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STORYTELLING: BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

STORYTELLING AS A TOOL TO FACILITATE INTEGRATION

ABSTRACT

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Storytelling: Bringing People Together
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This research-oriented thesis generates from the curiosity about the impact of storytelling in a migrant's life experience. This thesis tries to find out whether storytelling supports the integration process of migrants into a host community or not. Also, if storytelling helps the host community to integrate into the changes brought about by the newcomers. This research was carried out in collaboration with Universum Ry. This is a qualitative research conducted by interviewing the table hosts (migrant members) of story sharing universum.

Story Sharing Universum is one of the projects of Universum Ry which was commenced in year 2014 with the idea of bringing people from different background and nationalities together in order to get to know each other and bridge the communication gap present in the Finnish society.

The data collected from interviews were analysed using Braun & Clarke's six-phase approach. The thematic analysis of data resulted in supporting the research question that the storytelling does, in fact, support a migrant's integration into a host community in identification, interactive, cultural and structural perspective of social integration.

The result shows that storytelling helps an individual integrate into the host community in social level by exploring the sense of belongingness, finding similarities between people from different background, making connections by narrowing the communicational gap between migrants and host community,

and clearing the misconception and stereotypes of cultures. This eventually leads towards the development of an inclusive and divergent community.

"*Words are events, they do things, change things*" - Ursula K. Le Guin

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a qualitative research done in collaboration with Universum Ry. It explores the possibilities of storytelling being an assertive and impeccable tool of integration. It analyses the current situation and usage of storytelling as a tool to facilitate the integration and empowerment of migrants, in the context of Finland. The research was carried out by interviewing table hosts of story sharing cafes, and the data collected was analyzed by using Braun & Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach. The data collected from the interviews were analyzed thematically.

This thesis was carried out in collaboration with Universum Ry's project Story Sharing Universum. This project started in 2014 with the idea of bringing people from different national and cultural backgrounds together to share the basic components of day-to-day lives and knowing each other with the theme of promoting humanity.

The story sharing cafe brings the immigrants, asylum seekers, refugees and the native people of Finland together with a platform to share the life experiences, stories, and journey in an attempt to bridge the gap between the immigrants, asylum seekers, and the host community. It gives migrants a chance to mingle with members of the host community with the motive of making everyone realize no matter the what part of the world we're from, in the end, we all are a human being.

Storytelling is a commonly practiced cognitive way of communicating. Stories can be told through different techniques. All the art forms have a story within. However, the commonly practiced art of storytelling has a directive method of delivering the zest of the story including different incidents while engaging the audience.

Stories usually assist us in finding a connection between sociological and abstract extensions along with the individual experience that exists in a

community. It helps to explore and build a common ground for assisting the integration of marginalized members in a particular setting. They also help us to find the connections between human beings to bring them together for the formation of a community (Murphy et al 2008.)

2 BACKGROUND

The detailed understanding of migration, migrants and migration policy, storytelling, integration, and different dimentions and aspects of integration is important in order to understand the impact of storytelling in a migrant's integration process. This chapter contains of the detailed explaination of the basic background concepts related to the topic, the present scenario of Finland, the connection of storytelling with integration and community building, the understanding of story sharing cafe, and the relavent researchs and projects done in the related field.

"Outside of the physical universe, and the laws that govern the physical universe, there is nothing that impacts, informs and transforms the human experience, nor moves our spirit, more than a story." (Hunt n.d.)

2.1 Migrants and migration policy

Migration is a process of moving be it nationally or internationally (spencer 2011 6). International Office of Migration (IOM 2019) defines migrant as an umbrella term that reflects the common perspective of a person, migrating from their original place of residence either for short-term or long-term, whether nationally or internationally.

The term migrant includes "a number of well-defined legal categories of people, such as migrant workers; persons whose particular types of movements are legally defined, such as smuggled migrants; as well as those whose status or means of movement are not specifically defined under international law, such as international students". (IOM 2019 130.)

Other terminologies used to define the people who migrate under different circumstances are immigrants, emigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees. All of the terms refer to the different set of people based on the nature of the movement.

Immigrant refers to an individual whose movement is comparably short-lived and circular, meaning they migrate back-and-forth from their native place to their place of residence. Contradictorily, emigrant refers to the individual who is a long-term resident or a citizen of the host country.

According to 1951 Refugee Convention, a refugee is "a person who is outside his or her country of nationality or habitual residence; has a well-founded fear of being persecuted because of his or her race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to avail him— or herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution" (UNHCR 2011 3). On the other hand, an asylum seeker is an individual who has applied for or plans to apply for the refugee status. UNHCR (2011) defines asylum seekers as "someone whose request for sanctuary has yet to be processed" (Spencer 2011.)

Since there are different types of migration, and a huge number of people migrating across and within borders, there is an international migration law issued by IOM (2019) to ensure the rights of migrants and policy of migration. International migration law is stated as "the international legal framework governing migration, derived from various sources of international law that apply to the movement of persons within or between states and regulate states' competence and obligations, migrants' status, rights, and duties, as well as international cooperation".

The international migration law is composed of various bodies of law, principles, and norms rather than its own set of rules, for instance: International Human Rights Law, Labor Law, Humanitarian law, law of the Sea, Maritime Law, Transnational Criminal Law, Consular Law, Refugee Law, and Nationality Law. (IOM 2019 111.)

In Finland, the migration policy is based on Government objectives, EU legislation on migration & asylum policy, and international agreements. The major treaties comprise of the European Convention on Human Rights, the

United Nations Convention against Torture, the Convention on the Rights of the child, and the Geneva Refugee Convention. (Ministry of the Interior n.d.)

In 2015, the number of refugees and asylum seekers entering Finland was 32,476. However, the number of refugees and asylum seekers drastically decreased in the following years. In 2016, the number of asylum seekers was 5,651. And, in 2017, the number was 5,046. While the total sum of foreigners being 243,639 and 249,452 in 2016 and 2017 respectively. (Statistics Finland 2018). In 2018, the number of immigrants dropped down drastically to 31, 106.

The tables below show the statistical data of the migrants in Finland over the years. Table 1 shows the number of asylum seekers in Finland under different title, and the number of positive and negative decisions made to grant the permission of residence over the year 2013 to 2017. Table 2 shows the number of immigrants coming to Finland in years 2016 and 2017 along with the percentage of the annual change. Table 3 shows the total number of migrants in Finland (intermunicipal, intramunicipal, immigration, emigration and net migration) from the year 2005 to 2018.

