The first extension is that autonomous design holds beyond territorial struggles. The second is that autonomous design must account for worldmaking across the registers of choice, necessity, and fate, because the women build in all three and existing theory can recognise only the first.

What the women build in 5.6, from iftar gatherings to online Ramadan communities to creative practices held against depression, constitutes homeplace in hooks's (1990) sense: spaces of care and dignity assembled under conditions where the surrounding system does not provide them. The data confirms hooks's claim that building such spaces is a political act, and extends it by showing that the act is also, simultaneously, a survival infrastructure the welfare system depends on without knowing it exists.

Mahmood: held in reserve, justified by the data

Chapter 3 held Mahmood's politics of piety as available for the analysis without letting it govern. The data justifies that decision.

In most positions across the arc, faith appears as infrastructure: it keeps people going, structures days, explains events, makes possible a continuity that institutional systems interrupt. This is Simone's function (people as infrastructure) more than Mahmood's ethical self-cultivation. Mahmood's framework fits one register precisely: P7's deliberate construction of an Arabic-Islamic home. It sits uncomfortably with P1's *istikhāra*, which is supplication, an opening to what is ordained, in a different mode from reflexive self-fashioning. It sits uncomfortably with P8's faith, which she was born into and sustains through inhabitation; cultivation is a different relation to faith than what her account shows.

Applying Mahmood as a governing framework would have imported a model of deliberate piety onto women for whom faith is often the ground of practice: the condition under which

life continues. Deliberate self-making through faith is a different practice from what most participants showed. The selective use was the right decision. The data confirms it.

The estrangement sequence: what the corpus gave the framework

The sequence was not imported from the theoretical framework. It emerged from the corpus, named in participants' own terms, confirmed across positions in the arc. The sequence is offered as a diagnostic model with intervention points at each stage, and is not a universal theory of migration experience.

6.4. The diagnostic vocabulary as theoretical contribution

The vocabulary documented in Table 5 was given to the thesis by the women. Section 5.7 introduced each term with its empirical grounding. This section does different work: it positions each term against the existing literature and names what it sees that existing frameworks cannot.

غربة (structural estrangement). Against homesickness (which presumes a reparative return), nostalgia (which is temporally located in the past), and marginalisation (which locates the problem at the social edge), غربة as documented in 5.7 names a condition none of these terms can reach. The system invited the person in. The estrangement is produced inside that invitation.

التغريب (broken promise). Against integration policy's "adjustment difficulties" (TEM 2025) and the acculturation tradition's "unmet expectations" (Berry 1997), both of which locate the gap in the newcomer's psychology, التغريب names a reproducible system-level pattern. The commissioning function and the delivery function were never designed to connect. The gap is architectural.

تفريغ (hollowing). Against depression as a clinical category, marginalisation as a social-edge condition, and burnout as a product of overwork, تفريغ (hollowing) is distinct from each. It operates through sustained indifference in the presence of nominal inclusion. أمان بلا حياة (safety without life) names its stable endpoint.

أمان بلا حياة (safety without life). Against the assumption in Nordic welfare research that safety provision constitutes adequate reception, this term names purpose-failure alongside execution-success. The system is delivering what it was designed to deliver. What is

missing was never in the specification. The concept is offered for Nordic welfare studies as a way to hold both facts simultaneously.

وطنية مؤلمة (painful belonging). Against Brah's (1996) diaspora space and Yuval-Davis's (2006) politics of belonging, both of which describe the structural conditions of diasporic life from outside, **وطنية مؤلمة** names the phenomenology from inside: the specific pain of belonging to something that cannot fully hold you back. It extends diaspora scholarship by naming what the structural frameworks describe without inhabiting.

The slip. Against the integration literature's "disengagement" and "withdrawal," which name an outcome without specifying its order, the slip names a directional sequence. That directionality tells the researcher where structural cost began and what was sustained at greatest price. No existing integration framework names this order.

The gratitude tax. Building on Ahmed's (2010) work on the politics of happiness and the demand that certain subjects perform satisfaction as the price of inclusion, the gratitude tax specifies the integration-context mechanism: a structural ceiling on legitimate demand. The system receives suppressed complaint and continued compliance. The mechanism has not been named in the existing integration literature.

Ambient decency. Against the intervention-heavy logic of integration programming (TEM 2025), ambient decency names what works when nothing is targeted: safety as default, accommodation without justification, being treated as capable before requiring proof. The design question it poses is specific. The system does not need to produce this through targeted intervention. It needs to stop producing its opposite.

Each term does work the existing integration vocabulary cannot. Together with the estrangement sequence, they constitute a diagnostic framework for reading integration at a level the existing monitoring architecture cannot access.

6.5. Contributions

The lens, the vocabulary, and the framework extensions amount to more than a local account of Finnish integration. This section names what they contribute to four fields that frame the integration system: Nordic welfare studies, diaspora studies, design justice discourse, and service design and participatory research methodology.

To Nordic welfare studies

Welfare metrics are designed to be satisfied. A system optimised to satisfy its own metrics will structurally eliminate evidence of its own failures. The mechanism is the architecture of what counts as failure rather than deliberate suppression. If the metric does not include وطن (homeland), the absence of وطن (homeland) is not visible as absence. If the metric measures employment as evidence of integration, what happens inside employment is not a metric failure. أمان بلا حياة (safety without life) is a precise description of where this leads: the system satisfying its indicators and failing the person's own measure simultaneously.

The methodological contribution is structural. Single-format monitoring reaches the composed self and misses the working self by design. The stratigraphy this thesis documents shows that the gap between the two selves is organised around exactly what the system measures and what it was not built to ask. When a person describes in the present tense something the case record marks as past, she is providing information the monitoring system has no field for. These are findings about what kind of knowledge welfare research can and cannot produce, given the formats it currently uses.

No existing Nordic welfare study has approached integration through Arabic-first, dual-channel, Ramadan-timed, insider research with this population. That specificity is what allowed the thesis to produce أمان بلا حياة (safety without life) and the estrangement sequence as structural knowledge.

