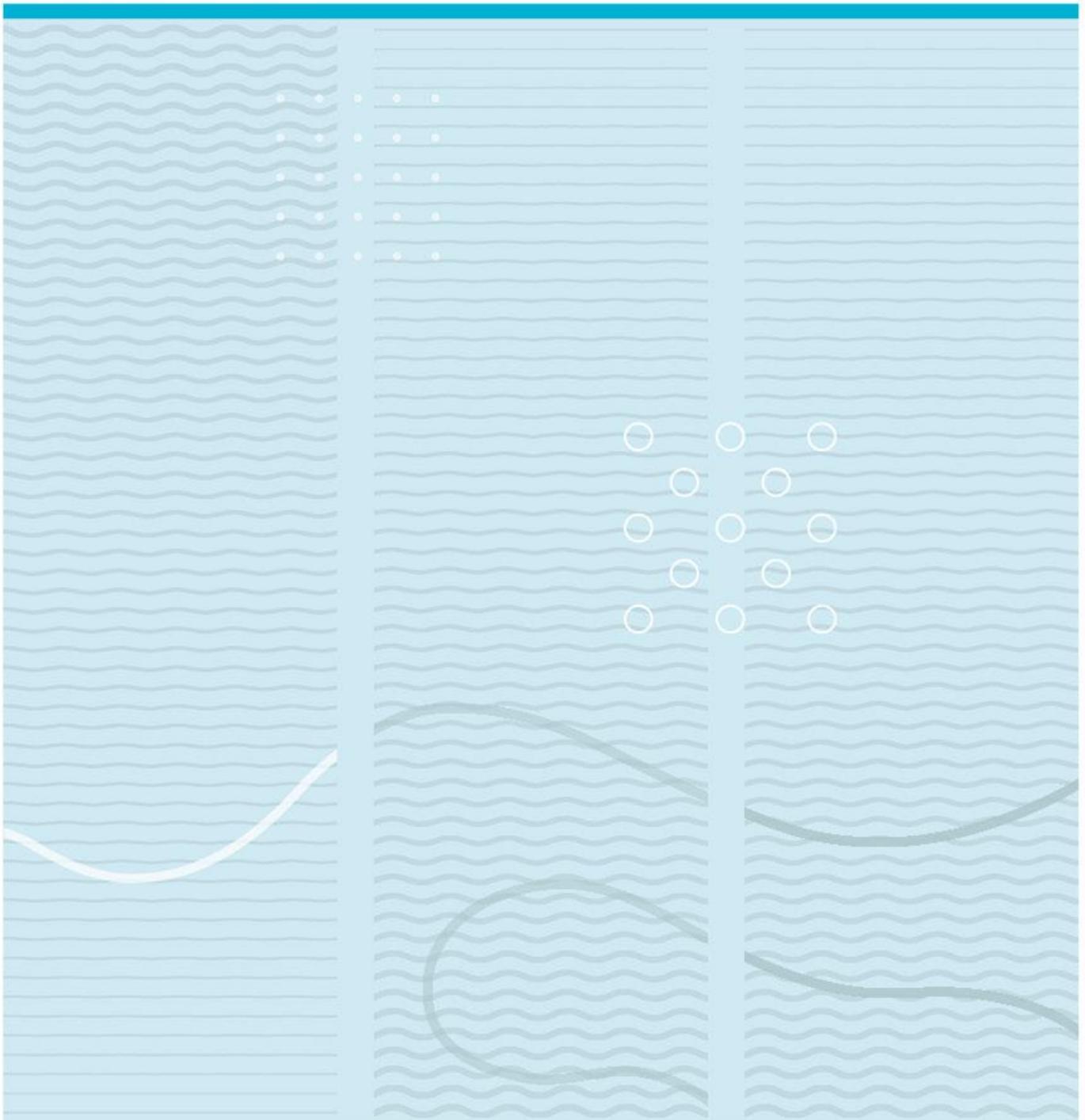


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Understanding the challenges of building an inclusive community.

a comparative analysis of the social landscapes in Bø, Norway and Pune, India



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This thesis is worth 30 study points

Abstract

Inclusive communities are indispensable for the effective functioning of democracies and play a crucial role in mitigating social exclusion through principles of social justice. This study examines the challenges faced by communities in Bø, Norway, and Pune, India, in their pursuit of social justice and inclusiveness. Employing a qualitative approach established in grounded theory, descriptive interviews were conducted to gather insights from community members. Despite the economic, demographic, and cultural diversity between Norway and India, both countries face similar obstacles with some differences in fostering inclusive communities. Broadly, it can be said that communities in both contexts are not resilient in coherently promoting social justice and inclusiveness for various reasons. Despite Norway's efforts to create inclusive communities, data shows a lack of initiative from the community, similarly to India. The social and policy-related factors scored the most on similarities with sub-factors such as socioeconomic, religious, and cultural diversity, along with policy and governance-related issues such as lack of awareness and policy initiatives. Notably, Norway differs from India in terms of the prevalence of the caste system and internalized oppression. Context-tailored strategies are needed to overcome these challenges. Norway's community should take more steps to make it equitable for people from multicultural backgrounds, whereas, in India, there is a need for social reform. People from different caste/class backgrounds must come together to form communities and break free from customs and behaviours causing social exclusion on an individual level. Recommendations are provided for policymakers and community leaders to promote socially sustainable and resilient societies, emphasizing the need for enhanced community engagement and eradicating systemic barriers. Limitations of the study include a small sample size and language constraints impacting the depth of communication. Future research should focus on evaluating the effectiveness of diverse community-based initiatives fostering the social inclusion of immigrants and assessing each municipality's performance in implementing inclusive community-level initiatives.

Keywords: Inclusive Communities, Social Sustainability, Community Engagement, Social Capital

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1 Introduction

In contemporary politics, democracy faces numerous challenges. One of the most significant threats to democratic principles arises from the dominance of particular ethnic and/or religious groups, which can be displayed in various forms such as right-wing populism¹, ethnic autocracy², majoritarian rule³, and anti-immigrant sentiments. These challenges pose a threat not only to the integrity of democratic principles but also to the rights and representation of minority groups within society.

By aligning with social democracy⁴, political democracy can mitigate the risks posed by majoritarianism and ensure equitable representation and protection of minority rights. Political democracy, defined as the governance system characterized by representative institutions and electoral processes, must synchronize with the ideals of social democracy, which emphasize equality, social justice, and inclusivity.

In this context, civil society emerges as an important factor in fostering a resilient democratic system. By actively promoting social cohesion with equity and diversity, civil society organizations such as NGOs, in collaboration with political institutions and other stakeholders, can contribute to the preservation and advancement of democratic values and principles. Civil society organizations play a crucial role by engaging in grassroots mobilization, advocacy campaigns, and community-based initiatives, where diverse voices are heard and respected. Additionally, civil society should act as a watchdog, holding governments and institutions accountable for their actions and policies that may continue exclusion or inequality.

¹ Right-wing populism is a political doctrine merging right-wing policies with populist rhetoric, catering to the grievances and apprehensions of the populace. This ideology encompasses nationalism, an anti-establishment voice, an emphasis on restrictive immigration and cultural policy matters, economic protectionism, and a strong emphasis on law and order. The specific policy stances and rhetoric of right-wing populism may differ depending on the nation and the circumstances in which it arises (Havertz, 2019).

² Ethnic autocracy indicates autocratic (where absolute power lies with the ruler) governance within ethnically diverse nations, characterized by the ruler's fear of losing power to rival ethnic groups. This concern often results in the implementation of biased policies favouring certain ethnic groups and the continuation of autocratic structures (Amegashie, 2008).

³ Maintains that the majority, often categorized by religion, language, social class, or other criteria, holds the predominant position in society and possesses the authority to govern without obstacles from minority groups or civil society.

⁴ Social democracy asserts the rights of citizens, advocating for equal entitlement among all citizens to participate equally in the standards of living achievable within a given society (Dow, 1993).

1.1 Purpose And Research Questions

The purpose of the study is to understand the challenges in building an inclusive community. My motivation to work on this topic stems from my perception of the need for inclusive community-building activities. I strongly feel humans should be living together as equals in the global village harmoniously and peacefully.

Additionally, there is a recognized necessity to bridge the gap between the developed nations and the developing nations. Norway, displaying a higher standard of living according to OECD reports (2024a), holds a stronger position to address its social issues. Conversely, India continues to grapple with various social challenges that impede its overall development (Sharma et al., 2020; Sinha et al., 2021). Despite these obstacles, there is a pressing need to expand sustainable practices to confront the behavioural challenges within each of these unique context (O'Brien et al., 2023). Considering these aspects, the present research undertakes a comparative analysis of the social landscapes in Bø, Norway, and Pune, India. Utilizing research methodologies from both the social sciences and humanities, the study aims to prioritize equal access for all individuals, irrespective of their ethnic, political, or socioeconomic backgrounds.

To provide valuable insights conducive to the development of flexible, inclusive community-building strategies applicable to various social environments and technological settings, my objective is to identify the challenges through the following research questions:

- What are the challenges to achieving equal access to community spaces for social inclusion amidst changing social contexts?
- What are the similarities and differences in the challenges of achieving equal access to spaces for social inclusion amidst changing social contexts?

This research can be categorized under sustainability research (Franklin & Blyton, 2011) because inclusive societies are important for sustainable development for many reasons: First, they provide access to basic social services, to build social capital, leaving no one behind. Second, they help in building healthy communities with social cohesion. Finally, reducing social exclusion improves people's participation in social, political, and economic activities, improving the social capital of a nation. This research is expected to contribute directly to SDG 16 (Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and

inclusive institutions at all levels); SDG 10 (Reduce inequality within and among countries); and SDG 11 (Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable) (UNESCO, 2015), and they are critical goals to achieve for both India and Norway.

While there is existing research that explores various aspects of social sustainability in India and Norway (Sabzalieva et al., 2021; Korum & Subramaniam, 2020; Traavik & Adavikolanu, 2016; Kishita et al., 2021; Negi & Tripathy, 2023), this particular topic remains relatively under-researched, particularly when considering the contrasting contexts of these two countries. This thesis adds to an understanding of the challenges in achieving social inclusion and building social capital. Although the responsibility of social uplift lies with state policies, the study seeks to discuss the challenges in addressing social exclusion through informal community activities both in Bø, Norway and Pune, India.

1.2 Thesis Structure

This thesis is comprised of seven chapters. 'The Introduction' as the first chapter sets the stage by providing the context, research aim, and questions. The second chapter, 'Conceptual Background', explains and defines various theoretical concepts and their interrelations. In the third chapter, 'Methodology', I will explain the ontological and epistemological foundations of the research and the methodology chosen to address the research questions, followed by the fourth chapter, 'Results', outlines the findings and their alignment with the analysis. In the fifth chapter, I discuss how data and the concepts help in answering the research questions, contributing insights to the field, and suggesting potential for future research. Finally, the conclusion section contains proposed solutions to address the challenges.

2 Conceptual Background

In this chapter, I will define and describe the theoretical concepts relevant to this research. This is a master's thesis within the framework of Sustainability Management under Sustainability Development Goals (Briant Carant, 2017). Established in the conceptualization of 'sustainability' (Urdan and Luoma, 2020), this study adopts a problem-solving approach with democratic principles (Briggs, 2008). Additionally, the study sets the stage for addressing some of the contemporary social sustainability challenges. First, I will first define some of the concepts and terms relevant to the study followed by a description of the different contexts (India and Norway).

2.1 Democracy As An Evolving Idea

The evolving understanding of democracy, as explored by scholars such as Yıldırım (2017) and Munck (2016), highlights the dynamic nature of democratic principles. When discussing the traditional concept of democracy, we typically associate it with political equality and a government by the people as its main components. This traditional perception of democracy has varied across different regions, with the Western world often adopting a distinct interpretation compared to other global contexts. For instance, findings of a survey (Richard & Schumacher, 2020) highlighted the shifting expectations regarding what defines a robust democracy. The newer concept of democracy includes not just political equality and popular rule, but also broader factors like transparency, accountability, and responsiveness to the needs of all citizens.

The contemporary view of democracy has transformed in response to changing societal dynamics. This evolution is evident in the expanding discussion surrounding democracy, which increasingly recognizes the intricate relationship between political processes and social considerations. Paul Woodruff, in his work *'First Democracy: The Challenge of an Ancient Idea'* (2006), posits several conditions that must be met for a society to represent true democracy. These conditions include, among other things, inviting broad participation in governance, upholding the rule of law that even the government is subject to it, demonstrating maturity in accepting changes initiated by the public and recognizing the importance of education in cultivating informed

citizenship. This definition of democracy goes beyond mere electoral processes or the presence of elected representatives, emphasizing instead the broader ideals of inclusive governance, legal accountability, social maturity, and civic education.

Highlighting the challenges of democracy, Gramsci (as cited by Bates, 1975) argues that while parliamentary systems and electoral processes serve as visible manifestations of democracy, the true essence of democratic governance lies in the effective control and influence exerted over cultural institutions and communication channels within civil society. Gramsci's perspective implies that while parliamentary systems and electoral procedures are tangible expressions of democracies, their fundamental essence exists in the ability to effectively control and influence cultural institutions and communication channels within civil society. By managing cultural institutions like the media, educational systems, and various channels of cultural production, dominant groups hold the capacity to mould societal ideologies and beliefs, consequently impacting political results. This view of democracy acknowledges the role of societal dynamics and power arrangements that extend beyond conventional politics. It is crucial to recognize the significance of this perspective in setting majoritarian rule in the present study.

However, features of modern liberal definitions of democracies highlight a balance between contradictory institutions. Francis Fukuyama (2015) opines that while the state possesses the authority to generate and wield power, mechanisms such as the rule of law and democratic accountability serve to restrain this power, ensuring its alignment with the public good. According to Fukuyama, a state lacking such restraining institutions moves toward dictatorship, where power remains unrestricted. Conversely, a polity characterized solely by constraints without corresponding power structures risks descending into anarchy, lacking the capacity for effective governance.

A consensus among some of the researchers on democracy emphasizes the significance of prioritizing social justice within democratic frameworks (Pereira et al., 2015; Riner & Vartkessian, 2018; Yuqiao, 2013). Norway and India both face challenges to better incorporate social justice as a part of their democratic systems. For example, India already has social justice inscribed in its constitution⁵, but the implementation is

⁵ Relevant social justice and empowerment-related articles from the Constitution of India (Government of India, 2014) (<https://socialjustice.gov.in/writereaddata/UploadFile/1.pdf>)

extremely poor. Furthermore, foundational theories posit that justice necessitates the equitable distribution of opportunities and resources, with institutions tasked to safeguard individual freedoms and ensure equal access to and treatment under the law (Riner & Vartkessian, 2018). Moreover, the landscape of democratic governance is continually evolving. A salient illustration of this evolution lies in the adaptation of educational systems to facilitate the integration of newcomers into society. Through the cultivation of inclusive educational practices, accommodating diverse backgrounds and experiences, democracies can mitigate social exclusion and foster cohesion among citizens from varied ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Another challenge is addressing deep-rooted religious dogma. In societies characterized by diverse religious communities, ensuring equal rights and opportunities for individuals of all faiths and ethnicities is required for upholding the principles of inclusivity and equality. Democracies need to navigate the delicate balance between respecting religious freedoms and safeguarding against unwarranted imposition of religious beliefs on public policy and governance.

For democracies to thrive, it is essential to maintain stability while also embracing changes that promote enhanced inclusivity and social justice. This necessitates acknowledging the evolving needs and aspirations of diverse populations and adjusting institutional frameworks and government policies accordingly. Societies can derive considerable advantages when democracies aspire to be both inclusive and dynamic, capable of accommodating societal shifts while consistently upholding core principles of fairness and equality with a focus on equity.

While observing society, we can notice what meets the eye is not always sufficient to figure out the true meaning and intentions behind actions. Numerous forces influence the dynamic social behaviours of people (Zhou et al., 2016), and social interactions, in turn, foster a sense of belonging (Apuke & Omar, 2021). However, if social behaviours become too rigid, it can be challenging to make the necessary alterations and adjustments (Guy, 2023).

When considering avenues for social change, we could view a society through the lens of a social movement oriented towards positive transformation. A society, seen as a social movement with a common goal, needs flexibility to adapt to changing social dynamics, understanding of the nuances of complex social behaviours, ability to nurture

a collective sense of belonging, challenge rigid social structures, and, crucially, champion democratic values underpinned by principles of social justice. With this aspirational perspective, researchers need to consciously pose some fundamental and sometimes unconventional questions that deepen our understanding of how to cultivate a truly democratic society.

For one thing, in the pursuit of promoting social equity, researchers should critically examine power dynamics between majority and minority groups. By scrutinizing these dynamics, researchers can help identify and rectify disparities that hinder equitable participation and opportunity. For example, in order to counteract the exclusion that follows increasingly class-restrictive social spaces, establishing regulations aimed at enhancing common social spaces would be a helpful tool to cultivate a socially sustainable world. These regulations could not only ensure fair access and participation for all members of society but also contribute to the creation of inclusive environments where diverse voices are heard and valued.

A second point to consider is that early modern democracies have often been interpreted through the lens of isolated individuals and their souls. However, Mukherjee (2009) proposes recommendations that advocate for a democracy with a social nature. As stated in his study, from the perspectives of Dewey and Ambedkar, democracy should be inherently linked to social justice, and they advocate for a social conception of democracy, ensuring that principles of justice extend beyond individual interests (Dewey, 2021) to encompass the collective well-being of society with inclusivity.

Before proceeding with the argument of social inclusion, I would argue that it is important to draw some insights from the existing knowledge in the field of sociology for several reasons. First, sociology helps us understand the context through the nuanced understanding of concepts like social structure, inequality, and group dynamics. Second, drawing insights from the empirical data of the social phenomenon allows for an evidence-based study. Additionally, as sociology intersects with various other disciplines, it enriches the understanding of social inclusion. Lastly, as sociology enables critical analysis, it helps us think rigorously about issues taken for granted in a social setup.

With this critical lens, let's begin with the concept of 'hegemony' within a social context. Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony serves as a foundational tool for studying the concept of social inclusion, shedding light on the relationship between hegemony and social justice. 'Hegemony' can be understood as a form of domination, whether it be political, social, or moral and intellectual (Olsaretti, 2016). Bates (1975), in his analysis of Gramsci's theory of hegemony, highlights Gramsci's focus on the notion's significance as the prevailing ideology and cultural influence within society. Gramsci argued that ideas exercise significant power in maintaining societal structures. Intellectual groups, in this regard, craft a cohesive worldview to foster consensus and social unity, thereby normalizing certain viewpoints and making it challenging for civil society to express dissenting opinions. The essay also posits that both civil society and political society encounter power dynamics through different means. As integral members of the social fabric, intellectuals hold considerable influence, often blending to shape structures that serve their interests, potentially resulting in social exclusion/inclusion.

Gramsci identifies intellectuals' role in upholding social order and advocating for social inclusion while emphasizing the connection between power and consensus. He underscores the role of ideas and cultural leadership in fostering social inclusion and justice. The study is driven by this understanding, advocating for social inclusion instilled with principles of social justice, and recognizing the potentially enabling rather than coercive or authoritarian role of intellects in this endeavour.

Building on Gramsci's insights on the role of intellectuals in shaping societal norms and fostering social inclusion, I argue that it is helpful to examine the concept of 'social capital' and its implications for social cohesion. Robert D. Putnam (1995) defines social capital as comprising social connections, norms, and trust, whose beneficiaries, whether individuals, communities, or specific groups, require practical determination. While recognizing the challenges involved in assessing the effects of various forms of social capital, the argument prioritizes those that typically contribute to civic purposes, influencing multiple facets of society, particularly by fostering civic engagement and advancing broader community interests. Alongside advocating for the practical determination of who benefits from social capital and its forms, the author emphasizes the crucial yet intricate task of addressing the effects of these different forms. In

addition to highlighting the benefits of building social capital, I would argue that it is important to consider the societal implications of its decline.

Acquiring an understanding of theories and concepts concerning social capital, religious social networks, and civic engagement is important for effectively addressing complicated societal challenges. These theoretical frameworks offer structured approaches to examine the intricacies of social dynamics, community cohesion, and individual welfare within broader societal frameworks. Additionally, they help expose the mechanisms underlying social capital, the contributions of religious networks to community advancement, and the determinants of civic involvement. Such understanding is important for devising strategies and policies aimed at nurturing social inclusivity, empowering marginalized segments of society, and ensuring fair access to resources and opportunities. Ultimately, these theories serve as helpful instruments for guiding efforts aimed at constructing resilient, inclusive, and thriving communities.

Research shows that there is a relationship between social capital, religious social networks, and civic engagement (Lewis et al., 2013; Field, 2005) and social networks serve as sources of information and provide various benefits (Mowbray & Hall, 2020). To extend these benefits to all individuals and prevent social exclusion and deprivation, it would be necessary to bridge the gap and empower local communities (Field, 2005). Furthermore, identifying tools and measures for assessing individual-level social inclusion or exclusion (OECD, 1998), and addressing social exclusion and its consequences across various domains such as healthcare, policy, and individual well-being, is paramount (O'Donnell et al., 2022).

There is a need for management studies to integrate social aspects (Krumm, 2022) to achieve sustainability with a triple-bottom approach⁶. Additionally, management studies/economy etc exist because people exist and have the responsibility to uphold human dignity. Moreover, by examining the impact of group cognition, group processes, and group performance, with a particular emphasis on cross-understanding and its effects on communication effectiveness and the development of mental models (influencing individual learning), the construct of cross-understanding may offer

⁶ The triple bottom line (TBL) encompasses a sustainability-oriented framework designed to broaden the scope of environmental considerations to include economic and social dimensions. It emphasizes the integration of profit, people, and the planet, to provide a comprehensive and unified assessment of an organization's performance and achievements (Pasamar et al., 2023).

valuable insights to researchers in organizational theory (Huber & Lewis, 2010). Additionally, larger corporations have a responsibility to foster human capital development (Camilleri, 2017). Furthermore, the growing globalization is accompanied by a rising concern for sustainability and corporate supply chains, leading to increased emphasis on understanding procurement logistics in international trade and enhancing information exchange regarding corporate economic, social, and environmental performance (Burritt and Schaltegger, 2014). In addition, as Schwab argues, there is a need to treat social sustainability more than 'philanthropy' and not let it become a business empire, causing further economic and social inequalities rather than ameliorating them (Schwab, 2023).

