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In a Space of Non-existence

The Life of Afghan Undocumented Refugees in Malmö

A Bachelor Thesis in Social Anthropology

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Abstract

As the 'era of borders' can define the structure of the present European Union and its nation-state members, the rapid increase in international migration and the high amount of refugees can reveal how today's EU politics has come to focus on the importance of maintaining the present-day European Union and its unifying identity. In consequence to the on-going politics, it is required to lower the inflow of migrants and refugees. In relation to this, I discover how and why Afghani refugee youths make their way to Sweden and the 'illegal' life some of them are living. The purpose of this thesis is to uncover the complex life of Afghan undocumented refugees living in Malmö, Sweden. It examines their relation to belonging and identity within three different sociocultural spheres: the past life and experiences, the present day situation in Sweden and their connection to the activist organisations of Asylgruppen Malmö and Asylstafetten. A fourth parallel sphere, a space of non-existence, is also examined and uncovered as the primary sphere to an undocumented refugee. Though this sphere is connected to the first three spheres, it is still excluded and placed in an uncertain relation to these.

Key words: social anthropology, undocumented refugees, belonging, identity, activism, social movements.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

Undocumented refugees live their life in a parallel sociocultural world, in a space of non-existence. They live a life excluded from most of the society's rights, norms and laws. The undocumented refugees are not allowed to stay within the borders of the nation-state and are defined as illegal immigrants.

The research of this thesis was conducted in the culturally complex city Malmö that is located in the south part of Sweden. The city veils a parallel society that consists of a large group of young undocumented refugees. There are no statistics but an estimated 2-4 million undocumented refugees circulate within the European Union (EU) and about 10- 50 000 lives in Sweden (URL 1). An undocumented refugee is usually on the move not to be caught and found by the authorities. However the group of people that I came in contact with during my research were both willing and often able to find different solutions to continue to live in Malmö. One major reason for this is that some parts of the city have become sanctuaries for young undocumented refugees much due to the activist organisations and networks that facilitate political, social and economic support to undocumented refugees.

I chose to limit my study to the life experiences of young undocumented Afghan refugee men living in Malmö. I decided to only focus upon Afghani men because they are overrepresented as undocumented refugees in Malmö and were therefore the persons that I mainly came in contact with. There are of course undocumented Afghani women as well, but to write about these women would demand several other additional perspectives that would have made this thesis too extensive. All of the Afghani undocumented refugee men are connected to the activist organisations The Asylum Group Malmö (Asylgruppen Malmö) (URL 2) and/or The Asylum Relay (Asylstafetten) (URL 3).

The purpose of this thesis is to elucidate the complexity of young undocumented Afghan refugees construction of belonging. Throughout the chapters I examine the different spheres they are connected to as well as the sphere I call 'a space of non-existence'. I study what consequences living as an undocumented refugee has for

one's identity and if one can establish a belonging by becoming part of the proactive organisations that protect and support the rights of undocumented refugees.

As I in this thesis seek a holistic understanding of the undocumented refugees life and construction of belonging in a Swedish context, I therefore aim to answer the question:

What does it mean to live as an undocumented refugee in Malmö?

Two additional questions are added to help answer my main research question:

How does an undocumented refugee construct a belonging within the context he lives in?

Does the activist organisations The Asylum Group Malmö and The Asylum Relay have an impact on undocumented refugees' construction of belonging, and if so, in what way(s)?

Over a period of one and a half years (2014 – 2016) I conducted participant observation and several unstructured interviews with my focus group. I also held semi-structured interviews with four key informants. I started my research conducting participant observation on occasional meetings, although to deepen my understanding of the field, this eventually turned me into taking an active role as one of the activists within both of the organisations. I signed up and became a contact person within the Asylum Group Malmö (AGM), and I spent time within this social setting with new friends as both a researcher and a private person. Furthermore, I attended The Asylum Relay (AR) as an activist for four weeks.

1.2 Previous Research

The field of international migration is widely researched within several different disciplines, such as anthropology, sociology, economics, political science and so forth. Below I have chosen to focus upon previous research from the anthropology of migration, related to the field of my study.

