

Social media and public perception of refugees and migrants



Social media and the refugee crisis in 3 parts

Video 1: Introduction to the refugee crisis

Video 2: The refugee crisis in social media

Video 3: The use of social media by refugees

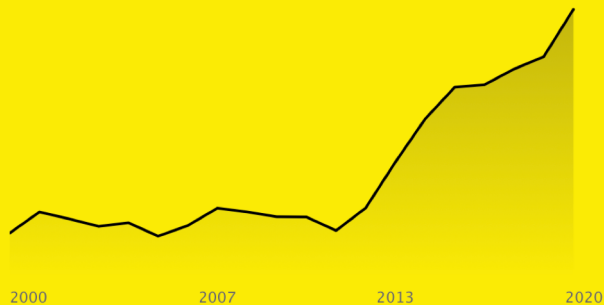
UNHCR:

Refugee Population Statistics

80 MILLION

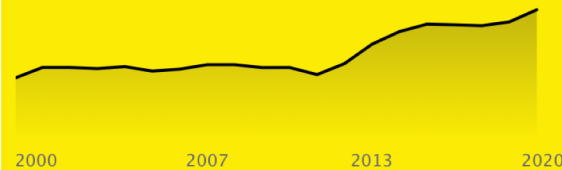
Forcibly displaced people worldwide

While a full picture is yet to be established, UNHCR estimates that global forced displacement has surpassed 80 million at mid-2020.



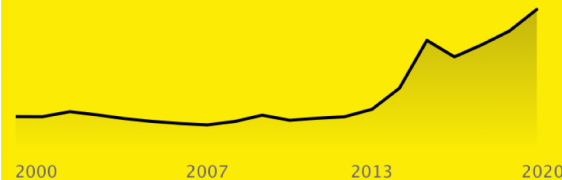
45.7 MILLION

are internally displaced people (Source: IDMC, as of end-2019)



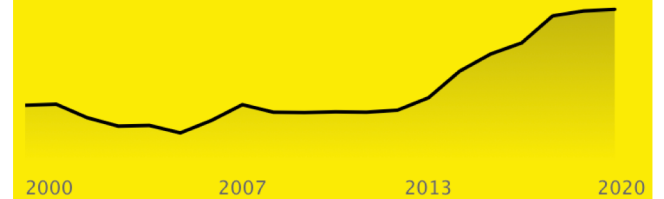
4.2 MILLION

are asylum-seekers (as of mid-2020)



26.3 MILLION

are refugees (as of mid-2020)



3.6 MILLION

are Venezuelans displaced abroad. A total of 4.5 million Venezuelans have left their country as of mid-2020, including 138,600 refugees, 808,200 asylum-seekers and 3.6 million Venezuelans displaced abroad.

30 – 34 million

are children

86%

hosted in developing countries

4.2

million stateless persons



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So what is this all about?

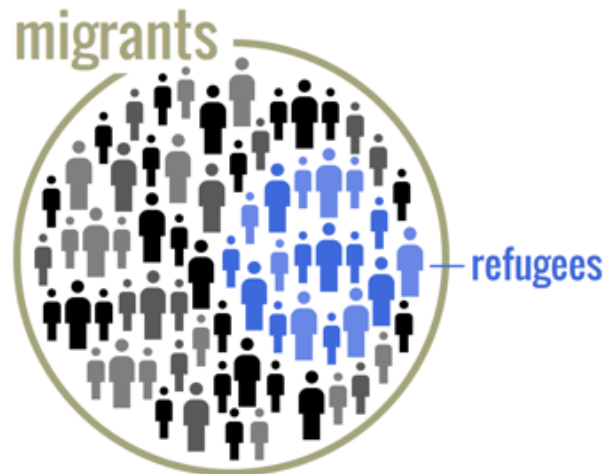
“The European **migrant crisis** or European **refugee crisis** began in 2015, when a rising number of **refugees** and **migrants** made the journey to the European Union (EU) to seek asylum, traveling across the Mediterranean Sea or through Southeast Europe”.