Overall, to foster greater equity and inclusivity, I would argue societies must study and tackle the interplay among social capital, religious social networks, and civic engagement while integrating social dimensions into management studies for sustainability. Identifying the role of private sector in society, it is required to establish an interconnected partnership between business schools and major corporations, with society in addressing educational gaps and nurturing human capital.

2.2 Social Sustainability

Sustainability, covering environmental, social, and governance factors, highlights the crucial role of social aspects alongside environmental concerns. Recognizing sustainability as the interaction between individuals and their environment emphasizes equal importance for both. Social sustainability, a key component of sustainability, consists of various societal dimensions, including urban and rural contexts, management, policy, and other related topics. Positioned within the British urban context, a study conducted by Dempsey et al. (2011) defines social sustainability rooted in the concept of social capital. According to this definition, social sustainability is not static but dynamic, emphasizing the creation of communities that foster human interaction through an equitable and inclusive approach. Furthermore, by examining social sustainability through the lens of distributive social justice, the definition underscores the complexity inherent in the concept. This definition resonates with the present study, situated within the British context in diverse environments similar to the

diversity of Pune (Krishnamurthy et al., 2016), India (Constitution of India, 1950; Nath et al., 1998), one of the study contexts.

Another definition offered by the research conducted by Missimer (2015) of social sustainability is grounded in a systemic perspective of the social system, outlining five principles aimed at achieving social sustainability. These principles advocate for the removal of structural barriers to individuals' access to (1) health, (2) influence, (3) competence, (4) impartiality, and (5) the ability to assign meaning to their lives. Significantly, addressing the inherent vagueness and complexity associated with the term, social sustainability can be described through three distinct subcategories: development sustainability, bridge sustainability, and maintenance sustainability. However, it is noteworthy that these descriptions often reveal existing contradictions, thereby underscoring the intricate nature involved in defining social sustainability (Vallance et al., 2011).

2.3 Social Inclusion

Inclusive communities play a crucial role in fostering social inclusion by providing environments where diversity is celebrated, barriers are removed, and all individuals have the chance to participate fully in society. Inclusive communities and social inclusion are about having equal opportunities to participate, contribute, and thrive. Inclusive communities are promoted through community building, equality with socio-economic awareness of each member of the community, implicit and explicit expectations, and social rules (Silva, 2021).

The United Nations (2016) defines social inclusion as a deliberate process and as a goal, as indicated below.

“... social inclusion is defined as the process of improving the terms of participation in society for people who are disadvantaged based on age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status, through enhanced opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights.” (United Nations, 2016)

The United Nations report (2016) lays out various aspects of social inclusion/exclusion and acts as a framework for achieving social cohesion.

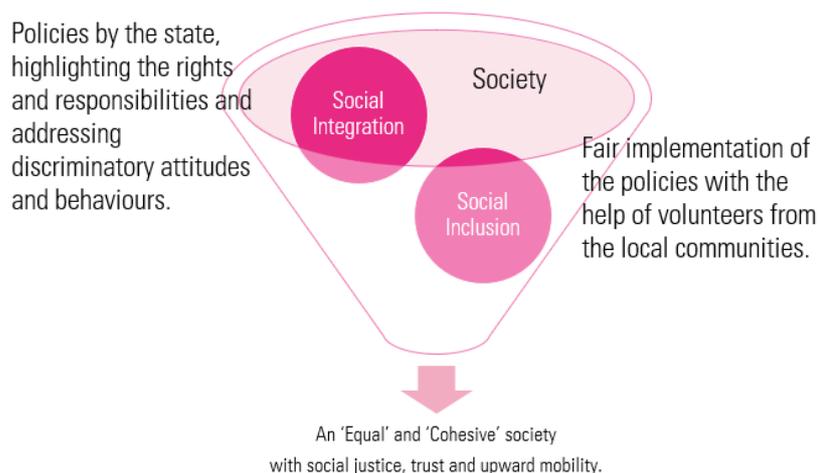


Figure 1 Main elements of Social Cohesion (Source: recreated based on UN report, 2016)

Figure 1 illustrates the role of both the state and society as the main elements in achieving social cohesion. Both have to work in tandem to succeed in social inclusion. What collectively emerges shapes the dynamics and functioning of society, influencing how individuals access, interact, organize, and perceive the world.

An alternative perspective on the concept of inclusion can be gained by examining the notion of 'social exclusion' (United Nations, 2016). Priya and Uteng (2007) explore the convergence of transportation, social exclusion, and resource allocation within households in Norway. The study utilizes the lens of 'development' to explore the dynamics of social exclusion, outlining three key dimensions for conceptualizing this phenomenon: process orientation, participation in decision-making, and the role of space and location. Through these dimensions, the researchers propose three definitions of 'social exclusion', depicting it as a condition wherein individuals encounter barriers preventing full participation in economic, social, political, and cultural spheres. Conversely, social inclusion seeks to facilitate equal opportunities for all individuals to actively engage in societal functions and avail themselves of its resources and rights. Moreover, Priya and Uteng underscore the importance of viewing social exclusion as a developmental process necessitating the formulation of alternative strategies to foster inclusion. Their empirical investigation shows how family factors can significantly impact policymaking, with disregard for these factors potentially impacting demographic shifts and altering social structures. The study further explores the concept of 'Pareto efficiency' in resource allocation within non-Western immigrant households and its

potential implications for integration processes. The study underscores the potential conflict between efficiency-driven approaches and the fundamental principles of social integration and inclusion. In essence, with the help of the transport system as an example, the research offers significant insights into the intricate factors of social exclusion, and household dynamics within the Norwegian context.

Highlighting the anti-politics of inclusion, the research article by María Hernández-Carretero (2023) examines the dynamics of Norwegian citizens' engagement with the newcomers. It talks about how individualized acts of kindness and charity towards newcomers overlooked the political opinion of the immigrants, masking underlying political tensions and power dynamics. The author uses the depoliticization 'from below' to put forth the main argument. To understand the phenomenon in a better way, the author identifies the volunteers' wish to help as a depoliticization 'from below'. The author posits that within the context of integration and inclusion, there exists harmony regarding the important role of integration and inclusion. This belief among Norwegians stems from the aspiration for social cohesion, aiming to ease inequalities among individuals. The principal strategy for fostering inclusion relates to native perceptions, emphasizing the reduction of disparities to cultivate social unity. Furthermore, the historical interaction between Norwegian civil society and governmental bodies has been characterized by mutual collaboration rather than confrontation. This historical backdrop has shaped the approach to inclusion, prioritizing cooperation among stakeholders and institutions over contention. The author recognizes a connection between humanitarian efforts towards newcomers promoting inclusion within the local community of the helpers themselves. By considering Ferguson's (1994) and Ticktin's (2011) perspectives, it becomes apparent that these activities may be interpreted as symbolizing a concept termed 'anti-politics'. The study captures how the Norwegian volunteers displayed acts of compassion and humanitarian reason by resonating with the struggles of the newcomers. Additionally, it shows the process of integrating the newcomers by the state along with voluntary initiatives by the locals working hand-in-hand with the state. Formal spaces like the hiking group, homework help and language cafes started emerging as public initiatives as part of volunteering. While identifying the causes of perpetuated distinctions between the residents and newcomers, the author argues that the state reinforces the

policies of inclusion/integration. These policies resonate with the set hierarchies by the state, naively encouraging bureaucratic state authority.

Furthermore, the author identifies some themes revealed from the interaction with the volunteers ranging in age: First, the volunteers associated their activities with efforts towards 'integration' or 'inclusion'. Second, they view the field of integration as distinct from politics, associating politics with government and party affairs. They make a distinction between immigration policies and integration practices, focusing on how newcomers are incorporated into Norwegian society rather than on who should be allowed to enter. Some volunteers see their engagement as occurring at a lower, more immediate level compared to politics, which they perceive as distant. Third, they consider integration as a simpler and consensus-driven domain compared to the complex and contentious nature of immigration politics. They believe that helping newcomers settle benefits everyone and transcends political differences. This perspective aligns with a humanitarian logic that portrays volunteering with newcomers as kindness and compassion driven by humanism rather than political or religious ideology. In this narrative, newcomers, especially the refugee children, are represented as innocent and unaware of politics, leading to widespread agreement on the necessity of helping them. The research articulates the need for integrating the newcomers. There is a strong sense of duty and responsibility among the Norwegian volunteers.

On the other hand, the study shows that some of the social inclusion policies may lead to social exclusion. Integration policies tend to be applied selectively. Some immigrants are mandated to integrate, while white individuals are often exempt from such requirements, showing a perception that certain groups do not inherently belong and must conform to the dominant culture to be accepted. This shows a widespread view of 'proper citizenship' tied to cultural integration. In Norway, integration is viewed as a political welfare project with moral and cultural values. This perspective often leads to the perception that migrants from certain regions or backgrounds do not naturally belong in society, prompting extensive efforts to resocialize them for integration into the Norwegian labour market and society (Friberg & Midtbøen, 2018). Second, similar to the concept of assimilation, integration implies that immigrants are expected to adhere to the norms and values of the dominant group in society (Bates, 1975), in order to be regarded as legitimate or deserving members of society.

Overall, the study reflected the relationship between the state and civil society, historically rooted in Norwegian values. The emergence of informal community organizations such as 'Jæløya Platform⁷' and 'Dugnad⁸' in the integration work highlighted the state's role as an ally respecting citizen's autonomy.

2.4 Social Justice

The Indian state is built on the foundations of an unequal society. While the Constitution abolished untouchability, untouchability has merely changed form in the past 100 years, especially after independence. Caste still remains the overarching determiner of life chances, predicting the kind of school you will go to and how long you will live (survey shows Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe ⁹women and men die earlier than people of other castes (Kumari & Mohanty, 2020)). So Indian democracy and social justice cannot be understood without considering caste. Caste as a system/institution has also evolved with time, so it is necessary to look at that change (Bapuji et al., 2023). In the Indian context, caste is 'the hegemony' (Natrajan, 2022; Rao, 2015; Chandrashekar, 2023; Kureel, 2021; Daftary, 2024).

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (Anand & Vellanki, 2015), a Dalit by birth, considered a champion of social justice, called India's democracy a communal majority. He envisions an India without the caste system and proposes 'annihilation of caste' if India wanted to be an inclusive democracy (Debnath, 2022). However, in my opinion, it may not be realistic to achieve it but work towards debrahmanising India.

According to Dr. Ashna Singh (personal communication, 2024), a professor of law at NLS, Bangalore, "the main obstacle to civil liberty in India lies not within the state, but within society" (Singh, personal communication, 2024). Therefore, ensuring equal access entails identifying and addressing the various layers and barriers that hinder

⁷ A voluntary organization, established essential policy priorities and principles to direct the coalition's agenda, encompassing critical areas like climate and environmental policies, immigration, and welfare reforms (Hernández-Carretero, 2023).

⁸ A collective attempt within Norwegian culture, involving voluntary community work undertaken by members of a community, organization, or group on tasks such as cleaning, maintenance, gardening, or other activities aimed at enhancing shared spaces and achieving mutual objectives (Hernández-Carretero, 2023).

⁹ Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) are socially disadvantaged groups recognized by the Indian Constitution.

certain groups from having equitable access to opportunities and resources. For Dr. Singh, this involves challenging societal perceptions about caste and caste patriarchy.

3 Methodology

The study uses an exploratory qualitative investigation employing a post-positivist approach. It is guided by a social constructivist ontological perspective, aiming to probe into the complexities of achieving social inclusion rather than hypothesis testing. Epistemologically, the study embraces an interpretative approach. Methodologically, qualitative descriptive semi-structured interviews are employed to elucidate the phenomenon under investigation as it allows the researcher flexibility and come up with follow-up questions relevant to the topic if required (Kallio et al., 2016). To keep the study open to capture data from the field by delving into social complexities, the study has used an inductive approach under qualitative methods (O'Leary, 2021). Ethical guidelines outlined by The National Research Ethics Committee (NREC) are adhered to throughout the study's implementation.

3.1 Grounded Theory

I argue that the study demonstrates a strong alignment with the key components of grounded theory as its methodological framework. It draws insights from Bryant and Charmaz (2007) and Hood's (2007) book chapter '*Orthodoxy vs. Power: The Defining Traits of Grounded Theory*'.

First, the study attempts to understand the processes by investigating challenges in Norway and India through an inductive approach. Through descriptive interviews, I identified codes and themes inherent in the data, allowing theories to emerge organically (Saldaña, 2021; Hood, 2007). This approach facilitates a deeper understanding of participants' lived experiences and perspectives.

Second, grounded theory facilitated iterative processes of data collection, analysis, and study design.

Third, purposeful theoretical sampling was employed, selecting participants based on their potential to contribute to emerging theories. This allowed for refinement and expansion of initial concepts, enriching the understanding of social inclusion/exclusion phenomena. Additionally, the study developed the theory inductively from data rather than tested by data, although the developing theory is continuously refined and checked by data.

Last, through coding, I could uncover novel insights about communities. This process of theory development (Charmaz, 2015) provided a framework for abstraction, enabling the development of theories applicable to broader social contexts. Furthermore, the data is presented in an analytical and categorized manner rather than just descriptive (see Figures 4 & 5).

3.2 Method

The study employed the semi-structured interview technique as a fundamental tool, framing descriptive questions to address the research inquiries. Highlighting the significance of interviewing as a unique form of social interaction, it provided a platform for face-to-face communication rich in intrinsic rewards for participant engagement (Lune & Berg, 2017, p. 66).

The primary objective of the interviews was to gather unique insights relevant to addressing the research questions. Qualitative descriptive interviewing was the most suitable method for acquiring data to effectively address the research questions under enquiry in this study. Furthermore, acknowledging interviewing as a technical skill, the study maintained a deliberate focus on conducting research interviews distinct from journalistic interviews (Lune & Berg, 2017, p. 66). This approach fostered natural and immersive conversations, encouraging a joint process of learning about the topic while engaging with the participants.

Including a 'dramaturgy' style, although structured questions were employed, I adopted improvisational techniques to obtain additional information (Lune & Berg, 2017, p. 66). Furthermore, the selection of respondents was guided by the analysis based on my personal interactions with them, ensuring individuals with an inclination to provide honest responses and possess an understanding of the phenomenon.

A preliminary interview was conducted to assess and refine the interview questions, primarily to uphold ethical standards of treating participants with respect and dignity. During the interview, which was conducted in Hindi language, I encountered several challenges, prompting adjustments to better align the questions with the main topic. Additionally, the data obtained from this pilot interview did not sufficiently address my research inquiries, making it necessary for me to employ the spiraling research approach (Lune & Berg, 2017, p. 23). Furthermore, it became evident that the interview

context and the characteristics of the interviewees required careful consideration to ensure that questions were posed in a respectful manner that did not cause discomfort. Given the research's focus on social inclusion/exclusion, it was crucial to ensure that participants did not feel marginalized or overlooked.

Initially, the research aimed to investigate the exclusion of the Muslim community in India, particularly considering recent political developments globally. However, an extensive literature review revealed broader societal aspects that deserved attention. Influenced by personal experiences of exclusion, particularly in accessing certain public spaces while residing in Bangalore, India, I decided to shift the focus of the study to examine social inclusion and exclusion more broadly. Additionally, the global initiative outlined by the United Nations (United Nations, 2016) to promote social inclusivity further motivated the shift in this direction.

The selection of Pune as the context for this study is primarily motivated by the desire to draw insights from my local environment and compare them with the Norwegian context (Royster, 1996). The aim is to emphasize the importance of studying the complexities of a diverse culture such as that of India. Additionally, I opted to participate in an exchange program to India facilitated by the Social Justice and Culture: Sustainable Social Welfare in Neoliberal Times (SOJUCU) (2021) project and the Sustainability Management group at USN. This decision stemmed from my interest in gaining firsthand experiences and insights to compare with the community in Norway. Given the increasing collaborations between Norway and India across various sectors (NICCI, 2024), I believe that this study will shed light on the Indian context and contribute to fostering greater understanding between the two countries.

3.3 The Sample

In my study, I aim to record social inclusion/exclusion phenomena. I intend to study the challenges of building an inclusive community. It involves ensuring that individuals of any socioeconomic background can freely access public and community spaces like parks, playgrounds, roads, public libraries, and other public places. These spaces should encourage people to come together, engage in discussions, play, take strolls, or organize informal community events with unrestricted movement and access.

To achieve this goal, I collected data from individuals actively involved in such events. The study employed purposeful sampling with an understanding of specific phenomena from the surrounding communities, enabling a deeper understanding of various characters and people within the study contexts. As a starting point in the Indian context, I have interacted with one individual experienced in coordinating such gatherings (Participant 1). Originating from Pune, he fulfils the role of a medical doctor at an executive level. The second participant who worked as a housekeeping staff, was from an underprivileged background and was born and brought up in the 'Gokhlenagar' slum area. Here, 'underprivileged' refers to anyone holding a 'Below Poverty Line' card issued by the government of India. I seek to understand both the perspectives of individuals actively involved in organizing such events and those from underprivileged backgrounds who may face additional barriers to participation. I have consciously depoliticised engagement with the slum dwellers and remained objective to the study.

In the Norwegian context, data collection was conducted to facilitate comparative analysis with data obtained from Pune, India. Participant 3, residing in Bø for over two decades, has built a successful business which is frequented by immigrants. Participant 4, a student from a developing economy, has resided in the town for four years. Interviews with Participants 1, 3, and 4 were conducted in English and 2 in Marathi for ease of communication.

3.4 Interview Structure and Implementation

To ensure an understanding of the topic under investigation, interviews were conducted within the respective contexts of the interviewees. The interview questions are structured to directly address the research questions, with prior consent obtained through the signing of a consent form approved by SIKT (2024). In Pune, the initial interview with Participant 1 was conducted in English, reflecting the participant's language preference. However, recognizing the importance of linguistic comfort, the subsequent interview with Participant 2 was conducted in Marathi, the local language of Pune. This was done to facilitate a deeper level of engagement and understanding, mitigating the risk of information loss inherent in interactions conducted in a secondary language (Welch & Piekkari, 2006).

Due to my limited proficiency in Marathi, I employed the assistance of Ms. Yadnya Revankar, an MA Sociology student from the Savitribai Phule Pune University (SPPU), in collaboration with Prof. Shruti Tambe, head of the sociology department. Together, we ensured the translation of both the consent forms and interview guide into Marathi, thereby facilitating effective communication and understanding.

In Bø, interviews primarily utilized English, considering the linguistic preferences of both the participants.

3.4.1 Interview Guide

The interview guide was designed to provide participants with background information about the topic and establish the study context in clear and accessible language. A deliberate effort was made to avoid academic jargon, ensuring that participants could relate to the study topic and express their insights freely. Additionally, the guide included all interview questions, offering participants an overview of the topics to be discussed. This allowed them to make an informed decision about their participation in the study—moreover, this approach aligned with ethical considerations outlined by SIKT and NREC. Upon obtaining participant approval, all the participants signed a consent form before the commencement of the interview.

Initial questions were asked to get information about their ethnicity and surroundings followed by inquiries related to research questions (see Appendix 1 for complete information). Broadly, the interview questions were as follows:

Interview Questions:

Introductory questions:

- Where they belong, ethnicity, profession, and surroundings.

Main theme questions:

RQ 1:

- Challenges faced during accessing community spaces, the influence of socio-economic factors, and changes over time.

RQ 2:

- Opinions, suggestions on policies or regulations, societal attitudes towards inclusivity in community spaces, social trends, govt.'s roles.

3.4.2 Interview Implementation

During the pilot interview, questions were directed towards a woman residing in one of the villages in Pune, aged approximately between 26 to 28 years old and a parent to a 3-year-old daughter. The interview occurred within her neighbourhood, conducted in a language mutually understood by both the interviewer and the participant. Although the conversation started with formal questions, soon the interview went beyond an exchange of words and sentences (Lune & Berg, 2017, p. 66). Questions were framed with a blend of directness and consideration, with empathy and respect. Sensing the participant's emotional response at certain junctures, I paused the interrogation to provide comfort, which proved to be profoundly impactful, producing unexpected shifts in the interview's emotional tone. This unforeseen encounter emphasized my need for heightened awareness regarding participants' emotional states, prompting adjustments in questioning techniques to uphold their emotional well-being.

The first participant interview occurred in Pune in his office premises, conveniently scheduled at the commencement of the workday to minimize disruption to his professional obligations. Exhibiting a grasp of the research topic, the participant demonstrated an ability to articulate his thoughts coherently. Showing clarity in his understanding, Participant 1 proactively sought clarification on topics or concepts deemed ambiguous. Before consenting to the interview, the participant devoted approximately 15 minutes to perusing the interview guide, familiarizing himself with the interview questions. During the interview, the participant took long silent pauses before answering to some of the questions.

Conversely, the interview with the second participant occurred at his workplace post-office hours, facilitated within a secure and quiet setting with the necessary permission. Hailing from an economically disadvantaged background and a resident of a slum in Gokhlenagar (similar to Lakshminagar slum as seen in Appendix 2), the participant, a 23-year-old, born and raised in the slum, by a single mother alongside three siblings. Employed as a housekeeping staff at a central Pune hotel, the participant exhibited limited awareness about his rights, displaying satisfaction with governmental provisions. For the interaction, both the interview guide and questionnaire were

translated into Marathi by Ms. Yadnya Revankar. The participant was given ample of time to review and grant consent.

The third and the fourth participants were from Bø, Norway. They were selected based on convenient sampling but with immigrant background. Possessing a nuanced understanding of the research topic, they displayed a willingness to contribute their insights, displaying enthusiasm similar to the first participant. Drawing upon their immigrant experience in Norway, both the participants gave information from firsthand experiences and perspectives, adding value to the study.

3.5 Context Description

In this study, the scope of analysis and the definition of community pertain to two contrasting contexts differing at various levels. Bø, Norway and Pune, India are the regions of analysis for this study.

3.5.1 Bø, Norway

Bø, located in Midt-Telemark, Telemark County, Norway (since January 2024). The regional municipality arrangement in Telemark often undergoes administrative changes for convenience. Since 2020, Bø has undergone several administrative adjustments, leading to its merger with Gvarv to form Midt-Telemark Municipality. This municipality, encompassing Bø, Gvarv, and Sauherad has a total population of 10,539 residents (Mæhlum, 2024), with Bø alone accounting for 6,630 (2019) (Lundbo et al., 2024) inhabitants. It covers a land area of 487 km² and has a highest mountain peak, Jøronnatten on Lifjell, at 1275 meters above sea level, bordering Notodden and Seljord municipalities.