The anthropology of migration is the subject of numerous focus areas as well as theoretical standpoints. The focus is divided between areas of identity and belonging, globalisation and transnationalism, nation-states and borders, diaspora, migrant culture(s) and so fourth. The subject of migration has produced a large amount of research literature (Whyte 2011; Khosravi 2010; Malkki 1992; Jackson 2002; Hylland Eriksen 2004) and in relation to migration, identity and belonging as well as culture (Chambers 1994; Bauman 1999), and social movements within migrant communities as reactions to restrictions of mobility (Nyers & Rygiel 2012). Also, transnationalism as theory (Glick Schiller 2015) and other closely related conceptual frameworks such as diaspora and border theory (Clifford 1994). Critics (Ahmed et al. 2003) question most of the above-mentioned theoretical standpoints, especially the diaspora theory, and aims to rethink the perception of 'home' in migration through a feminist, intersectional theoretical perspective on transnational areas. Ahmed. et al.'s (2003) theoretical standpoint is central to my thesis, however the theories of Khosravi (2010) and Hylland Eriksen (2004) are also crucial parts of the understanding of this field.

As mentioned above, the anthropology of migration is well explored, however the literature does not fully cover the complex life situations of undocumented refugees in Swedish local contexts, and how this undocumented life affects the sense of belonging and creation of identity. Therefore I hope to contribute to a more holistic understanding of the contemporary situation for neglected Afghani undocumented refugees in a present-day reality.

1.3 The Theoretical Framework

In this section I will give an overview of the theoretical framework to better grasp the foundation of the factors that create the state of the undocumented. Thereafter I move on to the theory of belonging and uncover the aspects that are essential for humans and their identity. Thereafter, the refugee is discussed in terms of 'uprooted' from history and the struggle to 'reground' within the space that the refugee is living in. Lastly, the theory of migrant movements and citizenship is also highlighted as an important aspect to have in mind while reading this thesis.

Borders and the nation-state

The 'era of borders' decides how the world is portrayed; today's borders are constructed to define differences, but the borders appear as natural, unbreakable and inevitable parts of the nation-state and the 'national order' becomes the natural or normal order. Without these borders the nation-state cannot exist. (Khosravi 2010: 1-2). As the borders become the outermost aspect in maintaining the national order of things, the idea that the action of crossing is pathological and unnatural is strengthening the idea of borders. It is not only the crossing borders that upset the nation-state system and its identity: the pathologisation, the sickness of uprootedness can also take several different forms, often interrelated, such as medical, political and moral (Malkki 1992: 32-34).

Within this nation-state system, undocumented refugees and unidentified asylum seekers threatens the bond between man and citizen, nativity and nationality. They are portrayed as neither one thing nor the other, neither here nor there. They are placed in the space in between the organised, fixed cultural classification within the nation-state (Khosravi 2010: 2-3). Nation-states fear that these peoples will tear up the safety of what the constructed national-cultural identity is supposed to represent. They are seen as a symbolic threat to national sovereignty and the purity of the citizens.

Further, Khosravi (2010) problematizes how the borders both directly and indirectly create real life consequences and difficulties for those people who are forced to cross and illegally trespass the borders of the nation-states. As these borders are being crossed, the people become criminalised and are left vulnerable not only by being excluded from the society, but also through state violence such as regulations, political structures, the police and state priorities. They are left in a space without being able to protect themselves. Out of this conception of illegal immigrants, the system marks these peoples as unwanted non-citizens that the nation-state needs to deport (Khosravi 2010: 3-4).

To Belong to Somewhere

As mentioned earlier, one part of the thesis purpose is to understand the Afghan undocumented refugees' construction of belonging within their parallel space in relation to the Swedish society. The undocumented refugees are living with an ever-

threatened identity and a constant fight for a re-claiming of it, because they live illegally within the borders of a nation-state. They exist in a home that does not "belong" to them. Bauman concludes in his work *Cultural Praxis* (1999): "No thoughts are given to identity when `belonging' comes naturally, when it does not need to be fought for, earned, claimed and defended; when one `belongs' just by going through the motions which seem obvious thanks simply to the absence of competitors." (xxx).

It is when the cultural identity cannot longer be taken for granted and is being threatened, that the identity suddenly no longer appears 'naturally' but it instead becomes crucial to re-establish and re-enlighten the self to secure its survival (Ibid.).