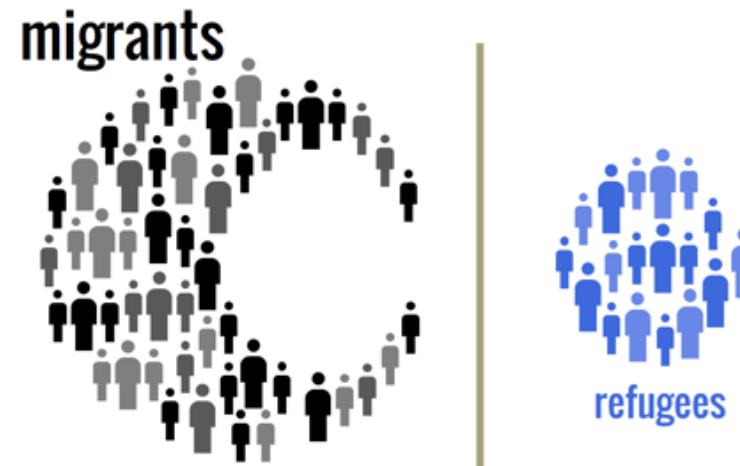
Is 'refugees and migrants' a neutral phrase?

While 'refugees' are defined in legal terms in the 1951 Refugee Convention, there is no corresponding source that defines 'migrants'

Inclusivist definition of migrants



Residualist definition of migrants

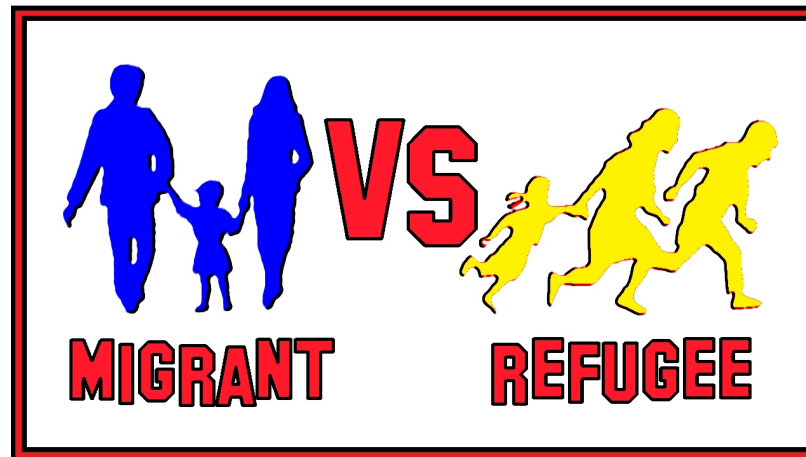


'Refugees or Migrants': Are they really interchangeable?



Refugee vs. Migrant

- **Migrant:** A person who moves, usually voluntarily, to live or work, either temporarily or permanently. May or may not cross a border.
- **Refugee:** Forced to flee a country due to conflict or persecution



What's in a name?

“To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient [...], in such a way as to promote a particular definition of a problem, casual interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (Entman, 1993)

- Frames:

- Used to present information in a certain way
- Used for interpretations
- Used to influence public debate and public opinion



Framing the refugees

- Prime Minister **David Cameron**: "swarms of people coming across the Mediterranean"
- Home Secretary **David Blunkett**: referred to child asylum seekers as 'swamping' some British schools
- **Marine Le Pen**, National Front party France, referred to the wave of refugees as "migrant anarchy."
- Luxembourg Foreign Minister **Jean Asselborn**: "We are heading into anarchy"
- Greek Prime Minister **Alexis Tsipras**: "We will not accept turning the country into a permanent warehouse of souls"



Van Gorp's cultural frames

FRAME	Role	Social problem	Responsibility	Moral/emotional reaction
Migrants as VICTIM	Passive / in need of help	How to <i>receive</i> people who are victims (of circumstances beyond 'our' control) and who are forced to leave their country	Borne by democratic countries and citizens who respect human rights	Duty to help those less fortunate than 'us'
Migrants as INTRUDER	Active / resorting to illicit actions or practices	How to <i>stop</i> people (who are a threat to 'us') from entering our country	Borne by policy-makers, law-enforcers and migrants themselves	Duty to protect 'ourselves' from threat

Source: Adapted from van Gorp (2005).

Framing the refugee crisis

Daily Mail
FRIDAY, JULY 31, 2015 www.dailymail.co.uk 60p

WHY WE ALL FEAR DENTISTS ARE NATURAL BORN KILLERS

QUENTIN LETTS PAGE 14

As police seize stowaway migrants across South, Cameron is attacked for 'likening them to insects'



Making it through: Police across southern England arrested alleged illegal immigrants yesterday after hundreds stormed the Channel Tunnel entrance in Calais

THE 'SWARM' ON OUR STREETS

THE Calais crisis intensified last night after a day of astonishing scenes on both sides of the Channel triggered by the chaos at the French port.