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Asylum-seekers	3 238	3 651	32 476	5 651	5 046
Decisions on asylum [1]					
Asylum granted	556	501	1 112	4 586	2 528
Residence permit granted [2]	1 271	845	767	3 159	1 256
No asylum or residence permit granted [3]	1 903	2 050	1 307	14 282	3 996
Family reunification					
Positive decisions	875	1 094	986	1 179	2 080
Negative decisions	1 692	1 035	406	283	619
Refugee quota	750	1 050	1 050	750	750

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Table 1: Population of Asylum seekers in Finland, 2013-17 (Statistics Finland 2018.)

Country of citizenship	2016	%	2017	%	Annual change, %
Estonia	51 499	21,1	51 539	20,7	0,1
Russia	30 970	12,7	29 183	11,7	-5,8
Iraq	9 813	4,0	11 729	4,7	19,5
China	8 480	3,5	8 742	3,5	3,1
Sweden	8 040	3,3	8 018	3,2	-0,3
Thailand	7 487	3,1	7 533	3,0	0,6
Somalia	7 018	2,9	6 677	2,7	-4,9
Afghanistan	5 294	2,2	5 792	2,3	9,4
Viet Nam	5 253	2,2	5 603	2,2	6,7
Syrian Arab Republic	3 355	1,4	5 290	2,1	57,7
Others	106 430	43,7	109 346	43,8	2,7
Total	**243 639**	**100**	**249 452**	**100**	**2,4**

← → image 1 of 6 ✕

Turkey 278 271 257 229 264
Iran, Islamic Republic of 451 341 219 140 222

Table 2: Population of immigrants in Finland, 2016-17 (Statistics Finland 2018.)

Internal migration and in- and out-migration 2005–2018

Year	Intermunicipal	Intramunicipal	Immigration	Emigration	Net migration
2005	267 939	624 030	21 355	12 369	8 986
2006	265 469	600 097	22 451	12 107	10 344
2007	272 285	595 985	26 029	12 443	13 586
2008	262 454	567 619	29 114	13 657	15 457
2009	257 595	577 668	26 699	12 151	14 548
2010	264 362	575 323	25 636	11 905	13 731
2011	274 896	600 781	29 481	12 660	16 821
2012	274 650	595 163	31 278	13 845	17 433
2013	265 844	577 960	31 941	13 893	18 048
2014	267 799	571 775	31 507	15 486	16 021
2015	280 271	613 474	28 746	16 305	12 441
2016	282 257	590 830	34 905	18 082	16 823
2017	287 839	572 688	31 797	16 973	14 824
2018	288 443	595 638	31 106	19 148	11 958

Table 3: Internal and in-and-out migration 2005 – 2018 (Statistics Finland 2019.)

2.2 Integration

Integration is rather "individualized, contested and contextual", meaning the definition and evaluation of the integration purely depend on the target group, project and the relationship between the migrants or minority group & the host community (Ibid (n.d.) cited on Pogacar 2018 24). Integration can be understood in detail by breaking down the four aspects of a society: cultural, economic, political, and social aspects.
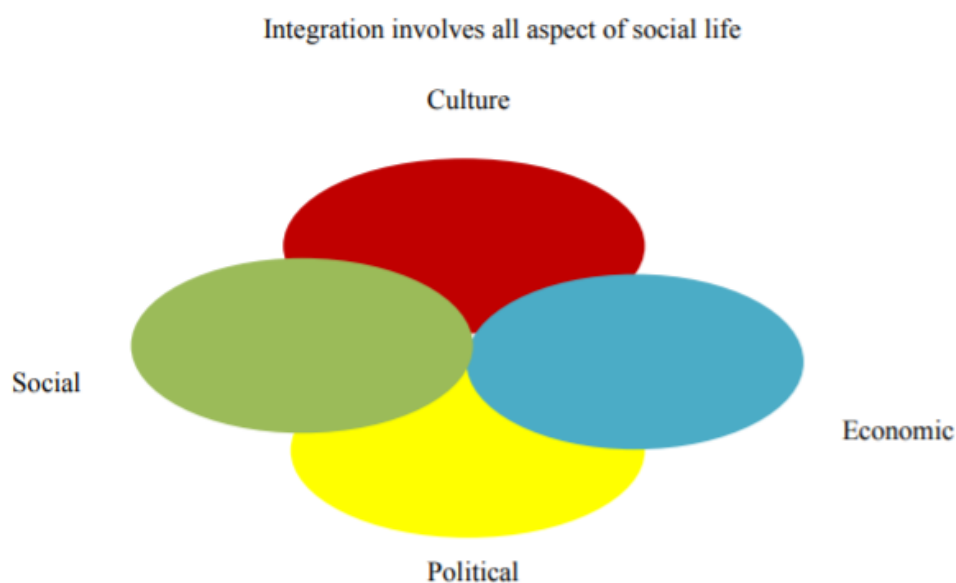

Figure 1: four aspects of society: cultural, economic, political and social. (Ager et al 2004)

In this thesis, integration is understood by considering social aspect.

From the social perspective, integration can be defined as an interactive process between migrants and the host community with the restoration of the rights, access to positions and statuses, building of personal relations, and formation of sense of belongingness and identification of the migrants in the host community (EFMS 2006). The idea of social integration can be better understood by the term social capital. Social capital can be defined as "networks together with shared norms, values and understanding that facilitate co-operation within or among groups" (OECD n.d.)

Social capital is formed by three components: social bonds, social bridges and social linkages. These three components help us understand social integration in micro, meso and macro level. Bonds link us to the individuals with a sense of common identity, bridges link us to the community with a shared sense of identity and linkages link us to the communities beyond the shared identity and social ladder. It means social integration can be formed in layers, first with an individual with the same/similar background, then with the diaspora group of the same background and finally beyond the same/similar culture i.e. the host community.

There are various dimensions of social integration: structural integration, cultural integration, interactive integration and identification integration.

Structural integration refers to the acquisition of rights and the accessibility to position and status in the important institutions of host community which include the economy and labor market, education and qualification systems, housing systems, welfare state, health system, and full potential citizenship (Adduow 2012 40).