In her article *"National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees"* (1992), Malkki discusses the implications of sedentarism by conceptualising the word of 'displacement'. Sedentarism is found in the deepest thoughts of belonging to the "national soils" that connect peoples and cultures to their specific places. It confirms the national geography, the divided nations within the modern world order. Sedentarism actively territorialises both the cultural and national identity, and is taken for granted to the extent that it is almost invisible. Because of this naturalised view of where a person is meant to belong, the territorial displacement becomes unnatural and pathological. It is when the national order of things has to confront displacement and its people, that the sedentarist metaphysic becomes the most visible. Earlier theoretical standpoints examine the place of the refugees in the national order of things, and Malkki (1992) also argues that this highlights how people construct, claim and remember particular places as homelands and nations. She concludes that identity cannot only be the birthplace and the homeland, but have a multiplicity of different attachments that humans form to places by living there, imagining them and remembering it. However as diverse the identity connected to home is, it is not to forget that deterritorialisation and identity are closely connected.

One could criticise the theory of sedentarism when analysing today's globalised world. Even though the world is portrayed as globalised, Malkki (1992) still touches upon the foundation of the nation-state logic and foremost the national order of

things, which in today's world is the predominant way of constructing homeland and identities. This theory is therefore central to the understanding of why displacement becomes pathological and unacceptable even in a modern-day globalised setting.

"Being grounded is not necessarily about being fixed; being mobile is not necessarily about being detached." (Ahmed et al. 2003: 5). This theoretical point of view is criticising and rethinking the diaspora theory that usually regards 'home' and 'homeland', and migrants' relations to these as the fundamental place of identity. The concepts of "uprooting" and "regrounding" question that 'home' for refugees are only something they leave behind. Homes are made and remade as the grounds and circumstances for people change. When relating to 'home' it is therefore better referred to as something that is being reclaimed and reprocessed. Aspects such as habits, objects, histories and names that has been uprooted in the displacement process can be gathered in the central meaning of home, and by creating a mix of both pasts and futures through inhabiting the grounds of the present (a.a 8-9).

To continue with the theory of identity, the notion of the human as a social being, it is central to connect the social world with the human identity to come closer to an understanding of the creating of it. A social being develops and changes throughout life. Our self develops in connection to the social world that surrounds us, and will thereafter follow and change us depending on the social structures we are living within. The human is therefore a result of social processes and humans create this social and cultural world to be able to fulfil biological needs. We would not exist without these common social grounds and unspoken rules for how to behave as humans. All are constructed by culture as cultural beings. Humans are also part of a culture depending on where that person was born and where that person lives (Hylland Eriksen 2000: 43-44, 47).

Movements and Citizenship

The social movements and the migrant political activism that is analysed in this thesis can be understood as a consequence of restrict mobility for some people in today's globalised world.

Restrictions on mobility and citizenship generates new forms of inequality and social exclusion within the borders of the nation-states, the contradistinction and counter-reaction to these controls can be found in new forms of migrant political activism. By investigating the migrant citizenship from the social movements on a grass root level, it is also possible to understand the background and circumstances of specific strategies, knowledge and tactics that migrant groups organise in their struggle for the right to movement (Nyers & Rygiel 2012: 2).

The regulation of mobility plays a key role in the definition of citizenship. The nation-state controls mobility and movement, though this does not highlight how these regulations are producing new ways for people to be mobile or how new subjectivities are being created in and through the order of the mobility. These new political orders are different ways of organising political communities and can be reflected upon through the values of justice, equality and recognition. The governing of mobility is directly linked to the construction of citizenship not only through a legal and political nation-state perspective, it also influences the daily life related to be politically active (a.a 3).

1.4 Data and Method

This thesis is based on qualitative research methods. Using fieldwork as an active tool is the most essential source for the anthropologist to collect data about the research setting – the society, social structures and culture (Hylland Eriksen 2000: 25-27).

It is essential to address the importance of confidentiality and informed consent within this choice of field. My focus group is a highly vulnerable group in both juridical and social aspects; and I had to take caution in relation to their illegal attendance within the borders of EU and Sweden. This makes the confidentiality and anonymity of the individuals in this thesis essential to their security and protection from the authorities. Having this in mind, all of the names of my informants have been changed to other Afghani names, and I have also been careful not to write anything that can reveal where in Malmö these people live, or where the activist organisations have their common locations (Davies 2008: 59-61).

