The Role of Syrian Refugees in the Sharing Economy and Technology Sector in Germany:

A Neoliberal Approach to Integration and Empowerment

by

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Dedication:

To my Palestinian *countrymate*, my Yemeni sister, my favorite Israeli solider: your personal stories of displacement led me to this topic. This work is for you.
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Abstract

From January through December of 2015, Germany accepted nearly one million refugees. Though arriving with diverse skillsets and past experiences, nearly half of these refugees share one thing in common: they are Syrian. As the influx of Syrians in Germany represented a larger trend of what was happening throughout Europe during this time, it seemed fitting to study their case for this thesis. This study sets out to answer these questions, as well as to explore solutions that give refugees agency to contribute to their own advancement and integration. Over the course of three months, twelve refugees were interviewed and fifteen were surveyed to produce the results for this work. To this end, the work presented here suggests the existing dependency-creating aid structure must be changed to give agency to refugees. Such changes improve integration of refugees and enable them to contribute in a meaningful way to their host communities. The three chapters in this work will narrow in on this topic. Chapter One will go on to provide further background and context about Syrian refugees, German policies and practices as they relate to integration, and the field of social entrepreneurship. Chapter Two argues that the sharing economy can be used to help Syrian refugees integrate into their communities in Germany. Chapter Three argues that the technology sector can be used to improve the integration of Syrian refugees in Germany. Comprehensively, this research contributes to a growing field of work around how refugees can serve as economic boon instead of burden.
Introduction

In August 2015, Germany announced a new policy that received overwhelming approval by two-thirds of the country’s voters, that is, to offer refuge to asylum seekers. A beneficiary of this policy, Bidal Majeed, fleeing violence in his home country of Syria, arrived by minivan later that month to a small town called Passau, on the German-Austrian border. Twenty-six-years-old, Bidal is a graduate of English literature and the humanities from the University of Damascus, and previously worked in office management. He was among the thousands of people arriving in Germany to start a new life. “The local people were staring at us in wonder,” Bidal describes the scene as he, his brother, and fifteen other refugees climbed out of a van, stepping onto German soil for the first time. The Germans who greeted Bidal then helped him and his brother to buy train tickets to Berlin and showed them the way to the train station. “It was all something new and exciting for us,” Bidal reflects.

From January through December of 2015, Germany accepted nearly one million refugees like Bidal. Though arriving with diverse skillsets and past experiences, nearly half of these refugees share one thing in common: they are Syrian. As the influx of Syrians in Germany represented a larger trend of what was happening throughout Europe during this time, it seemed fitting to study their case for this thesis. The work herein seeks to understand what happened to refugees like Bidal after his train reached Berlin. How were they supported? Were they empowered to assimilate? How were these diversely skilled individuals contributing to German society? How did they find agency to create a new life? Were they given resources or training to help them adapt and add value to the German community? If not, how can this be accomplished?

This study sets out to answer these questions, as well as to explore solutions that give refugees agency to contribute to their own advancement and integration. To this end, the work presented here suggests the existing dependency-creating aid structure must be changed to give
agency to refugees. Such changes improve integration of refugees and enable them to contribute in a meaningful way to their host communities.

**Crisis Discourse and Dependency-Creating Aid Structures**

Since Bidal’s arrival in August, the mass influx of refugees in Europe has been termed a “refugee crisis.” Media headlines and world leaders alike have used this phrase repeatedly. As a result, the words “refugees” and “Europe” are often associated with the word “crisis.” When searching in *the New York Times*’s archive for the keywords, “refugee crisis,” nearly 5,000 articles appear. The ubiquitous appearance of these words in such a venerated medium is notable. Figure 1 shows a search in The Guardian for the word “refugee”, in which the word “crisis” appears multiple times. Teun van Dijk, professor of language at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra, notes that “recipients tend to accept beliefs, knowledge, and opinions through discourse from what they see as authoritative, trustworthy, or credible sources”.

In other words, when leading media sources, such as the *New York Times* and the *Guardian*, call the refugee situation a “crisis,” they instill in its many readers and viewers the belief that it is.

![Google Custom Search](image)

Fig. 1. A search of leading news site *The Guardian* with key suggestions and word pairings for the word “refugee.” The word “crisis” comes up multiple times.

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Crisis is defined as “a time of intense difficulty, trouble, or danger”. This definition of crisis can be broken down into two parts. First, it refers to an interval or a moment in “time.” Second, it refers to “trouble,” connoting a negative situation. As “crisis” is the principle word used to connect “refugees” and “Europe,” it is no surprise that the arrival of refugees in Europe has come to be viewed as a discrete and difficult event. As a result, as researcher Tamsin Murray-Leach writes in his work, *Crisis Discourses in Europe*, “It is this crisis-discourse that determines how the ‘crisis’ is perceived and, therefore, prescribes and restricts where and by whom solutions are to be found.” Marxist philosopher and professor of philosophy Louis Althusser argues that under capitalism “(ideas) are elicited through non-government organizations that entwine with the government in civil society, most notably the media, trade unions, charities, and political parties.” These organizations that convey the word “crisis” are the same ones that produce societal ideas. Althusser and other scholars emphasize the importance of language in shaping meaning and action. We understand then that the manner in which refugees have been treated and the solutions they have been offered has been in response to the media’s “crisis” language.

The language of crisis inaccurately portrays the situation, however, and may contribute to the unsuitable solutions offered to refugees. On average, a refugee is uprooted from his or her life for 17 years. However, due to the nature of the word “crisis,” global actors such as government and non-governmental organizations, address the refugee situation as though it exists in a single moment of time, hindering long-term visions and planning. This is an unhelpful response as Miriam Ticktin writes, “Actions and interventions in the name of the moral imperative – even when grounded by a belief in a universal humanity – take place as exceptions, performed in situations of crisis or with the rhetoric of emergency, when there is no other recourse.” Addressing the situation at hand as though it were an exception therefore fails to consider the refugees’ need for long-term solutions.
According to the second part of the definition, refugees as a group in “crisis” connotes a situation that is “difficult, trouble[some] or danger[ous]”.\textsuperscript{xiii} However, that is a misnomer as there are many positive cultural, economic, and social benefits of refugees, which the crisis discourse may cause us to overlook. Dijk notes that this kind of discourse can by itself produce social inequality\textsuperscript{xiv} as it creates a false image of who the refugee is, which accordingly affects how he or she will be treated.

Given the vocabulary, it is not surprising that refugees have come to be seen as a burden, particularly economically, on their host communities. This is exemplified by the humanitarian structures in place to receive refugees. In her work, \textit{Casualties of Care}, Tictkin discusses how victims of severe health impairments are offered asylum in France, while impoverished individuals are not, given they are in less visible need of care.\textsuperscript{xv} Victims of severe health issues attract the attention of those in the humanitarian field and are thus granted asylum due to their visibly helpless nature. Ticktin observes that in France, asylum seekers need to be in obvious need of rescue in order to be granted asylum, making it difficult for victims of causes such as poverty to receive assistance. Ticktin asserts that this bias ultimately reinforces an oppressive order, wherein inequalities are reproduced, as well as racial, gendered, and geopolitical hierarchies.\textsuperscript{xvi}

Humanitarian assistance for refugees is designed to provide for them as if they were helpless; a common aid model throughout the world. Generally, refugees receive hand-outs in the form of financial assistance for the first few months they spend in a country and are usually offered other free services thereafter. As a consequence, they are considered a burden to society. An example of this comes from the largest refugee camp in the world, located in Dadaab, Kenya.\textsuperscript{xvii} If it were a city, it would be one of the largest in the country, with over 300,000 residents in the camp (Fig. 2).\textsuperscript{xviii} Within the twenty-four-year-old camp, refugees are unable to work formally, nor are they able to find jobs outside of the camp.
The governance structure of the camp operates in a way such that residents of the camp lack the ability to change their own situation. Regulations ban refugees the formal permission to work, causing them to stay in these holding-pen type situations. This sort of situation may be a result of the language used, which Hall and Dijk have discussed as being deeply influential on society. For example, commonly used phrases such as “burden sharing” or “refugee problem” employ language that produces a negative view of refugees and may lead to outcomes such as these camps.

The top-down approach to humanitarian assistance reflects and reinforces the idea that refugees are victims, and does not empower them to use their diverse skills and abilities. Moreover, Harvey notes that humanitarian attempts to assist refugees can be “clumsy, inefficient, and wasteful.” This victimizing produces and reproduces the model of assistance and charity that creates dependence while also being ineffective. Laqueur notes that though the compassion of the host community is helpful, it does so by “using an inherently exclusionary process.” That is, it often creates an “us” versus “them” sentiment. Here is the challenge: when a host community views refugees as helpless, it is also when they have the most compassion for them.
Brian Reich, the director of the USA for UNHCR Hive innovation space, explains that “part of the whole cry and buy, hope and horror dynamic is that the non-profit community kind of gets by on finding the most extraordinarily awful stories, or the most hopeful stories, and saying those. The whole idea of normalization gets lost”.

The “hope and horror” tactic for gaining support that Reich mentions can actually worsen the situation and may need to be reconsidered. Ticktin continues to build on this idea of what she calls the “politics of care,” explaining that such assistance is about the “exception and not the rule, about generosity rather than entitlement.” It is based on engaging a host community on an empathetic level to prompt them to act out of their humanity. However, it unfortunately involves the refugee having to play up or emphasize their suffering. This feeds the cycle of charity wherein the refugee is without empowerment to become a member in the host community. Despite their complex nature, and often good intentions, these exclusionary acts of compassion keep individuals and organizations from viewing refugees for their unique backgrounds and experiences. These obstacles cumulatively hinder the refugee’s ability to integrate and become fully contributing members of their host community. As long as refugees remain economically segregated, they will be socially and politically isolated as well, exacerbating the inequality.

**Research Questions and Argument**

The current framework to accept refugees deals with them as though they were part of a negative, emergency event – a crisis – thus perpetuating a model of charity that creates dependence. This existing aid structure is inadequate because it springs from and reproduces logic that refugees are a burden.

This study proposes that improved integration can best be achieved through economic empowerment and self-sufficiency, arguing that economic integration often drives social, political,
and cultural inclusion. In a recent article, George Soros argues that opportunities for an effective asylum system are available; they just need to be conveyed in a sound policy. He proposes that a policy driven by economic goals, such as integrating students into universities and junior doctors into hospitals, could achieve refugee integration across the EU over a gradual time period. He suggests that a promising opportunity to fund such policies could be to re-open the European Commission’s Multiannual Financial Framework, which establishes the EU budget, to allocate more funding towards refugees. In doing this, he asserts that, “making large initial investments will help tip the economic, political, and social dynamics away from xenophobia and disaffection toward constructive outcomes that benefit refugees and countries alike.” Such funding allocations and policy changes are essential to consider as a practical step towards improving integration and assimilation for refugees across the EU, as they could not only promote growth, but also decrease negative social consequences for all people involved.

Importantly, in surveys conducted for this work, results showed that when asked about their long term goal for the future, 86% of respondents said to find a job (see Appendix B). This evidence further shows that economic integration is not only a primary concern of the EU, but for the Syrian refugees themselves.

There are two recent and growing areas in the economic system that can support refugee integration: the sharing economy and the technology sector. These parts of the economy suggest an alternative model of integration, wherein refugees can be seen as a form of human capital as opposed to being viewed as a burden to the host community. There are many overlapping themes of the sharing economy and the technology sector; many of the examples proposed here are entrepreneurial in nature.

The research for this project began in 2014 in Spain, Italy, and Morocco, where though there were innovative approaches to the socioeconomic integration of refugees on a grassroots level – for
example, a street market for refugee entrepreneurs in Morocco, or a project of my own, a LinkedIn forum for highly-skilled refugees in Spain – there were few, if any, large scale initiatives that challenged the current model of refugee integration. Most organizations perpetuated a model of hand-outs, offering few opportunities for long-term integration through economic empowerment. The goal of the research here is to explore the effectiveness of recent innovations and adaptations to the old model, in order to inform future government and other large-scale integration programs and policies.

When this research began, there were thousands of refugees flooding the European Union, constituting the “refugee crisis.” As the situation unfolded in August 2015, something different was happening in Germany compared to the rest of the European Union. While the United Kingdom closed the channel tunnel that connects it to mainland Europe, and Macedonia closed its borders, Germany was openly welcoming a mass influx of refugees. Germans flocked to train stations to hang banners and cheer for the refugees entering into the country. They were launching start-up businesses to help integrate refugees who had already arrived. Meanwhile, groups of refugees often broke out into chants of “Germany! Germany! Germany!” in train stations across the Balkans, as they tried to make their way there. Many photos illustrate scenes of Germans welcoming Syrian refugees to their country as though they were joining a family reunion (Fig. 3). These early arrivals of Syrian refugees in Germany provides an example of how the refugee “crisis” can actually be a positive event.
Fig. 3. Images of refugees waving to locals after disembarking in Germany. A German aid worker embraces a Syrian child. German locals await the arrival of refugees with donations. Locals reach out to give small gifts to the refugees.

Despite this positive sentiment, Germany has still faced challenges and obstacles regarding refugees, such as the January 2016 anti-refugee protests in Cologne or the growing fear of terrorists entering into Germany with refugee status. These events have exposed xenophobia and anti-refugee sentiment among native Germans. Tensions have particularly risen through 2016, as political parties have begun to speak out. One right-wing party in particular, Alternative for Germany, has launched a campaign around restricting political asylum, while making negative comments about Muslims. While the situation appears to be growing worse, future is still unpredictable. Arguably, to the extent that we are able to push economic integration forward through the sharing economy and the technology sector, it may be possible to mitigate or address the emerging backlash. If refugees can be seen as economic boon instead of burden, they have the potential to become more normalized in regular society.
While these obstacles are present, there is still a general sense of optimism around refugees that will be further explored in this paper. This paper will thus use Germany as case study to understand how other nations could learn from its example. Is there something exceptional about the combination of Syrian refugees and Germany that has led to this particular generally positive outcome? Or could a similar mechanism for integration be implemented in other nations? This paper will explore what has been done in Germany to understand how it could be replicated, built upon, and implemented elsewhere to facilitate refugee integration.

**Methodology**

The research conducted for this paper sought to answer a number of questions, such as: How can the technology sector and the sharing economy help refugees contribute meaningfully to their host community in Germany? How does innovation in the model of refugee assistance promote improved integration? The nature of this research, however, can best be articulated simply in the broader question: How can Syrian refugees add economic value to their host community in Germany? This is therefore the central research focus from which sub-questions will stem.

In order to answer this question, there are two key parties who must be represented: The Syrian refugees, and the entrepreneurs and innovators working with them and on their behalf. Since this study is on Syrian refugees and Germany, the majority of the interviewees were either Syrian or German (see Appendices A and B). However, as there are limited examples in the technology sector and the sharing economy as it relates to Syrian refugees in Germany, this paper employs relevant examples from other countries and contexts. See Appendix A for more detailed information on how the research data was collected.
Neoliberalism, Globalization, and Migration Theory

This argument is contextualized in a broader framework of neoliberalism. According to researcher Panos Paradongonas, anthropological perspectives from Gupta and Onga, and geopolitical ones from Hardt and Negri, capitalism is a “global consolidation of its dominant paradigm, neoliberalism”. David Harvey describes neoliberalism as “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade”. This theory is essential to understand as the argument of this thesis is situated in a neoliberal framework. Harvey asserts that neoliberalism has social ramifications, such as increased inequalities and various other negative impacts. He is highly critical of neoliberalism’s outcomes for a fair and equal society, claiming more that it was created to improve the situation of the upper class alone. Harvey’s perspective is a common one, and is upheld by many other leading scholars and critics, such as Pereira, Maravall, and Przeworski, who argue that there are many negative impacts of liberalizing reforms. These include inequalities between the rich and poor populations or between developed and undeveloped nations or general risk of market failure.

While there are negative implications of neoliberalism, it is a system that many Western societies currently operate within. For the moment, it is not going anywhere. Therefore, instead of critiquing and dismantling a system that other scholars already have many times before, this paper will find ways to work within it. While acknowledging that there are other - perhaps better - ways of running an economy, the argument of this work is situated within a neoliberal framework.