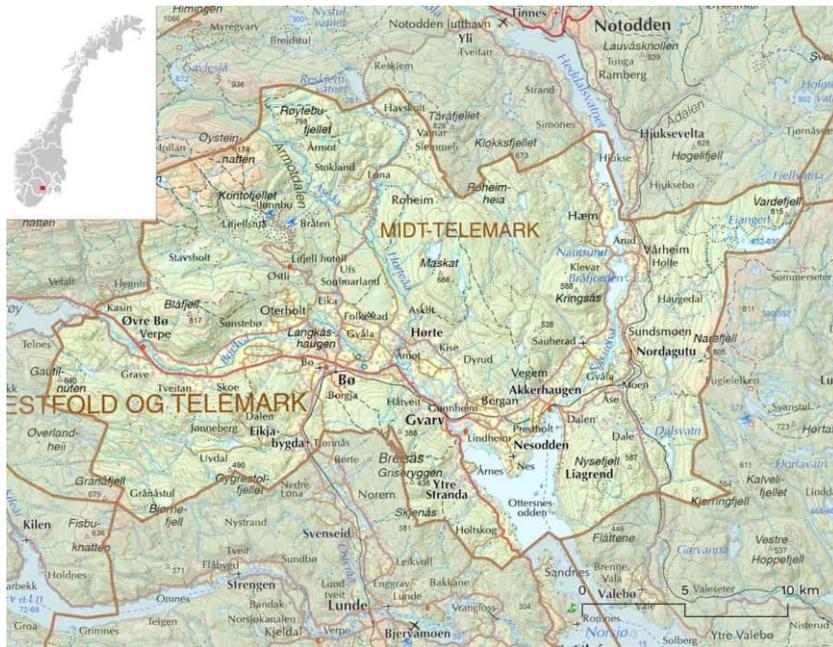


Figure 2 Map of Bø (Source: Mæhlum, 2024)

Furthermore, Bø is recognized as the best cultural municipality in Norway (Bø, 2022) and is renowned for its agricultural, forestry, tourism, and educational sectors. With only 299 immigrants recorded by SSB (2024) in Bø and 1,348 in Midt-Telemark (Midt-Telemark, 2024), Bø does not reflect much of a diverse and vibrant community. The town claims a strong association to Norwegian cultural tradition in music and artisanship, and it serves as a university town, hosting the University of Southeast Norway with many international students. Additionally, Telemarkforskning in Bø is a research institute with national expertise in cultural research, nature- and culture-based innovation, municipal economy and municipal structure, regional development, and health and welfare research.

Also, talking about the worship spaces, Bø features five churches catering to individuals of the Christian faith. However, there are no facilities or community halls available for individuals from diverse religious backgrounds to congregate or pray.

3.5.2 Pune, India

The Pune city, situated in the Maharashtra state of India (Mundhe, 2019), is governed by the Municipal Corporation and falls under the Pune Metropolitan Region. It covers a land area of 1,110 km² According to the World Population Review (Pune

Population, 2024)¹⁰, the estimated population of Pune City in 2024 is around 7,000,000 with an average literacy rate of 86%, and the child sex ratio is 883 females per 1000 males. In Pune city, there are a total of 564 slums, of which 353 are officially recognized by the government, while 211 remain unrecognized¹¹. Hinduism is the predominant religion in Pune city with other religions such as Islam, Christianity, Jainism, Sikhism, and Buddhism. There is a small fraction of the population identified as 'Other Religion' or states 'No Particular Religion'. The Pune metropolitan area encompasses Dehu, Dehu Road, Kirkee, Pimpri and Chinchwad, Pune, and Pune.

Known as the 'Queen of the Deccan', Pune is considered the cultural hub of the Maratha community. Its significance dates back to the 17th century. Despite brief periods of Mughal control, Pune reclaimed its status as the official Maratha capital in 1714, enduring until its conquest by the British in 1817. Today, Pune stands as a popular tourist destination, known for its pleasant climate, historical landmarks, religious sites, museums, parks, educational institutions, and vibrant cultural attractions (Pune, 2024). In Pune, I noticed that there are diverse places of worship available to people of various religious beliefs, including Hindu temples, Muslim mosques, churches, and Gurudwaras (Sikh temples). Additionally, the city also has many community led Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) addressing various social issues such as children's education (Khelghar¹²), health (SATHI¹³), youth development program in slums (YARDI CSR¹⁴), water-related (Jivit Nadi¹⁵), heritage-related (INTACH¹⁶) and interfaith harmony building (SALOKHA).

¹⁰ Pune Population (2024). Retrieved April 26, 2024, from <https://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities/pune-population>.

¹¹ Slums In Pune. Retrieved April 26, 2024, from <https://www.pmc.gov.in/en/total-slums>

¹² Educational initiative for Slum children by Palakniti Pariwar NGO.

¹³ An NGO with a right-based approach partners with civil society organisations to work on health rights issues (<https://sathicehat.org/>).

¹⁴ <https://www.yardi.com/blog/giving/opportunity-equity/28904.html>

¹⁵ <https://www.jeevitnadi.org/>

¹⁶ <https://intachpune.org/>

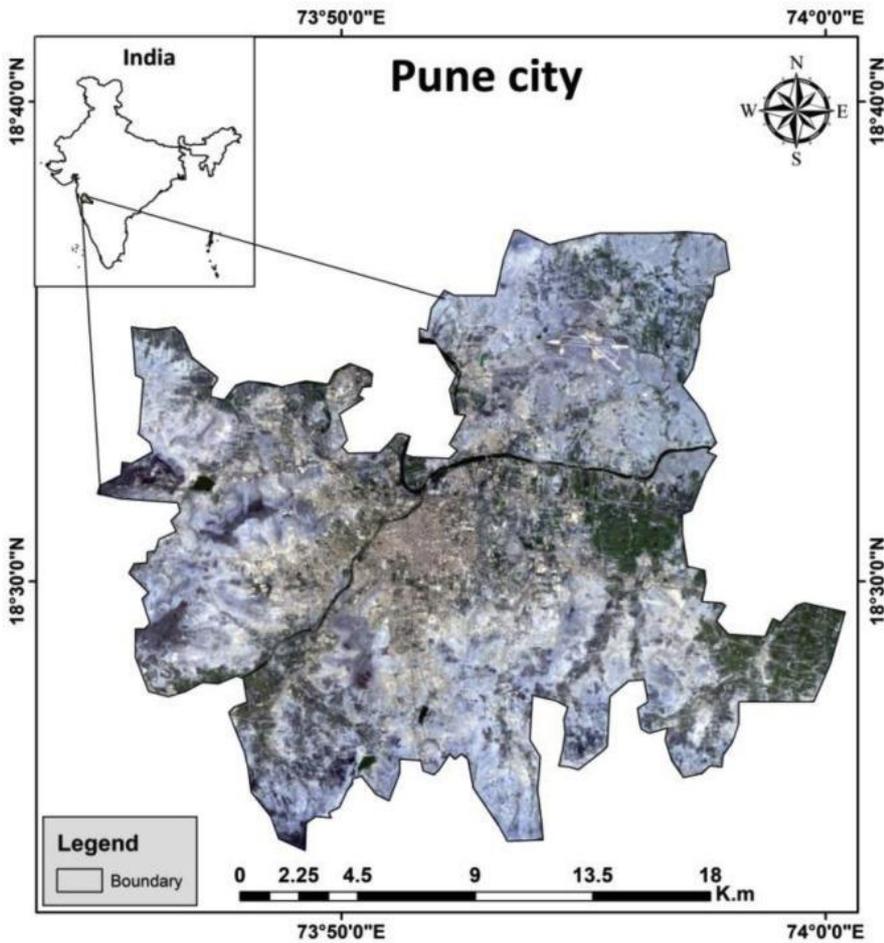


Figure 3 Map of Pune city (Source: Gohain et al., 2021)

To comprehensively address the study topic and gather relevant information, the original strategy was to engage with residents of urban slums in Pune (Mundhe, 2019). This approach aimed to focus specifically on inhabitants of unrecognized slums, who may not be documented in official city records. However, due to the logistical challenges and time constraints, I had to rely on other participants from the same city. The main challenge here was more due to procedures, making it difficult to ethically collect data. However, for a better understanding of the context problems and a chance to represent the migrants in Pune, I have described the two-prominent slum areas. The Sambhanagar (recognised) and Devi Aai (unrecognised) slums (see Appendix 3).

3.6 Ethical Considerations

During the interviews, I adhered to the ethical considerations of The National Research Ethics Committee (NREC), prioritizing participants' personal integrity, safety, and well-being. Additionally, consent was a prerequisite from all participants, ensuring

they willingness and involvement, particularly those from disadvantaged or vulnerable groups. Data was analysed and interpreted with a focus on maintaining anonymity and confidentiality. Furthermore, special care is taken by anonymising to protect vulnerable populations, such as Dalits and religious minorities. Post the study, the results will be shared with all the participants, stakeholders, providing comprehensive information on how to interact with the data after dissemination. Finally, the interview guide was developed to contribute to the credibility, confirmability, and dependability of the study.

3.6.1 Challenges

Addressing ethical considerations in this research posed several challenges, including language barriers that hindered direct and effective communication between the researcher and the participant. It limited the possibility of further questioning based on the answers given by the participant. Furthermore, gaining access to slum areas, where valuable data could have been obtained, proved challenging due to various factors such as security concerns and community distrust. Additionally, procedural requirements by institutions like SPPU regarding consent processes complicated the data collection efforts, requiring careful navigation to ensure compliance with ethical standards. The availability of interviewees presented a significant challenge, as scheduling interviews with participants due to work or other commitments delayed data collection efforts and impacted research timelines. However, I could overcome these challenges to some extent by thorough planning and determination to address ethical considerations while conducting the research.

3.7 Data Analysis

The study employed thematic analysis (TA) as a structured five-phase approach outlined by Andrea J. Bingham (2023). TA served as a methodological tool to identify recurring themes derived from codes developed inductively. The five stages comprised organizing the data in Phase 1, followed by sorting data into relevant topical categories in Phase 2. Phase 3 involved open/initial coding, while Phase 4 focused on identifying patterns, themes, and findings. Finally, in the last phase, the study expanded on its findings (Bingham, 2023).

Although a small study, this qualitative research has produced a lot of data (Bingham, 2023). Interviews were meticulously transcribed and organized to systematically address the research questions (Lune & Berg, 2017, p. 90), with Autotekst (2024) employed for transcription purposes. During the organization of the transcribed data, minor grammatical and sentence adjustments were made to preserve the original meaning, supplemented by additional notes in parentheses as necessary. Deductive strategies were implemented in the initial phase to maintain alignment with the research questions, with data categorized using attribute coding techniques (Bingham, 2023) to establish a coding scheme for both Norway and India. Transcriptions were subsequently imported into NVivo software. They were named 'Norway' and 'India'. This was done to facilitate the categorization of naturally emerging codes unique to each context and classify them into thematic patterns and to trace their respective sources, thereby enhancing the confirmability of the study's findings (Lune & Berg, 2017, p. 90). Memoing was carried out in the form of taking notes throughout the data collection to capture the thoughts, insights, and interpretations of the data (Bingham, 2023; Saldaña, 2021).

During phase 2 of the study, codes were generated in alignment with the research questions and objectives. Before code identification, a thorough review of the data was conducted, highlighting significant events, passages, and quotes (Bingham, 2023). Descriptive codes were then assigned to capture broader categories relevant to the research inquiries. Drawing from existing literature and previous studies, additional support was sought to set the overarching categories (Bingham, 2023). Subsequently, the data was organized based on these pertinent categories, facilitating analysis in subsequent phases. Given the significance of relevance in this stage, correct code identification was essential. Utilizing memoing strategies, I maintained detailed notes to track important points for further analysis (Bingham, 2023). These memos served as a reference for comparing ideas during analysis. To enhance the trustworthiness and rigour of the research, a coding guide was employed to systematically track code development, thereby establishing an audit trail.

In the third phase, an inductive approach was employed through open coding (Saldaña, 2021) to scrutinize the data. This involves revisiting the data within the framework of the first-order codes established in the initial phases. The objective is to

compare newly analyzed data with previously examined data to ascertain the emergence of new codes (Bingham, 2023). Simultaneously, memoing aided in linking the codes back to the research questions, thereby capturing emerging sub-questions about socio-economic factors incorporated into the study.

Subsequently, the fourth phase facilitates the identification and development of findings through an inductive process. Data coded during the third phase was systematically reviewed to determine underlying patterns and themes. Patterns were recognized by merging codes and initiating the process of theme identification. In this study, themes were set with brief descriptions, which were subsequently condensed into findings (Bingham, 2023). The final patterns and themes in this study emerged after extensive rearrangement and synthesis of various factors and themes.

Finally, the last phase entails the discussion of findings based on the identified themes. Literature codes, derived from concepts utilized in the study, are utilized to contextualize the findings. Memoing during this phase aided in interpreting the significance of the findings, their relevance within the broader context, and their implications for existing literature. Additionally, it shed light on participants' perspectives, contextual interpretations, and their alignment with the broader literature base, offering insights into potential areas for further research and learning (Bingham, 2023).

3.8 Coding

In this section, the coding process is explained along with the steps followed. The coding was conducted in phases according to the phases outlined in the previous section titled 'From Data Management to Actionable Findings: A Five-Phase Process of Qualitative Data Analysis' (Bingham, 2023). The coding approach encompassed both inductive and deductive methods to align with the research questions and objectives.

The interviews were recorded using both my mobile recorder and laptop to ensure backup in case of file loss. Subsequently, the files were uploaded to Google Drive and transcribed using the Autotekst tool. The transcribed text was then carefully reviewed for accuracy and factual correctness. Any grammatical errors or filler words were edited to enhance clarity. Additionally, identifiable personal information such as names,

designations, and specific locations were removed to maintain anonymity and adhere to ethical standards.

3.9 Role Of AI During The Study

The utilization of AI is inevitable in research efforts these days. In this study, AI was employed in various aspects, including conducting topic-related research through search engines or literature databases. Furthermore, the recent integration of SIKT KI-chat as a tool has significantly influenced the research process. Throughout this study, AI tools were predominantly utilized for language support, idea generation, and accessing literature pertinent to the research questions through search engines. During the coding process, it was used to draw suggestions on synthesizing the codes and themes. All these were driven by ethical considerations and the commitment to maintaining study quality.

3.10 Reflexivity

Reflexivity plays a crucial role in qualitative research, as it involves a dynamic interplay between subjectivity and objectivity (Bourdieu, 1990). Throughout my study, my interpretation of the data was inevitably influenced by my personal experiences and background. However, I maintained objectivity by rigorously applying coding and thematic analysis techniques. As stated in Bourdieu's (1990) concept of habitus on the influence of deeply ingrained dispositions, my interpretations could have been influenced as well. Situating myself within the research field, I brought various perspectives shaped by my identity as a woman from an Indian minority. Growing up in a large family, I was deeply influenced by my grandfather's active leadership in the freedom fight against British rule in India (Sayeed, 2018). Additionally, my previous master's degree in mass communication from Bangalore University, has further enriched my understanding and insights. Moreover, I attribute social responsibility to vulnerability, aligning with Bourdieu's notion of capital, as it enriches our social fabric and promotes equity. However, I acknowledge the potential for harm in research, including emotional distress and symbolic violence in the following four types: i) the risk of feeling bad about the situation they're in; ii) vulnerability due to information they have disclosed; iii) feeling of exclusion and pain while narrating instances; iv) harm from

'symbolic violence' due to power relations between researcher and the researched. To mitigate these risks, I employed generic skills such as active listening and empathy, ensuring participants' comfort and well-being. Additionally, a claim of social proximity and symmetry as a researcher enhanced the study through a process of shared objectification and empowerment talk. Furthermore, engaging a second coder could offer diverse perspectives and enhance the study's robustness. Ultimately, reflexivity enabled me to navigate the complexities of qualitative research, enriching the study's depth and validity.

4 Results

In this chapter, I will present the data findings. First, I will start with a brief overview of each context based on my observations, followed by insights from the interviews. The data is organized into themes based on their respective codes with the analysis. Each theme is briefly described, acknowledging the possibility of code overlap. Observations for each theme are drawn from the data and correlated with the concepts relevant to this study.

4.1 Background Insights: Bø, Norway and Pune, India

Bø, Norway

Norway, known for its cultural richness, the reserved nature of its populace is a notable aspect, particularly evident in rural settings like Bø. Demographically, Bø has an older population, yet it also boasts a significant number of youngsters due to its status as a university town. Despite its small size, Bø provides all essential amenities for its residents (see Bø in Appendix 4). While most people are comfortable conversing in English, establishing a genuine connection often requires proficiency in Norwegian. Social media platforms host numerous groups where individuals can donate, sell, or buy second-hand items, with the iconic 'Det Gule Hus'¹⁷ serving as a popular second-hand store offering a range of goods at reasonable prices. Demand for shelf space at Gule Hus is high, with waiting periods of up to three months reported by some residents, indicating its consistent popularity. From personal observations, Bø remains lively year-round, with activities organized by youth-run organizations like 'Spire Bø'¹⁸, including repair cafes, cycle repair events, bird watching, and more, all offered free of charge. Additionally, the youth-run NGO 'Bua'¹⁹ provides free lending of sports equipment, addressing the issue of expensive gear. The town itself is characterized by cleanliness, abundant greenery, and a sense of safety, with residents known for their politeness, helpfulness, and humility. The municipality actively seeks ways to enhance safety, addressing issues such as conflicts between youth and other community members, as

¹⁷ <https://detgulehus.no/>

¹⁸ <https://aktivimidttelemark.no/organisasjoner/spire-bo>

¹⁹ <https://www.bua.no/bua-nettverket>

depicted in the series 'Rådebank'²⁰, shot in Bø. While accessing services may involve a somewhat cumbersome process, the availability of facilities is widely appreciated. However, employment opportunities often require proficiency in Norwegian, posing challenges for international students, particularly those from non-EU countries who face additional barriers in the job market. The societal adherence to policies is evident, exemplified by the nation's compassionate response to the Ukrainian war refugees, although with a critique of prioritizing temporary relief over diplomatic intervention. This issue holds particular resonance for me as a researcher, having engaged with immigrant individuals, especially students from nations like Iran, Africa, and Bangladesh, who seek policy flexibility from UDI to harness their skills and contribute to Norway's economy. Here, I argue Norway needs a holistic approach, including workforce development initiatives, lifelong learning programs, language programs, and strategic immigration policies aimed at attracting and retaining talent to sustain economic growth and prosperity in the long term. The high cost of living, including groceries and transportation, poses a significant obstacle to mobility in Norway's expansive and cold landscape. Furthermore, the expense associated with socializing with Norwegians, whose interests revolve around activities such as skiing, fishing, and sauna bathing, underscores the financial challenges inherent in forging connections in this cultural setting. Although hiking and fishing offer appealing recreational options, these often remain limited within closed community circles, further combined by the requisite licensing and fees associated with fishing activities.

Pune, India

Based on my observations in Pune, it is apparent that India's cultural landscape is intricate, characterized by numerous class and caste distinctions that contribute to its complexity. In my view, diversity manifests in various dimensions, including cultural, linguistic, religious, regional, geographical, racial, caste, and economic factors. The prevalence of contradictions in India is particularly striking, as the emphasis on differences often hides the common threads that could unite individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds with distinct values and social relations.

Social interactions in India are multi-layered and intricate, reflecting the country's vibrant diversity. Identifying and associating observations with a specific class, caste, or

²⁰ <https://tv.nrk.no/serie/raadebank/sesong/1>

community is challenging due to the country's diverse societal fabric. My observations and insights are presented in two distinct areas: social relations and gender dynamics. Values surrounding social relations:

Based on my observations, social interactions predominantly occur within homogeneous social groups, making it difficult for individuals to engage in casual or friendly cross-class interactions. For instance, during one observation, nomadic girls selling modest goods were observed gazing at students from FC College²¹ dressed in fancy Indian sarees. Despite their approximate age similarity, the contrasting lifestyles of the two groups were evident. The nomadic girls, engaged in income-generating activities wearing torn dirty clothes, roamed the streets, while the students, benefiting from educational opportunities, engaged in socialization unrelated to livelihood. This scenario highlights how socioeconomic status influences social interactions, indicating that individuals from different economic strata may experience distinct forms of engagement.

Moreover, while individuals from diverse religious backgrounds participate in various business and social activities together, social relations often gravitate towards individuals of the same socioeconomic class. Pune, known for its educational and industrial hubs, attracts a diverse population from across India and beyond. Social interactions are prevalent in public spaces, primarily within formal contexts. Indian cultural values, such as respect for elders and hard work, shape local social dynamics. Genuine distinctions between social groups become more pronounced during religion-based celebrations compared to national festivals. Further examination is required to uncover the underlying values prevalent in a conservative society like Pune.

Gender relations:

India's population is almost evenly split between men and women, suggesting equal participation. However, the ground reality paints a different picture. My observations in Pune city over two months reveal distinct patterns among different segments of the population: students, working professionals, and individuals in other occupations such as drivers, cleaners, and salespersons.

In the student community, where gender parity is evident, students are often seen gathering in the evenings till late nights. Working professionals present a contrasting

²¹ Fergusson College is an autonomous public-private college (<https://www.fergusson.edu/>)

scenario, with more men visible in and around workplaces during lunch and tea breaks. The presence of women is comparatively lower in such gatherings. It would be insightful for management studies to explore the topics discussed during these informal meetings and their potential implications for workplace dynamics.

Additionally, jobs in fields such as cleaning, driving, and roadside eateries are predominantly occupied by men (see Appendix 5) while sales positions in malls feature a mix of genders, albeit with fewer women. Despite women's presence in the workforce, they are less visible outdoors during working hours. Further investigation is warranted to understand why women may be hesitant to join their male counterparts or female colleagues outdoors during work hours, and whether this reluctance has implications for workplace efficiency and productivity.

A deeper examination is necessary to unravel the reasons behind the declining presence of women in the workforce, potentially linked to entrenched cultural beliefs about women's rights in India.

4.2 Insights From The Interviews

The allocation of themes within the dataset is derived through a dual methodology, drawing from both inductive analysis and insights from relevant literature. All four contacted participants provided consent to participate in this study.

The memoing notes revealed that while all participants sought clarification on questions they found ambiguous, Participant 2 appeared visibly uneasy throughout the interview. Upon inquiry, he affirmed that he was alright. Additionally, Participant 1 used 'pauses' before answering some questions and in-between his answers.

For interviewee demographic and other related information, see Table 1.