Informed consent means that the ethnographer has an ethical responsibility to explain as much as possible for the informants what the research is about, why the field is being studied, and how it is going to be communicated later on (a.a 54-55). I presented myself in the beginning of my research to the AR planning group, thereafter I also presented myself and my intentions on the different events, both formal and informal social gatherings with the AGM. Additionally, during my time in the field I often talked about my research with people in general and informants especially, however after spending a great part of time around and with about the same group of people, I did not always continue to repeat the information about my research. Although, before interviewing my key informants I informed them about how I would use the material and guaranteed their confidentiality and anonymity.

Participant Observation

The participant observation consists of several different techniques, and it is up to the researcher to use the ones that are the best suited for the specific field. The participant observation is often used by the ethnographer to become introduced to the field and the people being studied. The researcher can adopt four different kinds of roles while conducting the research: complete observer, an observer as participant, a participant as observer, or a complete participant. The roles develop through time spent in the field and it also depends on the acceptance from the informants (a.a 81-83).

I started my field study by being a complete observer at meetings when AR was planning their actions during the spring of 2014. Additionally to this, I was an observant participant attending informational gatherings and events with the AGM. As time went on, I wanted to come closer to the field and decided to get active and involved to better understand the two organisations and to have a chance of coming in contact with the informants in a more informal way. I became a complete participant; a member and contact person within the AGM and I also participated four weeks during the AR march, summer 2014. The data collected about the organisations is therefore from my participant observation and unstructured- and semi structured interviews with people connected to these. This involvement gave me the opportunity to become close friends with many of the active undocumented Afghan refugees.

The many life stories that I listened to, both as an ethnographer and as a friend, gave my research a holistic perspective. I talked to numerous undocumented refugees during my time in the field, but had in total an estimated 15-20 unstructured interviews (in addition to interviews with four key informants, see below). The outcome of the story being told is therefore important for the understanding of the individual and his own definition of himself.

Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are normally arranged meetings set off in time and space as something other than the usual social interaction that can be recognised as an unstructured interview. The semi-structured interview is therefore pre-worked out by the ethnographer, having prepared some questions or topics to be discussed by the informant (Davies 2008: 105-106).

I used semi-structured interviews as one complementary method and interviewed four key informants. I prepared a few general topics to discuss with my informants. I asked questions that involved the informants lives as undocumented refugees, how they viewed their own personal identity and what relationship the informants had with the different organisations around Malmö as well as what meaning they have to the informants' everyday life.

The individual interviews lasted for about one and a half hour per informant and were held on different places picked by the informants, for example at cafés and parks or in someone's apartment. Depending on the informant's knowledge of Swedish, the interviews were mostly held in Swedish with some help from English and sometimes other Afghani friends. To collect the information from my respondents I used my mobile phone to record the interviews. To use recording as an interview tool is almost universally accepted and often advocated, since this tool does not disturb the conversation the same way as it would by taking notes while talking (a.a 126). When all the interviews were conducted, I transcribed them on my computer, and thereafter translated the relevant parts to English.

Reflexive Considerations

Because of the researchers' connection to the specific field and the influence that these connections comes with, it is important to be aware and take these aspects into consideration during the research process. This usage of *reflexivity* – a turning back on you for self-reflection, is particularly important within an ethnographic research. The relationship to the field is therefore more likely to influence the collected data. To be able to work with a high level of reflexivity the ethnographer should include 'jumping in and out' of the research setting and in this way be able localise the influences being made (Davies 2008: 3-5).

As I became a member of both the AGM and AR, I began to travel to Malmö as a private person as well, which made the border between research and private complex. Several times I had to force myself to look back at meetings or other social settings from a reflexive standpoint even though I was there as a private person. The personally related occasions often turned in to valuable meetings that gave me new inputs and empirical knowledge. However, because I do not live in Malmö, the physical distance to the field helped me to "jump in and out" of the research setting. This 'breaking out' of the scenery helped me to reflect upon the influences made by me as an ethnographer and what aspects in the field that influenced me.

Although the closeness to the field turned my research into a more complex site, I became someone in the group, which gave me deeper insights. The development of friendships between the ethnographer and informants can result in a more productive closeness and deeper understanding of the people being studied, however the friendships can also create difficulties of interpretation and cross-cultural communication. The essential part here is to reflect upon, as well as revaluate, the relationships with the informants, so that an evaluation of oneself as an ethnographer can be made (a.a 91-93).