P4's scaffolding model, that community should grow you and then release you, offers a framework the parallel-societies discourse does not hold. The TEM document frames certain forms of community life as a risk to social cohesion. P4's model reframes them as temporary scaffolds that compensate for what the formal system fails to provide. The scaffold exists because the surrounding structure is unreceiving. When the scaffold becomes permanent, the model has failed. Whether the community releases its members or keeps them depends on whether the surrounding system ever becomes receiving enough to replace what the community provides. The design question is not how to prevent parallel societies. It is how to build a receiving society that makes the scaffold unnecessary.

To diaspora studies

غربة (structural estrangement) has been theorised as a psychological condition, a cultural feature of Arab diasporic life, and a classical literary theme. Each of these framings locates the problem inside the migrant. The response they invite is adjustment.

This thesis relocates غربة (structural estrangement). Here it is what the encounter between a one-world welfare system and a person carrying more than one world produces. That relocation changes both what غربة means analytically and what it demands in response. If غربة is produced by the encounter, the appropriate response is design change. Therapeutic intervention does different work.

The multi-positional forms of غربة this corpus documents complicate the home/host binary that structures most diaspora research. Born-here غربة (P2 and P8 carrying estrangement in a country that is legally and biographically theirs) is not adequately described by any framework that treats غربة as a migration experience. Post-integration, pre-belonging, as 5.8 documented it, is where the integration system's own logic runs out: the programme has declared its work complete, and the غربة continues below the level of any instrument the system possesses.

وطنية مؤلمة (painful belonging) extends diaspora scholarship in a specific direction. By naming the designed system as part of what produces that pain (the classification infrastructure, the monitoring framework, the intake form), the thesis pulls diaspora scholarship toward the designed systems through which belonging is administered.

To design justice discourse

Ansari (2025) names the migrant as the figure decolonial design discourse has not yet interrogated. Design justice and decolonising design have drawn their vocabulary and cases heavily from Indigenous and territorial struggles. That vocabulary reaches the colonial dispossession of land with precision and leaves non-territorial, globally mobile subjects largely outside its frame.

This thesis answers that gap with eight migrant lives and a vocabulary built from within them. The women in this corpus are not users being designed for. They are designers: of survival practices, of faith infrastructures, of pedagogical transmissions, of refusal as political practice. The clearest instance is P3's mid-conversation shift from participant to

mentor, documented in 5.6. The mentoring she offered was the mentoring no Finnish institution had provided. The participant was designing the orientation the system had failed to produce. That moment is not an anomaly. It is the condition: the people the system is designed for are already doing the design work the system has not done. The framework developed here extends autonomous design by bringing the necessity and fate registers into view alongside the choice register, and by recognising forms of designing that do not present as autonomous creative agency but are nonetheless deliberate work under constraint.

The design justice principle (Costanza-Chock, 2020) that those most affected by design should be central to the design process assumes a stable "us." The data shows that the "us" is not stable at the level of lived identity. The category "Arabic-speaking Muslim women" does not cohere across the working selves of the eight women in this study. It is a structural position in the system (a policy category, a resource allocation unit, a monitoring denominator) rather than a shared world, a shared story, or a shared identity claim.

What the thesis names is the need for structural solidarity without ontological unity: the capacity to design with people who share a structural position in a system without presuming they share one world. The workshop is the proof of concept. Four women who do not share a nationality, a relationship to Arabic, a relationship to Islam, or a migration history sat in the same room and produced knowledge none could have produced alone. P8 told P3 that the system had failed her, and the sentence carried a weight the researcher's voice could not have matched. It held because it came from inside the condition, from someone living the same structural position, with no institutional stake in P3's self-blame. That is structural solidarity without ontological unity in action. The concept is offered as a contribution design justice theory needs in order to work with populations whose shared position is structural and whose worlds are plural. A design process that routes all knowledge through researchers or facilitators will miss this register. Creating conditions for peer-to-peer analysis is part of what it means to practise design justice with this population.

To service design and participatory research methodology

The contribution to this field is **Reception design**: the reorientation from moving people toward the system's categories to receiving what people already know and carry. The method in Chapter 4 is a worked example. The principle that generalises from it: any

design research working with populations whose structural position the system is not built to receive needs at least one format that does not produce the composed self, and at least one space where knowledge moves laterally between participants without the researcher mediating it. Section 6.6 develops the framework, the four instruments the method produced, and what they replace in the conventional toolkit.

6.6. Reception design

What is Reception design

Reception design begins from the premise that systems do not perceive neutrally; they perceive through structure. What institutions are able to detect, interpret, and respond to depends on the conditions under which knowledge becomes available to them. Systems cannot perceive what their conditions cannot produce. Reception design refers to the capacity of a system to admit, interpret, and structurally respond to forms of knowledge produced within unequal conditions. The framework developed in this thesis approaches reception as a problem of institutional perception: a question of how systems become able to recognize experiences, vocabularies, and structural conditions that standardized formats routinely exclude.

Integration design orients the person toward institutional coordinates. It defines success through movement toward predefined categories such as employment, language certification, reduced welfare dependence, procedural compliance, or administrative self-sufficiency. Once the coordinates are reached, the case closes. Reception design reverses the orientation. It asks what conditions institutions must establish in order to receive what people already carry: language, structural position, situated knowledge, relational experience, and the diagnostic vocabulary produced within those conditions.

The framework developed in this thesis reorients institutional practice across four dimensions.

- ❖ First, it shifts from single-format encounters to dual-channel reception. Formal institutional encounters are paired with a second channel aligned with everyday conditions rather than institutional tempo. Different formats produce different forms of expression, disclosure, and interpretation. Reception therefore depends not only on access, but on the coexistence of formats capable of admitting different forms of knowledge.