Table 1 Demographic details of the participant

PARTICIPANT NO.	COUNTRY	GENDER	EDUCATION	EMPLOYMENT INFO.	RESIDENCE TYPE	IMMIGRANT
1	INDIA	MALE	DOCTOR	100%	OWN	NO
2	INDIA	MALE	10TH GRADE	100%	RENTED	NO
3	NORWAY	MALE	BACHELORS	100%	OWN	NO (WAS)
4	NORWAY	FEMALE	MASTERS	STUDENT & WORKING PART-TIME	CO-LIVING WITH PARTNER	NO (WAS)

Through the coding process, three predominant themes surfaced: (1) Social factors, (2) Policy and Governance factors, and (3) Political factors. Navigating the intricacies of coding to identify common themes across the diverse contexts of Norway and India posed a significant challenge. However, through a review of relevant literature applicable to both settings and guided by emerging codes, I categorized them into thematic areas. Social factor was selected as it represents a prominent category, capturing challenges originating from socioeconomic disparities, cultural heterogeneity, and discriminatory practices, which hinder the inclusion of diverse populations into a community (Putnam, 1995; Pager & Shepherd, 2008). Additionally, policy-related hurdles, such as inadequate funding for social initiatives, the absence of inclusive policies, and insufficient backing for marginalized segments, worsen social exclusion and curtail opportunities for active participation (Dovidio et al., 2007). The subsequent sections explore each of these themes, examining their indicators in both Bø, Norway and Pune, India.

4.2.1 Category 1: Social Factors

Many of the codes related to society and social dynamics were brought together under social factors. This theme emerged while capturing the systematic and structural barriers present in society. Concepts under social factors include i) Religious and Cultural Factors; ii) Socioeconomic Factors; iii) Diversity; iv) Caste System; and v) Internalized Oppression (see Table 2).

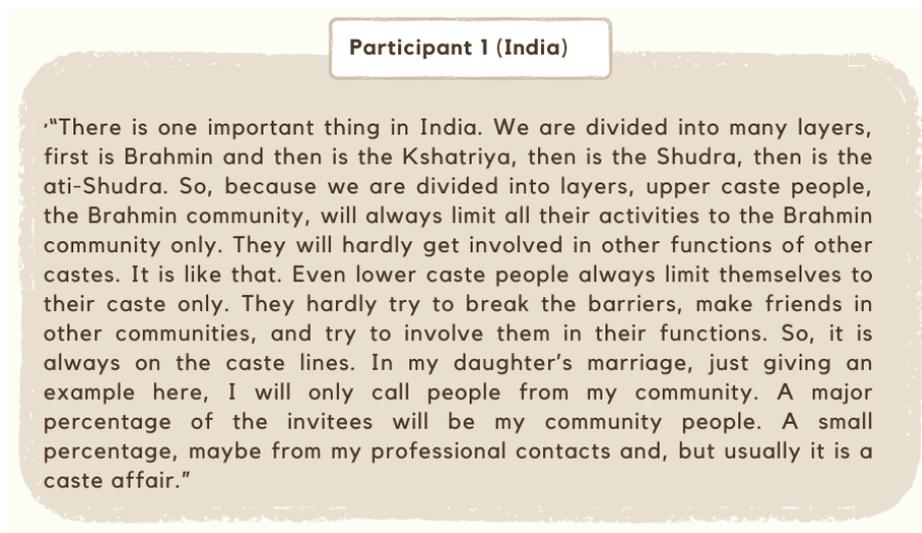
Table 2 Social Factors as a Challenge to Inclusiveness.

SOCIAL FACTOR CODES	COUNTRY	REFERENCES
RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL FACTORS	NORWAY / INDIA	42
SOCIOECONOMIC FACTORS	NORWAY / INDIA	39
DIVERSITY	NORWAY / INDIA	32
CASTE SYSTEM	INDIA	18
INTERNALIZED OPPRESSION	INDIA	9

Religious and Cultural Factors

Differences in religious and cultural backgrounds can impede effective communication, comprehension, and service accessibility (Scalvini, 2016). Research indicates that individuals from minority religious, cultural, or linguistic communities frequently encounter discrimination, language obstacles, and challenges in navigating systems tailored for the dominant group (Bhattacharya, 2019). Consequently, these obstacles may restrict their access to vital services such as healthcare and education, worsening the impact of discrimination. Out of 140 references, 29 references were attributed to this theme making it 27 percent from India and 13 references making it 18 percent from Norway.

Some important quotes from Participants 1 and 4 and the analysis are as follows:



The statement illustrates how the experience of cultural diversity within religious communities is limited by factors like caste identity and social stratification, leading to limited exchange of cultures. Participant 1's remarks underscore these dynamics, informing key observations:

- Indian society displays rooted caste divisions, marked by a hierarchical structure between upper castes (Brahmins, Kshatriyas) and lower castes (Shudras, Ati-Shudras).
- Upper and lower castes typically limit their social and cultural interactions within their own caste groups, resulting in limited engagement across caste lines spread through various facets of social life, including events like weddings.

Although these thoughts may not resonate with all, these viewpoints underscore the entrenched nature of caste-based discrimination as a barrier to social inclusion in

India. I advocate for comprehensive interventions encompassing education and policy measures to address the multifaceted structural, attitudinal, and behavioral aspects of this issue.

Participant 1, a medical doctor, illustrates the persistence of caste-based discrimination in his experiences, highlighting the deep-rooted discrimination at various levels of society in India.

Participant 1 (India)

"I belong to a very, highly educated group of people. I am a doctor. I performed well in the government sector. So, I'm in my college [social media such as WhatsApp] groups. So, even then, I can see that [...] very talented doctors, very talented physicians, very talented surgeons, they still cling on to their class identity. My work is good, but I'll be identified by 'who is he' [in a discriminating way]. That is the question that comes everywhere. I get more respect if I am from the upper caste [...] I face it day in and day out. In fact, I have been facing it, and it is not ending. It will not end. I know it because some people who have an advantage in this position do not want to give away that advantage. They want to maintain this graded caste system. And again, let us forget about the Brahmins. They are the topmost and they are in the best position to enjoy everything. The second caste, the Marathas or the Kshatriyas, are the major landholders. They enjoy their position of advantage. And they see to it that they do not mingle with the other, the third group/layer of caste, Vaishyas and the businesspeople community. [...] the sonars, it is like that. Each one of these layers, there is a system in which they systematically use the lower people to their benefit."

The text highlights caste-based discrimination within Hinduism, emphasizing its persistence despite education and professional success a person may achieve in other arenas. Some key observations include:

- Caste identity remains a significant determinant of social standing and respect, even among highly educated and accomplished individuals.
- Clear caste hierarchy: Upper castes hold power, while lower castes face marginalization.
- Upper castes resist relinquishing privileges, reinforcing the caste system.
- Caste discrimination is deeply ingrained in India's social, economic, and political structures.

Due to these factors, many marginalized Indians are unaware of their rights, posing a key challenge to fostering equity and inclusivity.

Furthermore, Participant 1 further illustrates the caste system's negative impacts, delving into the interdependence among different castes and the dominance dynamics, leading to a term coined 'mental slavery'²².

Participant 1 (India)

"They are happy at their level because they are able to [...] dominate and, extract from the other people [...] Brahmins are happy at their level, even to Vishyas. They have more people down the line to squeeze [suppress] them, get the benefits from them. So, it is a very crooked system. [...] This crooked system is accepted by those at a disadvantaged position. They do not want to leave it. You can say that there is 'Mental Slavery' behind this caste system. Those at the top of the [social] ladder don't want to give away their advantages and those who are at the lowest rung of the ladder, are happy with what they have, and they are happy with what they are being thrown at them. [...] And I think, this mental slavery comes from religion. It comes from the religion."

Participant 2's responses reflect a similar dynamic to the one Participant 1 describes here, with short rejections of any discontent and apparent contentment with the current situation.

Further, Participant 1 references the Indian Constitution's (Article 51A in the 42nd Amendment of the Constitution in 1976²³) call for cultivating a 'scientific temper' as a national responsibility, suggesting the need to scrutinize religions based on constitutional principles. He attributes the concept of 'mental slavery' to individuals' reluctance to seek answers. Later, he discusses the diminishing relevance of religion and provides further examples of discrimination to support his argument.

²² This is a slavery that the individual inflicts upon himself. History abounds with individuals who have enjoyed physical freedom and who have at the same time inflicted mental and spiritual freedom upon themselves. Deep down in their souls and minds they were slaves. (Martin Luther King Jr., 1954)

²³ To develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform.

Participant 1 (India)

“The Indian Constitution has made it compulsory that all the Indian public, they should nurture a ‘Scientific thought process’. This is our [...] duty. So, it is our duty to nurture the scientific thought process. And out of [...] duty, we are supposed to scrutinize our religion also. This duty from the Constitution gives us the right to scrutinize religion. Unfortunately, people have not understood this. They don't want to understand, or [there is] so much of mental slavery that they are not able to figure it out.”

“Let me give you an example if I’m an IAS (Indian Administrative Services[25]). IAS is a very prestigious thing. IAS in the city. [But, when] I go back to the village, I’m identified as “Tu maharasa hai, tu mangata hai[26] [You are maharasa, you are mangata]”

The participant highlights challenges to social inclusion in India despite constitutional mandates for critical religious examination. This is attributed to a perceived ‘mental slavery’ hindering the questioning of traditional beliefs. Furthermore, the participant cites instances of caste-based discrimination in prestigious roles like the IAS. These insights underscore the need for a more scientific and inclusive approach to social issues, addressing the ongoing influence of caste discrimination and the gap between constitutional ideals and societal norms.

Additionally, he advocates for the elimination of religion from education.

Participant 1 (India)

- “Yes, and again, I feel that religion should be separated from education, all kinds of education – primary, secondary.”

The issue of separating religion from education in India is multifaceted. While historically marginalized groups, like religious minorities, have encountered exclusion, ensuring equitable access to education for all is vital for social inclusion. However, religion holds significant cultural importance in Indian society, making complete removal from education impractical and potentially problematic.

The participant provides additional examples of discrimination based on profession and highlights the complexity of changing social behaviors, underscoring the need for intervention.

Participant 1 (India)

"See, India has grown up with the mentality because of the caste system that the 'suta', the carpenter, they will do the carpenter's job, the barber communities will do the barbers job only. Dalits, they will do the job of cleaning the toilets and wiping the roads, So, for thousands of years we have been growing with this mindset: (ki) the Brahmins will only do 'Poojas or Pujas' (the worship of a particular god) in a temple, and the 'Kshatriya' they will go and fight on the border, So I think this has to change."

The entrenched caste-based discrimination and social exclusion can be seen from the above text and how it hinders equal opportunities in education, healthcare, and other public services. Historically marginalized groups like SCs, STs, and religious minorities have faced systemic marginalization, limiting their access to essential services and perpetuating poverty. Despite government initiatives, concerns persist regarding their effectiveness.

From Norway, participant 4 highlights barriers due to cultural conservatism by giving examples from her experiences, identifying the need to work together:

**Participant 4
(Norway)**

"This is one thing, [...] the non-materialistic things, [...] the acceptance and the way of inclusion. I think, [...] we have a long way to go. Still, work on it, in real life, the mentality [of] both from both sides of [the community], I divide host community and [...] the so-called 'other'. So, there is still something to work together."

"[...] Norway doesn't have the history of a multicultural society. If I tell you, it's just 40-50 years highest [at the most]. And before that, Norway was more homogeneous. So, still, a generation or many hold a homogeneous identity. They feel what is Norse or what is Norwegian, they feel very strongly. [...] through this, they easily exclude others: What is immigrant, what is international, what is not there's. So, I think we have a lot of [...] things to consider as a concern and work on it."

**Participant 4
(Norway)**

"I also found many who want to clarify clearly what is Norwegian and what is not Norwegian. And I had several discussions or arguments with them that 'can we really clarify what is Norwegian?'. Because of this very globalized world now, if we accept a food as they are accepting food, for example, they are accepting different literature, they are accepting movies, music and different things. They're accepting these. Through these, they are telling 'this is mine' or 'this is yours', but my question is – 'if they can accept all these things, like food, clothes, literature [and] different things, why not people?' When [it] come[s] to people, they want to just differentiate between them. But what they are accepting as their things are not theirs."

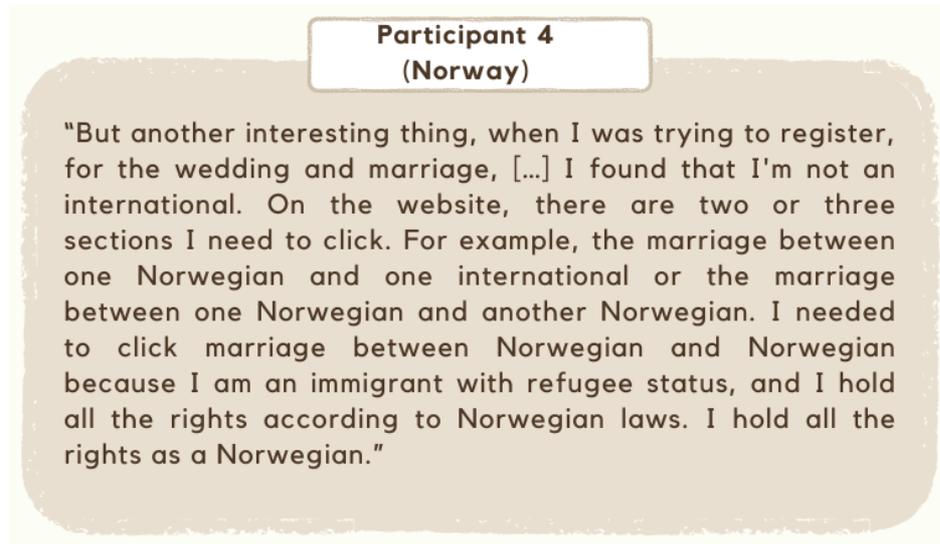
"Culture is very complex. Another thing is, I will talk about this on the 17th of May, the arrangement. I can [tell] it [from] my personal experience, that I'm getting married soon and I was thinking that what could be the wedding dress and I really like bunad [traditional Norwegian attire]. bunad is the national dress of Norway, but bunad is still very much homogeneous. I was thinking 'okay, so, if it's there's, what can be mine? Can bunad be mine also? Can I use also [...] and then I found it very difficult. That is, [bunad] is a very [different] from municipality to municipality, place to place, different design. It's unique. Then I found that 'okay then maybe it's not, cannot be mine.' I guess [I'm] an immigrant!"

The above text illustrates that there are still challenges in fully integrating immigrants and refugees into Norwegian society. Participant 4's experiences emphasize several salient points:

- Norway's history as a predominantly homogeneous society has fostered tendencies to exclude individuals perceived as 'others' or 'immigrants'.
- Some Norwegians express a desire to identify between what is considered 'Norwegian' and what is not, posing obstacles to immigrants' full inclusion and sense of belonging.
- Although Norway has embraced foreign cultural elements like food, literature, and music, this acceptance does not always extend to immigrants and refugees as part of the Norwegian identity.
- The participant's struggle to find a traditional Norwegian wedding dress (bunad) highlights the challenges immigrants encounter in embracing and being embraced by Norwegian culture, given the bunad's status as a specific and homogeneous national symbol.

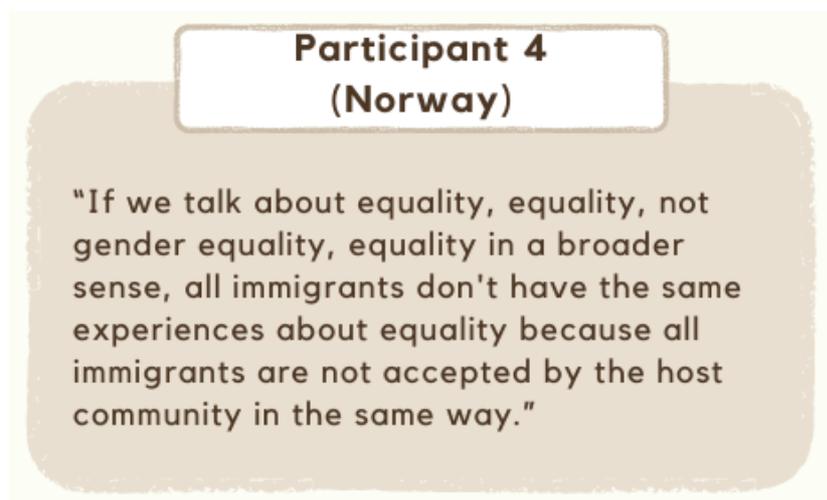
While Norway has advanced in promoting social inclusion, significant cultural and societal barriers persist, necessitating further efforts to ensure immigrants and refugees are genuinely integrated and accepted within the Norwegian community.

Describing a contrasting sentiment, she recounts a procedure she underwent during the registration of her marriage with her Norwegian partner in Norway, illustrating policies that reflect inclusivity.



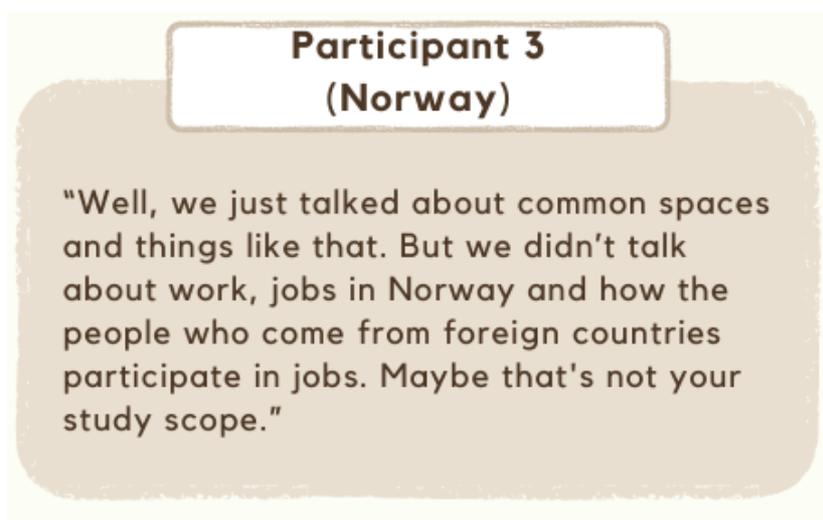
This reveals Norway's commitment to facilitating the social inclusion of refugees through various policies and initiatives. It also suggests that social inclusion is perceived as a multifaceted process, with both structural and individual considerations. Additionally, it exemplifies how immigrants and refugees in Norway enjoy equal rights to access public services, including marriage registration, indicating a determined effort by Norwegian policies to promote equality and provide immigrants and refugees with similar opportunities as native citizens.

While closing the interview, participant 4 made the below statements exemplifying discrimination.



While we notice efforts by Norway supporting immigrant integration, including provisions for social welfare services, the above text makes a significant point by mentioning how not all immigrants have the same experiences about equality.

Norwegian policies prioritize equal participation in core institutions such as the labour market and education. However, experiences suggest that there are existing barriers that prevent immigrants, particularly those from non-Western backgrounds, from accessing these opportunities fully. Participant 3 expressed a similar view.

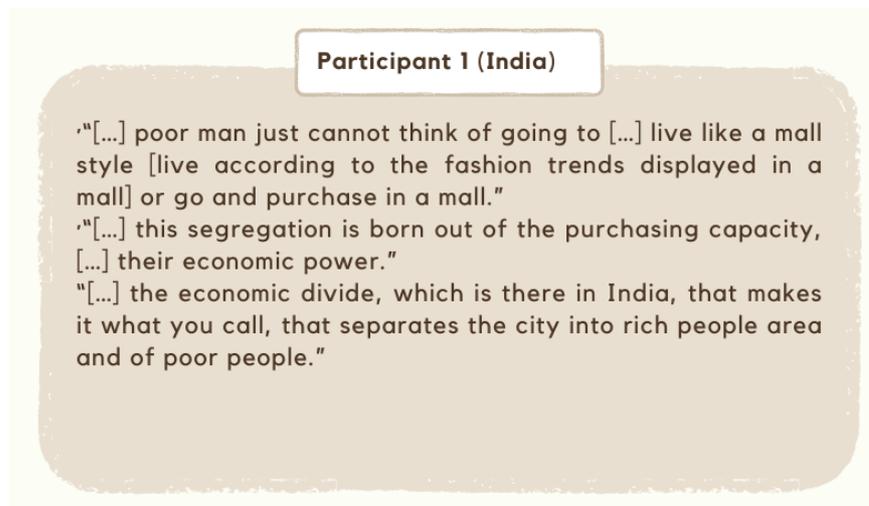
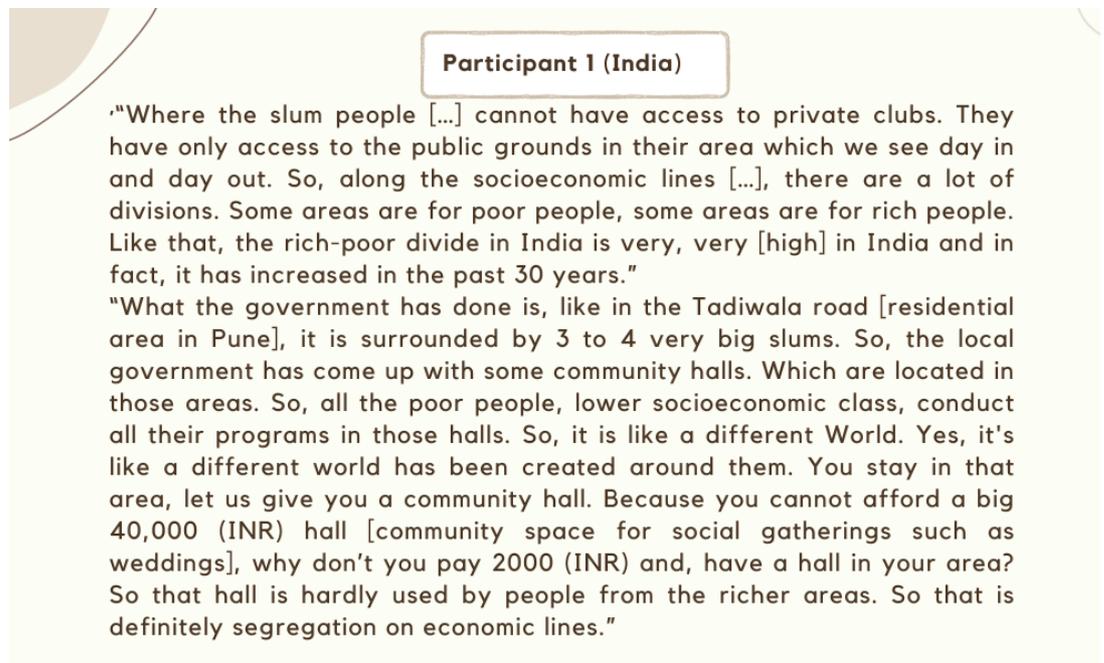


The study does not cover job opportunities and corporate skill requirements, but I have a short comment based on the above texts. Despite Norway's anti-discrimination legislation, limited policies related to the inclusion of immigrants into the labour market point to the necessity for more proactive measures to ensure equitable treatment.