I often listened to stories that were very sensitive and personal, about inner and outer struggles. One way to earn trust from these people was to become personally involved within the different organisations, but also to make sure I was not a researcher all the time but an actual friend. Although, these relationships took time to build and it

affected me on a personal level to know about those very difficult aspects of the undocumented life, but also to become aware of what had been lost not only in relation to becoming a refugee but because the situation they are living in now.

I was aware of my position as a researcher in relation to the focus group and social setting. At some level I was a member of the organisations just like anyone else, particularly during the AR march and when I was working as a contact person within the AGM. However, the affect given by me as Swedish to those classified by the Swedish society as illegal refugees, was a crucial reflexive thought I kept in mind – that could in fact have affected the data and the level of deepness of the participant observation. I can be one in the group, I can be an activist, but I am not one of the undocumented refugees. Therefore there will always be a space between the informants and me, even though we developed good friendship relations. Not to forget, my research took place in Swedish settings even though the people that I studied are excluded from this context. The insecurity in this exclusion might also have influenced the data.

According to Setha M. Low and Sally Engle Merry (2010), the engagement of public issues in anthropology has made a rapid development into the field. Engaged anthropology can take different forms; sharing and supporting, teaching and public education, social critique, collaboration, advocacy, activism. For me this research journey has been a mix of all these different aspects because of my involvement, resulting in that I was a social supporter, working as an activist with advocacy, planning and attending events to educate the public about undocumented refugees life situation.

To add on this discussion, it is crucial to mention the personal interest for these questions that I developed during the time I was studying this field. The arrangement started as a research for this thesis and ended as a personal engagement in issues involving undocumented refugees and their rights. Therefore I would like to add that I am well aware of how this personal engagement and passionate feelings for the people I became friends with can have affected the data collected in a biased way.

1.5 Outline

Chapter 1 gives an introduction to the researched field. *Chapter 2* covers a holistic definition of the people in this study, where they come from and why they become undocumented refugees in Sweden. The chapter also analyses the undocumented refugee from a EU macro perspective and identifies the politics and culture of the Swedish nation-state and how the undocumented refugee is perceived and treated from this view. *Chapter 3* reveal the life of Afghan undocumented refugees in Malmö, the everyday difficulties, obstacles and exclusion from the society, and what consequences this has on their construction of belonging and social creation of identity. The chapter analyses the different spheres that undocumented refugees are connected to, including a life in the space of non-existence. *Chapter 4* analyses the activist organisations AGM and AR and which aspects the undocumented refugees can relate to in their creating of belonging within these organisations. *Chapter 5* contain the answers to my research questions and the conclusions of my findings.

2. Who Has the Right to Belong Where?

To understand the people that are in focus of this research, one needs to know the history of their past lives: where these people come from, the main reasons of why they fled their lives in Afghanistan and how they ended up in Sweden. One also has to know what the political terminologies of "a refugee" and "an undocumented refugee" means in practice to those being defined with these terms, and how this definition affects all aspects of their present life.

The histories of my informants are all unique and complex; however there are some common stories that one can interpret as reasons to why these people ended up in similar situations in Malmö.

The history of Afghanistan is characterised by its geographic location and has been afflicted by invasion and war on and off during centuries. Affected by its long history of conflicts and wars, and the aftermaths of these, (such as civil wars and the influence of the Taliban's) Afghani life is imprinted by a complex struggle between the modern and the traditional (URL 4). The country is said to be developing in two different directions at the same time, which creates opportunities for people but also puts them in unmanageable situations with harsh living situations pushing young people, especially teenage boys, to a decision to flee from Afghanistan. The answer to why it is mostly teenage boys that flee their country is much due to their high risk of being targeted by extremist groups, and because the families usually send their oldest son with the expectation of that the son will send remittances back to his family when established in a new country, or, that the son can arrange for the family to flee to where he is. Teenage girls or women do not have the same opportunities to flee their country. Within the cultures of Afghanistan, they do not have the same rights as men, and they are also at higher risk of being caught into human trafficking on their way to EU.

Some of my informants had the chance go to school for a few or several years; others did not have that opportunity. Some were forced into work at a young age, others have witness serious discrimination because of being born as the ethnic minority

group Hazara[1]. Many informants tell stories about poor living conditions with a harsh economic situation and an overhanging responsibility to help to provide for their family. The Taliban groups have also targeted them in several ways; many Hazara people are living with the fear because of their ethnical background. Another common reason why these young Afghanis started thinking about leaving Afghanistan was that they were all desperate and longing for a better life situation for themselves and their families.