This paper’s argument is aligned with the contesting views of anthropologist, James Ferguson. Ferguson suggests there are tenants of neoliberalism which could be used to combat against the stratifying nature of the theory in order to promote progressive outcomes. He asserts
that markets do not necessarily serve only those who have purchasing power, but that market-based solutions could be redirected to serve and include the poor. He argues that markets can serve as a means to progressive ends “in ways that may require us to revise some of our prejudices that automatically associate market mechanisms with the interests of the well-to-do.” This argument is interesting because it suggests that instead of dismantling or critiquing neoliberal systems, it is possible to work within them to achieve social goals. Redirected neoliberal efforts, as Ferguson proposes, could actually increase the purchasing power and inclusion of those who are disadvantaged, such as refugees. Ferguson claims that while politics are often centered around “the antis: anti-globalization, anti-neoliberalism, anti-privatization…even anti-capitalism,” there is much to be said about being “pro.” He therefore describes the various “uses of neoliberalism” to have a more progressive perspective than the numerous critiques of neoliberal theory like Harvey’s.

Throughout this work, many ideas will connect back to these various “use-cases to help understand how neoliberalism could work to empower instead of exploit, and to solve the very problems created by other forms of capitalism that Harvey criticizes.

As we will be discussing Syrian refugees in Germany, it is important to also anchor the argument in a larger conversation about globalization. While Ferguson’s ideas of neoliberalism are relevant, it is essential to note that globalization is not purely economic. Appadurai is one of the leading scholars who argues this, describing various landscapes that relate to the international flow of not only economic capital, but also other kinds of flows across borders. One of these landscapes, Appadurai calls an “ethnoscape,” which refers to the “landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, and other moving groups.”

We often refer to globalization as the exchange of ideas, goods, and services, but we may forget to consider the flow of people as well. Often our views of globalization may overestimate
how smoothly these goods and actors move from place to place. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) illustrates this tendency by optimistically defining globalization as “the process through which an increasingly free flow of ideas, people, goods, services, and capital leads to the integration of economies and societies.” However, Appadurai points out that there are people who “deal with the realities of having to move or wanting to move,” such is the case of Syrian refugees, and that such flows in globalization are not always smooth. Anthropologist Anna Tsing builds on this idea, pushing back against the conceptions of globalization such as the IMF’s. Tsing notes that despite the commonly held idea that globalization promotes free flows, there are actually many “unexpected and unstable aspects of global interaction,” which she refers to as “friction.”

According to Tsing, “friction” can be either compromising or empowering. However, she notes that often friction “gets in the way of the smooth operation of global power. Difference can disrupt.” This is important to consider in the case of Syrian refugees in Germany, as within the framework of Appadurai’s ethnoscape, there are differences to be reconciled and friction to be considered as they arrive in Germany, a context vastly different from their own. The flow of Syrian refugees into Germany is by no means simple, and goes beyond an economic exchange of goods or services. Briggs addresses these issues of migration as a form of transnationalism that is “back and forth,” wherein there is an exchange of goods, services, or people, across national borders.

With the context that globalization is not just a movement of goods and services, but also a complicated movement of people, we need to understand how the literature discusses migration and its relevance to the global economic system. It is most helpful to look at international migration in two categories: voluntary and involuntary migration. Voluntary and involuntary migrants differ not only in their motivation to migrate but also in the volume, process, and direction of their immigration patterns. Voluntary migration occurs when an individual makes a choice to leave his or her home country for a social improvement such as better living conditions, better health care, or a
wider array of education opportunities. Improved employment opportunities and higher wages may contribute to the decision. Voluntary migration may be influenced by push factors, such as war or discrimination. These are termed “pull” factors. For example, a low-income Eastern European farmer is recruited by the US Agriculture Association to work for a higher wage in the United States, or an Indian engineer moves to Silicon Valley to take a job or start a business.

Involuntary migration, on the other hand, can result from a variety of “push” factors, which motivate people to leave their home country. War, famine, discrimination, and lack of opportunity are examples of push factors. The 7 million Syrians refugees illustrate involuntary migration, having been pushed into host countries as a result of the conflict in Syria. In addition, involuntary migration has vastly different implications for their host country. While voluntary migrants tend to benefit the receiving country by providing trade, skills, and a cheaper work force, a large subset of involuntary migrants often cause strain on the host country’s healthcare, education, welfare systems and social fabric due to the fact that they are generally less self-sufficient upon arrival.

Still, it is important to note that there is not always a clear line between the “push” and “pull” experience of a migrant. In the case of Syrian refugees, many have had to flee because of war, but nonetheless most still weighed various factors to make a decision on where to go. In the interviews conducted for this research, numerous refugees used language such as “I chose” and “I decided” when explaining their migration to Germany. This illustrates that voluntary and involuntary migration is not fully discreet and it does a disservice to the complexity of the choices that refugees make to assume they are. Refugees do not need to be seen as helpless victims, but as individuals making decisions in difficult situations about their futures, and who experience some combination of both voluntary and involuntary migration. Many current humanitarian support systems are set up to perpetuate the idea that refugees are victims, rather than people who are also seeking a better economic situation. It is thus essential to reexamine the sometimes blurry line
between voluntary and involuntary migration in order to more adequately support refugees.

This is particularly important as it is clear from current data that migration rates, both voluntary and involuntary, have been increasing in recent years. Work by Hatton and Williamson finds that from 1965 to 1990, the number of people living outside the country in which they were born rose from 75 to 120 million. In 2011, the World Bank reported that immigrants made up 3.2% of the world’s population. Francis Deng notes that 25 million people in the world are internally displaced within their country of origin (in comparison with 18 million refugees). The map below illustrates the significance of migration as a trend throughout the world (Fig. 4).

Fig. 4. This map shows that current migration routes touch every major continent across the world.

Deng’s discussion of internally displaced people centers more on the involuntary side: individuals who are forced to leave their homes for reasons related to war or famine. He emphasizes the need for an international response to this situation as well as increased dialogue with experts on global migration. Myron Weiner, in The Global Migration Crisis, discusses the consequences of movements of populations across international borders. He highlights prominent issues in the
discussion of international migration, such as citizenship, and the impact on the global economy. He particularly underscores the importance of politics in the discussion about migrants, noting that population movements can challenge the nature of regimes and societies. His work provides a number of examples of how migrants can change the composition or creation of the state. Weiner’s discussion of migration focuses more on what Walter Wilcox would deem voluntary (i.e., an individual who chooses to move to a new country for reasons such as economic or social opportunity).

Though often deemed a migration “crisis,” the movement of large numbers of people can have many positive impacts. Peggy Halpern’s work notes that despite the various obstacles like the lack of language skills and lower education levels, migrants in the United States still enter the workforce at a relatively high rate. According to George Borjas, immigration increases the size of the US economy by about 11% each year. He estimates the immigration surplus is around $35 billion annually, approximately 0.2 percent of the total US GDP. Michael Katz and Carl Shapiro, as well as David McKenzie, claim that the significant positive impacts of migration are largely the result of network effects. McKenzie’s work also suggests that migrant networks are established after the first migrants arrive, and effectively lower the cost of migrants who come later by assisting them with accommodation and employment.

Migration also impacts the country of origin. According to the World Bank, official recorded remittances to developing countries from migrants approached $435 billion at the end of 2014. In 2013, remittances were significantly higher than foreign direct investment in developing countries.

Examples from Jaschke and Perea show that many governments close their borders and refuse to integrate migrants into their countries. However, Bade and Bommes have produced a
study which examines the distributional position of migrants.\textsuperscript{lxviii} They examine migrant access to income, education, healthcare, and legal rights, producing evidence that suggests that migrants experience social inequality on these dimensions. This contributes to their inability to integrate into the broader society and is often why governments refuse to accept migrants in the first place.

Though integration is an essential issue for all migrants, it is especially imperative for refugees, a particular kind of migrant, due to their inability to return home and their typical unpreparedness for migrating. In his 2011 book, Alexander Betts discusses the magnitude of the refugee issue.\textsuperscript{lxix} At the time of publication, there were 43.7 million refugees worldwide.\textsuperscript{lxx} Bhatt notes that the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) is constantly seeking to adapt its policies and programs to work with the times, and is currently focusing primarily on stateless people, irregular migrants, urban refugees, and victims of natural disasters.\textsuperscript{lxxi} It is especially imperative that governments and agencies support the integration of these refugee populations in order to tap into the potential they have for benefiting the larger society and mitigate the negative social factors and costs associated with segregation. These migrant communities are generally more isolated, less economically and/or emotionally stable, and frequently exhibit lesser skill sets. Hence, they create bigger challenges for governments and societies in their efforts to incorporate them into the economic mainstream. Despite the fact that migrants are often viewed as burdensome in their host countries, in 2013, immigrants in the United States were found to be significantly more likely than native-born individuals to start their own businesses.\textsuperscript{lxxxii} There is a significant amount of evidence that refugees can be beneficial to their host communities, which we will explore further in this work.
Thesis Overview

The introduction has provided background, a literature review, and an overview of the research questions and methods.

Chapter One will go on to provide further background and context about Syrian refugees, German policies and practices as they relate to integration, and the field of social entrepreneurship. At the beginning of Chapter One, a literature review of relevant scholars who discuss refugee integration and assimilation is presented. Following the literature review, Chapter One will discuss the Syrian conflict, provide Syrian demographic information, and explain the asylum seeking procedure in Germany. After that, we discuss Germany, presenting an overview of the culture, economy, and demographics of the nation as it relates to migration. It will also provide a discussion of the field of social entrepreneurship. A literature review of entrepreneurship is provided and used to explain humanitarian assistance in this context, demonstrating how social entrepreneurship can offer an alternative model of assistance.

Chapter Two argues that the sharing economy can be used to help Syrian refugees integrate into their communities in Germany. The chapter ends with a literature review that discusses how economy and relationships are interconnected. Four key principles of the sharing economy are outlined, with examples of each that are relevant to refugees. By connecting the sharing economy principles to examples of refugee integration, this chapter explains how concepts embedded in the sharing economy can apply to Syrian refugees in Germany.

Chapter Three argues that that the technology sector can be used to improve the integration of Syrian refugees in Germany. Technological innovation and entrepreneurship are introduced and their influence on the Germany economy is examined. How Syrian refugees are currently utilizing technology is outlined. This chapter shows examples of start-up businesses and other initiatives that are helping to integrate refugees in their communities through the use of technology solutions.
Finally, Chapter Three discusses proposals regarding how an alternative model to charity and assistance, such as the sharing economy, can empower a refugee to add value to his or her own.

The conclusion examines the overlap between the sharing economy and the technology sector. It argues that when initiatives are representative of both economic systems, they can be especially effective in assisting refugees. It then explores how arguments made in this paper can be extrapolated and understood in other contexts. Finally, the conclusion emphasizes the importance of Syrian refugee economic integration in Germany as a means for refugees to build the necessary skills to be able to return to and rebuild Syria after the war and to contribute meaningfully to the Germany economy and society.
1. Background: Syrian Refugees, Germany, and Social Entrepreneurship

[My cousin] was able to build a friendly relationship with the inhabitants of the city where he lived (and still lives). He did this by presenting flowers to people [native Germans] in the streets around the camp, in response to their friendly welcome to refugees and all the things they offered.lxxxiii

- Syrian interview participant

1.1 The Humanitarian Imperative and Utilitarianism

In the 1990s, the international non-governmental organization (NGO) community released an impactful document.lxxxiv Created by the International Federation of the Red Cross and the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response, it was a Code of Conduct meant to provide guidance on programming related to war.lxxxv The first article of the Code states:

The Humanitarian imperative comes first—the right to receive humanitarian assistance, and to offer it, is a fundamental humanitarian principle which should be enjoyed by all citizens of all countries. As members of the international community, we recognise our obligation to provide humanitarian assistance wherever it is needed. Hence the need for unimpeded access to affected populations is of fundamental importance in exercising that responsibility.lxxxvi

The humanitarian imperative can be examined in the same framework as Immanuel Kant’s famous idea of the categorical imperative, wherein he argues that moral imperative is essential in guiding human action as many individuals are otherwise inclined toward something other than moral good.lxxxvii Kant explains that such an imperative is needed because we have obligations to moral and ethical standards, regardless of the expected outcomes. Both Kant’s categorical
imperative and the humanitarian imperative apply directly to the Syrian “refugee crisis” in Europe, wherein refugees are in need of humanitarian assistance due to their displacement from violent conflict. In the 1949 Geneva Conventions, principle architect, Jean Pictet, defined humanitarian as “being concerned with the condition of a man considered solely as a human being, regardless of his value as a military, political, professional or other unit”. The Conventions discuss how humanitarian assistance should be given unconditionally to those in need. According to the Code of Conduct and the Geneva Conventions, international and local actors are called to provide humanitarian assistance to Syrian refugees where needed, regardless of an individual’s perceived value. Antonio Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, further builds on these ideas, stating that “refugees have the right to be protected…under international law.” He explains that “the question shouldn’t be ‘how many refugees can we take?’, it should be ‘how can we organize ourselves to assume our international responsibilities?’

Despite the clearly defined responsibilities of global actors, humanitarian assistance to Syrian refugees has continued to fall short. In the United States, more than half the nation’s governors issued statements to say that refugees were unwelcome. In Bulgaria, officials erected a fence that eerily resembled the Cold War barriers prohibiting refugees from entering West Germany. Then there are the numerous neighboring Gulf states, who simply have not taken refugees coming out of Syria. This is particularly controversial as both Saudi Arabia and Qatar have provided financial support to rebel groups fighting Syrian president al-Assad.

In the height of this global tension, Germany’s Chancellor, Angela Merkel, reminded Europe of their humanitarian imperative. In a speech in September 2015, she claimed, “If Europe fails on the question of refugees, its close connection with universal civil rights will be destroyed”. Speaking on the basis of Pictet’s humanitarian definition and the Code of Conduct, Merkel’s speech emphasized Germany’s responsibility to care for the Syrian refugees in need. This
was one of the first of many moments to come wherein Germany would stand beside this imperative when other world actors did not.

Arguably, however, Germany was able to stand by the humanitarian imperative because it had additional reasons to act. With a diminishing workforce and aging population, Merkel understood that Germany also had a need for the refugee population. Therefore, Merkel’s stance may represent a combination of humanitarian and utilitarian incentives.

Differing from humanitarianism, utilitarianism theorizes that the best moral action to take is the one that produces the highest outcome or utility. The founder of utilitarianism, Jeremy Bentham, emphasizes utility as the total pleasure involved in completing an action that is usually based in reason and law. John Stuart Mill added to this definition the idea of maximizing quality of pleasure based on a set of rules instead of individual actions. Henry Sidgwick, R.M. Hare, and Peter Singer also argued that the right decision is the one where utility can be maximized in quality and quantity. As the field of utilitarianism has developed and changed over the past few hundred years, today’s modern theory is diverse and contains various opinions. Despite criticisms from Rosen, McCloskey, and Mill that discuss how utilitarianism ignores justice, is unable to calculate consequences or utility, and is demanding as it forces one to consider the needs and desires of strangers just as much as friends, it is still an important theoretical framework if one’s goal is to maximize utility. This paper adopts a more utilitarian stance on the refugee situation as it proposes a solution that produces maximum utility, not solely moral good. Notably, Merkel’s speech and Germany’s action serve as evidence that the choice does not need to be a binary between humanitarianism and utilitarianism.

1.2 Syrian Refugees in Germany as Boon instead of Burden
While Merkel maintains a positive view of refugees, many global leaders believe refugees are a net drain on their economic or cultural system. As King Abdullah of Jordan puts it, “Psyche of the Jordanian people, I think, has gotten to a boiling point. Jordanians are suffering from trying to find jobs; the pressure on the infrastructure for the government; it has hurt us when it comes to the educational system, our healthcare...” VIII Similarly, on a recent World Economic Forum panel, the Prime Minister of Greece called for Europe to “share the burden” of the refugees. XCVIII

Consequently, international actors have largely failed to act out of their humanitarian imperative. Countries are not accepting high quotas of Syrian refugees, nor are they providing comprehensive assistance to the refugees who they do accept. If the first article of the Code of Conduct and Pictet’s humanitarian definition has failed to motivate global players to act on the refugee situation, an alternative incentive that does is warranted. We must change the way we think about refugees; that if global actors can view refugees as a boon instead of a burden, they may find incentive to welcome and integrate them.