By **Claire Ellicott**
and **Stephen Wright**

point, a mother and her young son clutching a teddy bear were seen crawling through a security fence. It came as David Cameron was attacked

perpetrated migrants on the M20 after they made it to the other side of the Tunnel. One even risked his life by stowing away under a horsebox for two hours. Last night, 200 migrants tried to storm the Tunnel, shortly after a shuttle train from the UK pulled in, they rushed at the point where cars leaving the Tunnel join

it through before riot police formed a cordon. On another day of drama: ■ Eurotunnel dramatically sealed back its overnight freight service to reduce the opportunities for stowaways - a move which will have major implications for the UK economy, which is already losing £20million a day because of the chaos. ■ The tiny's small representation on

SUPERB PULLOUT INSIDE GREAT BRITISH BAKE OFF **SWEET TARTS AND PIES**

Daily Mail
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2015 www.dailymail.co.uk 60p



Cradled in the arms of a Turkish policeman, this little boy was drowned during his refugee family's desperate bid to reach Greece. The image could not be more harrowing - but must be seen to comprehend the gravity of the migrant crisis engulfing Europe **REPORTS: PAGES 8-11**



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Refugees and social media

■ Social media as an alternative public space

- Information gathering
- Content creation and engagement with content
- Participation in discussions of societal events

■ Social media usage among refugees

- Information gathering
- Staying connected with family and friends
- Integration into their host society

Additional sources:

Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of communication*, 43(4), 51-58.

Van Gorp, B. (2005). Where is the frame? Victims and intruders in the Belgian press coverage of the asylum issue. *European journal of communication*, 20(4), 484-507.

Amores, J. J., Arcila-Calderón, C., & González-de-Garay, B. (2020). The gendered representation of refugees using visual frames in the main Western European media. *Gender issues*, 37(4), 291-314.

**End of
part 1**

Social media as an alternative public space

Public perception of refugees



Social media and the paradigmatic shift

- Social media technologies have created a paradigmatic shift in processes of news creation and news dissemination
 - Build momentum surrounding societal crises, movements or events
 - Create interest among broadcasting and listening publics
 - Facilitated audience learning about the events
 - Facilitated crisis communication
 - Create larger narratives
- Transformed the role of publics in relation to information creation and distribution

Social media as a networked public sphere

- Enable publics to build alternative discourses that may intersect with, run parallel with, or run counter to the discussions arising in traditional media
- Users can participate in the generation of coherent and robust narratives that are co-constructed and coproduced
 - Collaborative narrative building:
 - Perpetuate media narratives
 - Challenge media narratives
 - Introduce new/different perspectives

Networked gatekeeping as a crowd-centered theory

- Gatekeeping: news selection processes by traditional media organizations
- Closely aligned to framing:
 - Inclusion and exclusion
 - Media's ability to set the substantive and affective framing agenda of passive news publics
- Hybrid and fluid journalistic processes utilize participating publics, cocreation and coproduction between mass media and publics.

Mainstream-Media vs Twitter

■ Media

- Prioritizing newsworthy events
- Attention to the crisis at large
- Political implications

■ Twitter

- More attention to the situation in the Middle East
- Sympathy and optimism
- Calls for hospitality, aid, donations, mobilization and activism

On Twitter the narrative is transformed beyond the factual and informative accounts into stand-taking and activism, designed to raise sympathy and support for refugees

Networked framing as a crowd-centered theory

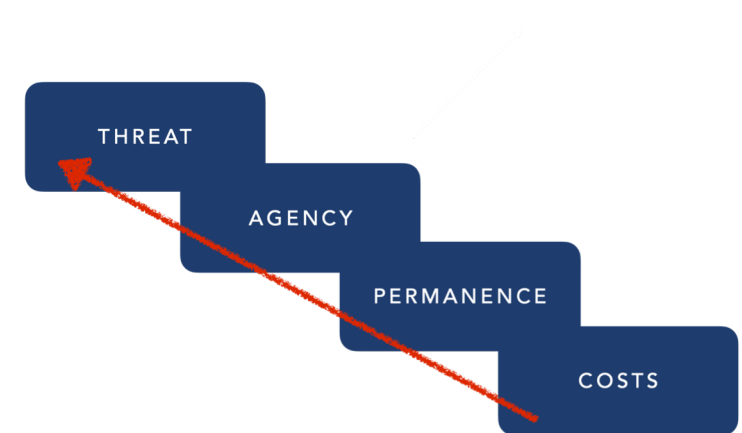
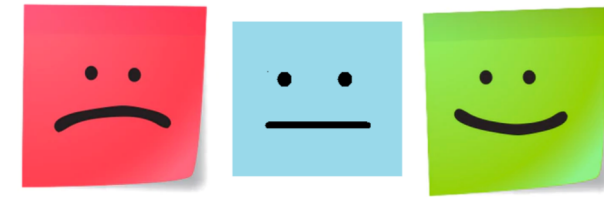
“To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient [...], in such a way as to promote a particular definition of a problem, casual interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (Entman, 1993)