Cultural integration means the process and states of cognitive, behavioral, and attitudinal change of an individual because of the adaptation to the new environment in relation to their original beliefs. This integration occurs not only to the migrants, but also to the members of the host community as they need to adapt to the changes brought by the migrants in their society. (EFMS 2006 16.)

Interactive integration refers to the inclusion and acceptance of the migrants in the host community. It is indicated via social interactions, marriage, friendships, social relationships, and the social groups formed by the migrants with the members of the host community. This dimension of integration focuses on communication and relations formed between the new and the pre-existing members of the community (EFMS 2006 17.)

Identification integration refers to the sense of belongingness and identification of the migrant members of the community "particularly in forms of ethnic,

regional, local and/or national identification" (EFMS 2006 17). Sense of belonging is defined as the personal experience of involvement in a community so that the individual feels themselves to be a fundamental and important part of that community (Bouwsema et al 1992).

In this particular research, integration is defined as the personal experience, sense of belongingness, identity of self and others in relation to culture & background, level of interactions with other members of the host community experienced by migrants in the new societal setting of the host community. In other words, this thesis will focus on identification, interactive and cultural integrations.

Here, integration is also understood as a sense of identification of oneself as a member of the currently residing community, with an equal sense of responsibilities and privileges as everyone. In this research, I will be pondering, mostly, upon how the migrants (who are interviewed) identify integration, and if storytelling and the story sharing cafe organized by Universum has helped them in their process of integration in Finland.

Robinson (1998) claims "integration as a chaotic concept: a word used by many but understood differently by most". To support the ideology of Robinson, we can see various integration programs offered by the government of Finland for the migrants that include language classes and knowledge about Finnish culture and background. After the completion of the programmed course of integration, the government gives the tag of 'integrated' to the migrants, while those people may not yet feel integrated or comfortable in the Finnish community. Thus, one can say that integration is very controversial terminology.

However, the integration for both, migrants and the host community, means a welcoming environment where there is no potential threat of cultural misunderstanding and clash. A community where both the members are treated equally with similar growth opportunities in all fields. "Social cohesion is best served by an inclusive and welcoming approach to cultural diversity, which emphasizes shared values (including a commitment to human rights)

and allows individuals to confidently develop their personal identity in the host country based on their experience of two cultures" (ECRC 2001.) From an integration perspective, services that both parties, refugees and the host community, can access together are considered valuable.

Therefore, activities like storytelling can help in bringing both parties together where they can learn about each other directly without any mediator. This boost active participation leading towards mutual understanding and bond-building. The book, Exploring Culture (2002) asserts that everyone has the capability to communicate with other people, however, it might take time and effort to understand each other.

According to the Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration (1386/2010) (Ministry of Employment and Economy Finland 2010), integration is defined as "interactive development involving immigrants and society at large, the aim of which is to provide immigrants with the knowledge and skills required in the society and working life and to provide them with support, so that they can maintain their culture and language." After 1990, Finland has been receiving migrants from over 150 countries around the world, due to its established image as a safe and prosperous member of the EU. (Koivukangas 2003)

And, hence, to promote the integration of migrants into Finnish society, the Government has developed personalized integration plan, as per the need of the migrant, as mentioned in Chapter 2, Section 11, Article 1 of Immigrant Integration Act (1386/2010). It includes teaching of Finnish or Swedish language, migrant's mother tongue, studies familiarizing migrants with the society, studies complementing basic education, integration training and other personalized measures facilitating integration. Like chapter 2, section 6 of Immigrant Integration Act mentions, the services and measures promoting integration are implemented as a part of municipal services and the services of the employment & economic administration.

The other measures and services included in the act with the purpose of supporting and promoting integration are: "interpretation and translation, services promoting the integration of immigrant children and young

immigrants, child welfare aftercare measures and services for unaccompanied minors entering Finland who have been issued with a residence permit, services and support measures for those in need of special measures, other measures and services that encourage immigrants to acquire knowledge and skills needed in society at their own initiative" (Ministry of Employment and Economy Finland 2010).

In 2016, September 8th, the Government Integration Programme 2016 – 2019 was approved and its implementation began. It includes four focus areas: "using the cultural strengths of immigrants to promote Finnish innovation, enhancing integration through cross-sectoral measures, increasing cooperation between the state and municipalities in the reception of beneficiaries of international protection, promoting a humane national discussion culture that rejects racism" (Ministry of Interior Publications 2018 30-31).

In order to achieve the objectives of the Government Integration Programme, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment launched the International talents boosting growth agenda in autumn 2016 to link together migration, innovation and industrial and business policies and to harness the potential of international talents to support the growth and internationalization of companies, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment and the Ministry of Education and Culture have worked together to promote the recognition of migrants' competence and to direct them to the appropriate education, training and employment pathways, and a project called TRUST, which focuses on resolving challenges associated with the asylum seeker situation, is being funded by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment and implemented by the Ministry of Justice in collaboration with the Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations (ETNO), other authorities, and NGOs. (Ministry of Interior Publications 2018 31.)

Establishment of an investment fund for the employment of migrants, pensions, social services, and health care services for migrants, and non-discrimination and acceptance of diversity are the other major steps in order

to fulfill the objectives of the Government Integration Programme 2016 – 2019. (Ministry of Interior Publications 2018)

2.3 Storytelling as a tool of integration

Storytelling is a way of expressing oneself, own's experiences and beliefs in the form of story with the purpose of making oneself understood by the listeners. It has various benefits, one of them is sharing the stories and knowledge in order to bring people closer, form individual/social bonding, and communicating with people in a friendly, warm and entertaining way. Storytelling creates a playful environment where people from different background can express themselves and represent their culture and beliefs, mostly in a non-offensive way. In such environment, it is easier to bring migrants and the host community together for the purpose of getting to know each other, sharing the cultural values and listening to each other's life stories. It helps in narrowing the gap between both parties and create bonding, which eventually helps in two-way integration.

Storytelling is considered a primitive characteristic of a human perspective. Accordingly, this characteristic trait of a human being makes the art of storytelling a strong tool/method of conveying information and bonding the group of people together. However, the model and composition of storytelling have endured a crucial revolution within human evolution. The ethnographic data discovered the fact that the people in the 15th and 16th centuries started communication through the form of art that told stories that made the scientists today easy to interpret the characteristics of that particular community.

