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Frontiers of Citizenship:

A Study of Refugee Trajectories in Local Integration

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Abstract

This thesis examines how local integration of refugees can be supported through their active citizenship. It is grounded in a critical application of Martha Nussbaum's capabilities approach to the concept of active citizenship as both a strategy and a goal in states' policies on refugees' local integration. It has a qualitative, interdisciplinary approach and argues that the predominant institutional understandings of local integration vary, which necessitates an analysis of states' approaches to local integration. As active citizenship is an explicit part of Denmark's policy on integration, a case study is conducted to understand the relation between active citizenship and local integration. The case study is based on interviews with refugees and professionals working with integration in Denmark and focuses specifically on the process of local integration as experienced by refugees. On this background, the thesis concludes that active citizenship, both theoretically and in practice, has the potential to support the social aspect of local integration. As such, it transcends integration as the granting of rights and acquisition of formal citizenship. However, it is important to maintain a focus on refugees' realisation of rights and central capabilities and to remain cognisant of the reciprocity between actors in local integration. These results highlight the importance of deliberation with refugees when implementing state policies that approach local integration through normative concepts such as that of active citizenship.

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