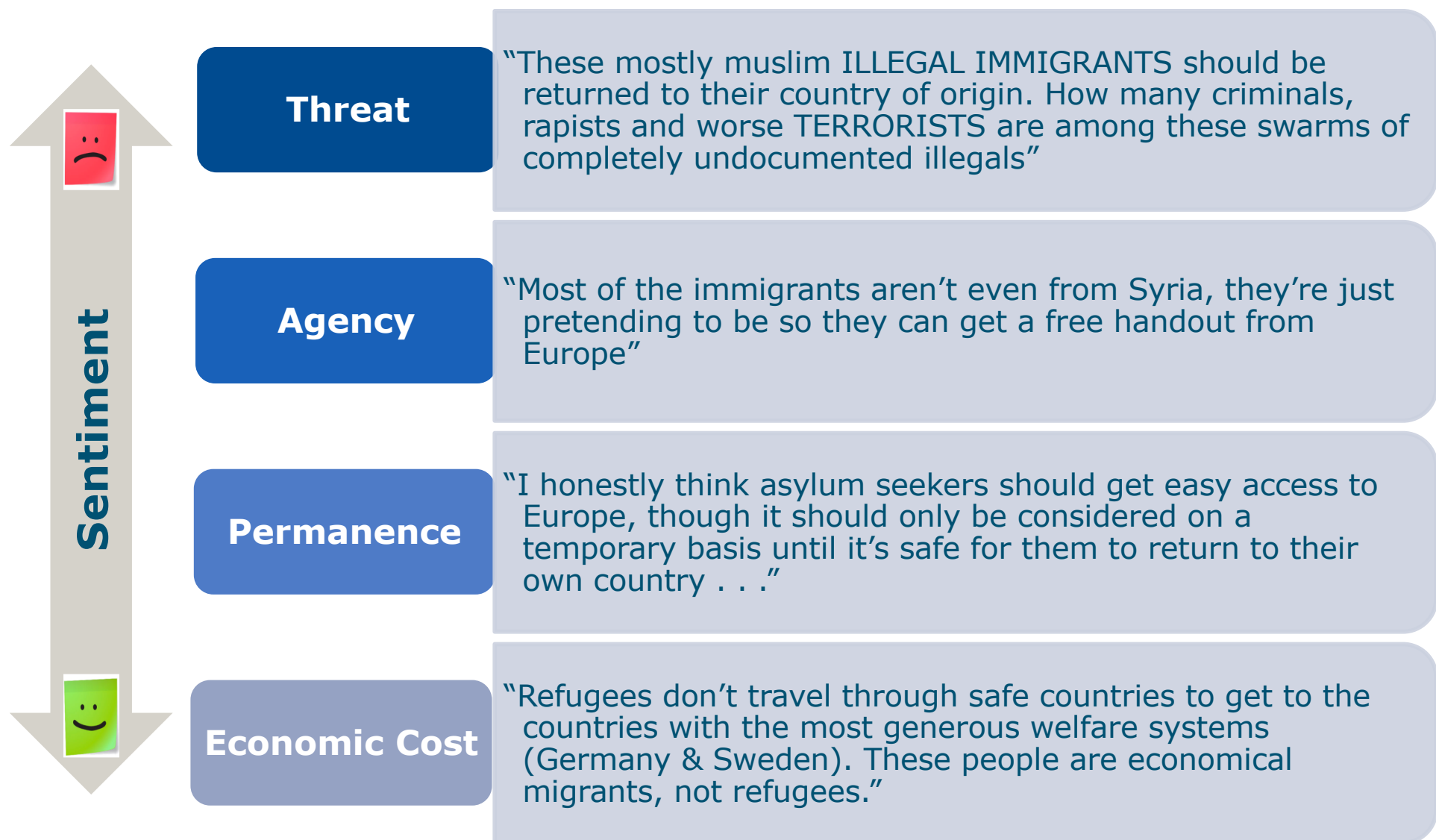
“A process through which particular problem definitions, causal interpretations, moral evaluations and/or treatment recommendations attain prominence through crowdsourcing practices” (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2016)

Refugee or Migrant Crisis?