Socioeconomic factors

Socioeconomic factors, including income, education, and occupation influence an individual's access to resources, opportunities, and overall welfare (Abdulkareem et al., 2023; Gao et al., 2023). Studies demonstrate that individuals from lower socioeconomic strata frequently encounter more obstacles in domains like healthcare, education, and employment. Consequently, these disparities can result in inferior health conditions, diminished academic attainment, and restricted social mobility. The data showed that socioeconomic inequalities were one of the main challenges hindering social justice and equitable access to resources and opportunities. In this study, socioeconomic status in the context was determined by considering individuals' education, occupational roles, and residential locales.

Out of 140 references under Social Factors, socioeconomic code exposed 30 percent coverage for India with 35 references and 4 from Norway with 8 percent coverage. The majority of them were revealed by Participants 1 and 4. The results and the analysis are as follows:



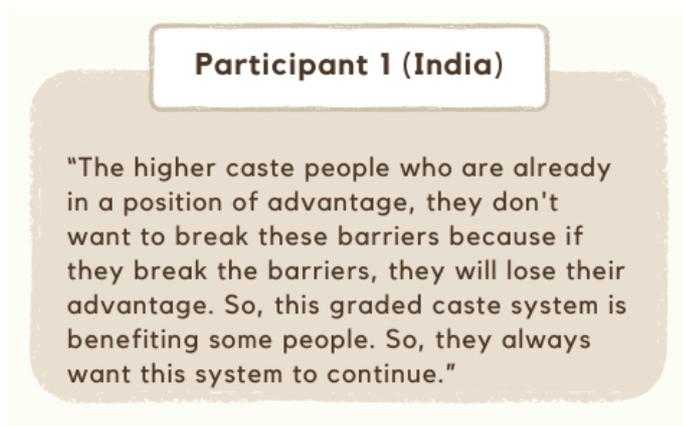
The provided statements show that there is segregation of societies. Additionally, it sheds light on the socioeconomic disparities and spatial divisions prevalent in India, particularly between affluent and impoverished segments of society. Some of my key observations for further thinking are as follows:

- Socioeconomic status decides access to public and private spaces, with poor individuals often confined to their own localities and community facilities, while the affluent enjoy exclusive access to private clubs and amenities.

- Urban landscapes in India exhibit obvious segregation between affluent and neglected areas, reflecting economic disparities and worsening social and economic divides over time.
- Poor individuals face practical exclusion from commercial establishments like malls, owing to their limited purchasing power, fostering a sense of disconnect and alienation from mainstream society.
- While the establishment of community facilities in low-income neighbourhoods aims to serve the local populace, it unintentionally preserves spatial and social segregation, as these amenities are predominantly utilized by impoverished residents, with little engagement from wealthier individuals.

My observations and interpretations stress the embedded socioeconomic divides and spatial segregation in India, posing challenging obstacles to genuine social inclusion. Addressing these challenges necessitates a holistic approach that dismantles structural and systemic barriers hindering impoverished and marginalized communities' access to public spaces, services, and economic opportunities.

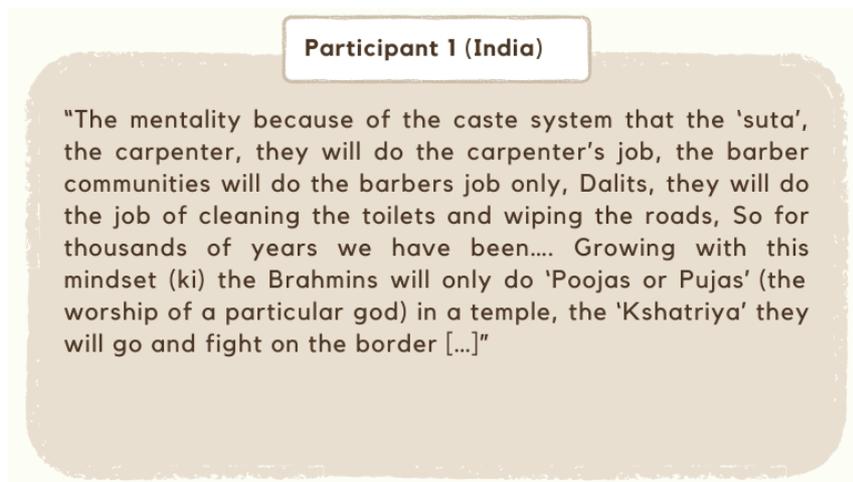
Furthermore, some more examples showing the indirect influence of 'caste':



The findings suggest that the upper castes such as Brahmins and Kshatriyas have accrued disproportionate influence, wealth, and social standing in comparison to lower castes like Shudras and Dalits despite a law mandating equality. Additionally, the text highlights that the upper castes show reluctance to give up their privileges and actively uphold the existing caste-based hierarchy, as it serves to uphold their dominant status and control over resources. Here, the participant is referring to 'benefits' based on socioeconomic privileges determined by the caste.

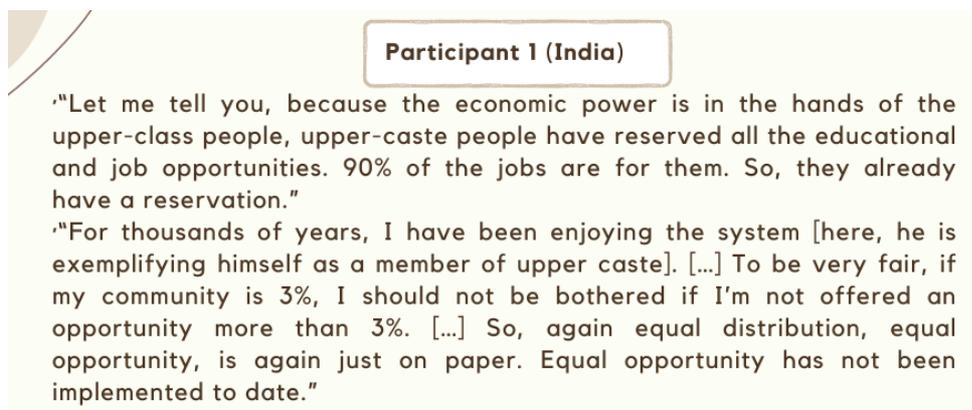
The following text further exhibits the effect of the caste system and its rigid grip on people's professions and income, making it hard for people to break away from it. As

the previously mentioned statement shows, participant A sees this as a very prevalent mindset in India.



We can analyze from the above statement that Dalits have historically been referred to menial tasks like sanitation work, while Brahmins and Kshatriyas have held esteemed roles such as religious ceremonies and military service.

Based on additional proof, we notice the prevalent mindset in today's scenario. The below texts exert the same factor with a better explanation:



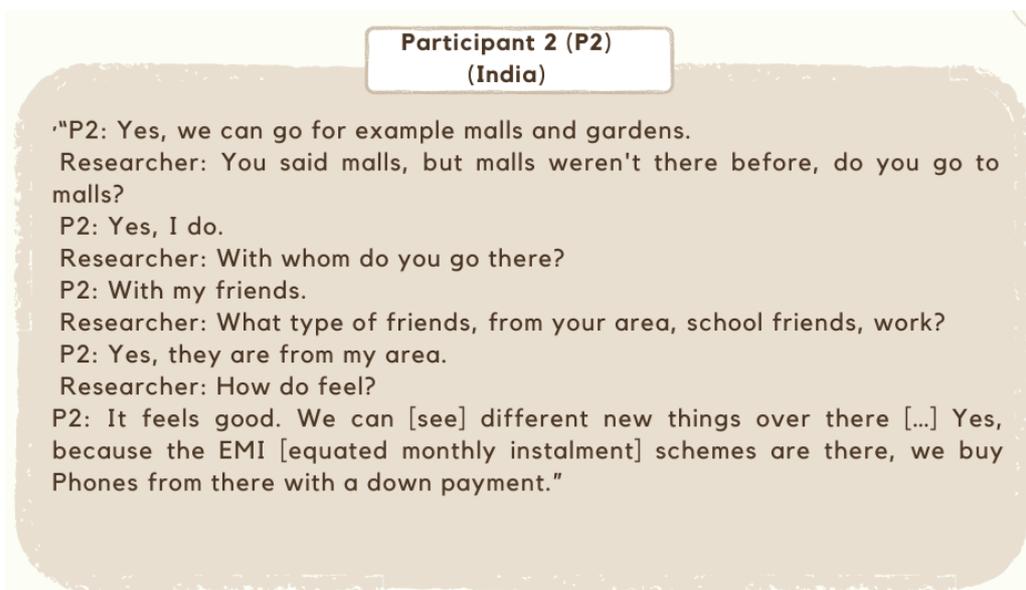
Some of my key observations from the above texts include:

- Participant 1 claims that historically, the upper castes have dominated access to education and employment, exploiting their social and economic influence.
- This dominance has led to an overrepresentation of upper castes in lucrative positions, maintaining social disparities.
- The statement above also suggests that upper castes have reserved most opportunities for themselves, limiting access for lower castes and marginalized groups.

- The participant acknowledges the unequal distribution of opportunities, indicating acceptance of the status quo.

Despite constitutional and policy provisions, achieving equal opportunity remains a challenge, highlighting persistent difficulties in implementing social inclusion principles into practice. Additionally, the concepts of equal distribution of resources and equal opportunities emerge as the factors affecting inclusiveness by maintaining the social disparities.

Participant 2, in the following text, also demonstrated a connection to socioeconomic factors indirectly. The passage highlights how Participant 2 utilizes urban spaces such as malls. By referring to malls, participant 2 reveals how they provide access to the latest trends and offer purchasing options tailored to personal budgets, including flexible schemes for buying mobile phones. Furthermore, it is important to note that Participant 2 belonged to the 'wadar community'²⁴. This illustrates how socioeconomic background can affect experiences in public spaces.



The key insights noted on social inclusion include:

- The participant emphasizes the increased access to public spaces such as malls and gardens, indicating progress in physical and spatial inclusion compared to the past.

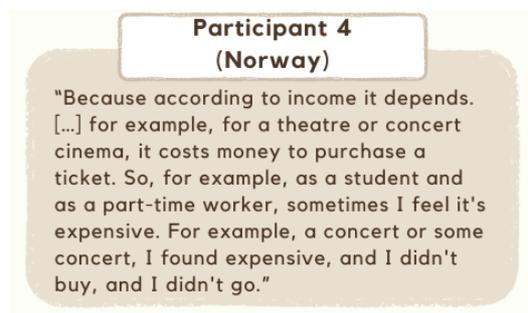
²⁴ The Wadar community, traditionally involved in digging and excavation, remains a nomadic tribe until they start settling on the outskirts of major cities like Mumbai (Sushmita, 2017).

- Visiting malls with friends with friends from the same local area reflects a sense of social inclusion and the formation of peer networks, fostering stronger social ties and a feeling of belonging but only within the same ethnic and social group.
- The participant's positive experience of discovering new things at malls suggests an expansion of experiences and exposure, contributing to greater social inclusion and integration.
- Mention of the availability of EMI²⁵ schemes for purchasing phones at malls indicates improved economic inclusion and access to consumer goods, further enhancing social inclusion.

The statement highlights that increased accessibility to public spaces, local social networks, and better economic opportunities lead to greater social inclusion in a community. A critical looking at previous conversation raises an important question 'do some of these goods address fundamental needs or merely contribute to consumerism?'. Here again, I argue a deeper evaluation is necessary to determine the extent and sustainability of this inclusion.

While India and Norway encounter comparable challenges, each presents distinctive nuances. Despite Norway's recognition as one of the most inclusive societies, opportunities for enhancement persist within its framework.

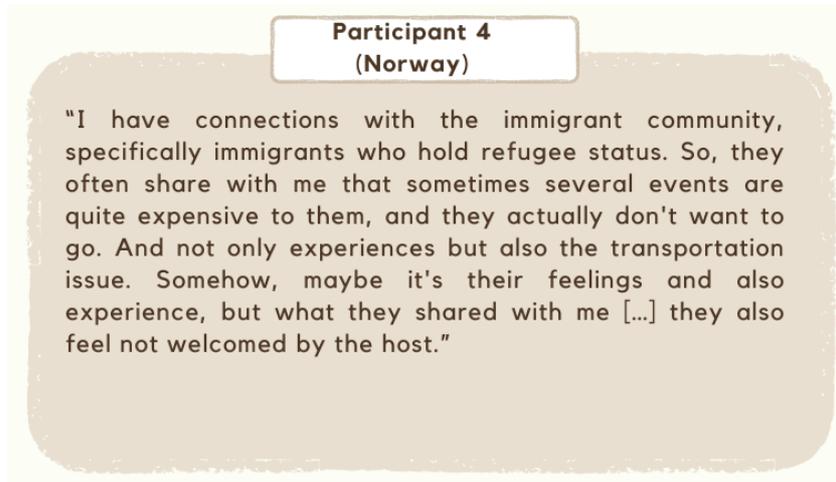
Participant 4 shared her experiences based on her choices according to her age and taste. Inclined more towards art and music, she expressed how some of the events of her choice were beyond her budget, hindering her from socializing with people from that community.



²⁵ EMI is a fixed payment amount that a borrower makes to the lender every month. It includes both the interest and principal amounts and helps in fully paying off the loan over a specified period. Common types of loans, such as real estate mortgages, auto loans, and student loans require the borrower to make fixed periodic payments over a certain number of years to retire the loan.

Drawing insights from her conversations with the immigrant community, Participant 4 represents what the community feels.

Participant 4 (Norway)



My key observations from the texts above include:

- Socioeconomic groups, such as students and part-time workers, may face limited access to cultural and recreational activities due to high ticket costs.
- Immigrant and refugee communities in Norway often encounter financial barriers to cultural events, contributing to their sense of exclusion.
- Accessibility issues extend beyond ticket costs to include transportation challenges and feelings of unwelcome in certain spaces, further isolating these communities.
- Economic status and social identity intersect to create barriers to social inclusion, systematically disadvantaging certain groups.

Additionally, highlighting the social aspect, Participant 4 observes and identifies a missing feeling of togetherness, as part of one community. She goes on to associate power relations attached to such a hierarchical structure, displaying the indirect relation to socioeconomic factors.

**Participant 4
(Norway)**

“But I really feel that one concern, ‘How can we be together?’. And, in a multicultural society, I strongly believe and feel that there is [no] I, me, mine; it's we, ours.”

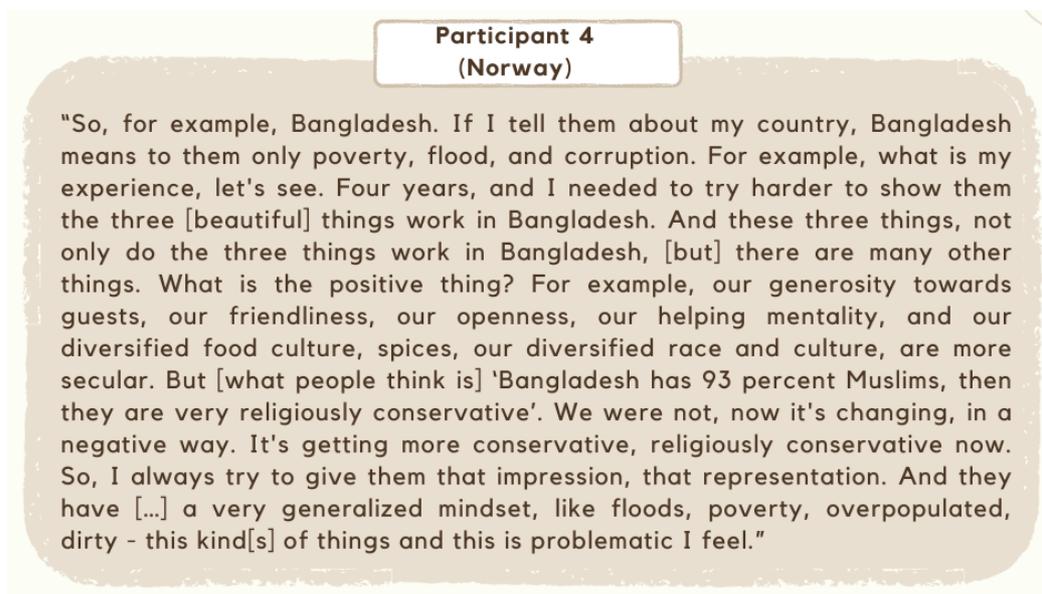
“if you only tell that it's mine and this is yours, just differentiate, a border in society and something [that] holds power. Like, ‘what is mine?’, ‘What is host culture?’ They are [more] powerful than me. They will decide what I should do and what I should not do. And this clearly shows us the power relation. And, in one way, power relations, sometimes, make us host, and marginalized. Host or guest. So, [these are] just some questions or some concerns. How can we reduce this?”

Analysis showed several key insights regarding social inclusion in Norway.

- The participant emphasized the significance of fostering a collective identity and shared ownership in a multicultural society, advocating for a shift from individualistic to community perspectives.
- Dynamics of power relations within society between ‘host’ and ‘guest’ through ‘mine’ and ‘yours’ in communities highlighted the concept of ownership and control.
- The presence of dominant culture holding more power and influence in determining societal norms and behaviors, with the potential for marginalization and disproportionate control by the host community over immigrants.
- A critical question is raised about reducing power imbalances and promoting inclusivity, equity, and integration to ensure all members feel a sense of belonging.
- The statements reflect an understanding that social inclusion needs more than access to resources; it involves nurturing shared identity, mutual respect, and balanced power dynamics.

Her assertion, though appearing exaggerated at first glance, highlights a fundamental aspect of power dynamics within societal frameworks. Addressing societal attitudes, power structures, and cultural barriers, alongside policy interventions, is needed in nurturing inclusive identities and mitigating power imbalances, in turn nurturing multicultural societies.

Further, Participant 4 highlighted the misinformation carried by the people about her country 'Bangladesh', and how she feels about it.



After reviewing the text, I noticed multiple key insights emerge from Participant 4's assertion.

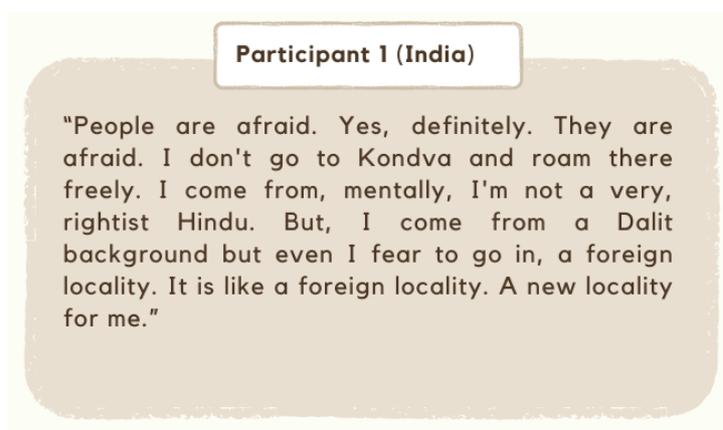
- The participant highlights the prevalence of stereotyping and negative perceptions among the Norwegian community towards her country of origin, Bangladesh. These stereotypes often focus solely on poverty, natural disasters, and corruption, overlooking the country's diversity and positive aspects.
- There is an emphasis on actively challenging these stereotypes and presenting a more balanced view of other cultures.
- The participant seeks recognition as an individual beyond preconceived notions.
- The text indicates the additional effort required by immigrants and minorities to counter negative perceptions and assert their cultural identity.

I argue that to foster inclusion and integration, it is important to promote a society with mutual understanding, respect, and inclusive representations of diverse cultures within the host society. This requires challenging stereotypes, promoting cultural awareness, and facilitating inclusive representations of minority communities to achieve meaningful social inclusion in Norway.

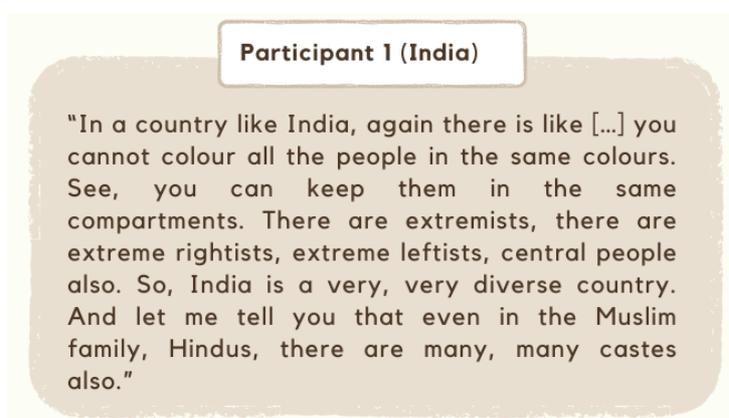
Diversity

Diversity can present several challenges to achieving true inclusiveness in society, such as communication challenges, lack of trust, and even cultural conflicts. From the data collected, we understand the various challenges faced due to diversity. Out of 140

references under Social Factors, the diversity theme exposed 27 percent coverage for India with 28 references whereas only 4 from Norway with 4 percent coverage in NVivo.



Participant 1 answered after a long pause. The quote above highlights the fear and hesitation felt by Participant 1, which could be understood as there is fear of freely moving around in Pune city. In some localities, based on diversity, an alien feeling is created. He identifies Kondva²⁶ areas as 'foreign localities' or areas dominated by Muslim communities. Could this imply 'xenophobia' towards Muslims or legitimate safety concerns? Further research is necessary to understand the presence of this phenomenon. This reflects spatial segregation by the municipality to address diversity making it a deep-rooted social division in society.



The above text shows that India's diversity poses hurdles to fostering inclusivity. The presence of varied political ideologies, from extremists to individuals with right, left, and centrist leanings, complicates the search for equality. Yet again, it reiterates the need for a holistic approach involving legal reforms, corporate initiatives, and societal shifts towards greater acceptance and understanding.

²⁶ A residential community in Pune, mostly dominated by Muslims.

To address the challenge of diversity, Participant 1 proposes reservation in private sector jobs.