- ❖ Second, reception design shifts from the institution's language to the participant's language as the primary analytical register. The diagnostic vocabulary documented in this thesis emerged in Arabic and would not have emerged in Finnish. Language here is not treated as a neutral delivery mechanism for pre-existing meaning. It is a structural condition that shapes what becomes available for articulation, recognition, and interpretation.
- ❖ Third, it shifts from predefined outcomes to maintained conditions. The framework evaluates whether the conditions required for reception are structurally present within encounters rather than whether participants reached predetermined institutional coordinates. Reception depends on continuity. Conditions held episodically produce episodic visibility.
- ❖ Fourth, reception design shifts from the commissioner's brief to the participant's brief. Institutional definitions of successful integration cease to function as the sole analytical orientation. Participants' descriptions of structural conditions become analytically primary because they reveal dimensions of institutional life current evaluative instruments routinely fail to perceive.

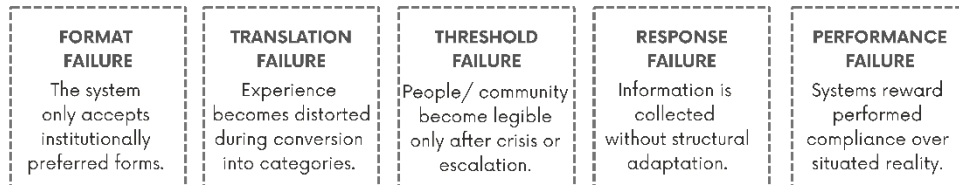
Reception design is therefore a framework for reading institutional perception. Figure 9 details the reception design framework.

RECEPTION DESIGN FRAMEWORK

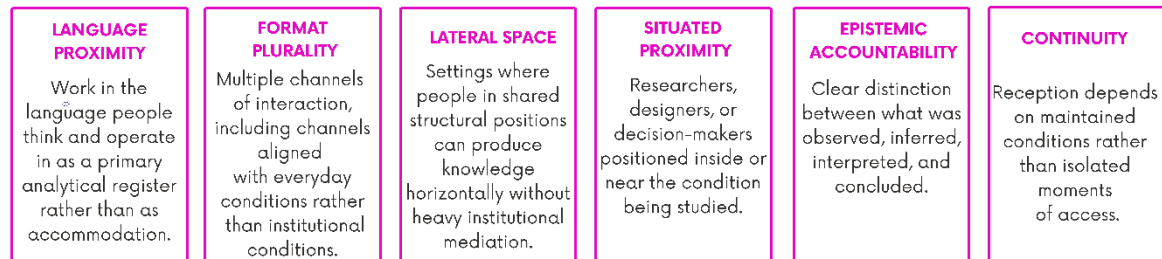
Reception

The capacity of a system to admit, interpret, and structurally respond to forms of knowledge produced within unequal conditions.

MODES OF NON-RECEPTION



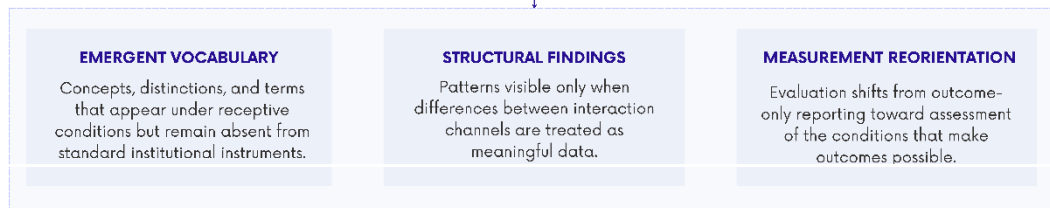
CONDITIONS FOR RECEPTION



INTERACTION

When receptive conditions are present, interactions can admit forms of experience and knowledge that standardized systems routinely exclude.

OUTPUTS OF RECEPTION



Modes of non-reception

The framework identifies patterned forms of institutional non-reception: conditions under which systems systematically fail to perceive, interpret, or respond to the knowledge available within the populations they govern.

Format failure occurs when institutions recognize only information delivered through institutionally preferred forms. Experiences that emerge through informal, asynchronous, relational, or peer-based formats remain structurally invisible.

Translation failure occurs when experiences become compressed during conversion into administrative or analytical categories. The process preserves institutional legibility while erasing situated meaning.

Threshold failure occurs when institutional visibility depends on escalation. People become legible only after crisis, burnout, withdrawal, or acute deterioration.

Response failure occurs when institutions collect information without adapting structures, practices, or evaluative instruments in response to what becomes known. Reception collapses into extraction.

Performance failure occurs when systems reward recognizable institutional performance over situated reality. Compliance becomes more legible than condition.

These failures are not incidental errors within otherwise neutral systems. They are structurally reproduced through the conditions under which institutions organize perception itself. These modes are abstracted from the empirical patterns documented in Chapter 5: format failure from the composed self (5.2), translation failure from compound absorption (5.5), threshold failure from the slip (5.5), response failure from the closed loop (6.2), and performance failure from the gratitude tax (5.5).

What reception produced

The diagnostic vocabulary documented in this thesis emerged only under conditions the formal integration system does not produce.

التغريير (broken promise) required sustained trust, shared linguistic register, and continuity across encounters. تفريغ (hollowing) required relational persistence across formats. أمان بلا حياة (safety without life) became available only in Arabic, in live conversation, after weeks of asynchronous exchange, with a listener positioned inside the structural condition being described. These terms demonstrate the framework's central claim: systems cannot detect what their conditions cannot produce.

The issue is therefore not informational absence, but structural non-reception. The formal integration system could not generate this vocabulary because the conditions required for its emergence were absent from the system's design.

The findings emerged through situated proximity: a researcher positioned near the structural condition participants occupied, working in the language participants think in, across formats capable of admitting what standardized institutional encounters routinely exclude. That positioning formed part of the reception condition itself. The vocabulary matters because it names conditions institutional instruments currently fail to perceive.

Each term therefore functions diagnostically. Each becomes a question directed back at the system:

- What conditions produced this expression?
- Why did institutional instruments fail to detect it?
- What forms of experience remain structurally illegible under current formats?