Labels, Perceived Agency, and Sentiment Online

- **Threat:** actors have been portrayed as constituting a criminal threat to host societies
- **Agency:** actors' having relatively higher agency in crossing-borders
- **Permanence:** whether or not actors are expected to permanently reside in a host country
- **Economic Cost:** refers to the expectation of economic costs incurred by the presence of these actors in a host country





Additional sources:

Wallace, J. (2018). Modelling contemporary gatekeeping: The rise of individuals, algorithms and platforms in digital news dissemination. *Digital Journalism*, 6(3), 274-293.

Nerghes, A., & Lee, J. S. (2019). Narratives of the refugee crisis: A comparative study of mainstream-media and Twitter. *Media and Communication*, 7(2 Refugee Crises Disclosed), 275-288.

Lee, J.-S., & Nerghes, A. (2018). Refugee or Migrant Crisis? Labels, Perceived Agency, and Sentiment Polarity in Online Discussions. *Social Media + Society*.

**End of
part 2**

Refugees: uses and purposes of social media



We the exiled ones, who live on anti-depressants, Facebook has become our Homeland. It opens the sky they close in our faces at the frontiers.

Maram Al-Masri, Syrian poet living in Paris

The affordances of smartphones

- Stay in contact with family and friends
- Receive advice from others
- Internet connection
- GPS and map services
- Translation applications
- Wire money transfers
- Access to social media platforms



Smart Refugees:

How refugees use social media information for decision-making

- Uncertainty creates a common need for information to be used in decision-making
- Access to news and information is insecure, unstable, and undependable, leading to potential threats to their well-being
- Smartphones provide access to strategic information that is disclosed via social media that can be used prior and also during their journey.



So how do refugees use social media during their journey?

- Information about accessibility and safety of various routes:
 - Finding and staying in contact with smugglers
 - Communicating with groups of fellow refugees who traveled a certain route a few days or hours earlier
 - Planning a route to Europe
 - Learning about access to European countries
 - Choosing a destination country

Social media and information precarity

- Limited access:
 - Affordability
 - Surveillance

- Diminished trustworthiness
 - Uncertainties about the truthfulness of information
 - Social media information can be false or biased by the vested interests of the source