Many young Afghani boys start their lives as refugees when deciding to leave for the neighbouring countries. Many try their luck in Iran, where the dream of work and a more self-sufficient life often results in hard, low paid jobs and a life as an illegal immigrant. A life in hiding with a pending discrimination by both the Iranian nation-state and the majority of the Iranian people, place the Afghani youths in a difficult position as the excluded 'others'. This exclusion causes many to continue their journey. By paying smugglers they pass the Iranian – Turkey border, thereafter they enter Greece by crossing the Mediterranean Sea in small rubber boats. After entering Greece they continue to find loopholes through the EU borders until they reach Sweden.

As soon as these Afghan youths flee from Afghanistan, they become the 'out group' and defined as refugees. In Iran these young Afghani boys are usually living an undocumented life. They are also a vulnerable, often targeted group on their way to Sweden and many individuals are exposed to difficulties, severe crimes and harassments, and are forced to live under harsh conditions.

To examine what it means to be a refugee it is crucial to go back to the source of this term. The 1951s Refugee Convention defines the refugee as someone who is:

> Owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country (URL 5).

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[1] http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2008/02/afghanistan-hazara/phil-zabriskie-text/1 (2016-05-02)

In this thesis I have chosen to call the Afghan undocumented persons for refugees because they are describing themselves with this term - and it is also on these premises they applied for asylum when they arrived to the EU and Sweden.

On the other hand, being an undocumented refugee or an irregular refugee means that a refugee is living within the borders of a nation-state without permission to do so (URL 6). Undocumented refugees are often called illegal. There are several potential reasons for why an individual becomes an undocumented refugee; however there are a couple of common causes that forced my informants into an undocumented life in Sweden.

One reason to this is if a refugee has their asylum application denied (each case can be tested in up to three instances) by the migration authorities. A dismissal of one's asylum application will usually lead to deportation back to the country of origin.

However, many refugees decide to escape and hide from authorities and the police and live as undocumented refugees during four years before they have the opportunity to apply for asylum again in that same country. If new information can be added to the case before the four years have passed, there is a chance that the asylum application can be re-opened and examined again by the authorities.

The undocumented refugee can also leave the country that denied their asylum application and apply in another EU member country. That means that the person will live in a system called the Dublin Regulation. The Dublin Regulation state that "You do not have the right to decide which country will investigate and consider your application for asylum" – the refugee has to apply in the first EU country he arrives to (or in practice, the first EU member country that registers the refugees' fingerprints). In theory, if the person has applied for asylum in another country and is still in the process of investigation and consideration, or if the person is already denied asylum in a EU member country, he is not allowed to seek asylum in another country within the EU and must therefore return back to that first country of interest (URL 7).

If a person falls into the Dublin Regulation system, it will turn the refugee into a "Dublin case". The usual reasons of why a refugee becomes a "Dublin" is when, as explained above, the person is forced to leave his fingerprints in a country where he

does not want to apply for asylum, or if the asylum application is declined and the refugee decides to escape and apply for asylum in another EU member country.

The regulation is a well-known tool used by EU nation-states to divide their responsibility of the arriving refugees and to control where refugees can apply for asylum. It takes 18 months for a "Dublin case" to dissolve, and during these 18 months the refugee is an undocumented refugee forced to hide from the authorities to not be deported back to their home country. After these 18 months the undocumented refugee is allowed to apply for asylum again, in a second EU member country. Then the first country of interest no longer has the responsibility to deport the refugee.

The consequences of both rejection of asylum and the Dublin Regulation create many undocumented refugees who live in hiding, afraid to be found and deported back to their home countries.

The politics within the union has come to focus on the importance of preserving the union of EU. The outspoken aim is to sustain and maintain the structures of EU's system of today. Consequently, it is necessary to regulate the inflow of migrants and refugees. The political landscape of EU today is therefore a reaction to the major increase in international migration and the high extent of refugees fleeing to Europe since a couple of years and became most apparent with the rapid increase of refugees during 2014 and 2015.

Because of the political struggles and warfare around the world, nation-states within the EU have become more focused on how to strengthen their national borders and are striving to ensure a strictly regulated inflow of immigrants. At the same time, the union has called its member countries to several refugee-crisis meetings in order to decide upon common political actions. These actions have different kinds of direct as well as indirect impacts on refugee lives.