Within a more sociological framework, this paper proposes a way to eradicate the notion of “the Other” between Germans and Syrian refugees. “Othering” occurs when a society defines who and what Others are based on the ideas of who and what ‘We’ are. Edward Said discusses “Othering” within the context of Orientalism, wherein Westerners helped to strengthen their own identity and superiority by setting themselves up against the East as a lesser society. This same practice can be seen in the context of the refugee crisis as many nations treat refugees as lesser than, denying them entry or else marginalizing them once they are within the country.

In the EU, many minorities are “Othered” as they may not meet certain social or cultural norms that are accepted as mainstream. In Germany, similar to other Western countries post 9/11, Muslim identities have increasingly come to signify this Other, which according to Peek has contributed to them becoming “the victims of discrimination, harassment, racial and religious
profiling, and verbal and physical assault”.

This is of particular consequence for Syrian refugees as they already constitute a non-European population, but many also come from Muslim backgrounds. Among the consequences of Othering are segregation and marginalization. This paper argues that refugees can be less Othered if they can be seen as valuable and contributing members of the host community.

There are many ways that a Syrian refugee can add value to his or her new community in Germany. Refugees bring new languages, cultural traditions, and economic possibilities. This paper focuses specifically on the potential of refugees as an economic advantage. Economic progress often fuels social, political, and cultural change. While scholars Fligstein and Choo consider various political and social factors as instrumental to economic progress,

this work aligns with the views of scholars, such as Ronald Dore, who assert that economic progress drives social change.

Therefore, this paper seeks to explore how refugees may serve as economic human capital to benefit their host community. It also seeks to explore how through economic integration, refugees will achieve other forms of sociocultural integration.

It is important to note, however, that there is a period of time in which refugees may be more burdensome. Leading migration scholar, Egon Kunz, calls this “initial cultural incompatibility.” This is an obstacle for refugee integration. When a refugee first arrives, there are fundamental differences, which Tsing has introduced as “friction,” between them and the host culture that must be reconciled.

In order to advance the argument of refugees as an economic advantage, this paper focuses particularly on the field of economic advancement for social good. Businesses in this field have been called various names, including capitalism for a cause, community wealth enterprises, corporate social responsibility enterprises, enterprising non-profits, social purpose businesses, and third sector enterprises. While the language is diverse, common characteristics of these initiatives...
include finding a common good rather than solely acting for private profit. This paper describes entities in this area using the terminology of “social entrepreneurship,” which this chapter will define and explain. The utilitarian nature of social entrepreneurship provides an alternative to the humanitarian imperative that is too often unmet.

1.3 Syrian Displacement

In 2011, pro-democracy protests in Syria erupted in parallel with the Arab Spring that was occurring throughout the Middle Eastern and North African region. Syrian protests were held in response to the government regime, led by President Bashar al-Assad, for perpetrating various policies that promoted inequality. As the protests grew, so did the violence that the government exercised against its people. And as the violence grew, the more people felt the need to protest for their freedom. This cycle created tension and conflict that quickly grew into what has now been called a civil war. Many armed groups began to form and the conflict continues to this day. The international community and governance organizations, such as the United Nations, have been trying to address this conflict, but it is deeply entrenched in the nation at present. Syrians who are uninvolved in the war have been prompted to flee to save their own lives or to avoid being drafted into one of the opposition groups or armies. This has left over 50% of the Syrian population displaced.

Since the beginning of the war, over 9 million Syrians have been uprooted, with nearly 5 million fleeing to countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, and Iraq. It is important to point out that while this paper considers the case of Syrian refugees in Europe, there are actually more Syrians displaced living in neighboring countries (Fig. 5).
Fig. 5. The map shows the majority of Syrian refugees are in neighboring countries such as Turkey and Lebanon.\textsuperscript{cxv}

Nonetheless, this paper will focus on Europe, particularly Germany, for a number of reasons. First, this is one of the first times that Europe has been engaged in a problem that has previously confined to the “Third World.” According to anthropologist, Liisa Malkki, the rich countries in the West have long tried to defend against immigration.\textsuperscript{cxvi} Nobel famously described this as an “arms race against humanitarianism” and “escalation of unilateral measures against refugees.”\textsuperscript{cxvii} Malkki continues by saying that “if rich countries do not have a ‘refugee problem’ within their borders, this fact is clearly not a simple accident of geography or history.”\textsuperscript{cxviii} Malkki is arguing here that many wealthier countries have had limited engagement with issues related with migration. However, with a new situation comes new opportunity. This work seeks to explore how Europe has and might respond to their new refugee situation. Germany provides relevant examples of how Syrian refugees can be seen as a benefit instead of problem and is therefore a particularly interesting country to examine. Germany is the nation that receives the highest number of Syrian refugees in Europe. By October of 2015, Germany had received over 100,000 applications for
asylum from Syrians. The figures below illustrate that Germany is the top country receiving asylum seekers, and the majority of these asylum seekers hail from Syria (Fig. 6 & 7).

Fig. 6. The greatest number of asylum seekers in Europe are concentrated in Germany.

Fig. 6. Syrians are by far the largest asylum seeking population in Europe.
Syrians have continued to flee to the European Union because they have been unable to find a comfortable lifestyle in Syria’s neighboring countries. Among the countries in the EU, Syrians tend to choose Germany because it is wealthy, welcoming, and offers opportunities in education, jobs, and housing. In one interview conducted, a Syrian man named Mohammad explained, “I’m trying to travel to another country to get a job. I’m thinking of going to USA or Germany.” Here is an illustration of the blurred lines between the push and pull factors of migration. Mohammad is being forced to flee, yet also has agency to choose where to go. Germany offers employment opportunities for him and is thus an attractive option.

Moreover, Germany is also an easily accessible destination. At the height of the refugee arrivals in 2015, Germany decided to suspend the Dublin regulation to help more refugees enter. The Dublin regulation is a law in the European Union that decides how member states consider the asylum status of an individual. The regulation asserts that an individual’s asylum application must be processed within the first state through which an asylum seeker enters the EU. Germany suspended the Dublin regulation, thereby helping nations such as Greece and Italy - the EU nations through which most refugees arrive - to process asylum seekers’ applications and adding to its attractiveness as a destination.

According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Germany is currently ranked as the second most popular country in the world for immigration. It is also in the top twenty countries that receive the most refugees. Although there are important differences between migrants and refugees, these historical immigration trends are also applicable to Syrian refugees.

In order for a Syrian individual to apply for asylum in Germany, which is the status granted once an individual is deemed to need international protection, he or she must fall into one of Germany’s four categories for granting asylum: protection from political persecution; protection as
a refugee; subsidiary protection; or prohibition of deportation.\textsuperscript{cxxix} Essentially, all of these categories boil down to protecting a refugee from an unsafe situation in his or her home country.\textsuperscript{cxxx} Among the population of Syrian individuals seeking asylum, the success rate of being granted refugee status is 93.2\%.\textsuperscript{cxxxii}

After a refugee arrives in the European Union, he or she must wait between six and nine months to be granted asylum.\textsuperscript{cxxxii} During this waiting period, the EU obliges all host countries to provide asylum-seekers with “harmonized standards of reception,” traditionally in the form of services provided by NGOs and other aid organizations.\textsuperscript{cxxxiii} It is not until an individual receives asylum that he or she is granted access to employment opportunities in the host country. If asylum is granted, the individual is given status as a refugee. As a refugee, an individual is given a temporary residence permit with the same privileges as German natives with respect to the social insurance system. This means that the refugee is allowed “social welfare, child and child-raising benefits, integration allowance, and language courses,” as well as other assistance to help them integrate.\textsuperscript{cxxxiv}

However, even after Germany grants asylum, with the exception of a few circumstances, the refugee is not able to immediately obtain a work permit. In addition, while waiting for asylum to be granted, an individual is not allowed to work on a self-employed basis.\textsuperscript{cxxxv} These are complications that make not only finding a job, but also entrepreneurship, a legal challenge for asylum seekers and refugees. Often a year goes by without a refugee being able to legally work in the German economy. It is important to note that this applies not only to Germany, but also to other countries across the EU. This thesis argues that it is during this waiting period that Syrian refugees should receive intensive support and training in specific skills to support their integration into alternative areas of the economy where they can meaningfully contribute once they are granted permission to work. Chapters Two and Three of this paper will further elaborate on how this could be done.
1.4 Demographics and Composition of the Syrian Refugee Population

This work examines the experience of Syrian refugees, not only because they represent the highest number of displaced people across the world today, but also because there appears to be something distinct that equips them to be particularly beneficial to their host communities. The following section explores these distinctions, discussing aspects of the Syrian economy before the war and demographics of the currently displaced individuals.

Before the war, population surveys in Syria revealed an 87% Muslim majority. This had various implications for the culture and customs of the country, but most relevant to the topic of this paper, it meant that the banks and citizens broadly obeyed the rules of Islamic finance. In Islamic finance, individuals are called to act in a socially conscious manner. The principles of Islamic finance strive to ensure that few do not accumulate wealth while others suffer; that an individual’s needs are balanced with society’s needs; and that people have a mutual responsibility for one another. These goals of promoting social justice are directly correlated to those of this thesis. That is, through reaching out to help others, and intentionally acting to participate in an equal and fair society, individuals who obey the rules of Islamic finance are presumably community minded and therefore in accordance with the ideals of social entrepreneurship.

It is important to note that Islamic finance is not the only inclination Syrians may have to practicing social entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship, broadly speaking, has been a common trend in Syria for many years. In 2011 (before the current war), nearly 35% of the Syrian workforce was self-employed. The United States, home to Silicon Valley and one of the leading hubs for entrepreneurship in the world, had only 6.8% self-employment in the same year.

Syrian population demographics contain a number of statistics that reflect the strong human capital. As of 2011, 86.4% of the total population was literate, defined as the percentage of the
population over the age of 15 that can read and write.\textsuperscript{cxli} There had previously been a 97% enrollment rate for children in primary school, making Syria a leader in education among its peers in the region.\textsuperscript{cxlii} Before the war, in the early 2000s, at any given time there were 100,000 Syrians in university, upwards of 6% of the population at the time.\textsuperscript{cxlii} The strong education system in Syria helped its citizens to meaningfully contribute to both the private and public sector in the nation. In 2000, over 6% of the nation’s GDP came from non-Arab tourism, which illustrates that many Syrians have the skills and abilities to interact with and accommodate other cultures and languages.\textsuperscript{cxliii} In research conducted for this thesis, the majority of surveyed Syrian refugees in Germany spoke at least two languages, including English and German (see Appendix B). This is in part because Syrian school systems also teach English and French as a second language. As many Syrians are bilingual, this arguably gives them an advantageous role in facilitating international exchanges and engaging with global issues.\textsuperscript{cxliv}

In terms of producing a strong and able-bodied population, Syria has boasted one of the highest birthrates in the world since before the war. As of 2011, over half the population was under the age of 25.\textsuperscript{cxlvi} These numbers serve as evidence that the Syrian refugees will bring young talent and opportunity to Germany. Many have a long future ahead and will arrive in Germany at a critical stage of development and growth. They are still able to absorb German language and culture during their formative youthful years. They will also contribute to the pension system when they work.

Barry Stein, Professor of Political Science at Michigan State University, points out that, “refugees are not poor people. They have not failed within their homeland; they are successful, prominent, well-integrated, educated individuals who fled because of fear of persecution”.\textsuperscript{cxlvii} Geiger similarly claims that, “before they became refugees, however, they had experienced lives in which there was peace, stability, enough food to eat today and tomorrow”.\textsuperscript{cxlviii} Both Stein and Geiger suggest that a refugee is not the incapable, poor individual that burden and crisis language
portrays them as. Most refugees previously had stable lives and are arguably capable of establishing them again.

These points are rarely discussed, however, as global media distorts the reality with images and language that display the worst of the situation. Syrian refugees are more often recognized as hopeless or in despair. They are moreover categorized narrowly. According to migration scholar Hein, “Research on refugees accumulated with minimal conceptual elaboration: Immigrants constituted an economic form of migration, refugees a political form.” This has left little room for refugees to present themselves as agents of economic change. Instead, the common connotation of a Syrian refugee is often negative.

Fig. 7. These are some of the top image results from a Google search with the key words “Syrian refugee”. Many resulting images are similar to these in that they show the “hope and horror” situations.

It is true that many Syrians have endured extreme hardship to reach their present circumstance and their integration is an immense challenge. Refugee studies scholar Keller describes various stages of the refugee experience, such as “the period of extreme danger and flight” and then “the early and late stages of resettlement”.

While overly broad, these stages are useful to consider the various transitions and adjustments refugees must make. Those stages in themselves are obstacles for refugees to overcome and venture through. In addition, during the
initial stage of exile, refugees “will confront the loss of their culture – their identity, their habits.” Hence it is evident that refugees face significant challenges. Taylor and Nathan also add that “loss of patterns of conduct is intensified by the uncertainty of what kind of behavior is acceptable or non-acceptable in their new environment,” further illustrating the challenges for refugees. Stein summarizes these points in noting that while integrating, the refugee is “searching his way through a strange and frightening society”. These scholars only skim the surface of the challenges that refugees face in their journey and upon arrival. More obstacles that refugees face are explored in Chapter Two.

Yet, these challenges and the hopeless images too often become synonymous with “Syrian refugee” (Fig. 2), and as a result the Syrian population is overlooked for its pool of diversely skilled human capital. A Syrian interviewed for this paper, Ayman, commented on the strength and resilient nature of refugees. He explains that a refugee is “somebody who challenged death and danger and accepted all the risks to reach his goal and start a new life with all its difficulties.” He recognizes that there are obstacles for refugees, but that they tend to be hopeful nonetheless.

Arguably, a typical Syrian refugee is an individual with a complex story and skill set who can contribute positively to his or her host economy. As Brian Reich commented,

They [refugees] are all forced to flee - but their abilities, needs, and contribution to society is always going to be different. And we need all of them. We need people who start small businesses, the same as we need people who play music. We need people who go to school and people who teach school. They [refugees] are not all helpless, they’re all valuable, skilled and diverse in terms of their potential contribution to a community.

Of the Syrian refugees surveyed and interviewed for this paper, there were professions represented from students to interior designers, entrepreneurs and carpenters. They spoke languages ranging from Arabic to English to Hindu to Turkish. In their free time, they did activities such as
writing short stories, playing guitar and piano, and going fishing. Among the hopes and dreams of those interviewed were “to be reunited with family”\(^{\text{clvii}}\) and to “become a contributing member of society”\(^{\text{clviii}}\). The participants in this study thus represent a pool of hopeful individuals with unique and diverse skills that could add value to their host community.

1.5 Germany as a Host Country

Syrian refugees are well equipped to integrate into Germany and Germany’s history illustrates why they could be best prepared to integrate them. Over the course of the nation’s history, there has been a long history of reconciling (and not reconciling) German migration. Though it would be possible to discuss these topics beginning as early as the 1400s, when there was a multiplicity of flourishing German nation-states, the focus here is on more recent events. It is important to note, however, that before Germany became unified in 1871, it existed as various states with a diverse set of cultural traditions and values. And even after the states became one nation, they still struggled to share one common identity as Germany. An example of Germany reconciling difference comes from recent history, when the fall of the Berlin wall unified the socially and economically diverse East and West German communities.\(^{\text{clix}}\) Arguably, events like these have prompted the German nation throughout its history to navigate identity differences, therefore the arrival of Syrian refugees is not a new challenge.

Germany’s relationship with migration in the modern era began with people flowing out of the country, with individuals fleeing Germany as refugees, not arriving.\(^{\text{clx}}\) During the time of Nazi rule, Germans left behind their homes and lives to seek safety and security of a new environment, not at all dissimilar to the experience of many Syrians.