Social media use

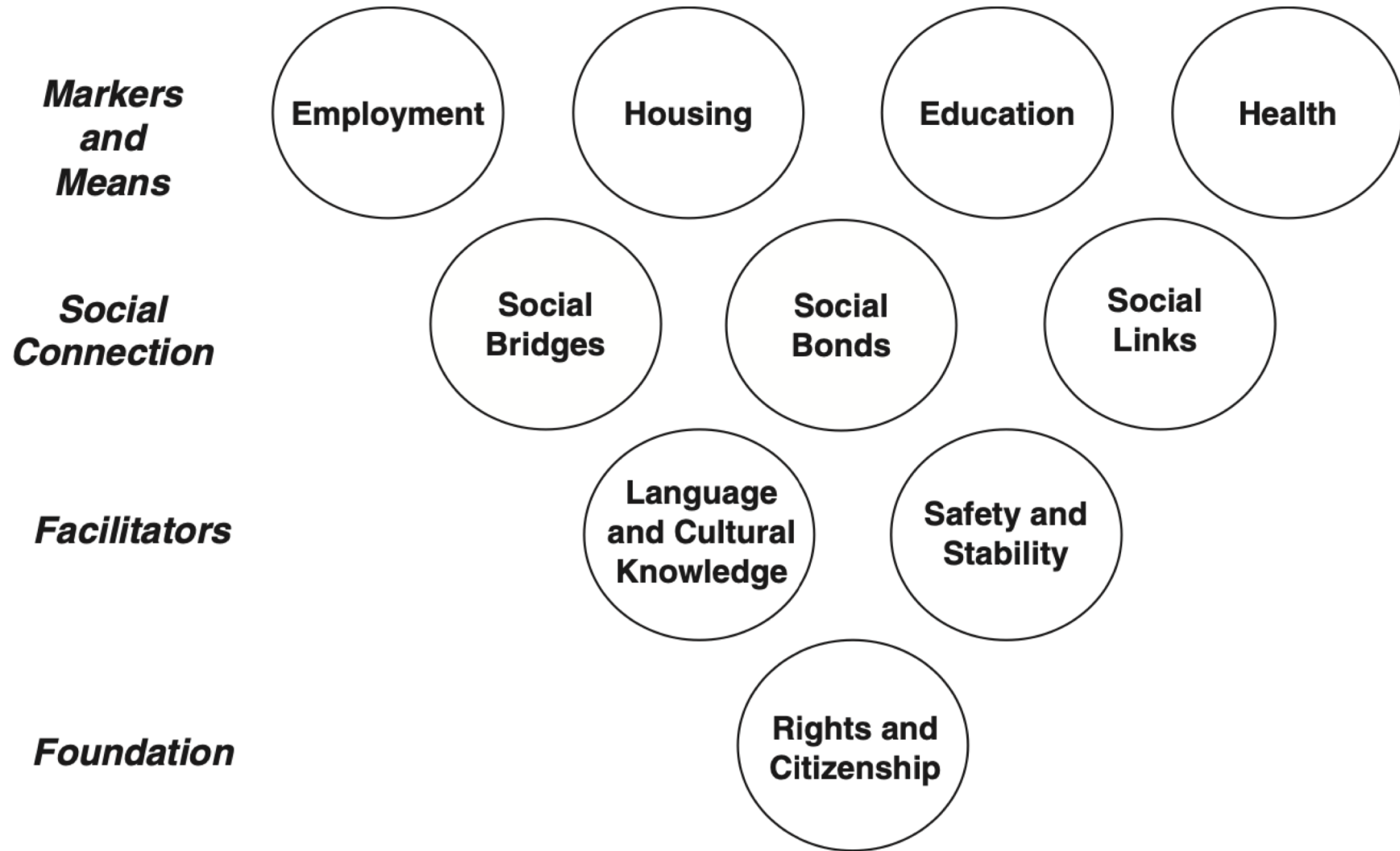
Journey



Integration



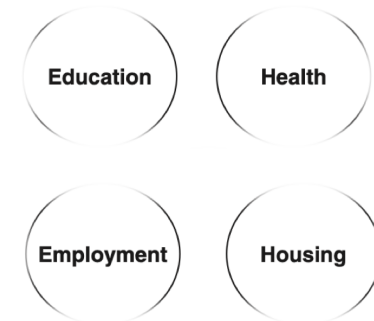
Domains of Integration



Social media and integration 1

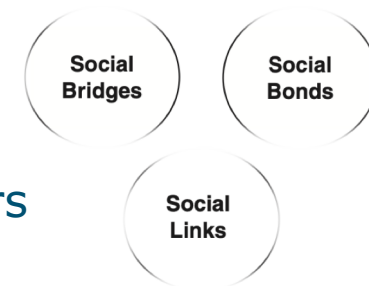
■ Means and markers:

- Information about employment, housing, personal health problems, training programs and the educational system (e.g., Refugee Start Force)
- Obtaining and sharing basic information about locations, transportation, shopping and market developments



■ Social connections:

- Establish links with the native population for language and cultural learning
- Emotional support
- Establish social links with immigration offices, lawyers and refugee centers.



Social media and integration 2

■ Facilitators:

- For language and cultural learning even before they received their residence permit
- Social media has not reduced discrimination and racism



■ Foundation:

- Sources of information about immigration procedures, laws and other legal issues of taxes
- Assisting refugees with information about legal services and applications



Additional sources:

Ager, A., & Strang, A. (2008). Understanding integration: A conceptual framework. *Journal of refugee studies*, 21(2), 166-191.

Alencar, A. (2018). Refugee integration and social media: A local and experiential perspective. *Information, Communication & Society*, 21(11), 1588-1603.

Gillespie, M., Osseiran, S., & Cheesman, M. (2018). Syrian refugees and the digital passage to Europe: Smartphone infrastructures and affordances. *Social Media+ Society*, 4(1).

Dekker, R., Engbersen, G., Klaver, J., & Vonk, H. (2018). Smart refugees: How Syrian asylum migrants use social media information in migration decision-making. *Social Media+ Society*, 4(1).

**End of
part 3**