The current situation of the EU and its 'European identity' can be questioned in a time when EU member countries seek to solve refugee questions by closing national borders and establish new regulations and laws considering migration. This has created a domino effect where member countries now follow in each other's footsteps to avoid becoming one of the major refugee hosting countries. The general result out

of these actions is that it is now harder for refugees to flee to Europe and to seek asylum. It is also generally more difficult to get a asylum application approved by the migration authorities.

While Sweden continues to sharpen its migration policies, proposing to decrease the refugee inflow to a EU minimum as well as continue to developing other regulating interventions, the country has received severe criticism from 22 different organisations and instances such as the Red Cross, Save the Children, UNHCR and RFSU, arguing that the new propositions will create 'serious and unacceptable consequences for refugees at all societal levels' (URL 8).

To define the EU as an 'in group', one can start to study the modernity of our time that is marked by the nation and nation-state, and with this comes an offered and constructed cultural identity within the imaginary community and its borders (Bauman 1999: xxx). The EU has followed in the footsteps of the national order, however with its free movement within the borders and its solid external border controls that confirms the national territory and identity of the EU (Verstraete 2003: 226-227).

Parts of the political present can be traced back to The Schengen Agreement[2]. Verstraete (2003) explains that this agreement implemented the gradual elimination of the national border controls and replaced these with limited ID checks. The purpose with the agreement was not only to be able to compete with other continents by a competitive flow of goods, money, people and the improvement of productivity; it also had a strong ideological motive with both geopolitical mobility and free movement inside the union. The goal of The Schengen Agreement was a truly united European community and identity (228-229).

Furthermore, Verstraete (2003) argue that the aims of the EU are therefore to expand the national sovereignty to its external borders and to generalise the national position to a united 'European citizenship'. It also aims to relocate the national differences within the EU to those migrants and refugees that are thought to be non-Europeans,

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[2] The Schengen Agreement was signed in 1985 and took effect throughout the EU in 1995. http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=URISERV%3Al33020 (2016-05-01)

the "others". In this way the European identity is strengthened. The frontiers were implemented to be able to distinguish between Europeans and non-Europeans. The freedom of movement for the citizens, tourists and business people was made on the cost of the organised exclusion of the "others" that now are forced to cross borders illegally. The outcomes of these functions are that these "others" cannot pass the European borders other than as illegal refugees or migrants (227, 229).

2.1 To Exclude the Threat

Malkki (1992) discuss national identity and how it nowadays is one of the most important aspects for people to feel rooted. The idea of the "tree and its roots" dominates the Western thought of national identities and takes form as origins, racial lines, ancestries. With this comes culture, which is also closely linked to the territorialised state. One country cannot at the same time be the same as another country (26-29). People locate their roots to the national soil and to the social and societal structures that are included within those borders. The refugee and undocumented refugee threaten the identity created between citizen and nation-state (Khosravi 2010: 2).

With the theoretical framework of this thesis and the national identity linked to the idea of being rooted in mind, this powerful philosophic of sedenatism confirms the "other", the refugee, as something pathological that does not belong to the national order. To protect the borders of the EU from the threat that lives inside its borders, the EU systematically works to lower the inflow of refugees by strengthen outer borders and reduce undocumented refugees living inside the borders by an exclusion of this threat.

The criminalisation of migration has become central to the 'illegal' border crossing that is classified as a criminal act. People who do not fit into the social model of the nation-state system, such as criminals, undocumented refugees, homeless or poor people and unidentified asylum seekers are all threats to the wellbeing of the society. Social issues are instead redefined as crimes and the affected groups are therefore considered as criminals. Therefore it is of interest to the nation-state to govern by criminalisation and to target as many non-citizens as possible. This political strategy

is achieved through strategies such as external and internal border controls, detentions and ultimately deportations (Khosravi 2010: 3-4, 21).

These political actions are enforcing asylum-applying refugees to become stranded not only in a state of uncertainty in general but in an uncertainty about visibility. Does the Migration Board see them and their experiences properly? Whyte (2011) argues that uncertainty about being visible or not, is a strategic tool in the Danish asylum system. That in turn effects the processing of asylum applications, which are directly linked to determining the credibility of the refugee and their application. Mistrust therefore becomes a significant factor in the production of rejection to applications. In a similar way, a combination of mistrust and uncertainty also controls the Swedish asylum system and influences the shaping of refugee's conception of the system.