In an attempt to recover from World War II, and the loss of human capital of those who fled, Germany implemented a model of recruitment of temporary foreign workers.\(^{\text{clxi}}\) By the end of the
program, there were nearly four million foreign nationals working in Germany.\textsuperscript{clxii} This led not only to an economic recovery, but also to a boom in West Germany, leading to economic growth rates of over 12\%.\textsuperscript{clxiii} Over the first ten years of the program’s implementation, the unemployment rate plummeted from 11\% in 1950 to below 1\% in 1961.\textsuperscript{clxiv} This is significant evidence that points to the potential of migrants, when given proper assistance, to positively impact their new environment. As Germany has already successfully facilitated using foreign guest workers as “human capital,” the country seems well-equipped to use the economic contributions of Syrian refugees for similar outcomes. It is important to note, however, that guest workers were primarily employed in low-wage positions such as assembly lines, shift work, and other areas of employment that were unattractive to Germans. By using the guest workers in these low-skilled jobs, Germans were able to move into more desirable positions. Therefore, a more inclusive scheme to more fully utilize today’s refugees as human capital is necessitated.

\subsection*{1.5.1 Willkommenskultur Culture}

Since the beginning of 2015, Germany has become globally recognized for its \textit{willkommenskultur}, its welcoming culture with respect to the increasing migration flows. On Twitter, the tag, \#\textit{willkommenskultur}, shows photos of refugees being hosted by young Germans and newspaper articles about how to get involved with helping refugees. As a practical result of the attitude and mindset of \textit{willkommenskultur}, Germany offers refugees free or cheap German language classes, as well as integration and citizenship courses. The concept of \textit{willkommenskultur} has resulted in local communities all over Germany contributing time and resources to help make refugees feel welcome.\textsuperscript{clxvi}

It is hard to say exactly what it is about Germany that has created this culture, but we must consider the German population. Whether politicians like Angela Merkel making political
statements of inclusion or young Germans opening their home to refugees, many German individuals have spearheaded a cultural tone of acceptance for refugees. This is reflected in their preferences and involvements in cultural activities across Germany.

A significant area of cultural involvement is on the sports field, specifically, the soccer field. For many years, researchers such as Bainvel and Hough have been calling soccer the game that can build peace between cultures.\textsuperscript{clvi,clviii} Kothy and Klein argue that sports in general can contribute to “social integration and conflict resolution”.\textsuperscript{clxiv} Germany has in many ways exemplified these ideas by sending the message “refugees welcome” to all attending matches in various ways (Fig. 9). At one Bayern Munich game, the most popular team in Munich, the soccer players walked out onto the field each accompanied by a refugee and German child. The players held hands with each of the children and then all of the children joined hands in what the club called a “symbol for the integration of refugees”.\textsuperscript{clxx} As the delicate moment sunk in, the 75,000 fans of Bayern and opponent Augsburg alike burst into a round of cheering and applause. Later, the Bayern Munich team donated 1 million Euros to assist with soccer training camps, German lessons, and other programs offered to refugees.\textsuperscript{clxxi}

![Fig. 8. Soccer fans in matches across Germany holding banners stating, “Refugees Welcome”](image)

Not only have national sports teams sent a message supporting the integration of newly arrived refugees, but local club teams have also been working to help more migrants join. This helps not only the individual migrant to build camaraderie, but also encourages families to become more involved in society through their children’s engagement in youth soccer leagues.\textsuperscript{clxv}
Apart from soccer, there are various aspects of German culture that favor the inclusion of refugees. Among the top performing musicians in Germany are artists of migrant backgrounds, including Xavier Naidoo, Sabrina Setlur, and No Angels. When it comes to eating out, a study shows that among Germans under the age of 30, 70% prefer to eat foreign cuisine. In fact, migrant owned Turkish kebab stores (Doner), have become more popular than their rival international leaders in fast food such as McDonalds. For more than a decade, kebabs have been the product with the highest sales figures among German restaurants. Even in terms of something so embedded in a culture as language, Germany has seen a shift to accommodate refugees and migrants. There are over fifty non-German newspapers currently produced in Germany and foreign languages are becoming an integrated part of everyday life there.

Clearly, there is infrastructure in place for refugees to be well-received and integrated in Germany. A movement of the German people in the realm of culture has created a sentiment of openness that prevails. As Germans seem to strive to welcome and accept refugees in new ways, the country is strategically positioned to integrate Syrian refugees through the use of social entrepreneurship. Moreover, studies by scholars, such as Alesine and La Ferra, have shown that cultural diversity is no longer seen as a cause for failed integration, but actually something that increases the competitiveness of an economy. According to a report by the European Commission, “with the ongoing integration of global goods and factor markets, the knowledge of different cultures, languages and foreign countries and regions in general are expected to gain in importance in the future.” Germany’s warm reception of refugees is not solely a humanitarian movement. It could also fuel entrepreneurial initiatives to grow and enhance the competitiveness of Germany’s economy.
1.5.2 The German Economy

Germany boasts the largest economy in Europe, with the fourth largest nominal GDP in the world. It is strong and steady, one of few that weathered well the Eurozone crisis. Research and development has always been important to the nation and has fueled the technology sector. But these achievements are not all that make Germany distinct. It has a unique economic model and one that may be advantageous in refugee reception.

In the mid-1940s, a group of economists came together to try to save Germany from its state of chaos after World War II, namely Walter Eucken, Alfred Muller-Armack, and Ludwig Erhard. These German economists proposed a new type of capitalist system, asserting that the laissez-faire economy of the U.S. and as the command and control economies of communist countries were ineffective. These individuals sought to create an economy that would obey the principles of the free market while serving humanity.

The free market is an economy that instead of being regulated by government operates where the markets balance supply and demand through pricing to regulate production and labor. While they have their own market regulations, the United States and Australia are the best examples of free market economies. Though there are various ways that competition regulates the free market, two particular ones are more choices for consumers and increased innovation among suppliers.

To distinguish itself from the profit-driven free market economy, Germany designed a social market economy in order to include another component: a strong welfare system. Within this system, Germany provides social security to anyone unable to care for him or herself. In this way, the social market economy seeks to achieve social inclusion and equal opportunity while abiding by the rules of the free market. Interestingly, the principles of the social market economy are thoroughly in-line with those of the aforementioned Islamic finance; both strive to create social justice in a free market economy. Syrian refugees arriving in Germany will not only be
welcomed into the social market economy, as it strives to include those in need, but they will also be familiar with the way it functions.

Because of its success, Germany’s economic policies today are still in-line with the social market economy model created nearly half a decade ago. However, though the country strives to balance the free market and government regulation for the benefit of social inclusion, the social aspect of the social free market has diminished over time. Today, there is less focus on welfare and social good, and more of an emphasis on the free market system.

Nonetheless, social market economies still suffer from many of the negative aspects of capitalism. Karl Marx and Frederich Engles most classically critiqued capitalism in *The Communist Manifesto*, released in the mid-1800s. Marx and Engles argue that market instability is a permanent aspect of the capitalism system. Meanwhile, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, one of Marx’s contemporaries, declared himself an anarchist and called the capitalist employee as one who was “subordinated” and “exploited.” Meanwhile, modern critic Ravi Batra focuses on the system failures caused by inequalities that stem from capitalism. Similarly, Immanuel Wallerstein notes that from a world-systems perspective, capitalism represents the rising of tax rates and material inputs which has led to a crisis that could last a number of years. While these classic critiques emphasize crisis, inequality, and exploitation as a result of capitalism, the social market economy falls within its framework. This is to say, although there are upsides of the social market economy, like any system, it has its shortcomings.

Still, the social market economy has many strengths that outweigh its shortcomings. Within its own economy, Germany has a strong innovation system in place. Due to its free market policies, there is an “inherent, competitive, market-based dynamic” that drives innovation. This is in part also due to the collaborative approach to research that the German system is well known for which prompts and drives creativity. There has been a recent focus on policies to help high-tech
areas, and those creating innovations, to build a strong system of research and development. As the economy already supports and encourages innovation in these ways, Germany is arguably well equipped to address the Syrian refugees in an unprecedented and novel way through social entrepreneurship. Moreover, the EU has now started an initiative and marketing campaign to encourage entrepreneurship.

Thought leaders in social market economy theory have observed “The concept of the Social Market Economy links the principle of freedom, the market and the institutional wisdom, but it lays on a decision on values which is borne by the moral foundations of our European culture”. And, as Stefan Muresan comments, “I do not believe that there are reasons to give up the participative model we have developed. On the contrary, I believe it is superior to all the other models and not just for socio-ethical reasons, but for economic reasons as well”. These scholars point out the advantages of the social market economy in terms of social equality and inclusion.

Despite the welcoming nature of the social market economy as it relates to the refugee situation, global sentiment continues to view refugees as an economic burden. It is a common opinion that refugees and migrants adversely affect the welfare system of the local population. While sometimes true, refugees can also bring significant economic benefits to Germany, and the social market economy may help facilitate that growth. Inge Brees, a member of the Conflict Research Group at the University of Ghent, notes that “refugees can also engender positive effects in the host country, especially on the economic level”. Loeffelholz and Kopp estimate that immigrants make a net contribution to the public budget by as much as 35 billion German Marks per year. The same study also shows that since 1998, immigration has created 85,000 new jobs and raised the GDP by 1.3 per cent.
1.5.3 The Aging German Population

At the end of 2014, the German population was around 81.1 million people, but low birth rates set the population on a path of inexorable decline. According to a recent study by the Hamburg-based World Economy Institute, Germany has the lowest birth rate in the world at 8.2 births per 1,000 people. Predictions show that by the year 2060 the population will have decreased to 73 million people. Moreover, with median age of approximately 45 years, without immigration, Germany faces not only a declining population, but also an older one. These are important statistics to consider because it shows that just as refugees and migrants need Germany, Germany also needs them. Among the individuals who applied for asylum in Europe in 2015, over 81% of the refugees were under the age of 35, with more than half between the ages of 18 and 34. As Germany begins to spend more on age-related pensions, health, and care (a predicted 5% increase in the GDP by 2060), a young immigrant population of refugees will be there to help support them.

1.6 Opportunities in Social Entrepreneurship

The preceding sections show that Syrian refugees could have a meaningful impact in diverse areas of German society. There are many advantages for Syrians and Germans alike, and further work could explore the various sociocultural and political reasons for refugee integration. The focus of this work, however, will narrow in on the economic impact of Syrian refugees in Germany through the lens of social entrepreneurship. This paper argues that social entrepreneurship can be a mechanism to facilitate Syrian refugee integration in host communities in Germany, as well as a method to help the refugees assist themselves and contribute meaningfully to the economy.

Before defining social entrepreneurship, it is important we first understand what entrepreneurship means. According to scholars Shane and Venkataraman, “the entrepreneurial
function implies the discovery, assessment and exploitation of opportunities, in other words, new products, services or production processes; new strategies and organizational forms and new markets for products and inputs that did not previously exist”. Reynolds builds on this definition, saying that “entrepreneurship – the entrepreneurial function - can be conceptualized as the discovery of opportunities and the subsequent creation of new economic activity, often via the creation of a new organization”. These scholars, as well as many others, would likely agree that entrepreneurship is the exploitation of a new market opportunity.

In 2010, migrants or children of migrants had founded up to 40 percent of Fortune 500 companies. Further research could explore is needed to explore whether this is because refugees are more suited to entrepreneurship, or if it is because of the barriers refugees face in the formal economy. Clearly, one way to integrate migrants into society is through entrepreneurship. Chang found that entrepreneurship encourages self-employment which is a positive factor in productivity growth. Carree notes that competition among firms, which is common in entrepreneurship, is also a factor for contributing to positive growth in the economy as increases in competition lead to an increase in efficiency. Acs claims that entrepreneurship is also advantageous because it creates jobs and increases competition. Todtling and Wazanbock assert that if entrepreneurs channel their ideas and abilities they can create such new opportunities in an economy and generate positive externalities. Robbins, Pantuosso, Parker, and Fuller note that as a result, entrepreneurship is relevant at the firm, industrial, national, and regional levels.

Social entrepreneurship becomes a bit more difficult to define. Low and Macmillian claim that most definitions of social entrepreneurship are unable to accurately explain it. Even the Skoll Foundation, one of the leading organizations to promote social entrepreneurship, admits it is similar to its “for-profit cousin” in many ways. What distinguishes social entrepreneurship, however, is
the value proposition of the entrepreneurial endeavor. For the entrepreneur, the value proposition is to provide a new product or service to a market that needs it, and reap a financial profit. However, for the social entrepreneur, an additional aspect of the value proposition is the “large-scale, transformational benefit that accrues either to a significant segment of society”. Therefore, social entrepreneurship may be best explained by Stevenson, Roberts, Gousbeck, and Schumpeter, who describe it as the “process of creating value by combining resources in new ways…to explore or exploit opportunities to create social value by stimulating social change”. This is the definition that this paper will consider.

Social entrepreneurship is therefore the broad framework that these innovations in capitalism – the sharing economy and the technology sector – fit within. The act of innovating new products, services, and solutions helps improve the livelihood of not only Syrian refugees, but also their host communities in Germany. Therefore, it is through the lens of, and with examples from the field of social entrepreneurship, that these alternative economic systems of the sharing economy and the technology sector among Syrian refugees in Germany will be examined.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter argues that the humanitarian imperative is not sufficient to compel a nation to act on the behalf of refugees. There needs to be an alternative utilitarian argument through which a nation should consider integrating refugees. This chapter argues that there are unique characteristics of the Syrian refugee population and the German context that make it an interesting case study. There are various utilitarian arguments for refugee integration, such as cultural or language diversity, and demographic solutions. While these arguments alone could be further explored as reasons to accept refugees, this paper does not study them in greater depth. This paper instead
argues for refugee integration through economic means. Social entrepreneurship is particularly interesting as it can empower refugees to make change while giving the host community a model for supporting their integration.
2. The Sharing Economy

*The sharing in the Arab world is very traditional, something that has happened throughout history, it is not something new. People are used to sharing almost everything with their whole circle of friends and family.*

- Ahmad Sufijan, CEO and founder of ArabShare

2.1 Introduction

2011 marked the beginning of the Syrian civil war and the onset of devastating violence that would displace over half of the native Syrian population. The same year, the sharing economy was named one of Time Magazine’s top ten ideas that would change the world. But what does the sharing economy have to do with displaced Syrians? A lot, as we will see in this chapter.

Despite the strengths of the social market economy in Germany, there are still significant barriers that prevent Syrian refugees from participating: limited knowledge of the German language; truncated professional networks; and often poor physical or psychological health. These barriers are particularly significant for women, who may not have had opportunities for education in their home country and have limited opportunities for language and cultural integration. Beyond these individual experiences, there are also societal and structural barriers. For example, employers often do not recognize degrees or qualifications from outside the host country, and will sometimes directly discriminate in hiring practices or behavior in the workplace.

Limited economic participation has a wide array of consequences for refugees. For example, researchers have identified correlations between limited economic participation and poor health. Limited economic participation can also lead to individuals to lose their capacity for skilled
employment over time, and contribute to a refugee’s isolation. Jahoda thus notes that having economic opportunities improves a refugee’s psychological wellbeing, providing “time structure, social contact beyond the realm of family,” and by “being a part of a collective purpose, and having social status”. This is to say that economic integration helps refugees psychologically and physically as well.

This chapter therefore builds on the argument that economic opportunities drive the Syrian refugee integration process in Germany. It also argues that as there are significant barriers for refugee participation in the current economic system, hence there need to be alternative opportunities, such as the sharing economy. The sharing economy can facilitate refugees ability to help one another to become financially self-sufficient. An individual who is financially self-sufficient has fewer obstacles to overcome in order to assimilate and become a part of the community. As refugees participate in sharing, not only among themselves, but also with the local German community, they will form important economic relationships that will lay the foundation for building social relationships that will improve integration.