The astonishing aspect of this art was that even at that primitive time, it depicted the social act beyond individuality. The authors claim that "Human understanding is largely related to storytelling -especially in relation to the concept of 'relocation', which means being able to refer to events belonging to a different time and place than ongoing communication." (Yilmaz & Cigerci 2018 2.)

"The stories we tell ourselves–and don't tell ourselves - impact our emotions, physical states, our choices, and relationships. The processes of interpersonal communication and collaborative storytelling involve exercising psychological muscles, executive function, and resilience where a person can begin to gradually reclaim control of their physical and mental connection to the environment around them." (UNHCR 2019.)

The main aim of storytelling is to give an individual a chance to look upon their beliefs, background, journey, trauma and the overall experience of their life, which have created certain unique characteristics among them that make them an individual and separates them from the rest of the world. And, on the contrary, those experiences, feelings, and emotions are the factor that unites them together with the rest of the world despite the national and cultural barrier. "Communities are made up of relationships. Relationships are created and deepened by sharing stories of experiences, hopes, dreams, and fears." (Hunt n.d.)

According to UHCR, "storytelling is not just about media making and media literacy". Across the refugee communities, it has been evident that the youths have been utilizing the storytelling platform for mental health and psychological support (MHPSS), as well as, a for community building. One of the captivating examples of storytelling for community development is #MeWeSyria, started by two Syrian Youth Facilitator in the Zaatari refugee Camp in 2014 with twenty-five youths. Their main motto is "leaders must first be comfortable with allowing youth space and experience to identify and address the invisible wars within the self. Only then can healing and further development occur". Which now has expanded to the community of 700 refugee youths with 50 trained Syrian influencers in 8 cities across 3 countries which give gives these young refugees "a space to dream, lead and act". Providing a platform and insight for the younger refugees to restore the authority of the narrative of their lives. (UNHCR 2019.)

2.4 Integration and community building

"Man is biologically predestined to construct and to inhabit a world with others. This world becomes for him the dominant and definitive reality. Its limits are set by nature, but once constructed, this world acts back upon nature. In this dialectic between nature and the socially constructed world, the human organism itself is transformed. In this same dialectic, man produces reality and thereby produces himself." (1966 168 cited in Teater 2014 74)

Humans, being social animals, are forced to form a group that later converts into a community, by default. During the formation of the community, various norms and beliefs are formed and are passed along all the members of the community, including the newcomers, is the unborn babies. And, those norms and beliefs eventually become the identity of the community and its members that brings about the sense of belongingness. "Community, as it is used here, is about the experience of belonging. We are in the community each time we find a place where we belong" (Block 2008.) Interestingly, when a person or a family migrates to a new place for any reason, they carry the beliefs and the norms with them all along, which later becomes a barrier for them to form or dissolve in new surroundings. This particular issue has become one of the global problems in the present context.

Once an individual finds herself in a new society, it is an abrupt change in the sense of belongingness which can create a long-lasting problem in the individual's life startling a malfunction in the host community, which, if not addressed promptly can lead to a moment of crisis among both parties. And, hence should begin a new process of community building including both the migrant and the host society. Community building comprises an essential approach to organized and social changes (Rappaport et al 2008.)

"For hundreds of years, the power of storytelling has been an incomparable form of individual and collective participation in all processes of life. Storytelling is in its essence collective. It creates community. It connects people because it makes them curious about all the fine specifics of life and experiences, which people have made in their lives. When people from different cultural backgrounds tell each other stories, this is integration as a two-way street" (Clarke 2018).

In a multicultural setting, for instance, in Finland, due to the big gap between the migrants and the host society, there is a huge problem of groups which leads to the alienation of the minority group. Hence, it is very important to evaluate the development of the community according to the needs of all the members, including the minority group. Otherwise, it will have negative effects on the micro, meso, macro-level in a longer span of time. This is where the theory and the practicalities of community development come into play to create an inclusive environment for every member. According to Christenson, J.A. and Robinson, J.W. (1989), community development can be defined as a group of people in a community making a collective decision of initiating a social action process of changing the economic, social, cultural and environmental context.

Community development is recognized as a discipline drawn from a wide variety of academic fields such as sociology, economics, political science, planning, geography, and many others. (Phillips & Pittman 2009.) Hence, after assessing the needs and demands of the people, everyone needs to work towards the development of the pre-existing problems of the community with the goal of creating an inclusive and welcoming environment for all, using different tools and methods from every aspect of the community formation while taking the cultural sensitivity into account.

2.5 Story sharing cafe

For this thesis, I chose story sharing universum as a research platform because it is one of the unique platforms in Helsinki that brings migrants and host community together for the purpose of getting to know each other. The main aim of story sharing cafes is to bring people from different nationalities and background together for sharing life stories, cultural values and bridging gap between people. The organizers are committed to create a community where everyone feels welcomed and are able to make connections deeper with mutual respect and understanding. The idea of story sharing universum is to mix art and differences of people in order to create a harmonious

community, which is the main zest of integration in social level. Thus, it promotes two-dimensional social and cultural integration.

In this project story sharing cafes are organized in different locations in different time intervals. The dates for the upcoming cafes are released in story sharing universum's website and social medias to inform the participants. The advertisement is also done through sharing the leaflet of the upcoming cafe in the neighborhood of the cafe's location. And, the public places like library, school, cultural center (where the cafe will be held), share the information of the cafe to their service users in advance. Usually, the cafes are arranged to sit 30 – 50 people according to the space available in the location. The willing people can confirm their participation via social media, email or they can just walk into the cafe.

In the cafe, 4-5 people are seated in one table and are asked questions that evoke the stories from their life, and everyone is free to answer as well as not answer those questions. These small tables are hosted/ moderated by table hosts. The table hosts are the people who used to be participants in story sharing cafes. They were later hired as table hosts and were given the training on how to proceed with the cafe, how to moderate the small groups they are leading, time keeping, how to handle if the stories or the questions stir negative emotions among the participants, and how to make the story sharing experience fun and light for the participants.

It is very important to remember that these cafes aren't therapy sessions and neither the organizers nor the table hosts are qualified or trained to deal with post-traumatic distress/ disorder. The cafe's purpose is to provide a platform for the migrants and native Finns to come together to get to know each other and their cultures, to share the life events in form of stories helping them to realize that no matter the country, culture and background, people experience same emotions and share similar experiences.