Reception produced more than vocabulary. It produced structural findings visible only through divergence across channels, temporal continuity, and peer-based interpretation. The differences between formats became analytically meaningful in themselves. What participants said formally, asynchronously, collectively, privately, immediately, or after relational continuity did not converge into one coherent institutional self. The divergence constituted the finding.

The outputs of reception therefore become inputs for redesign. Emergent vocabulary, structural findings, and failures of reception specify the conditions institutions would need to change in order to perceive differently.

The instruments

The method developed in Chapter 4 produced epistemic instruments oriented toward reception: instruments designed to detect forms of experience, divergence, and structural conditions that standardized institutional formats routinely fail to register. Four are developed in this thesis.

- ❖ The dual-channel reading (4.6.4, demonstrated in 5.2) pairs sustained asynchronous correspondence with live conversation across the same participants. The analytical focus lies in the divergence between formats: what appears in one channel, disappears in another, shifts in tone, or becomes sayable only under specific conditions. The instrument detects the distance between institutional performance and situated experience. It traces how participants distribute expression differently across formats, tempos, and relational conditions. Customer journey mapping assumes continuity across encounters and coherence across selves. The dual-channel reading instead treats divergence as analytically meaningful. Where the journey map plots movement, the dual-channel reading plots discontinuity, suppression, and emergence.

- ❖ The diagnostic vocabulary as assessment language (5.7, Table 5). The Arabic diagnostic vocabulary documented in this thesis functions as an assessment instrument. Each term names a structural condition institutional language could not internally generate under existing reception conditions. The vocabulary preserves participants' own analytical categories rather than translating them into institutional abstractions. The terms therefore operate simultaneously as description, diagnosis, and critique.
- ❖ The peer space as lateral knowledge instrument (5.9). Participants who share structural conditions generate interpretations, comparisons, and diagnostic language collectively, in their own register and without institutional mediation of content. Knowledge emerging within peer space differs structurally from knowledge produced through facilitated workshops or institutional consultations because the interpretive frame remains with participants themselves rather than being reorganized through institutional categories, prompts, or objectives. Peer space expands reception beyond the researcher-participant encounter. Participants become analytical actors within the production of institutional knowledge rather than sources of extractable information.
- ❖ The conditions-audit (Table 8, below). The conditions audit evaluates whether the conditions required for reception are structurally present within institutional encounters. The audit tracks: linguistic proximity, continuity across formats, opportunities for lateral interpretation, situated proximity, and institutional responsiveness to emergent diagnostic vocabulary. The instrument directs evaluation toward the conditions that shape institutional perception itself. Attention therefore shifts from outcome confirmation toward analysis of the conditions under which outcomes become possible, distorted, or rendered invisible. Monitoring dashboards stabilize around aggregate indicators. The conditions audit introduces interrogation into evaluation by treating failures of reception as system-level findings rather than participant-level deficits.

The instruments developed here are initial demonstrations of what receptive systems require. Reception design establishes an orientation rather than a closed methodology. Additional instruments remain necessary for positions and structural conditions identified by this thesis but not yet fully explored.

The logic of the framework extends beyond integration policy. The problem of reception appears wherever institutional formats determine which experiences become visible. Testing the framework across healthcare, education, welfare administration, and other domains organized through asymmetrical perception is work this thesis opens and does not close.

6.7. Three design obligations

The obligations below are reception design applied to the Finnish integration system, given what this thesis documented in Chapters 4 and 5. The form they take is specific to this system. The framework they instantiate is described in 6.6.

When harm is patterned, produced by identifiable design decisions, and shown by the data to be contingent, accountability follows (Young, 2011; Broom et al., 2023). The findings in Chapter 5 and the analysis above meet those conditions. The estrangement sequence is not one woman's bad luck repeated eight times. It is a pattern the system produces reproducibly. The mechanisms in Table 2 are design decisions about what to measure, what to close, what to classify, what to ignore, and they can be made differently. P4's case is the proof of contingency: under identifiable conditions, *غربة* did not deepen.

What follows are obligations, not recommendations. The brief appears in 5.11 as the women gave it: *جربوني* (*jarrībūnī*, give me a chance), honest promises, stop making us carry the explaining, remove nationality from applications, faith as infrastructure recognised, emotional safety, receive me. This section takes that brief as the design specification the system has not met and translates it into three obligations addressed to the integration system: the set of services, policies, measurement instruments, and classification systems that produced what this thesis documented.

Obligation 1: See the working self

The system currently reads the composed self through single-format encounters. The working self, which holds the persisting costs, the structural critique, and the conditions the system has already marked as resolved, has no official channel.

Build multi-format encounters. Any integration monitoring, welfare review, or design research that claims to know what these women's lives contain must create at least one channel that does not require the composed self. This means at least one low-stakes,

participant-paced, language-flexible channel sitting alongside formal channels. The two channels do not produce the same data. Both are needed.

Treat tense and contradiction as diagnostic. When a person describes a condition as ongoing and the case record marks it as resolved, the system is obligated to treat the contradiction as information about its own design failure. The contradiction is the system's problem to investigate.

Enable peer-to-peer epistemology. The workshop produced knowledge no researcher mediation could have generated. Creating conditions for lateral, peer-to-peer analysis is a methodological obligation for any process that claims to centre these women's lives. A design process that routes all knowledge through facilitators will systematically miss what can only be produced between women inside the condition.

One form this could take in Finland. A municipal integration follow-up that pairs a brief formal review with a participant-paced, Arabic-language channel (voice notes, messaging, whatever format the participant inhabits already) and an optional peer session with others at similar arc positions. The obligation is the principle. The form is a design problem for those with the institutional authority to solve it.

Obligation 2: Interrupt the sequence

The estrangement sequence begins at recruitment, before anyone arrives, and stabilises in the worst cases as *أمان بلا حياة* (safety without life). The system does not register this as its own output. It reads the outcome as successful: employed, housed, not drawing crisis benefits. The obligation is to treat the sequence as a diagnostic of the system's own design rather than as an index of migrant fragility.