This chapter therefore introduces the concept of the “sharing economy;” one possible alternative economic structure. With examples from the theoretical framework of social entrepreneurship outlined in Chapter One, it then discusses the principles of the sharing economy as it applies to Syrian refugee integration in Germany. The chapter concludes by offering recommendations for how Germany could support the refugees to help them further integrate into the sharing economy, as well as presenting other opportunities for further investigation.
2.2 Origins and Overview of the Sharing Economy

The “sharing economy” is “the value in redistributing excess to a community”\(^{ccxxv}\). It refers to a new market space, somewhere between owning and gift giving, which encourages participants to borrow and lend unused goods and services. The sharing economy can take place through in-person exchanges as well as through online information-based transactions. It can refer to the sharing of tangible goods and services, or intangible concepts and ideas. Although it produces a new economic model, the sharing economy lacks a clear definition, but generally refers to the sharing of access instead of individual ownership.\(^{ccxxvi}\)

In Germany today, the “sharing economy” is a commonly used phrase and concept. At the University of Leuphana in Germany, Professor Harald Heinrichs of the department of Sustainability and Public Policy, recently conducted a survey of over 1,000 randomly selected local individuals.\(^{ccxxvii}\) Among his results, he found that over 55% of those surveyed had experience with alternative methods of consumption and ownership.\(^{ccxxviii}\) These were young individuals who had access to the Internet to buy and sell goods, as well as high incomes and advanced education backgrounds that allowed them to make use of the borrowing networks available to them. They had decided to partake in the sharing economy primarily because of the quality and price of the goods and services available to them, as well as the added social and environmental benefits of sharing.

Though these findings show a limited start in certain ages and classes, Heinrich is optimistic about the growth of the sharing economy in Germany. Of those surveyed, a significant portion between the ages of fourteen and thirty-nine had changed their consumer behavior to become involved in the sharing economy.\(^{ccxxix}\) This popularity of the sharing economy was evident at one of Germany’s top information technology trade fairs, CeBIT, in which the sharing economy was
recognized as the most common theme among attending businesses.\textsuperscript{ccxxxi} In another survey of five-hundred German participants, 70\% claimed that they would participate in the sharing economy if they were not already doing so.\textsuperscript{ccxxxii} By the beginning of 2015, more than one million individuals across 490 cities and towns used a car-sharing program offered by one of the 150 German car-share companies.\textsuperscript{ccxxxii} An article titled “Germany Shares” argues that,

> In light of the trend’s potential for having a positive sustainability impact…government policy, business, and society in general should optimize the conditions for the further development of an economy of sharing and common consumption as a complement to property ownership and individualized consumption.\textsuperscript{ccxxxiii}

This evidence reveals that the sharing economy has emerged as a significant alternative economic system in which many Germans are participating.

Despite these advantages, researchers note that most of the policy responses to the sharing economy have been negative.\textsuperscript{ccxxxiv} This is largely due to the view that the competitive advantage of these companies comes from their ability to avoid regulations that are meant to protect third parties.\textsuperscript{ccxxxv} George Mason University Professor of Law, Christopher Koopman argues, these existing regulations were meant to solve problems that the sharing economy already addresses in its innovative model, primarily through relationships and reputation systems.\textsuperscript{ccxxxvi}

This theory of the sharing economy fits more broadly into the discourse about economic relationships and social capital. In Lloyd Dumas’s book, \textit{The Peacekeeping Economy}, he notes that “at its most fundamental, economics is not really about money, nor is it about statistical analysis, or mathematical or game theoretic models: it is about relationships”.\textsuperscript{ccxxvii} Dumas’s thoughts fit with Adam Smith, who observed that there was a “certain propensity in human nature…to truck, barter,
and exchange one thing for another”. His words illustrate how negotiation plays a role in all economic transactions, implying there is an essential relationship between the buyer and seller. Meanwhile, Hobbes notes that many economic transactions depend on trust. Economists Harvey Leibenstein and Gary Becker also assert that social relationships are a premise on which economic transactions are built.

Dumas’s comments that the systems that are created to satisfy an individual’s wants and needs are inherently driven by relationships – between individuals, to products, or to businesses. “It is a… mistake to believe that economic relationships do not play a critical role in creating the conditions that can either lead to explosions of violence or prevent them”.

The sharing economy offers a potential solution for Said’s “Othering”. By building trust and connection for economic transactions, the sharing economy can improve the integration of refugees by including them in its model. The sharing economy offers the potential for refugees to help one another and their local community, as well as to allow the local community to help them. Still, research shows that in the sharing economy, individuals tend to share with people who are similar to them in some way, whether socioeconomically, professionally, culturally, or otherwise.

The sharing economy can be understood through both a neoliberal framework (that defends deregulation and free-trade) and a Marxist lens. Marx believed that the proletariat would replace the capitalist mode of production with one that is founded on principles of collective ownership. These ideas directly apply to the sharing of goods and services that occurs in the sharing economy. Meanwhile, Harvey notes that neoliberalism imposes social stratification, and it is this very class struggle that Marx believed would cause the proletariat to break out from capitalism into an alternative economic system.
The sharing economy fits within the Marxist discourse of collective ownership, regardless of class differences. That is to say, the sharing economy is not entirely neoliberal in nature – there are elements of it, such as the focus on collective consumption and relationships that are more in line with Marxist ideals. The point of examining the sharing economy through these views is to assert that it exists in a new theoretical space, somewhere between Harvey’s neoliberalism and Marx’s ideas.

Within the sharing economy, Belk differentiates between “demand sharing” and “open sharing.” Demand sharing refers to the act of meeting the specific need of an individual. For example, a woman stops someone to ask the time, and that person tells it to her. Open sharing, meanwhile, refers to the non-requested, more privileged version of sharing that usually happens only among family members or close friends. An example of open sharing is someone who says, “My home is your home” and gives unlimited permission.

As Thomas Widlok suggests, demand sharing is not an unusual type of sharing, but actually its archetype. Demand sharing will thus be the focus of this paper. Demand sharing is an important form of sharing as it inverts the tone of the charitable bias and makes it clear that the taker or “demander” usually initiates the act of sharing. Within demand sharing, there are two key sharing models. First, there is the model of business to consumer (B2C). Within this model, a business owns the inventory and rents it to the consumer. An example of B2C is Zipcar, a company that rents out cars that it owns to individual drivers. The second model is peer to peer (P2P) sharing. In this model, an individual who owns the inventory will share it with another consumer. In this case, it is a private individual that does the sharing, not a formalized business. An example company that utilizes the P2P model is Airbnb, a service which enables individual homeowners to rent out their homes to consumers. In this work, we consider the P2P model, which is “in the
process of transforming society itself”. P2P sharing presents a new way of sharing, outside of the traditional B2C model.

An article written by co-founder Robin Chase of ZipCar notes that “Companies like these, who tap directly into the full diversity and energy of their human marketplaces, are able to scale faster, learn faster, innovate and adapt faster”. That is, there are individuals with unique skillsets that can be utilized in the sharing economy. Brian Reich, director of The Hive, said that, “Refugees, save for the situation that forced them to flee, the war the persecution, they are exactly the same as we are. They are doctors and lawyers and engineers and teachers and daughters and sons and cousins and students”. Clearly, within the refugee population there is a “human marketplace,” including a number of individuals with unique skillsets.

Still, there are regulatory hurdles that impede growth opportunities in P2P exchange, due to many factors, including the blurred lines between the personal and professional within anonymous transactions. Overall, the P2P sharing model has created jobs and solved the problem of underutilized goods and services, as well as unlocked idle capital, making a significantly positive impact on society.

### 2.3 Principles of the Sharing Economy

Belk outlines four key principles of the sharing economy that this chapter discusses: the creation of reciprocal economic value; making use of underutilized assets; exchanges within a community; and facilitating transactions through increased accessibility. By adhering to these principles of the sharing economy, refugees can become financially self-sufficient and meaningfully contribute to their host communities, arguably helping them to better integrate. Drawing on examples from the start-up ecosystem in Germany, this section examines how social
entrepreneurship projects within the sharing economy can facilitate the integration of Syrian refugees.

2.3.1 The Creation of Reciprocal Economic Value

In the sharing economy, reciprocal economic value occurs when the producer and consumer of the good or service being exchanged both experience an economic benefit. An example of this is RelayRides, a platform that allows car owners to share their cars when they are not being utilized. In the United States, personally owned cars are unused around 92% of the time. With RelayRides, car owners can work this statistic to their advantage. By renting their car out during its unused time, car owners can generate revenue in the time their car would otherwise sit idle. Reciprocally, consumers who rent these cars can benefit from lower prices and easy access to vehicles. This reciprocity is fundamental to the sharing economy – both parties engaging in the transaction should benefit. This is one of the core reasons that refugee integration could be facilitated through the framework of the sharing economy. This sharing economy principle could empower both the refugee and the host community to have a mutually beneficial exchange.

The Berlin-based non-profit group, Refugees on Rails, is another example of the reciprocal model. Refugees on Rails is a popular three-month long course in the website programming language, Ruby on Rails. German tech entrepreneurs founded the company in hopes that free coding lessons could help refugees find jobs in the technology industry. This is an example of the sharing economy’s reciprocal economic value principle: Germany is in need of highly trained programmers and refugees are in need of employment opportunities. According to the International Labor Organization, “Skill mismatches and occupational shifts have worsened,” with Germany being the worst of these as it cannot fill out all the jobs available in technical fields. For example, in Germany, there were 13,900 vacancies in engineering jobs in 2014. Refugees on Rails seeks to
solve this problem by implementing ideas of the sharing economy, harnessing the underutilized labour of refugees in an area of industry need.

Lessons can also be drawn from a similar initiative, ReBoot Kamp, that teaches Syrian refugees competitive coding skills. ReBoot Kamp has a distinct business model that is in line with the sharing economy principle of reciprocal economic value. After a refugee completes the course, and begins working in a technology company using his or her skills, he or she pays for the next class of refugees to move through the coding program. This is a sustainable form of P2P lending that not only finances the coding school, but also encourages refugees to give back and help one another to become financially self-sufficient.

At both Refugees on Rails and ReBoot Kamp, the mission is to help the operation of technology start-ups and companies while offering refugees the opportunity to become software developers. These courses will teach refugees how to build a website, create a mobile app, and manage databases, all of which are invaluable skillsets in today’s technology industry.

Refugees on Rails has opened their program to involve all members of the community, including local Germans who are donating laptops, information communication technology (ICT) specialists who are teaching the course, and of course, to the refugees themselves who are there to learn. Companies such as Microsoft and Google have offered classroom space, immediately integrating refugees into a professional network and community. This example demonstrates both components of my argument: Refugees on Rails helps refugees to become integrated with local technology experts and companies, while ReBoot Kamp supports refugees assisting each other to become financially self-sufficient. Thus the sharing economy has helped refugees to integrate into their communities by finding jobs and community in the technology industry. It is important to note that this employment is only feasible after the asylum seeker has been granted protection, and
consequently permission to work. However, training at Refugees on Rails and ReBoot Kamp can take place before work permits are granted.

While these programs have their advantages, there are also various shortcomings. First, there are still many barriers to enter these courses. A refugee must know how to use a computer, how to comprehend the language of course instruction, and be able to commit to three months of class attendance. There is also an obstacle for Syrian women, who typically do not work outside of the home and often lack extensive experience with computers. Nonetheless, in this particular example, advantages outweigh the disadvantages. Programs such as coding schools may not be solutions for all Syrian refugees in Germany, perhaps only a particular subset that is young and male, but nonetheless the impact can be meaningful.

If the young Syrian males can integrate, they may be able to provide for and support others in their community to do the same. In an interview, a young Syrian man named Omar, who had found a job in a design company in Germany, explained to me that Syrians who did not speak English or German often came to him and asked for his help. As he was more well-connected and integrated, he did his best to help his fellow Syrians in any way he could. Arguably, other Syrians who have had more opportunities than others may do the same, illustrating the potential for positive “network effects” that may prompt the creation of reciprocal economic value.

Refugees on Rails illustrates how Syrian refugees can learn a valuable and competitive skill while building connections with local community members, and how local German technology companies can benefit by acquiring new and skilled labor. Arguably, this model where both refugees and locals benefit creates a less discriminatory and less “Othering” environment, in which both parties recognize the economic importance of having a relationship with one another.
2.3.2 Making Use of Underutilized Assets

The second principle of the sharing economy is to make use of underutilized assets. From both human and physical capital, there are tangible and intangible goods and services all around that could be utilized more fully. The sharing economy creates a system to utilize them; looking to find value in assets that are idling.\textsuperscript{ccls} Airbnb is a classic example of this. Airbnb famously provides a platform for homeowners to rent out spare rooms or their entire home when they are not being used.\textsuperscript{cch} This allows Airbnb users to generate revenue from the sharing of their vacant spaces, while customers are able to have a low-cost, personalized experience. Thus, we find here also the aspect of reciprocity. It is important to note that like these two principles, most aspects of the sharing economy are interconnected and overlapping.

In the case of the Syrian refugees, it is helpful to think about whom instead of what is being underutilized. Kiron University is a Berlin-based company that tackles this question.\textsuperscript{cchh} A start-up that provides a free and accessible online university education for refugees, Kiron helps them to continue their pursuit of higher learning, and prepares them to contribute in meaningful ways to their host communities. In interviews conducted for this thesis, a recent college graduate in Syria, Mohammad, spoke about his experience. His experience put in perspective why an online university system could be helpful for Syrian refugees.

Mohammad had been studying structural engineering for a few years when the war broke out. When the violence in his city grew intolerable, his family decided to flee to the United States and Germany. He was close to finishing his degree at this time, so he stayed behind to do so. He knew he wanted to finish his education, and was willing to risk the threat of violence.

When asked if he had considering fleeing, he replied, “I want to travel in a regular way, like on a study visa or something like that.”\textsuperscript{cccii} He wanted to contribute meaningfully to his host community.
country, and therefore figured he needed to finish his degree to do so, and didn’t see a way to finish without staying in Syria. And he wasn’t the only one. “Many of my friends have stayed here [in Damascus]”, Mohammad explained, “and the only reason they have stayed is because they want to finish their study in university. They have just about one or two years left, so they want to finish and graduate, then they want to leave Syria. And that’s why I stayed too.”

Mohammad’s problem is a common one. Education is highly valued in Syrian culture, and understood as necessary to build a career. Mohammad and his friends preferred to live in the middle of a warzone than to abandon their education. He described the situation, saying that, “there were a lot of roadblocks and the university frequently closed, as things were getting worse in Syria.”

But if he wanted to continue his education, he saw no alternative.

Kiron University therefore offers a solution for students like him - an online university specifically for refugees who aspire to finish their degree. In this way, Kiron helps refugees be prepared to contribute to their communities after their graduation, helping to make use of the human capital that would otherwise be underutilized. The Chief Technology Officer (CTO) of Kiron comments that there is a practical curriculum for the students, so they, “can study things like computer science or business administration”. This is essential for students like Mohammad, who see finishing their degree as a stepping stone to entering the professional workforce. The CTO of Kiron goes on to explain, “We saw that education was something that needed to be more tailored to the needs of students. So we had the idea of creating the product, and having refugees as the customer.”

80% of the Kiron students are Syrian.

After completing their online university education, students will ideally be able to find careers in their areas of study in order to give back to the community. Not only is this important to help prepare Syrian refugees to contribute to their communities in Germany, but it is also helps the future of Syria for when its educated population one day returns home with the tools to rebuild their
nation. This is another example of how neoliberal alternatives can be effective in the place of state-planned interventions. While government universities have many obstacles to entry for refugees, such as language or cultural differences, Kiron offers a solution. As James Ferguson comments, such “market mechanisms, drawing on the power of vast self-organizing networks, are very powerful and very efficient”.

In this case, Kiron is an example of how neoliberalism can be reconfigured to serve those who are disadvantaged.

Nonetheless, Kiron and other programs to assist Syrian refugees focus most often on harnessing the skillsets of males. That is because their skillsets are more visible to the global economy, and thus easier to address. A significant amount of literature notes that women are often “invisible workers,” when their labor largely occurs within the home. Accordingly, it is important to point out that as men are the primary job seekers in Syrian culture, and have the most applicable skillsets to the economy, the domestic skillsets of women often go underutilized in Germany. This is problematic as these women and their children comprise three quarters of the Syrian refugee population. If the sharing economy is going to truly utilize idle assets, there must be consideration for how to employ the skills of women.