The cafe always starts off with simple and same question "what is your name and where are you from?". And then, it proceeds with other questions that ask about life experiences and stories from the childhood and so on. The table

hosts are responsible to choose what questions they want to ask in their own table. The table host circulate the questions to all the participants in their table, keep track of time and moderate if needed. The environment is very warm, friendly and fun. At last, the participants who are willing are allowed to come to the stage and share their stories with everyone via open mic.

2.6 Relevant research/project on the topic

There are a lot of art-based projects done over the past years. Also, there are plenty of researched done on art-based methods. However, storytelling, being one of the art-based methods is not as researched as the whole spectrum.

There have been few researches on the potential of storytelling to facilitate cultural understanding in diverse societies, one of them is under the title "Storytelling – A way of bringing people together" by Nyman Peik (2017). The research was carried out in maailma kylässä (world village) festival. In this research, the researcher has pointed out how storytelling can be used for cultural understanding. The finding of the research supports the main argument of my thesis. The researcher states, "I cannot see that the need for a working integration system will diminish in the near future. The contrary would seem more fitting. I, therefore, recommend that storytelling is developed as a tool to build and facilitate integration, making our society a more culturally aware one." The findings of the research include "storytelling creates understanding of other cultures and storytelling invites people to interact in a social environment", which shows how powerful storytelling is in context of bringing people together.

Teacher's attitude and use of stories and storytelling in Finnish foreign language education by Eela Lauri (2016) also points out some of the crucial benefits of storytelling. He states, "it is important for the students to learn not only stories from different places and times but also more generally how to understand and tell stories themselves. This is because stories are, one way or another, a fundamental part of all human culture." The fundamental way of human communication is a narrative method, and we must use that in order to

set a clear distinction in human experiences despite the differences, whatsoever.

Digital storytelling is also being used in social and health care sectors to help the troubled service users. Kharel (2012) mentions in her thesis that digital storytelling is a part of art therapy in which one can create his/her own life story by exploring their emotions and feelings while maintaining a safe and peaceful environment. Likewise, there is a type of therapy that deals with the problem by the means of storytelling known as Narrative therapy. "Narrative therapy believes in the idea that the stories we tell (and do not tell), are performed, live through us and have the ability to both restrain and liberate our lives." (Davis 2013 455)

"Art, at its best, has the potential to be both immediate and lasting" (Leavy 2018). Our immediate response can be visceral, emotional, and psychological as long as it grabs hold of our attention and provokes us. It also possesses the capacity to make a lasting impression and deep engagements and hence has unlimited potential to educate. (Leavy 2018)

Thus, using the art-based method in the integration of the migrants into the host community seems to be sustainable and has multiple long-lasting effects on people. As we adopt art-based approach to familiarize people into the new setting, the fear of unknown and uncertainty can be eliminated by fun-fill activities that gradually bridge the gap between people without forcing the connection and integration.

Besides, Universum Ry in Finland, there are other organizations in Europe that are using storytelling as a tool to integrate migrants into the host community. They let migrants' stories and voices are heard by all for the purpose of co-creating a diverged environment suitable for all actors of the community. Storydox from Sweden, storytelling Arena from Berlin, Cirkus Sibylla and Sibylla theatre from Norway, Dance-Up refugees from Finland, Telling Communities from Lithuania, UPOLERT from Norway, and Culture Hub Interkult from Finland are few of the organization that is using

storytelling as a tool to facilitate and promote integration in different parts of Europe.

3 AIM OF THE THESIS AND RESEARCH QUESTION

This chapter clarifies the research question and explains the main aim of the thesis.

The main aim of this thesis is to explore the possibility of facilitating the integration of the migrants by using the tool of storytelling in the context of Finland. And, the research question for this thesis is
how does storytelling support in migrants' integration?

Using this method, people are encouraged to share their life stories that show the similarities between all humans, despite the cultural background, nationality and any difference whatsoever. It helps to bridge the gap between migrants and the host community for the formation of an integrated society.

"Many stories survive through tenacious resistance in the face of a status quo that marginalizes, and often silences, their telling thus diminishing their truths" (Murphy 2008 7).

Coming from different backgrounds, due to various reasons, and adjusting to a new community with new culture, values, and language is not easy for anyone. While doing so, one faces a lot of different situations that later becomes a priceless experience that shapes an individual in a certain way. Those stories hide not only the components of the narrator's experience but also is comprised of the components of the host society.

Thus, it is necessary to share that story out loud for the analysis of several aspects of a community. And, it eventually helps in finding the missing dots in the integration of migrants into the host community. Also, helps the members of the host community to integrate into the new society with new members of the diverged culture.

4 RESEARCH METHOD

In this chapter, the research method is explained along with the processes of data collection and data analysis.

This thesis follows the qualitative research method. The qualitative approach of research is mainly connected with the subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions, and behavior. This research method is more applicable in behavioral sciences where "the aim is to discover the underlying motives of human behavior" which helps to administer the factors that affect their behavior. (Kothari 2004)

The set of open-ended interview questions has been developed for the interviewees (see 5.1 for more details). Open-ended questions are in such format that the interviewees can answer based on their complete knowledge, feeling, and understanding (Bhat 2019). It will help to strike the emotion of the participants regarding migration, integration, and their experiences (good/bad) in the host environment and their responses. This helped me get into the core awareness regarding the integration and its process.

4.1 Data collection

The research was carried out using interview as the data collection method. I used these this method to understand how storytelling helps or has helped in integration, and if it could be used as a tool of integration of migrants. The interviews were gathered from the table hosts, who are migrants themselves, of the story sharing cafe in different location preferred by the interviewees.

The interviews were semi-structured which helped me to gather more information as the interviewees could lead the conversation and give more detailed information on the topic. "Semi-structured interview is a meeting in which the interviewer doesn't strictly follow a formalized list of questions" (Doyle 2019). Five participants were interviewed for the research, who also act

as table hosts in the cafe. Open-ended questions were used in all the interviews to receive information and collect the perception of the participants. The interview questions can be found in the appendix section.

I interviewed 5 of the table hosts from Story Sharing Universum. All of them are from migrant background. I chose the table hosts as my interviewee rather than the other participants because each of them has been participating in the story sharing cafes for at least a year. The other participants changed according to the location of the cafes and were not the regularly participating. So, if I had interviewed them, the collected data wouldn't have been as accurate, as this research is solely based on the experiences of the migrants and the affects they have observed as a result of participating in the story sharing cafes regularly.