Participant 1 (India)

- "One more important thing, which I would like to see is as the government had given, the reserved seats for the minority, Dalits, the private sector should do it. That is the only way to bring inclusivity. The private sector holds, say, 70% of the jobs in India, more than 70% of the, it is the private sector that they should give attention to these [aspects]. To involve all groups of society. I think it is lacking there [in the private sector]. When I'm a businessman and I'm a Hindu, I will see to it that most of my jobs will go to Hindus. If I'm a Muslim, most of my jobs will go to Muslims. There should be government control on it, somehow."
- "They [government] should be sensitive to all the issues of the lower class. The marginalized people, they should be sensitive [signifying there is a need to sensitise the general public about how they feel excluded]. They should be more sensitive. And as a policy matter, like I just said, they should see to that all communities get good representation in all the jobs, all the sectors."

The above statements highlight the critical need for greater sensitivity and inclusivity towards marginalized communities in India. It emphasizes the importance of policymakers and decision-makers prioritizing the concerns and needs of the lower classes and ensuring equitable representation across all sectors and job opportunities.

**Participant 3
(Norway)**

"When they have so many asylum seekers, many foreigners, they have maybe...changed some rules so that [...] because when you have [...] large numbers [...] It's difficult for me to say now because I'm already in the community."

From the text above we notice that to accommodate diversity, 'changed some rules' suggests that policymakers may have had to adapt existing frameworks to accommodate the needs of growing diverse populations. This could mean the dynamic nature of inclusion efforts. The statement 'already in the community', stands as proof from a personal experience of crossing the dynamics of inclusion as a member of a marginalized group, signifying the lived realities of social inclusion. I argue in the face of increasing diversity, there is a need for flexible, context-specific approaches that address the unique experiences and needs of all members of society.

**Participant 4
(Norway)**

"I found also the LGBTQ communities, the lesbian, gay communities, queer and bisexual, the LGBTQ communities, they are trying to find their own bunad, what could be their own bunad. [...] In Norway, yeah, I saw some pictures also. Yeah, like a unisexual bunad or something like that. They are trying to make a protest as like activism."

Participant 4 makes an important point related to Norway's traditional costume 'bunad'. Her statement about the LGBTQ+ community in Norway trying to find their own 'bunad' reflects the following key points regarding social inclusion and diversity:

- The LGBTQ+ community in Norway is actively promoting their identity and cultural representation, evident in initiatives such as the creation of a 'unisexual bunad'. This signals a growing movement towards increased visibility and inclusion of diverse gender identities.
- The statement suggests that these efforts serve as a form of activism, reflecting the LGBTQ+ community's ongoing struggle for recognition and acceptance within Norwegian society.

Additionally, it indicates Participant 4's awareness of these developments within the LGBTQ+ community in Norway, reflecting a broader interest in global discussions surrounding LGBTQ+ rights and inclusion.

Caste System:

The caste system is a cornerstone for many challenges faced by India, including social inclusion (Singh, 2011; Kadam et al., 2023; Ram, 2024; Rabindran, 2020). This theme is unique to India and it's crucial to consider its direct and indirect role in fostering social exclusion. Out of 140 references under Social Factors, socioeconomic theme exposed 18 percent coverage for India with 18 references. The results and the analysis are as follows:

Participant 1 (India)

- "So again, these castes have their own identity. They have their own groups. They have their own, living area. There are societies like Marwadi societies, they sell houses only to the Marwadis."
- "There are some community-wise living community wise segregation, it is there. This is a very common phenomenon."

Yet another example shows discrimination based on the caste system. The distinct identities, social groups, and residential segregation of different caste groups in India are the key issues. Other important insights from this statement include:

- The Indian caste system, despite its official abolition, remains a deeply ingrained social hierarchy that significantly influences the identities and experiences of various communities.
- It highlights how certain caste groups, like the Marwadis²⁷, maintain exclusive social networks and residential areas, which restrict interactions and integration across caste lines, extending the marginalization of lower caste communities.

I argue, considering the complexity of the problem, to overcome these entrenched caste-based divisions and to foster a more inclusive society, we require coordinated efforts across legal, corporate, and societal areas. More efforts beyond affirmative action policies are needed to tackle unconscious biases and promote equal opportunities for all.

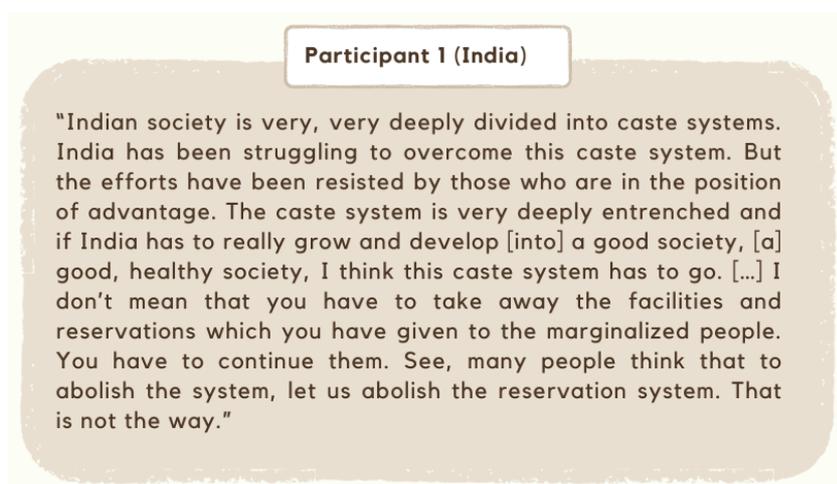
Participant 1 (India)

"When I was a child, I don't think we ever used to think or [came] across these discriminations in the public spaces. Now because of this privatization, it has all become... private things are very selective."

In this context, it's crucial to recognize the negative role of private companies indiscriminating within society. While the government plays a pivotal role as an enforcer of inclusive policies, the active watch on private enterprises is equally needed.

²⁷ It is an umbrella term to classify both Hindus and Jains, mostly in business and trade professions.

As a final comment, Participant 1 summarises the ill effects of the caste system in India and briefly opines on the reservation policy unique to India.



Participant 2 (India) (Seeking reservation to represent his community in Maharashtra)

- There was no reservation policy over here for our caste, so people protested it. My analysis of both the statements above regarding the formidable caste system in India and the social hurdles reveals several crucial insights:
- The caste system tries to break the unity despite attempts to dismantle it.
- While affirmative action policies have been implemented to support marginalized communities, resistance from privileged groups persists, hindering progress.
- The caste system extends beyond religious and ideological boundaries, penetrating socioeconomic and political structures, necessitating a comprehensive approach for its eradication.
- Merely abolishing reservation systems would impair marginalization, highlighting the ongoing need for positive action while simultaneously pursuing broader societal transformation.
- Overcoming the caste system demands a fundamental shift in mindsets, norms, and power dynamics, requiring sustained efforts at individual, communal, and institutional levels.

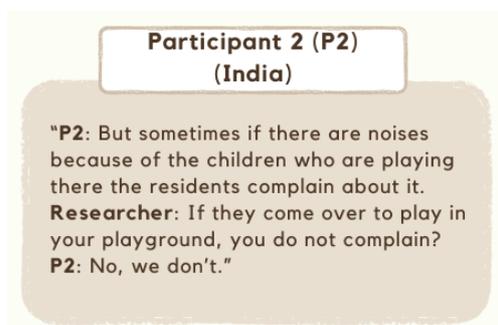
Fundamentally, the statements highlight a detailed understanding of the challenges posed by the caste system in India. It stresses the importance of a multifaceted strategy that integrates firm action with broader societal changes to achieve genuine and enduring social inclusion.

Internalized Oppression

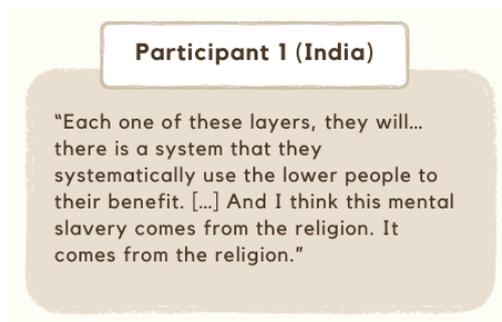
The 'Internalized Oppression' is a twisted discrimination in India. It is often subtle and difficult to identify, but it is deeply ingrained in the society. The prevalence of this kind of suppression can make it challenging for someone from outside the country to recognize it. The Indian society is structured in a way that accommodates indirect oppression, making it hard to root out. The caste system, which has been a part of Indian society for centuries, is responsible for perpetuating this twisted oppression. Despite efforts to abolish it, the caste system continues to exist in modern-day India and is a significant contributor to discrimination and inequality.

Internalized oppression is the process wherein individuals belonging to marginalized or oppressed groups internalize and accept negative stereotypes, beliefs, and attitudes about themselves and their community. This psychological phenomenon involves adopting the perspectives of the dominant group regarding one's group, which can lead to feelings of self-doubt, low self-esteem, and a sense of inferiority. This internalization often stems from societal messages, discrimination, and systemic oppression experienced throughout their lives. It can manifest in various forms, including self-blame, self-hatred, and the belief in the inherent inferiority of one's own group. The impact of internalized oppression extends to individuals' self-perception, behaviour, and overall well-being, potentially resulting in self-imposed limitations, adherence to societal norms, and perpetuation of their own oppression (Palan, 2021). Recognizing and confronting internalized oppression is crucial for fostering self-empowerment and driving social change.

Out of 140 references under Social Factors, Internalized Oppression theme exposed 1 percent coverage for India with 9 references which is unique to India. The analysis with the results is as follows:



The above statements, however, appear to discuss a practical issue of noise complaints from residents regarding children playing in a playground. While this could potentially be influenced by underlying social dynamics and power structures, the statement indirectly references internalized oppression.



Participant 1 here is referring to the Hindu religion. Considering the responses from Participant 2, who expressed no complaints about his living conditions or facilities despite residing in a cramped house within a socially disadvantaged slum, accommodating his mother and siblings, it is apparent that he does not critically reflect on the barriers preventing him from completing his education or how he can advocate for his rights to improve his living conditions. Further research is necessary to understand if this could imply 'mental slavery' or a personality trait. Moreover, Participant 3's responses also reflected satisfaction with the system. However, it would be inaccurate to label his mindset as one of mental slavery. Because, over time, he has demonstrated improvement in his social and economic conditions, as well as pursued education, indicating a proactive approach towards personal development.

My other observations are as follows:

- Talking from Participant 1's own experiences, he suggests that there is a systemic exploitation of lower caste or marginalized groups by the dominant, upper-caste groups in Indian society.
- He explicitly links this 'mental slavery' to the impact of religion, particularly Hinduism, which has historically upheld and strengthened the caste system through its religious scriptures and doctrines.
- A critical viewpoint is put forth by him emphasizing the role of religion in sustaining social disparities and oppression within India. It resonates with the findings regarding the obstacles to social inclusion and the necessity for a

substantial transformation in attitudes and power structures to realize true equality.

4.2.2 Category 2: Policy and Governance Factors

Policy and governance, if implemented wrongly or ineffectively, can present formidable obstacles to inclusivity. Ensuring inclusive government and policymaking processes helps in nurturing a society that embraces diversity and attains comprehensive growth (Reggi et al., 2022). Policies prioritizing fairness and equity across all demographics, rather than simply pursuing efficiency, are needed to mitigate widening disparities within society and eradicate poverty, a society that is more just and accommodating for all individuals and communities (Chattopadhyay, 2015).

Table 3 Policy & Governance Factors as a Challenge to Inclusiveness.

POLICY & GOVERNANCE FACTOR CODES	COUNTRY	REFERENCES
LACK OF POLICY INITIATIVES	NORWAY / INDIA	25
LACK OF AWARENESS	NORWAY / INDIA	19
CHANGES OVER TIME	INDIA	3

To answer the research questions, codes were identified as they emerged from the interviews. The concepts that were categorized under Policy and Governance factors include Lack of policy initiatives, Lack of awareness, and Changes over time (see Table 3).

Lack of policy initiatives

Out of 140 references under Policy and Governance factors, Lack of policy initiatives exposed 12 percent coverage for India with 18 references whereas 7 from Norway with 6 percent coverage. The results and the analysis for this code are as follows:

Participant 1 (India)

- "The government has provided, a very, lesser number of public playgrounds. Most of the clubs are playing [operating] on their private land. So, once they are private, [...] they attract the fees. So, there is no question that a lower class or a very poor man or student can access to those clubs."
- "See, I would say the local government should come up with more public playgrounds, more community halls and more libraries. Once they are in government control, they certainly give access to all. Govt. control is a very important thing. In all government-controlled facilities, I think there is no discrimination."
- "There should be government control on it, somehow [To involve all groups of society on the job front]."
- "And that is where we have to do the work most, primary education [to make education more inclusive]."
- "This duty from the Constitution gives us the right to scrutinize religion. Unfortunately, people have not understood this [lack of instilling scientific temperament as per the constitution]."

My analysis of the above text highlights the following:

- significance of public spaces and community facilities managed by the government in enhancing accessibility and inclusivity, countering the exclusivity often associated with private clubs.
- Participant 1 advocates for reinforcing primary education and fostering a scientific mindset following the Constitution to cultivate greater inclusiveness and mitigate discrimination. However, the observation regarding the lack of awareness about the constitutional obligation to scrutinize religion highlights the necessity of enhancing public education on their rights and promoting inclusive governance in this area.

I argue that inclusive governance and policymaking are essential for strengthening the voices of marginalized groups, addressing their needs, and forging a more equitable and cohesive society in India. I suggest implementing a comprehensive plan that involves multiple strategies and covering various sectors and governmental levels.

From Norway, Participant 4 identified a lack of proper accessibility through the transport system, expensive rates, and a lack of proper implementation of policies to foster a multicultural society in Norway.

Participant 4 (Norway)

"Because in public transportation, I feel, according to my four-year experience, it's not so well, like poor public transportation. [...] transportation is very important because especially in immigrant communities. They all actually don't hold a driving license for example, so they are dependent on public transport. So, transportation is [...] public transportation is very important. For example, I live in Akkerhaugen and buses, [they're] not so often – [they operate] like every two hours [or] one hour. So, if I miss one time, I need to wait for another one hour or two hours."

"They feel and its exclusion. This feeling is not according to the law or regulations. The law and regulations are always telling us that equality works here, or everyone has the right to do everything or whatever it is but it's more formal if we come to the real world or the practices, there is still something we miss."

"It's about policies, more about practices [signifying the need for policies to change people's practices]. Can I actually clearly differentiate between the policies which are more bookish or formal and practices we don't practice all policies in our everyday life?"

"So, I can tell again that now it's a more multicultural society in Norway, so the state, maybe, look on and also take some initiative, 'how can the host and the others merge into a box, into a cultural box?'"

"They [Government] have a very important role, of course, because they hold the authority."

"But yeah, they practice, they try to practice, or they try to include all."

"And I think they can look at some specific issues like how the immigrant feels. [...] how the Norwegians see acceptance and inclusion, and how the immigrant feels excluded or included everything, and they can work on more experiences, daily experiences, and they can also, if they understand about daily basis experiences, they can work also more deeply."

Based on Participant 4's insights from Norway, several key issues regarding the inadequacy of policy and governance in promoting inclusiveness emerge:

- Insufficient public transportation infrastructure: the poor and infrequent public transportation, particularly affecting immigrant communities, leading to feelings of exclusion. Accessible and reliable public transport is vital for social inclusion, especially for immigrants.
- Discrepancy between formal policies and practical implementation: While laws and regulations advocate equality, their actual implementation often falls short, resulting in a sense of exclusion. It shows the need to bridge this gap to ensure inclusive practices align with formal policies.
- Lack of government initiatives to encourage integration: There's a call for the government to play a more active role in facilitating the integration of diverse communities, including immigrants, into mainstream society. Policies should be informed by the daily experiences and perspectives of both Norwegians and immigrants to develop more effective and inclusive approaches.
- Demand for greater government accountability and responsiveness: the actual impact of government's efforts is often inadequate. Stronger government

accountability and responsiveness to the lived experiences of marginalized groups are essential for ensuring inclusive governance.

Participant 4 raises very important concerns necessitating more inclusive and responsive policies, improved implementation of existing policies, and enhanced government initiative and accountability to address the gaps in fostering social inclusion, particularly for immigrant communities in Norway.

Lack of awareness:

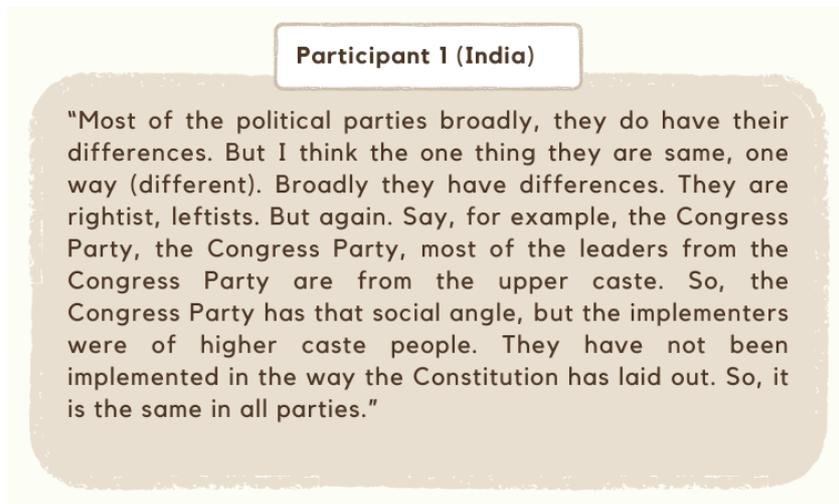
Out of 47 references under Policy and Governance factors, Lack of awareness exposed 5 percent coverage for India with 16 references and 3 from Norway with 2 percent coverage.

Participant 1's (India) contributions are noteworthy, particularly concerning the promoting awareness regarding the fundamental duties outlined in the Indian constitution, particularly the cultivation of scientific temper. Additionally, his reference to 'mental slavery' underscores the fixed societal attitudes that perpetuate social divisions. These observations underscore a significant expectation for proactive governmental intervention to instil progressive mindsets within the populace. Ultimately, the data underscores the urgent need for effective government policies, meticulously implemented, to catalyze the transformation of India into a truly inclusive society.

Participant 4 (Norway) advocates for broadening media coverage to include perspectives from diverse regions, particularly those from the global south. This involves a proactive approach by the government to integrate a wide selection of cultural and news programs from various countries into the media landscape. By showcasing voices and narratives from underrepresented regions, such initiatives can foster a better understanding of global affairs and promote cross-cultural exchange. Moreover, increasing coverage of countries beyond the traditional Western-centric focus can contribute to greater global awareness and solidarity. I recommend this approach as it aligns with the principles of inclusivity and diversity, nurturing a more interconnected and informed society.

4.2.3 Category 3: Political Factors

It had only 2 references from India. It highlighted the need for representation in the political arena. This was noted by Participant 1 when he said,



In India, political factors significantly influence inclusiveness, as highlighted by Participant 1. It emphasizes the ideological differences among political parties, noting that despite varying positions on the political spectrum, there's often a lack of meaningful action towards inclusiveness. Even within supposedly progressive parties like the Indian National Congress Party, upper-caste dominance has hindered the effective implementation of inclusive policies outlined in the Constitution. This points to rooted social biases within the political system, undermining its ability to represent marginalized communities. To address these challenges, there's a pressing need for stronger political will and accountability across parties and institutions. In this scenario, I argue for an inclusive vision of the Constitution into tangible policies and their effective implementation to dismantle barriers faced by marginalized groups.

4.2.4 Effective Strategies

While coding, some themes emerged showing inclusiveness at the community level. These are categorized under 'Effective Strategies' and further, the reasons were classified as government policies, equal access, and community initiatives.

When discussing effective inclusive practices, the community initiatives undertaken by the Norwegian people serve as good models. These initiatives exemplify the community's proactive efforts to foster inclusivity. Notably, Norway's government policies have helped nurture an inclusive society, ensuring equitable access for all.

Community organizations like Dugnad and the Red Cross have been commended for their initiatives aimed at facilitating the integration of refugees into Norwegian society. It is evident that Norway's progressive policies, supported by active municipal and governmental initiatives, have contributed to a gradual opening up of the society. However, there is room for improvement in promoting multicultural communities. Sharing and implementing best practices from neighbouring municipalities could further promote multicultural interactions regularly.

Drawing inspiration from India's transportation system, particularly its bus networks, Norway could explore effective strategies. Overall, there is much that Indian society has to learn and emulate from the inclusive practices observed in Norwegian society. There is a need for more structured and coherent voluntary community initiatives. However, Norway can learn to incorporate diversity with openness.

Best Practices

The code emerged from the information on strategies that the participants provided from their experiences. Some important observations include those from both Norway and India. Food from different cultures, in my opinion, broke the barriers easily. More results and analysis are as follows:

Participant 1 (India)

"I think the U.S. has done a good, job when it comes to giving access to blacks."

Participant 3 (Norway)

"[...] the students from the high school at that time, the college, they came to us, the Red Cross came, organized what you call skiing...Skidag."

Participant 4 (Norway)

- “[...] but last one year I've just observed a lot about the different kinds of events they are arranging. Kommune or the municipality about the immigrant culture. For example, in Gvarv, I saw there was an event about cultural food where the so-called Middle East like Syrian, and Afghanistan, they cooked food. All, including the host community, came and experienced different kinds of cultural food so it was one way nice. What I heard from the host and from the immigrant community, they felt included and the whole host community also enjoyed the different cultures, food and sharing such experiences.”
- “And in the adult school for immigrants, especially immigrants who hold refugee status, they also arranged cultural food events, for the host and they came, and it was a sharing and exchange of culture. This was in Gvarv, not in Bø. One was in Gvarv and one in Akerhagen because the adult school is in Akkerhaugen.”
- “This is another important thing, I think, nowadays, because, in the bigger cities like Oslo, I travelled in Bergen, I heard about Trondheim, Stavanger, these cities have easier access for all [...]”

Participant 4 (Norway)

- “Another, I was, as an audience, not a participant, so that was an Iranian movement, Women's Life Freedom.”
- “Yeah, and I can tell another thing which is very important and very interesting, that the film club, Gulbring. They arrange different kinds of cultural movies from different countries. And after that, they have a discussion about a specific culture. I saw Colombian or from Peru or Latin movies. I saw Bhutan, not still Indian. So, it's a great initiative I think to share and share and exchange cultures.”

As initiatives to overcome social exclusion in any country, insights from the statements above can be listed below:

- **Organizing cultural events and food festivals:** Municipalities and adult schools in Norway have hosted events showcasing various immigrant cultures, including Syrian and Afghan cuisine. These events promote mutual understanding and inclusion by allowing host communities and immigrant groups to share and learn about each other's cultures.
- **Hosting discussions and talks on diverse cultures:** Universities and community organizations in Norway have organized talks, discussions, and film screenings

focusing on different cultures like Bangladesh and Iran. These platforms facilitate cultural exchange and learning.