Before becoming refugees, most women in Syria were housewives and homemakers. In 2011, 13% of women were in Syria’s labor force in comparison with nearly 72% of men. Similarly, while over 90% of men were literate, only just above 70% were for Syrian women. The legal age for marriage in Syria is 17, and it is not unusual for Syrian women to get married this young. These examples illustrate that though Syrian women have been allowed to participate in everyday life, they have difficulty finding a role in political, social, cultural, and economic spaces. Their skillsets are often in homemaking and raising a family. Yet, the role of Syrian women has begun to change outside of Syria. From a study conducted by the renowned Gottlieb Duttweiler Institute (GDI), the tendency of gender differences arose, finding that “women share more
goods, services and time] than men, grounded in classic role allocation”. Frick continues and says that, “women are indeed more actively involved in co-consumption than men (68% vs. 58%).”

Daniela Greco, the International Rescue Committee’s women’s protection coordinator, notes that “a sudden push by displacement and violence” has caused women to come into roles as the breadwinner of the family. The husbands that traditionally would have provided for their families are many times across the border or have been killed in conflict. Thus women have found themselves in new positions, wrestling with how to engage in their new host communities in a way that will be socially and economically beneficial to them. It is important to note that even women who are in the company of their husbands and families may be dealing with this issue. Between the need to provide for their families, send money home, and pay for the expenses of building a new life and acquiring new possessions, Syrian women may feel pressure to find a job.

This situation presents a unique challenge, because the skillsets that most Syrian women have gained from working in the home are not applicable in the labor force of their host countries. Women have not had experience in the traditional labor force that men have had, and therefore face significant barriers while integrating into their host community’s economy. This paper therefore suggests that Syrian women’s unique skillsets are underutilized and could be “shared” the way the sharing economy allocates underutilized goods and services. There are few initiatives that currently do this. Further research and action on this topic is necessary, such as in the area of time banking that will be explained in the chapter conclusion.

2.3.3 Exchanges Within a Community

The notion of community has been a primary focus of successful companies in the sharing economy. This aspect of the sharing economy goes beyond the essentials of supply and demand,
and considers the human needs of consumers and producers. Economic sociologist Mark Granovetter points out that economic transactions such as searching for a job are more efficient when embedded in a social network.\textsuperscript{c}\textsuperscript{c}\textsuperscript{h}\textsuperscript{xvii} Alfred Marshall, one of the founders of modern economics, coined the phrase “industrial districts” to emphasize the importance of collaboration between workers and entrepreneurs.\textsuperscript{c}\textsuperscript{c}\textsuperscript{h}\textsuperscript{xviii} Robert Lucas, founder of rational expectations economics, also argues that social activity is a fundamental aspect of economic systems.\textsuperscript{c}\textsuperscript{c}\textsuperscript{h}\textsuperscript{xxx} These leading economists have pointed to the significance of social interaction and community to drive economic exchange.

The sharing economy builds off of this notion of social capital. Through ratings, reviews, and profiles, the sharing economy focuses on building trust within a community to validate a transaction. One example of community in the sharing economy is on the website “DogVacay.com”, where dog owners can find other dog enthusiasts with whom to leave their dog when they go away.\textsuperscript{c}\textsuperscript{c}\textsuperscript{h}\textsuperscript{xix} Dog owners are comforted by use of the site because they are assured that other dog lovers will provide one-on-one attention to their pet, and owners can receive photo and video updates from the dog-sitter. In this online community, because individuals share a common love for dogs, they are able to build trust and a stronger business model. Swanstrom builds off this idea of common connection, arguing that public policy should work to “creatively build economic restructuring on existing social solidarities”.\textsuperscript{c}\textsuperscript{c}\textsuperscript{h}\textsuperscript{xxi}

With a similar concept of community as DogVacay.com, a start-up called Migration Hub is working to harness the potential of refugees as human capital in Berlin. The Migration Hub is a co-working space for like-minded start-up businesses and individuals who are using social innovation and entrepreneurship to tackle the refugee situation.\textsuperscript{c}\textsuperscript{c}\textsuperscript{h}\textsuperscript{xviii} The founder of Migration Hub, Kathrina Dermul, comments that she launched the project after noticing that, “a lot of stuff was being done
by tech people [to address the refugee “crisis”], but were lacking the human-centered design approach of involving your user”. She therefore founded the gathering space with the hopes that it would bring tech entrepreneurs and refugees to work together towards solutions to the refugee “crisis.” Her vision directly correlates to the “new growth theory” in mainstream economics that economist Peter Herman discusses in his paper, *Economic Performance, Social Progress, and Social Quality*, which emphasizes social structure as essential to promoting growth.

Dermul’s Migration Hub not only provides a physical space for innovators to gather; it also hosts programs to encourage collaboration. Recent programs include workshops in how to crowdfund for refugee integration projects and how to improve refugee targeted language-teaching programs. She notes, “We wanted to make people aware to include their users to create products made for the refugees and actually used at the end of the day…I think we can’t have the greatest tech solution ever if it doesn’t serve the needs of the people we want to support.” She explains how she plans to do this, “I see this as my mission: to get refugees involved in the process and to also involve them in the execution process.”

Migration Hub also serves as an example of this type of user-centered innovation, as Dermul reflects, “About half of the staff at the Migration Hub have a refugee background, and I learn so much from them.” Through its collaborative approach to entrepreneurship, the Migration Hub is well positioned to utilize the skillsets of refugees as well as the local community to come up with innovative solutions to the refugee crisis in Germany. In doing so, it demonstrates the potential of the sharing economy to harness the Syrian and German community to collaboratively come up with solutions to pressing problems. It also shows how through the sharing economy, refugees may be able to more easily participate as they do in Dermul’s Migration Hub.

While the sharing economy encourages collaboration and exchange, it is important to note that there is not necessarily traditional “sharing” happening. An article in the Wall Street Journal
notes that,

Increasingly, the goods being ‘shared’ in the sharing economy were purchased expressly for business purposes, whether it’s people renting apartments they can’t afford on the theory that they can make up the difference on Airbnb, or drivers getting financing through partners of ride-sharing services Uber and Lyft to get a new car to drive for those same services.

Perhaps a more accurate name for the economy of “sharing” is arguably that of “collaborative consumption,” which refers to the sharing, swapping, trading, or renting of products and services, enabling access over ownership. It is reinventing not just what we consume, but how we consume. Nonetheless, popular press refers to “the sharing economy” in headlines such as the “Sharing Economy Can Help Financial Struggles,” “The People Have Said ‘Yes’ to the Sharing Economy,” and “Can the Sharing Economy Make Politicians More Responsive?” The term “sharing” has a psychological effect that can lead a consumer to believe they are participating in an economy driven by morality and a charitable form of giving when this may not be not the case.

2.3.4 Facilitating Transactions through Increased Accessibility

The fourth and final principle of the sharing economy relates to accessibility. In order to increase the utilization of idle goods and services, it must be easier for consumers to access them. In the past, the number of customers and producers that could access a market were those that could physically fit into the marketplace. For example, the largest marketplace in Europe is in Krakow, Poland, which brings together merchants from miles away to perform transactions. Nowadays, however, Krakow’s marketplace is miniscule in comparison to the Internet; a marketplace accessible to almost all. At the end of 2014, almost two-thirds of the European Union’s population
used the Internet daily. Estimates show that by the end of 2015, Facebook alone will have a greater population than the entire country of China.

Such collaborative consumption is a key reason that the sharing economy has grown to the magnitude that it has (both of the prior examples of Airbnb and RelayRides are companies that have flourished online) because the connectivity between individuals on the Internet is all that is necessary for transactions to take place. The Internet is unique in that it provides space for the strangers to interact, regardless of social, geographic, or economic differences.

The accessibility component of the sharing economy puts emphasis on online sharing through P2P marketplaces and could be transformational in the experience of refugees. The technological advances of mobile phones and Internet allow Syrian refugees to find consistent access to resources using online platforms. As an article in The New York Times notes, “[this] is driven by the tens of thousands of middle-class Syrians who have been displaced by war. Such tools are by no means limited to them.” Syrian refugees are familiar with the use of the Internet to share goods and services. In fact, many use Facebook to go through a “How to Emigrate to Europe” group with 39,304 members in order to share information about how to seek asylum. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, who is responsible for the majority of Syrian refugees, has distributed 33,000 SIM cards to Syrian refugees in Jordan. Therefore, Syrian refugees are familiar with using and sharing through mobile and online services, and will quickly be able to adopt the online sharing aspects of the sharing economy.

While the advantages of the sharing economy’s concept of reciprocal economic benefit are numerous, it is important to note the prevailing sharing economy critiques. The sharing economy fits with Mason’s argument in The End of Capitalism Has Begun, stating that capitalism, “will be abolished by creating something more dynamic that exists, at first, almost unseen within the old
system, but which will break through, reshaping the economy around new values and behaviors”. Optimists such as Mason have argued that the sharing economy offers an alternative to capitalism. However, as the sharing economy has grown, it has proven to perpetuate the same monopoly of power, wealth inequality, and boom and bust cycles that capitalism does. William Alden notes:

The so-called sharing economy is supposed to offer a new kind of capitalism, one where regular folks, enabled by efficient online platforms, can turn their fallow assets into cash machines...But the reality is that these markets also tend to attract a class of well-heeled professional operators, who outperform the amateurs — just like the rest of the economy.

The sharing economy is capable of producing similar negative outcomes as existing forms of capitalism. Among the greatest of these is income inequality. A study by the OECD showed that the move towards more “non-standard work” in place of full-time jobs actually hurts the economy and its laborers. In an economy with numerous part-time and temporary jobs, more low-skilled workers have access to the labor market, but at the consequence of greater inequalities in wages and benefits. One example of this comes from Uber, which recently claimed that their New York drivers were making a median income of $90,000 a year. An investigation found that none of their employees were actually making close to this amount, and were in fact making significantly less. The investigation found that Uber had both lowered the rates that drivers were paid per trip, and increased the amount that they took of that wage, causing Uber drivers to earn close to a minimum wage. The OECD argues that reducing the income inequality that harms growth should start not with reducing poverty or other social initiatives, but rather addressing low incomes more broadly. The sharing economy may be unable to do this, however, as it may simply transition low income wages from shift-work to non-standard jobs. Nonetheless, while important to recognize these
critiques as they relate to capitalism, as argued in the introduction, this paper does not seek to break free of capitalism, but simply to work within the system already in place.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter argues that instead of facing the barriers in the formal economy, refugees should seek integration and financial self-sufficiency through the sharing economy. Government and other organizations could facilitate this by supporting initiatives such as Kiron University, Migration Hub, and Refugees on Rails. Sharing economy scholar Alex Stephany notes, the sharing economy is a force that is revolutionizing the way the economy works anyway. The support for the sharing economy is already in place, and we just need to consider how to include refugees in it. The EU has already recognized that the sharing economy has in common many of its goals, including to increase resource efficiency, create jobs, support micro-entrepreneurship, build community participation, and advance digital innovation. The EU has therefore launched the “European Sharing Economy Coalition” to support policies that put an emphasis on growing the sharing economy. It’s four goals entail mainstreaming, sustaining, scaling, and financing the European sharing economy. Three of the four main organizations that promote the sharing economy – OuiShare, Echo, and the European Sharing Economy Coalition – are based in Europe.

Further research could explore how the sharing economy could help Syrian refugees in the period before they are able to legally work in Germany, when they are more burdensome due to initial obstacles. In an interview, Syrian social entrepreneur and CEO of ArabShare, Ahmad Sufijan explained a concept of time banking that could be relevant in this interim, particularly for the underutilized skills of women. Ahmad runs a start-up competition for entrepreneurs in Syria, and this year’s winners created what he explains as an “offline time banking application as a solution for
them to help Syrian youth to build more skills, resources, by using the time currency”. He explains how time currency works:

Time banking is when you do someone a favor and instead of paying you in currency, they pay you in an hour. Then you can take this hour to take to pay to someone else, to pay them for another initiative. So for example, if you do a translation for me, that will take you one hour. So I’ll give you one hour, then you go to someone else, for example, to translate Arabic for you or teach you how to code and they’ll charge you that hour.

Ahmad explained that in the warzone, “people participate in the sharing economy due to lack of resources.” There are few other alternatives for transactions and exchange. In a small city, he told me, there is a club of over three hundred people who use time banking to create a sharing economy. “Among them, they’ve exchanged something like 2,500 hours,” Ahmad said proudly.

In an environment in Germany where Syrian refugees are newly arrived and lack resources, their economic situation is not entirely dissimilar to when they are in the warzone. They have limited opportunities for transactions and exchange, and arguably in this setting, the time banking system and broader sharing economy framework could offer potential opportunities for Syrians in Germany. Moreover, Ahmad notes that most Syrians come from a society that is familiar with sharing. Thus, while helpful to promote long term integration, initiatives in the sharing economy such as time banking could be used as short term solutions before refugees are legally permitted to work.
3. How The Technology Sector Can Serve Syrian Refugees

What I’m saying is that we have one of the greatest opportunities probably in the history of human civilization in the opportunities that are coming, in terms of the economy and technology. Why not apply this great opportunity to solve one of the greatest problems we are facing in the world: the refugee crisis?

– Dave Levin, Refugee Open Ware

3.1 Introduction

On February 9th, individuals from the technology industry came together to discuss solutions to the refugee “crisis” at the Techfugees conference in New York City (Fig. 10). At this forum, Melissa Powers, the United States ambassador to the United Nations, spoke not to her usual political audience, but to a room of two hundred entrepreneurs, including coders, engineers, data scientists, journalists, lawyers, and students, who shared a common goal of using technology to address the refugee crisis. At the end of her talk about the importance of this work, Ambassador Powers scanned the crowd with a solemn expression, “This is a 21st century crisis,” she stated, “and we need a 21st century solution”.
The room fell silent for a moment, as the weight of responsibility seemed to sink in. The conference was full of young, Silicon Valley techies who were handing out Twitter handles instead of business cards; the kind of twenty-somethings who took notes on tablets instead of notepads, and wore smart watches on their wrists. Why was an ambassador to the most influential global governance organization looking to these individuals for a solution to one of the most urgent issues facing the world today? What could their technology start-ups have to do with refugees?

The argument is that there needs to be an alternative to dependency-creating aid structures, in order to give agency to refugees. The technology sector can arguably offer this alternative. It offers opportunities to improve integration of refugees and enables them to contribute in a meaningful way to their host communities.

Information and knowledge provided through technology is essential to social and economic development. Hassan and Rachid assert that technology is a “core catalyst” for socioeconomic progress. The individuals participating in the Techfugees conference are evidently not the only ones thinking about this topic. Similar to the sharing economy, the
technology sector is a new part of the global economy, offering new ways for refugees and host countries to mutually benefit.

### 3.2 A Growing Start-up Culture in Germany

According to the German Center for Research and Innovation, Germany is a country of “ideas, inventions, and innovations”.\textsuperscript{ccxiv} German companies file the third most Patent Cooperation Treaty patents in technology sectors, demonstrating their commitment to creating new products and services.\textsuperscript{ccxv} A famous guide to international business calls Germany an international leader in science and technology.\textsuperscript{ccxvi} Meanwhile, the World Economic Forum’s “Global Competitiveness Report” ranks Germany eighth out of 139 countries for innovation.\textsuperscript{ccxvii} This is in part because the government supports research and development, spending around 12 billion Euros on it in 2009.\textsuperscript{ccxviii} Without a doubt, embedded in German culture is a dedication to technological innovation.

Despite this commitment, however, it is important to note that mature companies drive most of this research and development activity. Start-ups and entrepreneurialism is not common, as a majority of German employees work for established companies started decades prior.\textsuperscript{ccxix} According to Nicola Breugst, a professor at the Technical University Munich’s Entrepreneurship Research Institute, “Germans don’t view entrepreneurship that positively. In other countries, entrepreneurs have a better reputation, but not in Germany”.\textsuperscript{ccxx} She observes that there is a cultural fear of failure, and this may be what keeps many Germans from starting their own businesses. According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Global Report in 2014, Germany was the 12\textsuperscript{th} least entrepreneurial country in the world, with only 2.3\% of the population identifying as entrepreneurs.\textsuperscript{ccxxi}

According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, there are nearly 65 million entrepreneurs globally who plan on providing twenty or more jobs in the next five years, and 69 million people
who plan to offer innovative products and services in the market. The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor found that there was a global steady increase in total economic activity that was contributing to the growth of several economies. German leaders have recognized these positive outcomes of entrepreneurial activity. Accordingly, the Social Democrat Party’s Economics Minister Sigmar Gabriel wants to give start-up businesses more tax breaks and provide them with easier access to the stock market, with the aim that these policies will encourage established companies to invest in German start-ups; an essential step in helping the entrepreneurship culture to grow. The German government has also set aside state funding for citizens to found new companies. It has also launched a high-tech venture capital firm.