I asked all my interviewees for their time. We matched our schedules and I went to the places that was most convenient for them or called them for the interview. My first interviewee is a lady from Iraq, who has been living in Finland for four years. She is originally from Iraq and came to Finland as an asylum seeker. We met in cafeteria of Business College Helsinki. The interview was about forty-five minutes long.

My second interviewee is from India. She moved to Finland with her husband as he got a job in Helsinki about one and half years ago. She lived in Australia before moving to Finland. According to her, she never experienced any integration programme in Australia, and she feels that the good intention of providing the integration programs to migrants is actually one of the main reasons to segregate the society as migrants and natives. We met in Hesburger Hakaniemi. The interview was about an hour long.

My third interviewee is from Iraq and has been living in Finland for four years. He came as an asylum seeker. He is a human rights activist in Amnesty International and is working as a social worker. We met in Myyrmanni, and I followed him to his work and the interview took place during the journey. It was forty minutes long interview. My fourth interviewee is also from Iraq and came as an asylum seeker four years ago. The interview with him took place on a phone call. It was about an hour-long interview. My fifth interviewee comes

from Pakistan as an asylum seeker. He has lived in Finland for three years. The interview took place in espresso house in Helsinki and it lasted an hour.

4.2 Data analysis

After the collection of data, they were analyzed in thematic manner using the six-phase approach of Braun & Clarke (2006). The analysis was done stepwise, as suggested in the approach.

Step 1: becoming familiar with the data. In this phase, it is important to get very familiar with the entire body of the data. In this initial phase, I took the interview and started transcribing them. I, with the consent of the interviewee, recorded the interviews. After the interview was done, I listened to the data collected twice before transcribing to insure all the questions were answered and the precise data was collected.

After step 1 comes step 2: coding the data. In this phase, we start organizing the data in a systematic way. The coding is done according to the need of the research and the keyword for the research questions. After transcribing the whole interviews (all five of them), I started organizing the collected data from the interviewees according to the interview questions and the answers they gave. It started to become like a themed collection of the answers as I coded according to the similar type of responses to different interview questions. I coded the responses generated as a result of semi-structured interview, which was out of the planned questions. The similarities in the responses of the interviewees started showing up. For example: them mentioning that they developed sense of belongingness in story sharing cafes, made more contacts and network, made friends, got jobs, mingled with people from different background, reflected in their own life and believes and so on. It helped me organize all the collected data in a way where I could see the similar patterns in the responses from the interviews. That helped me in the next step.

Once the data is coded, step 3: searching for themes comes to play. From the coded data, a pattern is picked which is relevant to the research and is

recurring in the interviews. Once the similarities are noted and listed, I separated them into different categories according to their nature. For example: the coded data about languages were listed under one theme, while the coded date of culture and cultural beliefs were listed in another theme. With this process, I was able to generate seven different themes related to the thesis.

After the themes are picked, we need to make sure that the themes are relevant to the research. And, we need to develop the theme which is step 4: Reviewing themes. Once the step 3 was done, it was easier for me to categorize the coded data into specific themes. The recurring patterns and sentences were categorized as a theme. Once the themes were categorized, I proofread them to make sure all the themes made sense and were delivering their messages and were related to the research question.

Step 5: defining themes aims to "identify the essence of what each theme is about" (Braun & Clarke 2006 92). After separating the themes of the collected data, it was time to name the themes according to the message they conveyed and their relation to the research questions. I came up with seven relevant themes related to my thesis and named them accordingly. At last, comes step 6: Writing up where we start writing our final analysis. After naming the themes. I started writing down the final analysis of the collected data in details. The themes and detailed findings (analysis) can be found in chapter 7 (results) (Maguire & Delahunt 2017.)

5 LIMITATIONS

In this chapter, reader can find out the limiting factors of this thesis, actors involved in the limiting factor and the ways the risks have been mitigated in order to get the most accurate result possible.

The research of this thesis was limited due to certain factors. The limiting factors were taken into consideration, the affect was weighed, and proper mitigating measures were taken in order to ensure the proper analysis and finding the precise result of the thesis. First and foremost being not enough preexisting research materials. There has not been much research done on the topic of storytelling in the field of integration. But I managed to find some literature related to the topic of my research, also, being critical, creative and objective helped me analyze the findings. I got enough help from my work life partner in understanding the role of storytelling in integration of a community (not only an individual) and help from teachers in literature helped me mitigate the risk.

The risk of language barrier and misinterpretation of the collected data (stories and experiences) were other major risks involved in this thesis. The personal stories shared by the interviewees could be misunderstood or misinterpreted during the process of data collection and analysis. To mitigate these problems, the interviews were taken properly, I separated the stories from my own emotions while collecting data, I tried to be as clear while asking the interview questions and take proper precautions while analyzing the results. The interviews were recorded with the permission of interviewees and were listened to multiple number of times before coding and finalizing the themes. In order to minimize the language barrier, the participants who could speak the English language were chosen for the interview for the data collection. This resulted in limitation of the data collected to a certain perspective, and the research couldn't be more inclusive, however, the interviewees were from different backgrounds and nationalities.

Another limiting factor of this thesis is human resource. The number of participants and the number of people working on this research slightly affected the precision of the final result of the research. As explained in the above paragraph, because of the limited number of interviewees, nature of bachelor's level thesis, and other resources available for the thesis, the findings are limited to fewer interviewees and much less data collection options. The research was done in as much accuracy as possible for the time, budget and other resources limitation maintaining the standard of the bachelor's level thesis.

The following table explains the limiting (risk) factors of this thesis, actors involved, and mitigating measures taken to resolve or eliminate the issue, in brief.

Limitations (Risks)	Description	Actors involved	Mitigating measures
Not enough pre-existing research materials	Not so much academic research has been done in this subject		Being critical, objective and creative. Asked help from teachers and working partner
Misinterpretation of the stories and experiences	The personal stories might be misinterpreted by the participants/interviewees, or could be misunderstood, which might bring dramatic results	Participants, interviewees and I	Separated the stories from my own emotions while observing for data collection, I tried to be as clear while asking the interview questions and take proper precautions

			while analyzing the results.
Human resource	The number of participants and the number of people working on this research slightly affected the precision of the final (data) / result of the research	All the human resources involved in this thesis	The research was done in as much accuracy as possible for the time, budget and other resources limitation maintaining the standard of the bachelor's level thesis.
Language barrier	Based on my research, the languages spoken by one-third of the target group and the interviewer were not common	Interviewees and interviewer	The participants who could speak the English language were chosen for the interview for the data collection. This resulted in limitation of the data collected to a certain perspective, and the research couldn't be more inclusive.