At التغير (broken promise): link recruitment and reception. An unsupported promise is a mechanism of harm. The commissioning obligation is architectural: whoever authorises recruitment must be accountable for the adequacy of reception. If the reception architecture cannot honour the promise, the promise must change.

At تفرغ (hollowing): detect and interrupt hollowing. The obligation is to stop producing cycles of effort with no structural payoff: the application loops, the repeated work trials, the language courses that end at the threshold where support is most needed and never

resume. Each cycle of effort without payoff is a unit of تفريغ (hollowing) the system produces and does not register.

At غربة (structural estrangement): name and design ambient decency. The obligation is to name this as a design outcome and to specify ambient decency as the minimum owed condition at every interface between these women and Finnish institutions. Safety as default. Faith and family accommodated without requiring justification. Being treated as capable before requiring proof. These constitute a design ethic. Every institution that touches these women's lives can be evaluated against it.

If community infrastructure compensates for the formal system's failures, and the formal system then reads that infrastructure as a parallel-society risk, the system is pathologising its own shadow. The communities the TEM document names as a threat are often the structures people built because the system did not hold them.

One form this could take in Finland. An obligation on universities that recruit international students to fund and maintain a reception structure for the duration of the permit cycle, with named accountability for what happens when the programme ends and the permit approaches expiry. This addresses التغيرير (broken promise) at its origin.

Obligation 3: Measure what the system was actually built to produce

P7 satisfies every metric the system holds. She has been here ten years. She is fine by every measure. She is not fine. She named what is missing: أمان بلا حياة (safety without life). The metrics succeed and the purpose fails simultaneously, and the system cannot detect the difference because it was not built to look for it.

The distinction the data forces is between integration and immigrant management. If the state is pursuing integration, it must specify what it is actually trying to produce: not only employment and housing, but a life that feels like a life. وطن (homeland) alongside بيت (house). If the state is pursuing immigrant management, the current metrics are already sufficient. The women's accounts suggest the system is optimised for the second while claiming the first. When the gap between the metric and the purpose becomes this precise and this documented, continuing to use the metric without revision is a choice.

The women's demand is for the system to do less. They are not asking for special programmes. They are asking for ordinary reception: a salary, a workplace that sees you,

a system that takes you in as you are. The nine-to-five desire documented in 5.6 is the desire to be received by a structure that functions. That modesty is analytically significant. The system is being asked to subtract friction. The request is not for added support. That inversion reframes what "responsive design" means in this context. In Finnish integration, the authority to revise monitoring indicators sits with the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment. The obligation is addressed there.

Table 7. What current metrics measure, what they miss, what a revised metric would require.

Domain	Current metric	What it misses	Revised metric (obligation)
Shelter	Has housing, income, address	وطن (homeland): sense of being at home in a life, not only housed	Felt liveability: does this person inhabit a world, or only a flat?
Safety	No immediate threat; basic legal protection	حياة: life inside the safety; أمان بلا حياة (safety without life) as the gap	Safety with life: is safety accompanied by conditions for a liveable world?
Language	Certification level; test passed	Whether language opens or forecloses a life; what the course gave and failed to give	Functional embedding: can this person use language to sustain a world, or only to satisfy a test?
Employment	Employed / not employed; benefit dependency	Exploitation inside employment; invisible employed	Quality of employment: is the person receiving what the welfare state offers, or subsidising it?

		subjects; employment closing the case	
Participation	Course attendance; service contact	Faith infrastructure, care networks, pedagogical transmission	Embedded networks: is there a world the person sustains, beyond the integration programme?
Arc position	Recent arrival / settled / citizen	Born-here غريبة (structural estrangement); post-integration, pre-belonging; twelve years and still outside	Structural position: where in the estrangement sequence is this person? What interrupted or sustained it?

The table maps revised metrics across six domains. The three sub-obligations below name the structural moves they require collectively.

Include liveability alongside safety. Add measures of whether life feels like a life: capacity for rest, continuity of meaningful practices, the presence of a world the person sustains and inhabits. The vocabulary the corpus produced (وطن (homeland), أمان بلا حياة (safety without life), distributed belonging) offers a starting point.

Surface unrecognised infrastructures. The system currently treats faith networks, transnational care, informal mentoring, and creative practices as invisible at best and as parallel-society formation at worst. These infrastructures do what the formal system fails to do. They are not supplementary to integration. They are the integration that happens when the system is not working. The obligation is to see them accurately, to stop pathologising what the system's own failures produced, and to ask those who sustain them what support, if any, they want.

Create categories for what the system currently cannot see. Post-integration, pre-belonging. Born here, structurally estranged. Employed and invisible. Twelve years and not arrived. These are structural positions the corpus documents and the monitoring

framework cannot name. Naming them is the minimum. A system that has no category for a condition will never detect it as a failure it produced. One tension attends this obligation. Glissant's right to opacity holds that people should not be required to make themselves fully legible to the systems that govern them. The obligation is on the system to have the capacity to see. It is not a demand that people make themselves seen. The categories must exist without requiring anyone to fill them.

One form this could take in Finland. Add two or three questions to the municipal integration review that ask about liveability: Is there something in your life here that is yours? Is there something you are building that you chose? Map the difference between employed and embedded and employed and invisible in employment statistics. These are specific changes. They require the willingness to see what the current system is producing and to name it as produced.

The reception audit

The three obligations above name what the integration system would need to change. The audit instrument below is how the change can be assessed. It asks of each service, indicator, or institutional practice whether the conditions for reception hold. A dashboard converges on a number that confirms a design. An audit converges on a question that interrogates one.

The obligations above are addressed to the integration system as a whole. This instrument offers a practical tool for those who hold specific responsibility within it: the institutional commissioner, the service designer, the welfare researcher, the policy analyst.

Table 8. The reception audit. Layers, prompts, and conditions for reception.