If the German commitment to research and development, and the promotion of innovation could be combined with a new push in entrepreneurship, it is conceivable that a successful start-up dynamic could emerge to produce innovative technological services and products.

### 3.3 Case Studies: Syrian Refugees in the Technology Sector

The use of technology has risen dramatically in Germany and among Syrian refugees. Studies show that a majority of Syrian refugees are familiar with mobile phones and other forms of technology. Across the world today, there are almost 7 billion mobile phone subscriptions, and 5 billion of those are in developing nations like Syria. Results from a survey conducted for this paper show that 93% of research participants owned a smartphone (see Appendix B).

According to an interview with a Syrian engineer named Ahmad, who was newly arrived to Germany, “Technology can play a significant role in the integration process, as most of the refugees already have smartphones that they normally use for communication with their families, navigation, searching for supermarkets and flats, etc.” Some of this technology played a large role in assisting the Syrian refugees in their journey to Europe. Ahmad notes that many refugees
“participate in many groups on Facebook to get information from the older refugees, who can share their experiences with them there.”

The refugees have access to diverse kinds of information from their mobile phones, including maps and service providers, as they seek asylum.

Another Syrian individual living in Germany, Abed, noted that technology “is helpful in various aspects and in so many ways…” He claims, “A lot of people I met were able to navigate in an easy way using these apps, even during their long trip on the way to Germany.” He continues, “I searched the net to learn more about grammar and enhance my vocabulary, using some free apps.”

He also talked about how refugees “used available apps to learn about city traffic and transport possibilities between cities” or even to “book their bus, train trips or Ridesharing services.”

Clearly, refugees utilize technology services to help them along through in their journey to Europe. According to the International Rescue Committee, the second most common question when a refugee arrives on the shores of Lesvos, Greece is “Do you have Wi-Fi?” This question is more common than the question, “Where can I buy food and water?” illustrating the necessity of connectivity to refugees.

Technology has helped aid workers to provide refugees with necessary services during their journey. Geo-location features on mobile phones have also allowed data scientists to study migration patterns and trends. Technology has also abetted public-private partnerships to help refugees. For example, the UNHCR Innovation division has collaborated with the United Postal Service to launch a system that will track the delivery of services and non-food items to refugees to ensure their arrival.

In 2010, a similar tracking system, called Refugees United, launched through a free mobile service. Refugees United is a family tracing service carried out through NGOs, which allows individuals possessing even the most basic technologies to connect with one another. The service now has about 250,000 registered users, successfully transitioning family tracing away from the
laborious and usually ineffective pen and paper methods. Refugees and aid agencies have begun collaborating to create maps that provide information about camps, border crossings, transportation, and other crucial services.

This collaboration is interesting, because it is a departure from the traditional roles of aid agencies as benefactors and refugees as beneficiaries. On open source maps such as the one shown below (Fig. 10), refugees can access information about where they may find food distribution or legal assistance. This kind of open-source sharing is in line with the sharing economy, where information is shared and collected collaboratively.

![Figure 10: Screenshot of an open source map of the refugee routes through the Balkans.](image)

Similarly, the website refugeemaps.org provides information and geolocation of specific organizations that serve refugees, particularly on mainland Europe. Google MyMaps has also created an initiative to map details about locations and services in areas with a large refugee population. There has also been an open-source Google document titled “Balkan Route” that shares important information using a combination of Emojis, Arabic, and English. NGOs and refugees have shared general advice there such as, “Taxi drivers are not your friends,” as well as
location specific guidance, such as in Gevglija, MK, where the site explains that “registration in camp is mandatory”.

These resources are crowd-sourced, meaning that refugees are often those who build the site’s content themselves by sharing data and information. These resources are accessible and modifiable to any refugees who own or are able to navigate a mobile phone, making it easier to receive assistance using this model of community-based sharing. Nonetheless, there are still barriers (the maps are in English and the resource lists are disorganized). Still, these technologies do help refugees become more self-reliant during their journey.

Technology transcends borders, which makes it a powerful tool to understand, provide assistance for, and monitor the multinational refugee movement. It has enabled refugees to help one another through the use of open-source platforms and crowdsourcing initiatives. Still, it is nonetheless important to consider the ways that such technological solutions fall short.

Prominent web security researcher Thomas Nachbar observes that the Internet is widely unregulated and there are evident dangers in this. Other security researchers build on this notion, asserting that despite the $7 billion that are spent each year on online security software, the Internet is becoming less secure. This is in part due to the professional criminal and terror groups who have gained the technological skillsets to carry out attacks online.

This paper also assumes that most refugees are already using technology. The majority of them will not be buying smartphones or computers for the first time to help them in their journey, they will have already been using them, as the earlier statistics have shown. Therefore, although there are security risks inherent to technology use, they are not new risks that refugees would be taking on by using technology solutions.

Another shortcoming of these technology solutions is in the risk of a refugee’s dependence on them. Geo-location with services such as GPS, for example, becomes for many refugees the only
tool they use to navigate their journey through Europe. One Syrian refugee recently told the BBC, “Without Google Maps we would be lost. Without digital technology, we can’t reach there.”

Many refugees depend on their phones’ GPS and geolocation services to tell them where they are and where to go. While useful, this is not the only way that technology solutions can be helpful – that is, GPS should not be the only solution available to refugees. There are various ways this technology can fail. GPS often lacks coverage where signal may be blocked, such as in urban areas or where there are obstructions between the user and the satellite. If geo-location fails, the refugee could become lost and misguided, possibly without even realizing it. Then there is the issue that in order to use geo-location services, an individual must have access to the Internet and a functional device. It is quite possible that in the remote parts of the Balkans, through which many refugees travel to get to countries such as Germany, the Internet signal could be weak or lost, and the refugee would be stranded with no access to Internet. However, researchers predict that geo-location services will dramatically improve in accuracy over the next decade, which may alleviate future concerns.

Recent innovations in technology have also shown the potential to support the newly arrived individuals with online skill training platforms. As with the sharing economy, technology solutions could be used in this interim before refugees are legally able to work in order to provide them with opportunities for skill development and engagement. In an interview with Syrian refugee Juan, he supported this notion, saying that, “Through technology, refugees can get to know more and more about the German lifestyle.” Juan is one of many refugees interviewed who uses technology to connect with his local community.

An example of technology solutions for refugees is the Welcome to Dresden mobile application that was launched to help refugees learn about available services and resources in the city. Peggy Reuter-Heinrich, the CEO of Heinrich and Reuter Solutions, said there were many
initiatives to help refugees integrate, but they were not readily available to refugees. So she decided to launch Welcome to Dresden.

When asylum seekers first arrive, they have more than three months where they can only wait…it’s really complicated to find out what to do, how to access the health system, get food. It’s important to do something at the beginning until they are allowed to work, go to school and then afterwards the system works quite well. The Welcome to Dresden application therefore provides refugees with information about local organizations and initiatives they may benefit from. It is currently available in English, French, German, Arabic, and Russian to make it even more accessible. Syrian refugee Juan describes the helpfulness of social media applications, commenting that, “Social media apps play the largest role in integration process[es] especially if they are managed by German people and directed to the refugee community.”

He explains that “through the help of technology, refugees can get to know more and more about the German lifestyle.”

In host communities, technology services such as Welcome to Dresden have been important tools to assist the refugees in integrating and becoming self-sufficient. It demonstrates how if refugees could access opportunities that empower them socioeconomically, their integration could be improved and they could contribute meaningfully to their communities.

In this sense, it is important to think of technology as embedded within a broader societal context. Saskia Sassan suggests that society and technology constantly overlap, commenting that there “is no purely digital economy and no completely virtual corporation or community…power, contestation, inequality, hierarchy…inscribe electronic space and shape the production of software.”

She notes that there are “complex interactions” between the physical and the digital world, and it is essential to account for them. Therefore, technological solutions should not exist by themselves. They should be integrated with and complemented by non-technological programs.
for integration, such as community-based efforts, to avoid the development of inequality or hierarchy.

An example of how technology can facilitate integration comes from the apartment-sharing website “Refugees Welcome.” In 2014, three young Germans founded Refugees Welcome to provide an online service in what has been called an “Airbnb for refugees”. The site allows local Germans to offer a room in their home to an asylum-seeker and to accommodate them for as long as they wish. This is an example of a program that fits in with Sessen’s framework of overlap between technology and society. Though facilitated through an online platform, Refugees Welcome promotes refugees to interact with Germans in the physical world. A founder of Refugees Welcome notes, “We have people [hosts] like bus drivers and carpenters, to doctors and scientists”. The diverse array of people helps to advance the mission of Refugees Welcome to not only provide basic housing services, but also the opportunity for refugees to integrate with their community. “Living together is a key part of the project so if you have an empty flat, we turn you down because that’s not what this project is about,” one co-founder of Refugees Welcome says. “It’s about living with people and getting to know them”.

Experiences such as those Refugees Welcome offer are essential, as there are a number of sociocultural challenges that refugees face that would be difficult to facilitate through technology alone. Fundamental to these is the concept of “Othering,” as first introduced by Said, which Katherine Ewing describes as “racism” and “discrimination against minorities”. In her book, Stolen Honor, Ewing describes various controversies related to the integration of Muslims into German society, such as the German public finding it troublesome that a Muslim teacher can wear a headscarf in school. She cites these kinds of issues as evidence of a clash between Islamic practices and German national identity. This was exemplified in 2000, when a conservative German politician proposed a policy that focused on preserving a sense of “Germanness” and national
identity in the midst of the large numbers of Turkish immigrants who had arrived as guest workers. It is conceivable that a similar desire to protect German identity may occur with the mass arrivals of Syrian refugees. As this is more of a political issue, it would be difficult to address with technology and instead likely requires a real-world solution.

In reality, technology solutions can only facilitate integration; cooperation, acceptance, and community welcome are also necessary for these initiatives to be successful. Therefore, the examples and argument of this section assume that the German community will be receptive to these innovations and welcoming towards refugees. This paper argues that some of these technological innovations may also prompt Germans to see refugees in a different light, as self-sufficient innovators and problem solvers that contribute meaningfully to the economy, which may positively affect the sociological integration of refugees.

Though technology solutions, such as Refugees Welcome and Welcome to Dresden, have an innovative nature, these technologies are still delivered in ways that reflect a traditional model of relief assistance described in Chapter One. This section therefore considers not only technology innovations that could help refugees, but also further explores the way assistance is conceptualized and delivered. Through technology, refugees may not only benefit from services offered by the host communities, but they may also use it to add value back.

The Arabic language-learning program Natakallam is an illustration of this. Through the online platform, Arabic students can be matched with native Syrian Arabic speakers in order to practice their speaking skills. The Syrian conversation partners are refugees, and many come from well-educated backgrounds. Sara, co-founder of Natakallam, notes that, “There’s this whole group of middle-class Syrians who were really on their way to completing their degrees – who might have had small businesses – a whole group of people that are really in need of support”. However, she continues on to emphasize that assistance is not a one-way street. “Frequently, people...
who study in the United States will go to Jordan, to Lebanon, and they’re speaking pretty much a Shakespearean version of Arabic. There’s an increase in demand for the spoken version of the language. Sara’s words are evidence for the reciprocal model of assistance. That is, there are refugees in need of income and work that the customer can provide to them. Meanwhile, the refugees can also use their unique skillsets (i.e., cultural and language capital) to provide a valuable service to individuals.

While initiatives such as Natakallam help refugees to support themselves as well as add value to their host community, Syrians can also use technology to help their fellow refugees in Germany. The results in a survey conducted for this paper showed that more than half of participants had volunteered or helped out in some way with their fellow Syrian refugee population (see Appendix B). A young man named Salah serves as an example of how this can be done. Salah is a Syrian engineer who was living in Germany during the mass arrivals of refugees in 2015. He noticed that many highly skilled Syrians were unable to utilize their skillsets. He gives the example of “a friend who has a Ph.D. in chemistry, who is searching for a job for a while with no success so far. And he is doing an hourly wage in non-relevant field.” Salah noticed that refugees “need some assistance in the application process - for example, on how to write a CV, how to search for the right job, and understanding what the different positions are that fit with their skills.” He wanted to do something to help his Syrian peers in this way, and set about doing it.

When he observed that refugees “participate in many groups on Facebook to get information from the older migrants who share their experiences with them,” he decided to start a Facebook group himself, specifically designed for Syrian engineers in Germany (Fig. 11). He did this “to help other engineers to find a job or training.” To date, he posts almost daily about “different subjects to explain how to write a CV or an application letter, and how to prepare for an interview.”

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“Additionally”, he comments, “I helped many refugees to search for positions, according to their skills.” Salah uses his knowledge of Arabic to help explain to these Syrian refugee engineers how the job recruitment process in Germany works. He uses his cultural understanding of Syria, as well as his knowledge of the German economy, to serve as a bridge between the Syrian engineers and their new environment in Germany. The group he built also allows other qualified people in a similar situation to help other refugees.

Fig. 11. A screenshot of Salah's Facebook group called “Syrian Entrepreneurs in Germany”, with nearly 4,000 active members.

Salah’s efforts are a poignant example of how Syrians give back to members of their own community, particularly those who have already integrated into Germany. These ideas are not dissimilar to those of the sharing economy, which encourages the exchange of ideas and advice for
stronger transactions. Significant positive impacts of migration are largely the results of these “network effects” \textsuperscript{ccclxxi} McKenzie suggests that migrant networks are established after the first migrants arrive, and effectively lower the cost of migrants who come later by assisting them with accommodation and employment. \textsuperscript{ccclxxii} These networks, such as Salah’s Facebook group, not only removes some obstacles for migrants, but also help them to have a sense of community and belonging immediately upon their arrival.

Though positive in the short term, self-grouping from network effects can actually hinder the refugees’ long-term integration. There is a risk in becoming isolated from the local community outside the refugee network. In 1985, researchers Portes and Bach showed the extent to which this can happen in “ethnic enclaves” that were developing in major cities in the United States at the time. \textsuperscript{ccclxxiii} A more recent example comes from Edmond Préteceille, who studies the banlieues of Paris, where there are communities of immigrants distinctly segregated from the locals. \textsuperscript{ccclxxiv} Préteceille notes that there are a variety of reasons for self-aggregation, such as language, religion, or especially economics. \textsuperscript{ccclxxv} The economic argument Préteceille makes is similar the network effects that McKenzie discusses, which is that self-aggregation happens when “your ethnic group’s social network may be in a position to help you find work or housing”. \textsuperscript{ccclxxvi} Technology is unique in that it makes any size community viable because it is not constrained to the local market alone.

It is important to have a nuanced understanding of network effects, and the possible consequences of self-grouping. For instance, there are various reasons why self-grouping occurs beyond the reasons already listed. For example, Préteceille asserts that economic agents and public agencies making “micro decisions” to discriminate against minorities may be another factor that results in self-grouping and isolation. \textsuperscript{ccclxxvii} So although McKenzie may assert that migrants themselves create these networks, Préteceille argues that they only create them out of necessity, as they cannot get the support they need from their host community. \textsuperscript{ccclxxviii} The complex causes and
effects of immigrant networks and groups are important to consider when we aim to build successful initiatives based on a model of “Syrians helping Syrians,” such as Salah’s Facebook group.

Though this section has given priority focus to ICT projects, as those constitute the majority of technology solutions for refugees, it is important to note that technological innovations for refugees can come in any form. In an interview, Dave Levin describes the present day and age as “the next industrial revolution,” and notes that a variety of new technologies have recently emerged that could have significant influence on the world today. Few people would think to connect innovations such as 3D printing, artificial intelligence, or robotics to the refugee situation, but Levin and his team at Refugee Open Ware have done exactly that.

Refugee Open Ware is a company that focuses on providing conflict affected communities with advanced manufacturing tools, so they can create the solutions to the problems they face on their own. Their aim is to lower the cost of humanitarian relief, while also empowering the affected community to solve their own problems. According to Levin:

We have one of the greatest opportunities probably in the history of human civilization, in terms of the opportunities that are coming in the economy and technology. Why not apply this great opportunity to solve one of the greatest problems were facing in the world: the refugee crisis?