Table 4: Limitations and possible mitigating measures for the thesis

6 RESEARCH ETHICS

This chapter explains the ethical considerations made while conducting this thesis.

"Ethics in research and development is a means to prevent wrongs and succeed in good practice." (Competences not graduates 2018.) There should be much ethical consideration made before and while conducting the research. "Some ethical violations in social work research can be subtle, ambiguous, and arguable, sometimes there is no correct answer to the situation, and people of goodwill can disagree." (Rubbin & Babbie 2010 256.)

First and foremost being the work-life agreement signed with the working organization in order to get permission to conduct the research under that organization. Using its platform, data and clients for the research must be permitted by the responsible person of the organization. Secondly, while taking the data or interviewing people, their consent should always be taken, either verbally or with a written contract, if necessary. "All the participants should be informed of all the consequences of the study and consent to participate in it" (Rubbin & Babbie 2010 257).

Additionally, the very basic and crucial research ethics are respecting the anonymity and confidentiality of the interviewees. Personal and sensitive stories of the participants shall not be reviled under any circumstances. The participants shall never be deceived while handling the identities or any other sensitive information. Research shall never harm its participants regardless of whether they volunteered for it.

Nevertheless, the primary ethical values are set by the AMK's regulations, the Ministry of Education and Culture shall be followed strictly. As well as, the rules of the organization and the events must be followed at all the time or phase of the research.

7 RESULTS

This chapter explains the findings of the research.

According to the interviewees, those who were intimidated and hesitant in the beginning relax as the cafe proceeds, and towards the end, it is very noticeable that most of the participants are engaged in the stories and are having a very good time. The misconceptions regarding the culture clear, almost always. And, the culture-sensitive issues are dealt with or talked about with engaging stories. It really looks like the best platform to bring strangers together in order to get to know each other. It is evident, almost always that people share contacts after the cafe. I have neither permission nor resources to follow up on what happens with the shared contacts, but some of the interviewees confirmed that they became friends, extended their networks and got jobs and social life via the people they met from story sharing cafe.

7.1 Storytelling for the reflection of self and life stories

All the interviewees gave a similar perspective around this theme. According to them, while sharing their stories, they get to reflect on a particular situation, remember how their life used to be, what their values are and how they have changed as a person, especially because of the process of migration; living in different countries and adopting to the new cultures while still upholding their own cultural belief patterns. One of the interviewees said, "while sharing my stories, I get to relive my childhood, and how my life used to be back home. It reminds me of my root and where I came from to how much life has changed." Storytelling helps in reflecting and stirring a person's sense of belongingness.

7.2 Storytelling to find the similarities among peoples' lives

One of the interviewees said, "no matter where we come from, what country, cultural background and language we belong to, we are all human beings in

the end, and that is what story sharing cafe made me realize. The story of the first kiss, or some life situation, memory of having a meal with all the family members together and so on, we all get to see that our lives are very simple and similar to each other. We all go through similar situations, and once we share those stories it is easier to connect the dots on how similar we are from each other."

Another interviewee stated, "it is funny when you listen to people's stories you've never met before and you start to relate to them. This is where it hits that we are humans and we all have human experiences. And this is how stories bring people together." The interviewees collectively reflected that when one finds similarities between peoples' lives who lived their life in different societal settings and completely different parts of the world, it really makes a person feel like home and they belong right there where they are.

According to Healthfield (2011), by giving a chance to tell stories from their own cultures in English, the cultural divide is often bridged through a blend of curiosity, close listening and the realization that people have great deal in common.

7.3 Story sharing cafes to meet new people

In the interviews, it is noticeable that the language courses (integration program by government) don't provide much chance to meet new people, especially the member of the host community. "we go to the same class every day, learn the language for 5 - 6 hours a day with the same people. And, the language we learn it isn't even useful in daily life. There is no new interaction or a chance to mingle with anyone else. But, when I came to the story sharing cafe, for the first time, I met more new people in one evening than I have met in 1 year", stated an interviewee. He added, "it is easier to get familiar with the new environment if you have people around you. New people teach you new things, and it makes it easier to integrate into a new setting than by just being at a language school."

7.4 Integration via networking

"All the best friends I have in my life right now, I met them at story sharing cafe. All the jobs I have gotten in my 4 years of stay in Finland have been possible through networking and the networking happened at story sharing cafes", said one of the interviewees. He also added, "in my point of view a person needs to have friends, a job and a social life in order to be integrated. And all of them have been possible for me because of the story sharing cafe." In my observation also, there have been many pieces of evidence of people being recommended to some jobs or some new people according to their needs in/after the cafe. People sharing contacts is common at the end of the cafes.

7.5 Story sharing cafes to bridge the communication gap

There are a lot of stereotypes of different cultures and people believe them because they have no platform to come can confront. This creates chaos and misunderstanding and that effects integration. This was said by one of the main organizers of the story-sharing cafe. He told that the main purpose of creating an event like this is to provide a platform for both parties (migrants and Finns) to come together, talk, ask questions, and share stories in order to get to know each other as well as clear the misconception around different cultures.

7.6 Clearing the misconception and stereotypes of cultures

"I was told, in the refugee camp, that 'don't talk to Finns, they don't like us, and you should never shake hands with them'. And I believed it because I didn't know any Finns, and that's the rumor about them among refugees", said one of the interviewees. She added, "when I first came to story sharing cafe, I was shocked to see all the people sitting in the same table, talking and laughing. I had some misconceptions about Finns, and they had misconceptions about Iraqis. We get to talk about that and clear them up in the form of stories."

It is, sometimes, obvious that one person or few people are hesitant to sit with someone because of the way they dress or the accent when they talk. But once they settle down and the story sharing begins, it is easy to observe them relax and see the change in their immediate hand gestures, tone of voice and level of curiosity.

7.7 Language is not everything when it comes to integration

"We go to the language school with almost the same backgrounds as ours and we speak our own language to each other. The language learned there is almost non-existential when we come and try to talk to people in real life. We don't get much chance to practice our Finnish language skills with a native person," said an interview from Iraq.