- **Improving access to services in larger cities:** Larger cities in Norway, such as Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim, and Stavanger, offer better access to services and resources for diverse communities compared to smaller towns.
- **Strengthening social relations and civic participation:** Community Initiatives like the film club in Gulbring aim to unite people from diverse backgrounds, foster meaningful relationships, and promote civic engagement. These efforts involve movie screenings followed by discussions on various cultures.

Overall, these community initiatives supported by government policies underscore the importance of creating opportunities for cultural exchange, enhancing access to services, and encouraging social relations and civic participation to address social exclusion. They reflect a commitment to building inclusive communities.

5 Discussion

In this section I will summarize the findings of the study in relation to the research questions. The study contributes to the understanding of social sustainability and inclusive communities, by studying the challenges behind it.

Overall, there appears to be a sense of harmony and cohesion within communities. This qualitative study found that Bø, Norway, and Pune, India faced numerous barriers to social inclusion at the macro (policy level) and micro levels (community level). Data shows that a significant portion of the population feels marginalized, primarily due to cultural conservatism and lower social status resulting from low income (observed in both Norway and India). Caste-based discrimination exerted a significant influence, both directly and indirectly, in developing feelings of exclusion among individuals in India.

Challenges to achieving equal access to community spaces for social inclusion (RQ1)

A significant insight from the data revealed that the challenges were interrelated, and it is hard to study them in isolation. Social factors and Policy and Governance factors emerged as the main challenges both in Bø, Norway and Pune, India (see Figure 4).

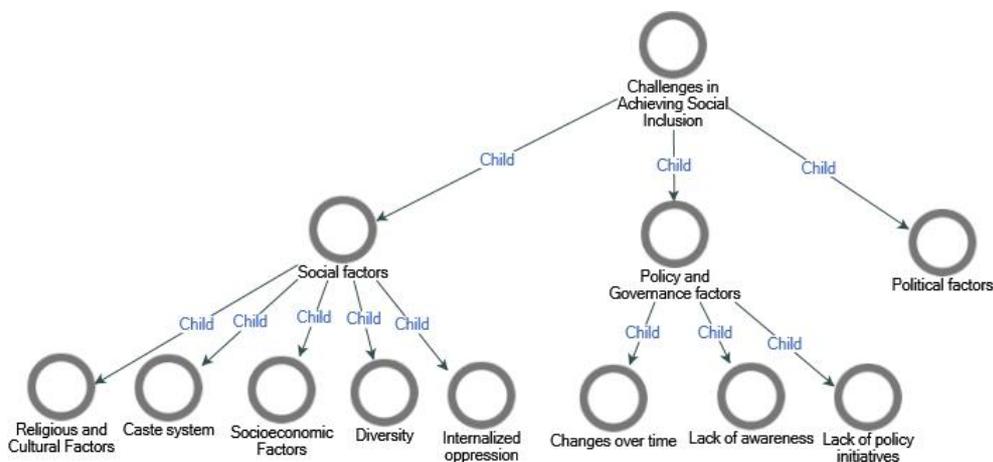


Figure 4 Challenges in Social Inclusion (RQ1)

The data showed that both Norway and India consist of conservative societies. The interconnected relationship between income and cultural conservatism resulted in increasing experiences of exclusion. The challenges are discussed in detail in the following paragraphs both for Norway and India.

Norway

In Norway, under social factors, the preservation of cultural identity and traditions among most Norwegians contributes to a conservative mindset, rendering immigrants more prone to feelings of exclusion. Moreover, immigrants face challenges in upholding their cultural heritage within Norway's predominantly homogeneous society, where a strong emphasis on Norwegian identity often leads to the perception of immigrants as outsiders. This indicates a majoritarian dominant rule of white Norwegians.

Second, low social status due to low-income results in a feeling of exclusion among immigrants in Norway. It could be due to lower job opportunities for internationals with limited Norwegian language skills mounted by the high cost of living.

Finally, although Norway does not have much diversity, it still finds it hard to create an environment of inclusiveness at the community level. This could be due to the comparatively large number of immigrants over the years and also due to the heterogeneity of the immigrant populace.

To address these challenges and promote social inclusion for immigrants, a multifaceted approach is necessary, fostering cultural exchange and inclusion:

- Support government-led initiatives aimed at facilitating genuine interactions and dialogue between the 'Norwegians' and 'immigrant/minority groups'.
- Invest in programs promoting cross-cultural learning, like the film club featuring movies from various countries and fostering discussions.
- Enhance media representation of minority perspectives and narratives to challenge stereotypes and foster mutual understanding.

When it comes to policy and governance-related challenges, community initiatives play a significant role in complementing the inclusive policies implemented at the municipality level. Despite Norway's anti-discrimination laws and equality-promoting policies, the research indicates a disparity between formal regulations and their actual implementation. However, some municipalities have shown effective implementation of these policies and have reaped their benefits. Such successes can serve as inspiration for other municipalities seeking to enhance their inclusive practices. This could be due to insufficient representation of the immigrant community during policy formation or implementation, including perspectives of children.

Second, limited awareness efforts by municipalities to encourage participation in social inclusion initiatives.

Some ways to address the challenges close the divide between policies and their implementation:

- Regularly assess and review current anti-discrimination legislation and equality policies to pinpoint areas lacking implementation.
- Grant local municipalities the authority to customize inclusive initiatives and services, catering to the specific requirements of their diverse populations.
- Enhance government accountability and receptiveness to the firsthand experiences of marginalized communities to guarantee policies yield the intended effects.

A study conducted at the municipality level could provide valuable insights into these challenges and help develop targeted strategies to enhance social inclusion. Additionally, to address the high transportation cost in Norway, it could be interesting to explore 'Achieving Pareto efficiency' from economics on the efficiency of resources. This concept is commonly used to assess the allocation of resources in an economy.

Future Research

In this context, I recommend undertaking a comprehensive study to assess the effectiveness of various community-based activities designed to promote social inclusion of immigrants. This study should focus specifically on inclusive initiatives, such as language training programs and employment placement schemes, to determine their efficiency and impact on immigrant communities. Additionally, I propose a detailed examination evaluating the performance of each municipality in implementing inclusive community-level initiatives. Such an assessment would provide valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of existing approaches and help identify areas for improvement. Furthermore, it is suggested to conduct a separate study to investigate the feasibility and applicability of the 'Pareto efficiency' approach in the context of community-level initiatives. This approach could offer valuable guidance on optimizing resource allocation and maximizing social welfare outcomes within diverse communities.

India

In the Indian context, the problem showed a complex relationship between religions, cultures, and the low-income generation. The caste system could be acting as a catalyst in creating social exclusion. It is rooted in the Hindu religion through the 'Varna' system. This has resulted in multi-layered, twisted caste, and class discrimination in Indian society. We need a long-term and deeper study to understand what kind of role the caste system has played in making India socially inclusive/exclusive. Some data-driven proofs of barriers to an inclusive society are listed below:

- Participant 1 provides insights into how the caste system deeply influences Indian society, affecting social interactions and opportunities in education and employment.
- Upper-caste individuals, such as Brahmins and Kshatriyas, tend to monopolize prestigious jobs and educational institutions, while relegating lower-caste communities, like Dalits and Shudras, to menial tasks and limited prospects.
- This entrenched social hierarchy, rooted in religious and cultural norms, creates exclusionary dynamics where access to resources and opportunities is largely determined by one's caste identity.
- The reluctance of privileged upper castes to relinquish their advantages perpetuates this system, posing a significant challenge to dismantling it.
- The influence of the caste system extends beyond religious and social spheres into economic and political domains, with economic power predominantly held by upper-caste individuals.
- The concept of 'mental slavery' highlights how marginalized communities internalize oppressive beliefs, further reinforcing existing power imbalances.
- This psychological dimension underscores the deep-rooted nature of the challenges hindering genuine social inclusion in India.

To address this challenge in India, it is necessary to have a deeper understanding of the historical, social, and psychological dimensions of the caste system and how it has affected marginalized communities.

With regard to policy and governance, unbiased policy implementation is a difficult task due to deep-rooted caste-based discrimination. Implementation should be carried

out according to the principles of the Indian constitution. The data showed that there is discrimination in the implementation of policies based on various caste and class-related layers. The Indian constitution, spearheaded by B.R. Ambedkar, explicitly champions social justice and the eradication of the caste system, ensuring equal rights and opportunities for all citizens irrespective of their social or economic standing. However, empirical evidence suggests that, in reality, government policies often disproportionately benefit the upper castes and privileged classes, leaving marginalized communities to cope with systemic hurdles and exclusion.

Participant 1 from India articulates this disparity, highlighting how educational and job opportunities are monopolized by the upper-class and upper-caste individuals, despite constitutional provisions mandating equal access. This deep-rooted dominance maintains existing social hierarchies, depriving marginalized sections of their rightful opportunities.

Moreover, the entrenched biases against lower castes, as underscored by participants, highlight the urgency for a paradigm shift in societal attitudes and power structures. Mere enactment of progressive policies is insufficient; their effective implementation necessitates concerted efforts to dismantle structural barriers and challenge ingrained prejudices.

To bridge the gap between policy and practice, I propose a comprehensive approach encompassing:

- Strengthening action-oriented initiatives and ensuring their equitable enforcement across all sectors, including education, employment, and political representation.
- Launching comprehensive awareness campaigns to educate the community about constitutional values of equality and non-discrimination, fostering a culture of diversity and respect.
- Empowering marginalized communities through the provision of resources, skills, and opportunities for active participation in socio-economic and political spheres.
- Enhancing transparency and accountability in governance, with unbiased, efficient, and effective grievance redressal mechanisms to combat discrimination and exclusion.

- Promoting inclusive policymaking processes that ask input from diverse stakeholders, including historically marginalized groups.

By aligning policy implementation with the progressive ethos of the Indian constitution, the nation can stride towards fostering a more just and inclusive society where the benefits of development are equitably distributed.

Moreover, initiatives should be implemented to empower marginalized communities, enabling them to advocate for their rights, and engage actively in social, economic, and political spheres.

Navigating Inclusion: Parallel Journeys in India and Norway (RQ2)

The key similarities in the Norwegian and Indian contexts are *Social Factors* and *Policy and Governance Factors* such as lack of policy initiative and lack of awareness (see Figure 5). However, the nature of these challenges differs.

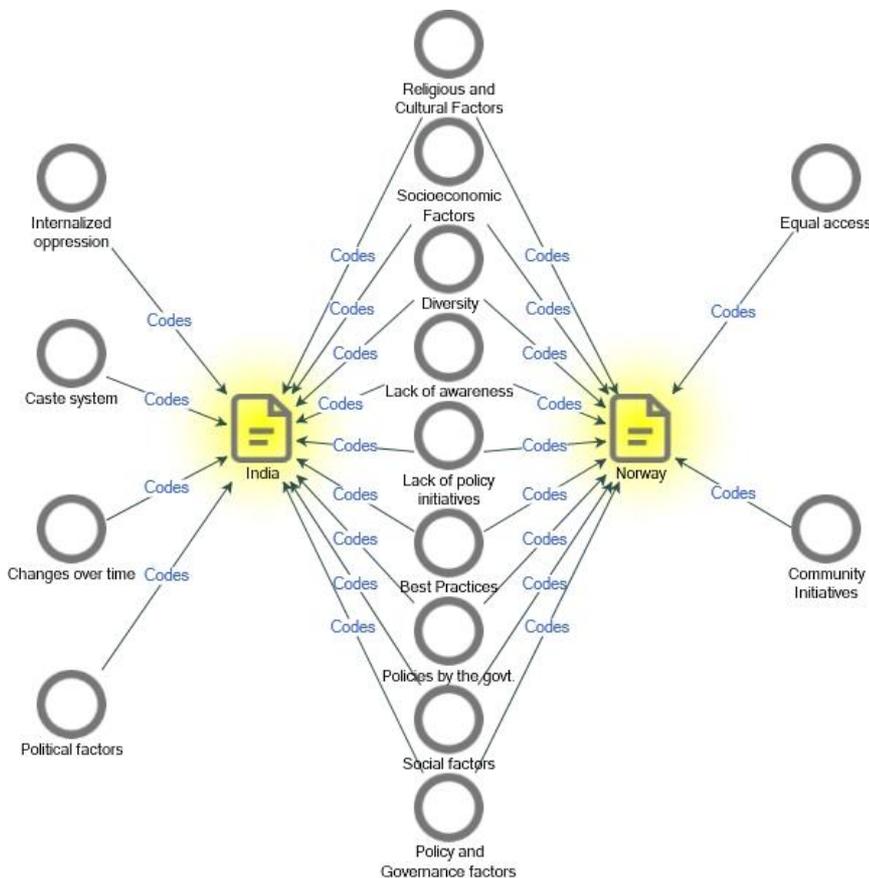


Figure 5 Similarities & differences between Norway and India (RQ2)

One key reason for these two similarities could be due to cultural conservatism. In both countries, the intersection of economic status and social identity could be creating systemic obstacles to full inclusiveness.

However, the notable differences in these challenges are some concepts from *Social Factors* such as the caste system and internalized oppression; *Policy and Governance Factors* such as changes overtime; and *Political Factors*. The caste system, unique to India, is deeply ingrained due to the country's Hindu religious majority and conservative societal norms, fostering segregation and social exclusion. Considering most Indians are religious, the problem escalates. This environment may also contribute to internalized oppression and other forms of oppression among marginalized groups. In contrast, the Norwegian context exhibits a slower pace of development, with a cultural emphasis on preserving natural landscapes, particularly forests. Additionally, with no reference to politics, Norway demonstrates a strong sense of democracy where power resides with the people. However, religion, politics, and power in India are interconnected, challenging the informal community activities and initiatives for social inclusion. In Norway, community-built organizations like Dugnad and the Red Cross, along with university initiatives, exemplify inclusive efforts. However, in India, there is less mention of community engagement, placing a heavier burden on the government to implement effective measures at the community level. Overcoming social exclusion in India thus requires comprehensive planning and innovation in implementation, given the country's vast population and diverse societal landscape.

In Norway, recognizing the intricate interplay between economic and social factors, adopting a holistic approach could aid in addressing aspects such as affordability, accessibility, representation, and the cultivation of a sense of belonging. Fostering inclusivity in Norway may require addressing both the material and socio-psychological dimensions of exclusion.

Additionally, as identified by Participant 4, the Norwegian municipalities could work together in the future to build inclusive communities in Norway. More interactive platforms on various aspects could bring the community together to discuss and understand different cultures, making Norway a multicultural and inclusive country.

Participant 1 suggests that Indians should adopt a scientific temperament to question religion and challenge hegemonic structures. The caste system stands out as a significant barrier to inclusivity in India, emphasizing the importance of highlighting B.R. Ambedkar's efforts in abolishing it. I believe the established social hierarchy based on caste has significantly hindered social inclusion, denying lower castes equal

opportunities and respect. The reluctance to challenge this system highlights the deep-seated nature of these biases, ingrained in society over generations. I argue that there is a need to address this challenge. The approach could be by bringing a fundamental shift in attitudes and efforts to reduce the structural barriers that continue caste-based discrimination and inequality in India. A holistic study is needed to craft how it can be innovated and implemented to address deep-rooted social exclusion.

Education geared towards fostering informed citizenship could empower individuals in India to reclaim agency and contribute to building an inclusive state. Additionally, a nuanced approach promoting religious tolerance and equal treatment in educational settings may be more effective. Policy decisions should carefully balance social inclusion, diversity, and educational requirements, requiring thoughtful deliberation and stakeholder input.

Additionally, the private sector promoting inclusivity and diversity parallels the government's initiatives in allocating seats for marginalized groups, especially considering the significant role the private sector plays in employment in India. There is a need for non-discriminating policies based on diversity. Inclusive policies along with training and accountability measures, for organizations to cultivate inclusive workplaces, extending beyond the corporate to broader societal dynamics. The current situation in India teaches us that an imperfect reservation system is ineffective in fostering social inclusion.

I argue enhancing community resilience is crucial for the long-term development of inclusive societies, a task that may require considerable time and effort. Additionally, addressing the challenges demands a comprehensive approach involving legal reforms, affirmative action, and social reform to shift societal attitudes to ensure equitable access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities for all segments of society.

My key thoughts on inclusiveness

Both Norwegian and Indian communities have a lot of things that they can learn and appreciate from each other. I argue our mentality needs to move from 'I' to 'Us'. Progressive thinking with moral reawakening and a sense of duty towards others should be materialized at an individual level. This means a bottom-up approach to initiatives, emphasising the importance of community-level engagement and the role of ordinary

citizens in driving social change. Social change is needed to fully address issues of racial inequality and social exclusion. Learning from our past mistakes, I argue there is a need for inclusiveness to be part of any initiative from the outset, considering all the important components (see Figure 6).

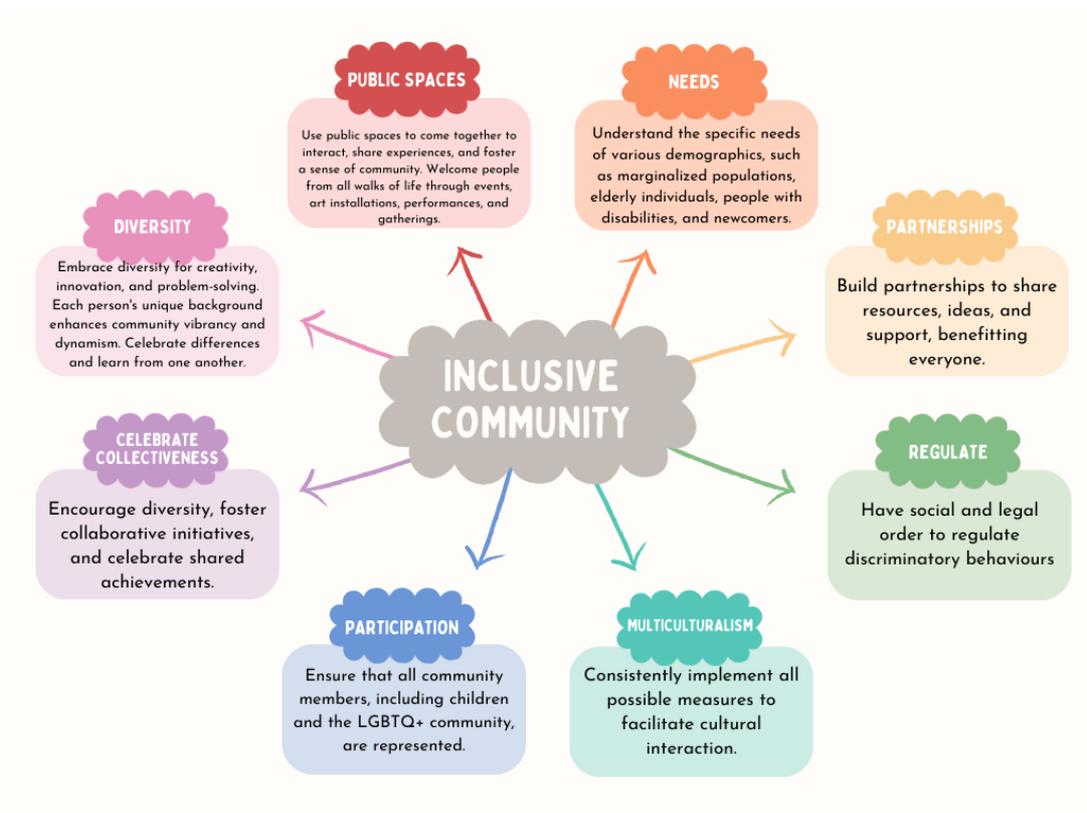


Figure 6 Author-created 'Components of an Inclusive Community'

Furthermore, fostering an exchange of knowledge and ideas between Norway and India can be achieved through initiatives like the 'Social Justice and Culture: Sustainable Social Welfare in Neoliberal Times' (SOJUCU) program. This program has played a significant role in bridging the contexts of Norway and India.

6 Conclusion

In this section, I propose a solution based on a qualitative study to understand the challenges of achieving inclusive societies. The aim is to make societies more inclusive.

Introspecting for solutions

My proposed solution for promoting social inclusion focuses on bridging cultural divides through simplicity. It draws upon a fundamental human interest in food and curiosity, providing strategies that are universally applicable with context-specific adjustments. Moreover, it draws upon existing academic literature on social ties and cultural respect to promote harmonious living within diverse communities. An expanded discussion on some of the key topics is as follows:

Achieving Inclusive Society in Norway: Addressing the Cultural Acceptance and High Costs of Living Challenge

While Norway is ranked as one of the most inclusive societies and is one of the most stable democracies, challenges to achieving true social inclusion remain. Apart from inclusive governance and responsive policies, Putnam's idea of public representation is significantly visible in Norway. Here, communities initiate the ideas for addressing social exclusion. Considering this as a good base, Norway can induct initiatives and services to cater to the specific needs of its diverse populations. Exploiting community spaces such as libraries, play areas, gardens etc. to promote multicultural interactions through various activities with the participation of the beneficiaries (Jones, 2022).

Furthermore, according to Fukuyama's idea of democracy, Norway should uphold the rule of law by having stricter punishment against discrimination. Inspired by Canadian policy (Uberoi, 2016; Lindquist et al., 2022), exploring the feasibility of 'multiculturalism' along with 'nation building' as official government policies could benefit Norway. Countering any kind of hegemonic form of dominance, Norway could benefit from having an open-minded approach towards various cultures, making integration easier. Leveraging the social networks in local communities, Norway could address the widening skill gap. Moreover, proactive measures are necessary at the

official government policy level to avoid Institutional racism²⁸ or systematic racism²⁹ in Norway.

To tackle issues such as high transportation costs for immigrants, limited public transportation facilities, and housing costs, I propose exploring the concept of 'Pareto efficiency'. In essence, the key factor for the success of efforts lies in the comprehensive identification and engagement of all stakeholders involved along with insights from the resource dependence theory, prospect theory, and organisational life cycle theory (Hayes, 2022).