Levin goes on to explain how Refugee Open Ware has been printing 3D limbs and designing eco-location devices for the blind. He tells the story of Hasem, a Syrian living in a Jordanian refugee camp. The team at Refugee Open Ware taught Hasem how to use a 3D printer. “And what was incredible…was that we taught him how to use a 3D printer within 2 weeks, and within one more week, he had 3D printed a prosthetic limb for a refugee boy. And within 3 days, he learned how to program an eco-location device for his friend, Ahmad, who was blinded in the war.” Such
examples illustrate that Syrians can have the ability to improve their circumstances through the use of technology.

Figure 12: The young boy who had a prosthetic limb made for him, which he uses to pick up his toys.

Levin goes on to say, “A lot of people think, ‘why do refugees need advanced technology and why don’t we just start with the very basic stuff?’ But I think what’s really great about the next industrial revolution is that it is fundamentally about the democratization of production.”

According to Levin, technologies like 3D printing are making it easy and possible for anyone to create solutions. He also advocates that refugees should be given the tools to help themselves. Through the examples from Refugee Open Ware, we can begin to understand how empowering and training refugees to use technology is a cost-effective, efficient, and productive way to address the problems they face. Not only that, but empowering refugees through technology may begin to address the stigmatization and view that they are an economic burden. As innovators and problem solvers, refugees could be viewed in a more positive light not only economically, but also socially.

Still, it is essential to keep in mind where technological solutions fall short. According to Boieri, current interest around technological innovation has “led some to question the exaggerated optimism of information society as linked to creating enterprising subjects within neoliberal
This is important to consider as it could perpetuate the inequalities that many scholars argue are inherent in neoliberal policies. This is of significance for refugees, as there are those who are unable to use technology due to their educational background, geographic origin, or financial situation. We have to remember that there are “social factors, technical factors, financial factors, and legal policy factors” that serve as barriers to integration. If an individual hails from a remote part of Syria, or a nomadic tribe, he or she may not be familiar with technology. Or if a refugee lacks financial resources to pay for the technology and Internet access, he or she will be unable to benefit from technology-based initiatives. By shifting to technology-based support for refugees, there is a risk of excluding and further disadvantaging those who have never had such resources to begin with. This is why it is imperative that technological solutions first emphasize providing access and education to all who wish to use them. As Wajcman notes, we need to accordingly see technology as a “socio-technical” product. Further research should explore how women could receive training and be included in these initiatives, and how they could be equipped to teach their children.

It is also important to consider the obstacle of accessibility. Individuals who are partially sighted, dyslexic, or have a hearing impairment, among other disabilities, will likely have difficulty utilizing the technology solutions. According to experts in visually impaired technology use, accessibility and mobility are particularly key issues for blind users. While progress on assistive technologies has been made, such as audio feedback to guide visually impaired technology users, it still falls short. As some refugees may have impairments, possibly as a result of the war in Syria, it is important to consider that technology solutions do discriminate by nature. Researchers in the field of web access, Brophy and Craven, suggest that this could be improved with better design of technology platforms. For example, instead of having a user interface made entirely of text, it could include audio, visuals, and multimedia. Henry asserts that everyone should have the right to
access the Internet, regardless of their situation, and technology solutions should therefore consider these barriers in order to be as inclusive as possible.

3.4 Conclusion

Technology has proved to be useful in helping to integrate and empower Syrian refugees in Germany. As innovations such as GPS tracking transcends borders, technology has also enabled aid workers to better reach refugees and understand their movements on their way to Germany. Examples of initiatives in the technology sector are diverse. This chapter draws on examples from the field of advanced technology to show how robotics and 3D printing can lower the cost of humanitarian relief, while also empowering the affected community to solve their own problems. Other examples stem from technology’s interaction with the sociocultural aspects of refugee integration, such as Refugees Welcome’s online platform to encourage refugees’ interactions with Germans. Many of the examples in this chapter, such as the open-source aid maps, are in line with the sharing economy, where information is shared and collected collaboratively. This consequently empowers refugees to have agency to help themselves to improve their situation.

While technology is part of the response we should consider to help refugees, it is not the sole solution for Syrian refugee integration in Germany. Technology solutions, particularly those that are web-based, need to be complemented by real world goods and services. Most technology solutions cannot provide a refugee with food, water, or shelter. Rather, technology appears to be most effective when it is used to share information about how to find those necessary goods and services. These tech-oriented solutions are not meant to solve all the problems refugees face, but can help offer support and guidance to empower the refugees to solve some on their own.
Final Conclusion

This paper examines the role of alternative economic systems to improve the integration experience of Syrian refugees in Germany. Using interviews and case studies from German entrepreneurs and Syrian refugees, it explores the role of the sharing economy and technological innovation in the context of the 2015-2016 European “refugee crisis.” While Chapters Two and Three examine the sharing economy and technology sector independently, the two subjects are tightly connected with one another. They both offer an alternative in terms of greater economic accessibility and ease of exchange in the market. Technology provides the infrastructure that improves accessibility and enables exchanges in the sharing economy to happen. Meanwhile, principles of the sharing economy such as the open exchange of ideas and other forms of intellectual collaboration, have given rise to various technological advancements.

An illustrative example of both of the sharing economy and technological innovation is Bitcoin. Bitcoin is a significant technological innovation of our time - a mathematical based digital currency that can be traded for sales as well as exchanged for traditional non-digital currencies. According to author Emily Little, this digital currency illustrates principles of the sharing economy in that Bitcoin’s “value and security are inherently dependent upon the trust of the Bitcoin community.”

Little notes that, “Bitcoin has value because its users ascribe value to it and are willing to trade it for things and services of value”. Bitcoin illustrates components of the sharing economy in other ways too. For example, the process of creating a Bitcoin involves complex sharing in a network using a collaborative public ledger system called block-chain.

When combined, the sharing economy and the technology sector serve as a meaningful avenue for economic engagements. Bitcoin is important in the context of this paper because it shows how combinations of these alternative systems can add value to humanitarian causes. In an interview conducted for this paper, a software engineer at the most prominent BitCoin exchange
platform Coinbase explained,

For refugees on the move, it can be hard to move cash/money, especially between countries. Government may have ceased assets in banks or cash may be taken from you at checkpoints. You also cannot be paid (as banks are controlled by government) for work if the host nation does not allow it (like in the case of Turkey). Bitcoin gets around all these controls, no one can stop you sending or receiving it.

Bitcoin illustrates the interconnectedness of the sharing economy and technology innovation, as well as how together these new areas of the economy can add social value, particularly in the case of refugees. Though there are shortcomings of this currency for refugee use, such as the inability to monitor or track transactions that can lead to illegal or risky exchanges, these drawbacks are outnumbered by the numerous benefits. It is also important to point out that the argument for BitCoin, as well as many other solutions in this paper, is in line with views of technological optimism. According to authors James Krier and Clayton Gillette, technological optimism will be able to rise above politics. However, there are many problems that technology solutions cannot address, such as racism between the host communities and refugees, or gender conflicts within familial structures when women go to work. Further research could explore precisely what issues are beyond the solutions of the technology sector and alternative strategies to address them.

While this thesis has focused on specific examples of how the sharing economy and the technology sector can benefit Syrian refugees in Germany, this paper argues that many of these arguments can be extrapolated to other contexts. As migration trends continue globally, both the sharing economy and the technology sector are on the rise as well.

Botsman and Rogers suggest that the sharing economy could be as important as the Industrial Revolution in changing the way people think about ownership. There are already billions of people in the world participating in the sharing economy. In Europe, Nielsen data found
that 54% of Europeans were willing to share their own assets, and 44% were willing to share from others. Another statistic shows that there are 30,000 cooperatives that have 1 billion members globally, which is more than the number of people working for multinational corporations, demonstrating society’s engagement in this area. The projected revenue of the sharing economy is estimated to be $335 billion by 2025. In the Harvard Business Review, Robin Chase emphasizes governments’ need to give more recognition to “this new third way of working which is neither full-time nor temporary part-time, but a new way of life”.

In terms of technology, there is also significant progress in European engagement. Across Europe, there are 250 million people who use the Internet daily. Driven by such Internet usage, the digital economy is growing 7 times as fast as the rest of the economy. As a result of this, the ICT sector comprises around 5% of the entire EU economy. A continent connected to wide-range cellular towers, with world leading universities and top ranking research firms, Europe is home to numerous technology innovations and will likely bring forth even more. The principles of the sharing economy and the innovations in the technology sector are relevant across Europe – not only in Germany.

Importantly, while these alternative economic systems are relevant in countries across Europe outside of Germany, they are also applicable in various refugee populations besides Syrians. In refugee camps in parts of Africa, the NGO Refugees United uses refugees’ personal information from their mobile phone data to help reconnect separated family members. This work shows how technology and crowdsourcing (based off of principles of the sharing economy) can help improve the situation of refugees. Further research could explore how principles of the sharing economy and the technology sector could be replicated elsewhere to improve the livelihoods of host communities and refugee populations alike.
One specific area of investigation could be how refugees could impact underdeveloped or underprivileged communities, not only in the EU, but also around the world. As skilled human capital, refugee populations have the potential to utilize their abilities to rebuild communities. A recent article in *The New York Times*, “Let Syrians Settle Detroit” explains:

Detroit, a once great city, has become an urban vacuum. Its population has fallen to around 700,000 from nearly 1.9 million in 1950. The city is estimated to have more than 70,000 abandoned buildings and 90,000 vacant lots. Meanwhile, desperate Syrians, victims of an unfathomable civil war, are fleeing to neighboring countries, with some 1.8 million in Turkey and 600,000 in Jordan. Suppose these two social and humanitarian disasters were conjoined to produce something positive.\(^{cdvi}\)

As refugees need a safe place to settle, and there are many towns that need human driven revitalization, there is potential to combine these two needs for a meaningful outcome. This article by David Laitin and Marc Jahr notes that Syrian refugees, despite their traumatic experiences, have still managed to be entrepreneurial.\(^{cdvii}\) Similarly, of those surveyed for this paper, well over half had either run their own business in the past or had aspirations of running their own business in the future (see Appendix B). It is possible that through modes of sharing and technological tools exemplified by the case of Syrian refugees in Germany, other refugees could utilize their skillsets to have a positive economic impact.

While the focus of this paper has been on Syrian refugees adding value to their communities in Germany, and how similar lessons can be drawn for other refugees adding value to communities outside of their origin country, it is important to also consider how refugees can bring value back to their home countries. In reference to the destruction in Syria, Melissa Fleming, head of communications for the UNHCR, says that, “This [Syria] will need to be rebuilt. By architects, by engineers, by electricians. Communities will need teachers and lawyers, and politicians interested in
reconciliation and not revenge. Shouldn’t this be rebuilt by the people with the largest stake – the societies in exile, the refugees? Today’s refugees are tomorrow’s Syrian citizens, working to rebuild their country destroyed by war. The refugees therefore need experiences using and building new skills, as they have an immense challenge of reconstruction ahead. In addition, as Fleming notes, “Refugees have a lot of time to prepare for their return” This time could be used to help empower the change-makers that Syria will need to help it rebuild. Alternative economic systems can give refugees opportunities to be able to grow their skills to take on those roles.

This paper therefore recommends that both local and international governance institutions consider alternative mechanisms for integrating refugees and helping them to improve their livelihood. More programs and initiatives in this area will prove beneficial to the host community as well. As migration continues to be a trend throughout the world, there needs to be alternative mechanisms to cope with it – so that migration is not a crisis, but instead an experience that can benefit both the a nation and the refugees themselves.
Appendix A

In order to interview Syrian refugees, I initially tried to gain contact through refugee aid agencies to speak with a wide array of refugees – women, the elderly, children, and so on. However, this was unsuccessful due to the high security and private nature of these organizations. So, instead, I reached out directly to refugees on Facebook through the use of Facebook topic groups for Syrian refugees in Germany. While this allowed me to recruit many individuals, and provided a random sample, it was also self-selecting. Most active users on the “Syrian refugees in Germany” Facebook pages are male, a deeper reflection of the social order in Syria. So, consequently, all of my interviewees were men. Furthermore, most of those who are online are generally young and technology savvy. So, this also limited my interviewee pool – all of my interviewees were under the age of 35. Though helpful as the majority of Syrian refugees in this age group from 23-35. I was still unable to capture the perspectives of the older or more vulnerable refugee population that may have provided a more critical perspective of my topic.

Another obstacle was the need to conduct the spoken interviews in English, which reinforced the selection bias of the sample population. The individuals I spoke with had an educated background that provided them with a working knowledge of English. These shortcomings likely shaped my results in various ways. This young, educated, male population is likely more inclined to be engaged with technology than an older, female, uneducated population may be, which skews the results. Thus it is essential to consider that the solutions that I propose could be less effective for these populations. Future research could target individuals who are women, not highly educated, and over the age of 35. This would lend to a more in-depth exploration of the research question.

Over the course of three months, twelve refugees were interviewed. Some interviews were conducted by telephone/Skype; others via email exchange, WhatsApp conversation, and Facebook
messaging. The refugees usually guided the conversations, which were principally based around the topics of innovation, entrepreneurship, and their integration experience in Germany. I also created a survey that I shared on a Facebook group with 100,000 members designated for Syrian refugees in Germany that is analyzed in Appendix B. I collected fifteen responses, and will include some ideas and themes that emerged from these surveys in this paper. Finally, I launched a Facebook group titled “Syrian entrepreneurs in Germany” in collaboration with two Syrian individuals in Germany. We created the page in Arabic and German, and before long had over four hundred members. Some examples and ideas come from posts that were shared in this group.

Fig. 13. The image above shows the home page of the Syrian Entrepreneurs in Germany Facebook group.

To interview Germans and other individuals working on the behalf of refugees, I drew from the Techfugees non-profit organization, a community of humanitarian innovators. I attended a Techfugees conference in New York City, and a Techfugees online conference hosted in London, from which I cumulatively recorded over 40 live interviews. While in New York City, I also
interviewed in person the director of the United Nations Innovation lab. I recorded perspectives from UNHCR, Al-Jazeera, and the IRC representatives, as well as those from founders of smaller refugee-focused start-ups. I therefore believe I was able to get a diverse representation of those who are working on behalf of refugees to improve their integration process. Though I couldn’t include all interviews conducted in this paper, I have drawn ideas and constructed arguments from them.
Appendix B

This appendix shows the results from the survey mentioned in Appendix A, conducted in a sample of 15 randomly selected refugees. Participants were provided with a question and a blank paragraph sized text box using survey software Qualtrics. Some answers were yes/no; others were longer response questions that required more elaboration. The questions and answers have been analyzed and sorted into the tables below.

Survey Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q1</th>
<th>What languages do you speak?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>What was your profession in your home country?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>Did you ever run your own business?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>Do you have a smart phone?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q5</td>
<td>Have you ever volunteered in the Syrian refugee community?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q6</td>
<td>What has been the greatest obstacle to your integration in Germany?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7</td>
<td>What are your dreams for five years from now?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q1</th>
<th>Arabic and English</th>
<th>Arabic and German</th>
<th>Arabic and Kurdish</th>
<th>Arabic only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What languages do you speak?</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>What was your profession in your home country?</td>
<td>Entrepreneur/self-employed/freelance (tailor, business owner, etc.)</td>
<td>Employed (i.e., engineer, electrician, etc.)</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Q3 | Did you ever run your own business?            | Yes                                                          |                                             |         |
|    |                                                | 33%                                                          |                                             |         |

| Q4 | Do you own a smart phone?                     | Yes                                                          |                                             |         |
|    |                                                | 93%                                                          |                                             |         |

<p>| Q5 | Have you ever volunteered in the Syrian refugee community? | Yes                                                          |                                             |         |
|    |                                                             | 53%                                                          |                                             |         |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q6</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Basic needs (housing, food)</th>
<th>Finances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What has been your greatest obstacle to integration in Germany?</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q7</th>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>Language acquisition</th>
<th>Financially self-sufficient</th>
<th>Run own business</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are your dreams for five years from now?</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Endnotes

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