"We are treated as kindergarten kids while we have our degrees and skills to perform in the labor market. I don't see how that will ever help Finland achieve integration goals", said of the interviewee. She said that she had been to many other countries as a migrant and this is the only country where they separate migrants from the natives. "Language is important, but not everything one needs to be integrated into society. And I feel like we are being held at a gunpoint and told to learn the language no matter what or we will never be integrated, and this is not how it's supposed to be. Integration can be achieved by empowering people and letting them use their skills at work, societal level and perform their duties as a resident of the country. And, I think Finnish integration goal is lacking that and it is segregating migrants in so many ways."

To conclude, the results answer the research question 'how does storytelling support in migrants' integration?'. It can be drawn from the findings that storytelling has helped the interviewees to form connections with people, find networking and get helped finding jobs, clearing the cultural stereotypes and getting to know the different cultures better in a friendly settings and bridge the communicational gap between the migrants and the members of the host community. All these findings prove that storytelling can actually promote identification, interactive and cultural integration.

It concludes that the story sharing cafe and the method of storytelling has facilitated the integration of these migrants. In fact, in their words, it has helped them a lot than the integration programme instructed to them by their residing municipalities.

8 DISCUSSIONS

With the interviews and the final analysis, it is very clear that story sharing cafe has been successful in implementing its concept of bringing people together and providing a platform to bridge the gap between migrants and the members of the host community.

As this thesis understood integration in social level, the findings of the thesis support the perspective. Storytelling for the reflection of self and life stories (chapter 7.1), storytelling to find the similarities among peoples' lives (chapter 7.2) explain the identification perspective of social integration. In these chapters, the interviewees' experiences of exploring own self and finding similarities within others are explained, which form a strong sense of individual and societal identity. The sense of belongingness is seen to be stablished in the interviewees which pondering upon the stories of their own and of others.

Story sharing cafes to meet new people (chapter 7.3), integration via networking (chapter 7.4), story sharing cafes to bridge the communication gap among migrants and the members of the host community (chapter 7.5) are the chapters that explain the interactive perspective of social integration. In these chapters, we can find out that the interaction between the two parties increase and is assisted by storytelling. The experiences of interviewees' making friend with natives and other members of the host community is evident in these chapters. The exposure of these parties to each other is made possible in friendly and warm environment by story sharing cafes. There have been some statements made by the interviewees that they found job(s) through the people they met and made connections with at story sharing cafes. This also touches the structural perspective of social integration.

In chapter 7.5 and 7.6, the cultural perspective of social integration is talked about with the viewpoint of the interviewees. Story telling provides a platform for everyone to share their culture in the form of stories that help to clear the stereotypes of different cultures and nationalities that are prevalent in the

community and create a common ground for the understanding and acceptance of different cultures.

Story sharing, according to the research, has been one of the tools for the migrants to feel empowered, own their own background and connect with new people in their lives. Sharing stories with a bunch of strangers has boosted their communicational skills, help them find friends, partners, and networks, and assisted them to get introduced to the normalcy of the host community. This platform has boosted integration of not only migrants but the members of the host community in the new and diverged community.

According to the interviewees and my findings, I believe, we have somehow come closer to answering the research question of this thesis. And, my findings say that storytelling is a very powerful and practical method that can and should be used in the integration of the migrants as well as for the members of the host community. The themes 'Storytelling to find the similarities among peoples' lives, Story sharing cafes to meet new people, Story sharing cafes to bridge the communication gap among migrants and the members of the host community, and Clearing the misconception and stereotypes of cultures via storytelling' support the argument of the research question.

9 CONCLUSION

This thesis is a small try to introduce the potential of art-based methods into the integration process of the migrants. This will also help the members of the host community as well, to integrate into the new diverged community of becoming. Since the research was performed with a set of closed target groups and only 5 people who are already a part of story sharing cafe were interviewed, the results may vary if the research is conducted in a larger scale.

However, the whole idea of this thesis is to approach the integration process by an art-based approach in a holistic way so that everyone feels like they belong in the community they live in. If we combine the art-based approach and storytelling together, we will be able to create a community where everyone feels heard. In order to integrate people and create a community, communication plays crucial role, and this can be easily achieved through storytelling. It helps people to get to know each other and blend into the societal setting with the understanding of another person's background and values.

The whole process of writing this thesis, from an idea to performing research and writing the complete paper, has taught me the practicalities a social service provider must have. The skills of conducting a proper research, collecting relevant data for the topic, analyzing the data using different approaches and finalizing the result of the research has been the major learning highlights of my thesis process. Besides, good listening skills, empathy, patience and forming the relevant interview questions are also the skills I have developed while working on my thesis. Nonetheless, writing a well-researched thesis in the given topic is one of the biggest achievements during my studies.

While conducting the research and writing this thesis, I, most importantly, learned how to implement all the theories learned over the years into practice and build a community that is inclusive and welcoming to everyone. This

thesis talks directly about integration of migrants into host community, as well as integration of host community into the new changes brought about by the migrants in the societal level. However, it indirectly links towards building a community in this changing world by using storytelling as a method.

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APPENDIX 1

Interview Questions

- Which country are you from? (optional)
- What brings you to Finland and how long have you lived here?
- Do you consider yourself integrated in the Finnish society? Why/why not?
- Who would you call fully or effectively integrated person? (when is a migrant fully integrated in the host community?)
- In your opinion, what is the most important factor for the successful integration process and why?
- What/who makes your process of integration easier and/or more manageable?
- How do you understand sense of belongingness? What role, in your opinion, does it play in one's integration?
- How long have you been a part of story sharing café? What impact does storytelling have on you and on your integration process?
- Do the changes in your life as a migrant ever make you feel like losing your sense of belongingness? What kind of things make/made you feel that way?
- Have you overcome that problem (mentioned in the previous question)? How? In your opinion, what do you think helps, or will help?
- In your experience, what role has storytelling played to bring migrants and host community together?
- How much do you think storytelling could help migrants with integration? Would you recommend it to a friend who is struggling with sense of belongingness and integration?
- Is there anything else you would like to share about storytelling in general, or story sharing café?

APPENDIX 2

Story Sharing Café Logo

APPENDIX 3

Picture of one of the all women story sharing cafes organized in African care in Rastila.