Layer	Scope	Prompts	Grounded in
Encounter and formats	How the system meets people	Which encounters do we currently design? Which version of the person do they reach: the composed self or the working self?	Composed/working self (5.2, 6.2); single-format monitoring

		Where do we have channels for the working self?	
Unseen worlds and trajectories	What the indicators cannot see	Where do we see أمان بلا حياة (safety without life) in our data? Where do we see التغريب , (broken promise), تفريغ (hollowing), غرابة (structural estrangement) as structural patterns? What worlds (وطن (homeland), faith infrastructure, care networks) are sustained entirely outside our instruments?	أمان بلا حياة (safety without life) (5.5, 5.7); estrangement sequence (5.7); watan/bayt (5.7)
Cost layer	What it costs people to live under the current design	How do our rules, timelines, and eligibility thresholds produce the slip? Where do we see the gratitude tax? Who is able to refuse our offers, and who cannot?	The slip (5.5); gratitude tax (5.5); refusal as uneven resource (5.6)
Obligation layer	What the system now owes	Which of the women's asks (5.11) does this diagnosis read as obligations? What one concrete rule, indicator, or form can change in the next cycle? How will we design for those who have stopped asking?	Extracted subject (5.8); faith as infrastructure (5.6); P5 as boundary condition

Accountability layer	Who does what differently, and by when	For each row: what will we do differently? Who, by role and institution, is accountable? By when? How will we know whether our changes reflect care for people, or only care about managing the problem of people?	Young's (2011) structural accountability; Costanza-Chock's (2020) accountability to communities
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The vocabulary this thesis produced is not a glossary to be applied from the outside. It is a diagnostic instrument. Whether a service can detect *تفريغ* (hollowing) is a question a designer can ask of a service. Whether a monitoring framework has a category for anything between *أمان* (safety) and *حياة* (life) is a question a policy analyst can ask of a dashboard. Whether an employer produces ambient decency or its opposite is a question an organisation can ask of its own procedures. The terms were given by the women. The system now has them. What it does with them is the next accountability.

The obligations above are addressed to an integration system whose political trajectory, as Chapter 2 documented, is moving in the opposite direction. Citizenship requirements tightened in December 2025. Family reunification narrowed in June of the same year. The permanent-residence requirement increased from five years to six in January 2026, three weeks before this fieldwork began. The March 2025 Non-Discrimination Ombudsman finding, that the Interior Ministry acted in a discriminatory manner in preparing the quota refugee plan, providing instructions designed to prevent Muslim refugees from entering Finland, indicates the trajectory is not incidental.

The obligations remain on record regardless. They describe what design accountability would require if the system were capable of receiving them. P5 names the limit case at the level of the individual: she has calculated that engaging with the system costs more than it returns, and she has stopped. The political moment names the limit case at the level of the polity. Both are part of the diagnosis. Neither weakens the obligations. The thesis records them at the moment when the conditions for their reception are most diminished, because that is when the record matters most.

6.8. Sub-questions and tensions

Sub-questions

SQ1: What do Arabic-speaking Muslim women in Finland carry, build, and refuse?

The women sustain linguistic, relational, and religious worlds, assembled variously through choice, necessity, and fate. The cost is documented in 5.5 and named through the slip, the gratitude tax, compound absorption, and the private economy of survival. The estrangement sequence names the trajectory those costs accumulate into when nothing interrupts them.

SQ2: What do the integration system's instruments count, require, and fail to register?

The system reads the composed self through its single-format monitoring architecture: employment, language certification, course attendance, benefit dependency, absence of sanctions. It fails to register وطن (homeland), distributed belonging, the distance between أمان (safety) and حياة (life), faith as infrastructure, the private economy of survival, and the conditions named across Tables 2, 3, and 4. The failure is not in the data. It is in the classification infrastructure, which was not designed to ask the questions these conditions would require.

SQ3: What vocabulary and framework does the thesis produce?

Three outputs. A sequential diagnostic model: the estrangement sequence, with intervention points at each stage. A set of analytical terms (Table 5) doing work the existing integration vocabulary cannot. And a methodological practice: Arabic-first, dual-channel, relational trust as epistemological condition, attention to tense and to peer-to-peer knowledge as forms of data the system currently has no protocol for. Together these constitute a framework for reading integration at a level the existing monitoring architecture cannot access.

SQ4: What conditions would allow the system to register what it currently cannot see?

The three obligations in 6.7 answer this at the level of design. The system needs multi-format encounters that can reach the working self. It needs to treat the estrangement sequence as a diagnostic of its own design, with intervention points at التغير (broken promise), تفرغ (hollowing), and غربة (structural estrangement). And it needs to measure liveability alongside safety, surface the infrastructures it currently cannot see, and create categories for the structural positions its monitoring framework has no name for. These are conditions of accountability. The thesis frames them at this level rather than as

recommendations for improvement, because the diagnosis the obligations follow from is structural.

Tensions

The five tensions named in 5.10 remain unresolved by the analysis above.

The inherited/produced *غربة* (structural estrangement) distinction (P1 and P7 arriving with the wound; P6 and P3 having it produced here) calls for different design responses at each pole. A framework that collapses them asks design to do the wrong work for the wrong person.

The choice/necessity/fate triad means any design response that celebrates worldmaking without naming the conditions that forced it will build for the choice register and miss everyone in the necessity register.

Refusal remains unevenly distributed. P7 is still attending courses and returning to offices at year ten because she cannot afford to stop. Any approach that depends on participants saying no will structurally exclude the people who cannot afford to say no.

P4's resolution and P5's non-resolution sit at opposite ends of the estrangement sequence. Neither is the normative case. The system produced both outcomes. Treating P4 as the success case and reverse-engineering a programme from her conditions would miss the structural fact that what worked for her required conditions most participants cannot access.

Ambient decency may or may not be designable. If it can only be recognised and never specified, the system has no tool for the condition P2 and P8 inhabit. If it can be specified, the risk is that turning it into a programme destroys what makes it ambient.