Achieving Inclusive Society in India: Addressing the Caste Challenge

Constituted under the leadership of B.R. Ambedkar, India's constitution explicitly advocates for social justice and the eradication of the caste system. Ambedkar, a Dalit himself, emphasized the deeply rooted nature of caste-based discrimination and inequality in Indian society. In his work 'Annihilation of Caste', he puts forth a well-articulated argument that dismantling the caste system is essential for India to achieve true inclusivity and democracy, however, challenging in practice. Hence, there is a need for ongoing social reforms to uphold India's inclusiveness and democratic ideals. Paul Woodruff's exploration of the fundamentals for genuine democracy resonates with the Indian context, highlighting the importance of broad participation in governance and adherence to the rule of law. Additionally, as rightly identified by Robert D. Putnam, any attempt to build social connections with the participation of beneficiaries in a country with so much diversity requires a complete willingness to make it work. Half-hearted efforts or badly implemented policies are a waste of resources and the time lost is irreversible.

From the theoretical perspective, the application of grounded theory helped this study by giving a framework for abstraction. It helped me go beyond my own narratives and apply them to broader social, psychological, and structural contexts. Additionally, it also provided a flexible and adaptive approach to the study. Employing an inductive

²⁸ Systematic policies and practices within organizations and institutions that, whether deliberately or inadvertently, result in outcomes that consistently benefit one racial group or disadvantage another (Willis, 2021).

²⁹ A structure wherein public policies, institutional procedures, cultural portrayals, and societal norms function in diverse, frequently reinforcing manners to sustain inequality among racial groups (Willis, 2021).

approach provided by grounded theory, I may be too ambitious and hasty in introducing the abstract framework termed 'The Solution Lies in Simple Things'.

'Food' as a tool

Both Indian and Norwegian societies enjoy unique culinary traditions, with India's cuisine renowned for its diverse flavours and spices. By leveraging common ingredients, such as cheeses like 'Paneer', cultural exchange through cuisine becomes feasible. For instance, restaurants in Bø offer 'Paneer' dishes (see Appendix 6), exemplifying how food can serve as a medium for multicultural interaction and inclusive experiences. The data from both Norway and India stresses the role of food in bridging cultural divides and fostering inclusivity. Initiatives enabling cultural exchange planned around 'food' could be explored.

Exploring 'Curiosity' as a solution

Human beings possess an innate curiosity that diminishes over time amidst life's challenges. Creating platforms encouraging curiosity about other cultures through innovative, engaging initiatives can facilitate mutual understanding. However, such endeavours must be approached with sensitivity to avoid mistakeably offending cultural sensitivities or triggering conflicts based on beliefs. Trained professionals should lead these initiatives at the community level, employing inclusive research-driven approaches to mitigate exclusionary practices.

Sustainability aspect

This study offers valuable insights into the social sustainability of Norwegian and Indian contexts by identifying key challenges. Community engagement emerges important throughout the research, highlighting the need for cultural adaptation in inclusive initiatives. Emphasizing the importance of building social capital and fostering community engagement, the study suggests that community-led strategies are more likely to succeed. Providing communities with resources and flexibility, together with accountability measures, can enhance effectiveness. Leveraging existing social networks to augment inclusive policies may yield significant social and economic benefits.

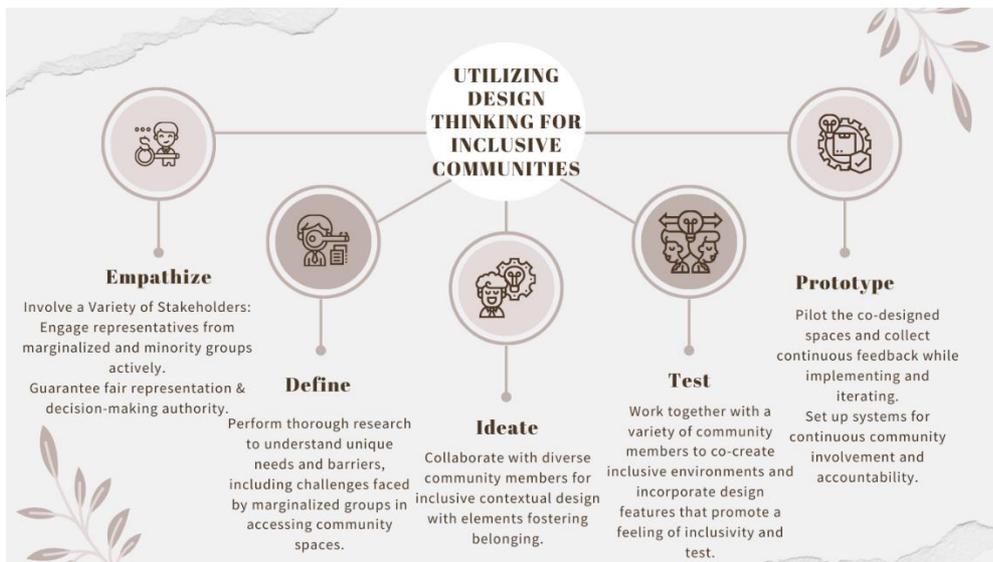


Figure 7 Author-created 'Community-Driven Participatory Design Process'

Applying insights from the Human Center Design process, I recommend a community-driven participatory design process (see Figure 7). This involves engaging diverse stakeholders, including marginalized groups in decision-making. Conducting contextual needs assessments helps understand unique challenges faced by these groups. Co-designing inclusive spaces with community members ensures flexibility and adaptability to varied needs. Implementing pilot projects and gathering feedback allows for iterative improvements. Through this approach, communities can create welcoming spaces that foster a sense of belonging and promote cross-cultural interactions. Continuous and consistent community engagement ensures responsiveness to evolving needs, ultimately enhancing social cohesion and fairness in communities.

Areas for Enhancing the Study

Reflecting on the study, I recognize areas for potential improvement. While the qualitative interview method suited the study's time constraints, an interdisciplinary approach with participatory action research could enhance implementation. This approach empowers communities as key stakeholders and fosters empowerment. Additionally, employing mixed methods to triangulate findings could enhance credibility and validity. Exploring quantitative methods, such as logit progression, to analyze the impact of inclusion-based policies on multiculturalism at the municipality level could be beneficial.

Limitations

As the study utilizes a small sample size, it may not fully represent the sentiments of the population. Second, language constraints likely affected the depth and nuance of the collected data. Third, limited access to marginalized communities, particularly in India, may have resulted in the exclusion of their perspectives from the study.

Challenges Associated with grounded theory

The study faced several limitations inherent in grounded theory. First, its iterative process of data collection and analysis is time-consuming. Second, the interpretative nature of grounded theory may have introduced personal bias. Third, using concepts without a theoretical framework to interpret the data poses challenges. Fourth, memoing could not be carried out extensively throughout the study. Next, due to the limited scale of the study, there was insufficient scope to attain 'theoretical saturation'. Furthermore, while the goal is to generate a new theory, clarity on this objective may not always be evident.

In summary, this research highlights the importance of tackling social, policy, and political obstacles to cultivate genuinely inclusive societies. It emphasizes promoting inclusive policymaking from the onset by engaging diverse stakeholders, especially marginalized communities, in decision-making. Empowering these groups through resource provision, skills enhancement, and opportunities for socio-economic participation is essential for realizing meaningful social justice and inclusion. Additionally, investigating such themes necessitates more than just determination; advanced methodological skills are crucial.

Special attention

Special attention is needed regarding my ability to capture insights from the relatively brief and direct responses from Participants 2 and 3. Recognizing the challenge of interpreting these 'quiet perceptions' within an evidence-based framework, I am mindful of the inherent complexities in qualitative research, especially when engaging with marginalized or underprivileged communities.

These 'quite perceptions' from the participants could be due to various factors, including fear of disrupting community harmony or a reluctance to express critical views openly. They may also be influenced by deeply ingrained societal norms or power dynamics, necessitating further exploration.

Methodologically, addressing this challenge, I recommend considering alternative approaches such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions with homogeneous groups, or participatory methods. These alternatives have the potential to yield richer data and deepen our understanding of participants' perspectives.

Reflecting on my positionality and interviewing skills, particularly when interacting with participants from marginalized backgrounds, is crucial to achieve the objective of this study. This highlights the lack of employing additional care, sensitivity, and specialized techniques to foster trust and encourage open dialogue.

I acknowledge the potential bias or limitations in interpreting certain responses in my analysis. I acknowledge failing to give a balanced representation of all participant perspectives in the analysis and findings is essential. The study may have overstated or overrepresented the of views from participants 1 and 4.

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8 Appendix

8.1 Appendix 1: Interview guide with Qualitative questionnaire

Understanding the challenges in building an inclusive community – A comparative study of informal community activities in Bø, Norway and Pune, India.

Introduction:

Have you ever been part of informal community events where families from the same neighbourhood come together? Perhaps you've taken part in informal gatherings organized by locals. Especially during childhood, we eagerly anticipated such events with music, singing, dancing, drama, and, of course, delicious food shared with neighbourhood friends. These occasions allowed every family to participate at their convenience, fostering friendships and bonds without regard to class or caste. Everyone was treated equally, welcoming neighbours of all backgrounds and religions to join the celebrations. Typically held in community spaces like nearby grounds or open areas, these events were organized through informal verbal invitations. The team structure of the organizers was also informal but efficient, with responsibilities divided among members. Such events broke barriers, building trust, and maintaining social cohesion, contributing to the creation of an inclusive community with many underlying benefits. Reflecting on my own experiences and observations, particularly in the context of neighbourhoods in Bø, Norway, and Pune, India, I recognize the significance of these informal activities in promoting a sense of belonging and community.

In my study, I aim to record the challenges of social inclusion/exclusion phenomena. I intend to study the challenges of building an inclusive community. It involves ensuring that individuals of any socioeconomic background can freely access public and community spaces like parks, playgrounds, roads, and public libraries. These spaces should encourage people to come together, engage in discussions, play, take strolls, or organize informal community events with unrestricted movement and access to public spaces.

To achieve this goal, I have interviewed four individuals: two from Norway and two from India. From India, it was my plan from the beginning to speak with an individual actively involved in organizing/in the capacity to organize such events. Additionally, one more individual (female/male) from underprivileged backgrounds to

understand their perspectives. For this study, I have used the term 'underprivileged' to refer to anyone with a 'Below Poverty Line' card issued by the government of India. I seek to understand both the perspectives of individuals actively involved in organizing such events and those from underprivileged backgrounds who may face additional barriers to participate.

During the interviews, I adhered to the ethical considerations of The National Research Ethics Committee (NREC), prioritizing participants' personal integrity, safety, and well-being. Consent is a prerequisite from all participants, ensuring they willingly and fully understand their involvement, particularly those from disadvantaged or vulnerable groups. Data is analyzed and interpreted with a focus on maintaining anonymity and confidentiality. Special care is taken to protect vulnerable populations, such as Dalits and religious minorities in India, with sufficient anonymity if needed. The study results will be shared with stakeholders, providing comprehensive information on how to interact with the data after dissemination. This study aims to support potential future research endeavours and promote the responsible use of research. The interview guide is developed to contribute to the credibility, confirmability, and dependability of the study.

By shedding light on the challenges and opportunities associated with informal community activities, this study seeks to contribute to a better understanding of how communities can work towards building more inclusive and cohesive environments, both in Bø, Norway, and Pune, India, and beyond.

Interview guide

Research Questions:

- What are the challenges to achieving equal access to community spaces?
- What are the similarities and differences in the challenges of achieving equal access to spaces for social inclusion amidst changing social contexts?

Interview Questions:

Introductory questions:

- Who are you and what do you do for a profession?
- Describe where you live.
- How long have you been living here/there?

Main theme questions:

RQ1: What are the challenges to achieving equal access to community spaces?

(people's perspective)

- Can you describe any instances where you or someone you know faced challenges in accessing community spaces?
- How do you perceive the accessibility of community spaces for different demographic groups (e.g., based on income, ethnicity, age, ability)?
- Have you encountered any physical barriers that hinder access to community spaces (e.g., lack of ramps, inaccessible entrances)?
- Can you share any experiences where socio-economic factors affected someone's ability to access community spaces?
- Do you believe any systemic issues contribute to unequal access to community spaces? If so, can you elaborate on them?
- How do you think access to community spaces could be improved for marginalized or underrepresented groups?
- Have you noticed any changes in the accessibility of community spaces over time? If so, what factors do you think have influenced these changes?

RQ 2: What are the similarities and differences in the challenges of achieving equal

access to spaces for social inclusion amidst changing social contexts? (policy perspective)

- From your perspective, how have policies or regulations influenced access to community spaces for different groups within society?
- Can you describe any specific policies or initiatives that have been implemented to promote equal access to community spaces? How effective do you think they have been?
- Have you observed any changes in societal attitudes towards inclusivity in community spaces over time? If so, how do you think these changes have impacted access?
- How do you think broader social trends, such as urbanization or gentrification, have influenced access to community spaces?
- Are there any international examples or best practices in promoting equal access to community spaces that you think could be applied in our context?

- In your opinion, what role should government agencies, community organizations, and other stakeholders play in addressing the challenges of unequal access to community spaces?

Closing question:

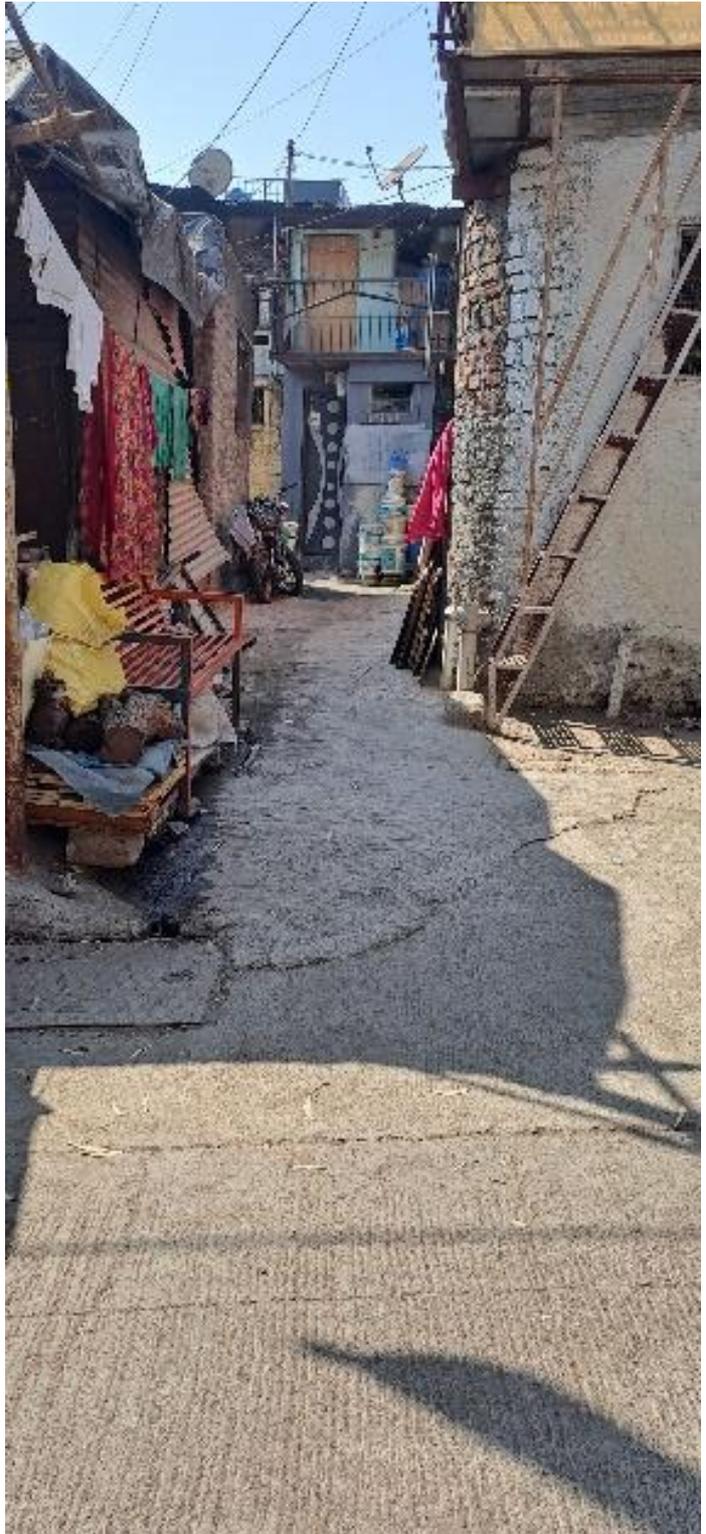
- Do you have anything to add before we end this conversation? Anything important that I did not ask you?

8.2 Appendix 2: The Lakshminagar slum















Picture 6 Open toilet for children.

8.3 Appendix 3: Sambhanagar and Devi Aai slum descriptions

Sambhanagar (Sambhajinagar) Slum:

Sambhanagar settlement (Jones, 2008), which has been inhabited for 70 years, is home to a diverse community. Among its residents are Vadari-speaking individuals, lemon-chilli sellers and utensil vendors, homeless individuals living on the footpaths. According to them, local corporator Rana Bhai permitted them to reside in the area. Over time, the settlement has seen improvements, including the installation of water lines, toilets, electricity, and a sheltered courtyard. However, the population of this region is characterized by a high level of mobility, with residents frequently migrating.

The settlement comprises approximately 100 to 150 households, and a significant aspect of the community is its adherence to superstitions, which often leads to reluctance to seek medical care and vaccination until the late stages of illness. Language diversity is evident in the region, with Vadari and Pardhi being two of the spoken languages. Educational opportunities for children are limited, resulting in low school attendance rates, particularly among girls who are often married off at a young age. Additionally, alcoholism is prevalent among both men and women in the community.

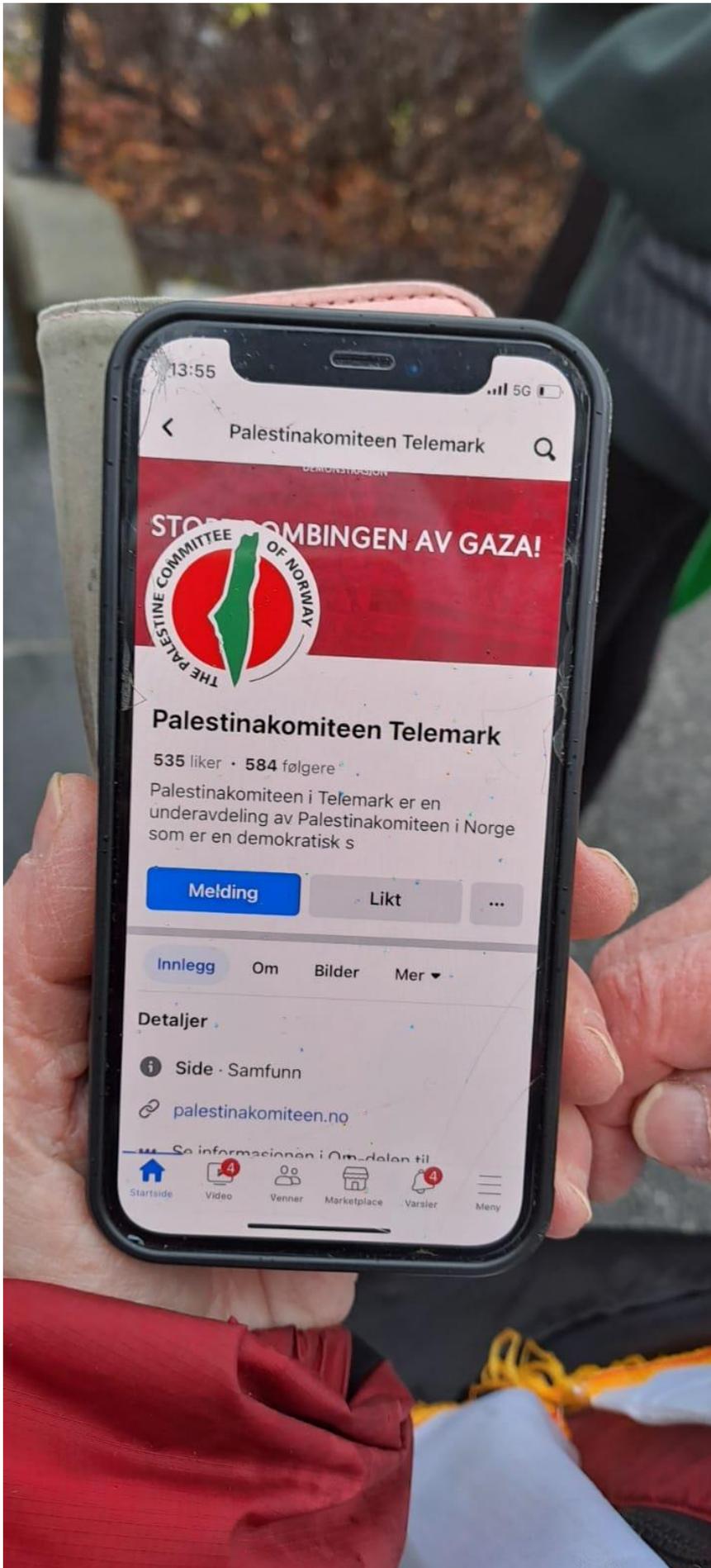
Devi Aai Slum:

This settlement, with a history spanning 70 to 80 years, comprises only 30 to 35 houses. Despite its age, the settlement lacks basic amenities. Although there are records documenting the settlement's existence. Approximately five years ago, the region had access to water and toilet facilities, but there is currently no sheltered 'courtyard shelter' (Anganwadi³⁰) available. Additionally, schools and hospitals are situated far from the settlement, posing challenges to children's education and access to healthcare. Consequently, many children drop out of school before completing the 10th standard. Alcoholism is prevalent in the community, contributing to social disunity. Despite being comprised primarily of kin and relatives, there is a lack of cohesion within the settlement.

³⁰ <https://womenchild.maharashtra.gov.in/content/innerpage/anganwadi-functions.php>

8.4 Appendix 4: From the fieldwork in Bø town



















8.5 Appendix 5: From the fieldwork in Pune city



Figure 8 Individuals gathering by a tea stall near The Pavilion Mall



Figure 9 SB road during peak hours, indicating the gender distribution



Figure 10 Individuals at an eatery during lunch, indicating the gender distribution



Figure 11 Swargate bus stand



Figure 12 Auto poster calls for student union protest on February 23rd, 2024



Figure 13 SPPU student group performing for indigenous rights on 'Marathi Bhasha Diwas' - Feb 27, 2024





An indigenous people's village in Junnar, Pune



Figure 14 A parent of a malnourished child in Junnar, Pune

Underweight woman shares her water crisis ordeal in Junnar, Pune; unclear if villagers suffer from climate change or social injustice.













8.6 Appendix 6: Paneer dishes in Bø, Norway

Figure 7



Figure 7&8 Food: Bridging Divides! (Source: Fabian Camilo Bocanegra Soto's gallery)

Figure 8