These tensions constrain what the three obligations can promise. They are left open because premature closure would cost the thesis its honesty.

6.9. Limitations

This study reads eight lives. It can name patterns and propose diagnostics. It cannot claim population-level generalisability, and it does not.

The eight women are Arabic-speaking and Muslim. The mechanisms this thesis names may operate differently for men, for non-Arabic-speaking migrants, for non-Muslim

newcomers, for people whose racialisation reads differently in Finnish public space. Several participants noted that male Arabic-speaking friends and colleagues encountered harsher institutional sorting: more suspicion, more policing, and sharper labour-market refusal. The estrangement sequence and the diagnostic vocabulary were developed from women's accounts. Whether the same mechanisms operate for men, or whether gendered racialisation produces a different sequence, is a question this thesis's scope cannot answer. What the women's observations establish is that the integration system distributes its harms along gendered lines, and a study that followed Arabic-speaking men through the same system would likely find different mechanisms at work. That study has not been done.

The most depleted participant did not attend the live conversation or the workshop. Her WhatsApp material is in the study; her absence from the formats that produced the working self is itself a finding about what participatory methods can reach. But it also means the thesis's richest analytical material comes from participants who still had energy to show up. The structural positions of greatest exhaustion are present in the corpus and under-represented in the collective analysis.

The Arabic-first commitment made certain things visible (the diagnostic vocabulary, the tense shifts, the moral geography of *غربة* (structural estrangement)) and may have obscured others. Participants who worked primarily in English produced data that required reading the English as data about where Arabic could not go. The commitment surfaced this as a finding. It also means the thesis's analytical vocabulary is weighted toward what Arabic could hold.

The three reflexive moments documented in 5.5 show that the insider-researcher position produced and foreclosed in the same encounter. Two of the three closed analytical threads that were in motion. One opened material no planned prompt would have reached. The method is productive and hazardous in the same gesture, and the thesis holds both.

The study was conducted in one country, under one welfare architecture, during a specific political period (the government that took office in 2023 and the policy environment it produced). The mechanisms may transfer. The specific institutional configurations will not. Testing the estrangement sequence and the diagnostic vocabulary across other Nordic welfare states, other migration populations, and other political periods is a direction the thesis invites.

Finally: the thesis was written by a Tunisian newcomer in Finland who shares the structural position she studied. The composed self I maintained to do the work is documented in 5.5. What that positionality produced and what it cost are part of the data.

6.10. The boundary that does not move

P5 appears at the close of this chapter because she will not leave, and she should not.

She has been here twelve years. She functions. She works, cooks, creates things, maintains her life. She has calculated, clearly and correctly, that engaging with the integration system costs more than it returns, and she has stopped engaging. She is not broken. She is not a failure of integration. She is the endpoint of the estrangement sequence run long enough without interruption, stabilised into a form the system reads as success.

Every obligation in this chapter was written with her in view. Obligation 1 (see the working self) fails to reach her because she will not enter the encounter. Obligation 2 (interrupt the sequence) came too late, or was never present. Obligation 3 (measure what matters) cannot detect *أمان بلا حياة* (safety without life) in a person who has stopped responding to measurement instruments. The audit table asks who is accountable for designing for those who have stopped asking. It does not answer the question because this thesis cannot answer it.

What this thesis can say is that designing for P5 requires a different theory of what welfare design is for. Not: we offer, they apply. Not: we measure, they comply. Something that offers without requiring application, that adjusts without requiring disclosure, that recognises without requiring performance. That is a welfare architecture that does not currently exist in Finnish integration. Building it is not this chapter's work. It is the obligation this chapter cannot close.

She is the verdict.

The system can deliver safety. It delivered hers. It cannot deliver a life inside the safety. It did not deliver hers. Everything this chapter has argued follows from that gap. The gap remains.

7. CONCLUSIONS

This thesis read eight lives across the migrant arc and found a gap between what the integration system sees and what Arabic-speaking Muslim women in Finland sustain. Chapters 5 and 6 documented that gap: the estrangement sequence, the diagnostic vocabulary, the closed loop, and the three obligations that follow. This chapter names what the thesis contributes, what it opens, and what it cannot close.

What the thesis contributes

The thesis makes six contributions to the fields it addresses.

First, it relocates غربة (ghurba) from a psychological state to a structural output. In the existing literature, غربة belongs to the migrant: a condition she carries, rooted in displacement, amenable to therapeutic intervention or cultural adjustment. In this thesis, غربة is what the encounter between a one-world welfare system and a person carrying more than one world produces. The estrangement sequence documents the mechanism by which this production operates across the arc, and P4's case demonstrates that the mechanism responds to designable conditions. If غربة can stop deepening when identifiable conditions are present, then its persistence elsewhere is produced. The relocation changes both what غربة means analytically and what it demands in response. The appropriate response is design change.

Second, the thesis introduces a diagnostic vocabulary grounded in what the women named: رخيت (the slip), أمان بلا حياة (amān bilā ḥayāh, safety without life), التغيرير (broken promise), استسلمت (I surrendered), تفريغ (hollowing), وطنية مؤلمة (painful belonging). These terms do analytical work the existing integration vocabulary cannot do, because they name what the system's categories structurally exclude. Each term was positioned against the existing literature in Section 6.4 and shown to see something no current framework holds. Together with the estrangement sequence, they constitute a diagnostic framework for reading integration at a level the existing monitoring architecture cannot access.

Third, the thesis demonstrates that single-format welfare monitoring generates systematic blindness by design. The composed self and the working self, documented across seven dual-format cases, are structurally different accounts of the same life. The integration system reads the composed self and names that person integrated. The closed loop documents how critique, complaint, and refusal are metabolised into compliance data, making the system's

failures invisible to its own instruments. The finding is about what kind of knowledge welfare research can and cannot produce, given the formats it currently uses.

Fourth, the thesis extends Escobar's autonomous design framework in two directions. It demonstrates that autonomous design holds beyond territorial struggles: the linguistic, relational, and religious worlds the women sustain inside a welfare state are worlds in Escobar's sense, maintained without land. It shows that autonomous design theory must account for worldmaking across the registers of choice, necessity, and fate, because the women build in all three and the existing framework can recognise only the first. The people the integration system is designed for are already doing the design work the system has not done. P3's mid-conversation shift from participant to mentor, P5's survival infrastructure, P7's construction of an Arabic-Islamic home for her children: these are not coping. They are design under constraint.

Fifth, the thesis makes a methodological contribution to service design and participatory research. The dual-channel method produced the composed self/working self distinction that single-format methods structurally cannot reach. The diagnostic vocabulary, the estrangement sequence, and the closed loop are all findings that became visible because the method made room for the working self. The principle generalises: any design research that claims to know what users carry needs at least one format that does not produce the composed self, and at least one space where knowledge moves laterally between participants without the researcher mediating it.

Sixth, the thesis names the design orientation that holds these contributions together. Reception design is the reorientation of service design from moving people toward the system's categories to receiving what people already know and carry. The thesis is a worked example: the method practiced reception, the findings are what reception produced, the diagnostic vocabulary is its artifact, the three obligations are its specifications, the audit instrument is its assessment tool. The concept is not external to the evidence. It emerged from it, in conditions the integration system does not provide.

What the thesis opens

What the thesis opens, it cannot all close. Eight women, one welfare system, one researcher whose insider position structured what was reachable. These conditions made the findings possible. They also bound them.

Chapter 5 closed with five tensions the findings held open. Three were resolved through the analytical framework: inherited and produced *غربة* (structural estrangement) held through the dual reading in 5.7 and 6.2; worldmaking across choice, necessity, and fate held through the triad in 6.2 and the Escobar extension in 6.3; refusal as an uneven resource held through the P7 contrast in 5.6 and the third obligation in 6.7. Two remain open: what counts as success when the only options available are survival structures, and whether ambient decency can be designed for without destroying what makes it ambient. The post-integration, pre-belonging position named in 5.8, where a person has satisfied every metric and arrived nowhere, is the structural condition these open questions describe.

P5's lucid disengagement after twelve years marks the boundary of what participation-based design can reach. She has calculated that engaging with the system costs more than it returns, and she has stopped engaging. Building for those who have rationally stopped asking requires a different theory of what welfare design is for, one this thesis names the need for without providing. That is the first open question the field inherits.

The diagnostic vocabulary and the multi-stream method were developed inside a specific configuration: Arabic-speaking Muslim women, a Nordic welfare state, an insider researcher with shared linguistic and structural positioning, fieldwork timed to Ramadan. Whether the estrangement sequence holds across other populations, other welfare architectures, and other political periods is a question the thesis invites. Specific tests would include the same method with Arabic-speaking men, with non-Muslim newcomers, with comparable populations in other Nordic countries, and under policy regimes whose direction has reversed. Several participants noted that male Arabic-speaking friends and colleagues encountered harsher institutional sorting: more suspicion, more policing, sharper labour-market refusal. Whether gendered racialisation produces a different estrangement sequence, or a different sequence entirely, is a question this thesis's scope cannot answer. The mechanisms may transfer. The specific institutional configurations will not.

Two further directions follow from what the thesis built. The audit instrument proposed in Table 8 was developed analytically, from the corpus outward. Whether it functions as a practical tool when placed inside a municipal integration office, and what it surfaces when practitioners use it to read their own services, is a question this thesis poses without answering. A longitudinal return to the same cohort would test the estrangement sequence's predictions: whether P6's depletion trajectory continues or is interrupted, whether P1's

institutional scaffolding holds, whether P7's *أمان بلا حياة* (safety without life) deepens or shifts, and whether the diagnostic vocabulary the women produced together in the workshop has changed how any of them read their own conditions.

The design justice principle that those most affected by design should be central to the design process presumes a stable collective subject. The eight women in this study do not share a nationality, a relationship to Islam, a migration story, or a sense of what the label "Muslim woman" means for them. What they share is a structural position inside the same system. The workshop showed they can produce knowledge together that none could produce alone. Together, they made sense of their experiences, held space for what is usually dismissed and unnamed, and comforted each other. How to build design processes around a shared position without pretending it is a shared identity is a problem the thesis opens and does not close. The conceptual architecture that answers it has yet to be built. Reception design is the orientation that follows. Whether its toolkit can be extended to other populations whose shared position is structural and whose worlds are plural is one of the open questions the thesis hands forward.

Adjacent to these, the corpus signals directions it could not follow in full: how racialisation, gender, class, and educational background differently distribute which costs become visible and when, and how the political period during which fieldwork was conducted configures the institutional conditions documented here. A study that held these dimensions as primary variables would need a different design. This thesis held them as present and did not hold them as governing.

What remains

This thesis began in a fluorescent room. Three times a week, a woman sits there and practises words she already knows in a language that is not hers. The integration plan says she is progressing. She said she is disappearing.

The room has not changed. The same metrics are running. The same plans close cases when employment registers. The same architecture reads the composed self and has no channel for the working self.

What has changed is the vocabulary available for reading what the room produces. The slip names what is being given up. Broken promise names the recruitment that did not arrive.

Safety without life names what stabilises after the case is closed. The closed loop names how critique enters the room and is metabolised into compliance, depletion, absorption, and self-blame. The audit instrument names what the institutions touching that room owe.

The orientation that holds these together is reception design. It is not a programme the system can adopt and call its work done. It is a commitment to receive what people already know and carry, and to build the instruments that commitment requires. The instruments in this thesis are partial. The brief, given by the women in 5.11, is what the rest of the work is for.

The woman in the fluorescent room remains. So do the eight women whose lives this thesis read alongside hers, and the many more whose lives this thesis cannot speak for, navigating the same architecture in conditions this study did not reach. The vocabulary is in the room now. What the system does with it is the system's own account to make.

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