One strategy for the EU to take control over the 'others' that already entered the borders is by following the Dublin Regulation. The regulation is an evidence of how the EU is actively cooperating in turn to secure the union. To further protect the EU from its internal threats, the union has implemented systems that all countries that are members of the Schengen Agreement are included and invited to participate in. One of these systems has the purpose to detect illegal immigrants and to speed up the process of the execution of deportations. It is a EU joint police operation targeting illegal immigrants. Sweden takes part in this search for undocumented people and has so far participated seven times. The police is organising massive operations, stopping and checking people's ID on trains, streets, roads and other public spaces.

2.2 At the Local Level

Just as the EU strives after a uniting collective identity, each nation-state has its own premises. In practice this means that Sweden within its borders has its own definition of who belongs to the country and who does not. One can see a strong connection to how Sweden is portraying and defining the 'out group' to how the EU in general defines this group.

As for the Swedish society, the undocumented refugee is portrayed as someone that has to be removed not to disturb the current structure of the nation-state and society.

Systematic excluding methods take away undocumented refugees possibility to take part in the society. To complete the above-mentioned restricting laws, joint police actions are common. The two last rounds of these police controlled actions was first during 2013, the project was called REVA and the police arrested over 10 000 undocumented refugees in Sweden. In 2014 the project was called Mos Maourim and was carried out through Europe and has been called "a REVA on steroids". The police have also been criticised for concentrating their operations on stopping people and checking IDs based on racial profiling (URL 9).

In Malmö parts of the city are highly segregated, however there are also several culturally complex sites. In these areas people live side-by-side, not strictly divided by culture or ethnic groups, and influenced with a lot of activists tied to different human rights activist groups and left-wing activists. To undocumented refugees, these areas in Malmö are centres that are more welcoming than other places, where you can find support and help in need, a multicultural space with a strong social movement. But in contrast to this image, Malmö, together with other larger cities, is also prioritised during joint police operations such as REVA. The authorities know that the city houses many hidden undocumented refugees and are targeting the specific areas with high populations of immigrants.

One of the reasons of why the informants of this research chose Malmö is the geographical location; the city is located closely to Öresundsbron (The Öresund Bridge) that connects Sweden with Denmark and the rest of the European continent. Malmö is therefore one of the first cities you will arrive to when entering Sweden. However, there are many undocumented refugees that decide to give Malmö a chance after they are denied asylum in Sweden and has to escape the authorities. There are three main reasons for this. One is because of the many activist organisations that can help support you in your life as an undocumented refugee. The second reason is that Malmö is one of few communes in Sweden that approves sustenance allowance for undocumented refugees through the Social Services. This means that an undocumented refugee can be allowed about 2000 SEK each month, which often becomes an important economic resource. It is up to each commune in Sweden to interpret the Social Services Act, however the law states that each commune has the responsibility for each and every person that is living in that area (URL 10).

The third reason is that the city have a high immigrant population and as an undocumented refugee it may not only be easier to disappear from the authorities by hiding in the populace but there are also formal and especially, informal immigrant communities, many afghan ones, that can support an undocumented refugee, becoming connections and communicational ways of reaching spaces of the society that otherwise is closed for the one considered as an undocumented refugee.

3. Undocumented – A Space of Non-existence

This chapter aims to provide the reader with a more holistic view on the different aspects of a life as an undocumented refugee in Malmö; therefore will this chapter contain more quotations from informants as well as information from the field.

In the coming chapters you will meet the four Afghani undocumented refugees, all in their twenties, that became my key informants:

Hamid, who is searching for that sense of feeling that he can call 'home' in a condition of illegalness,

Morteza, who was forced into an undocumented life because of the Dublin Regulation,

Mohammed, who lived most of his life in Iran as an undocumented refugee before he arrived to Sweden, and

Ezat, who is spending all of his free time being politically active within the two organisations AGM and AR.

3.1 Practical Aspects

As a legally applying asylum-seeking refugee in Sweden you are given a temporary personal identity number: four extra digits at the end of your birth date that ties you to the Swedish society. These four last digits are no longer valid as soon as you become an undocumented refugee.

These four last digits are your entrance to the society; with these numbers you are entitled to the society (almost) like a Swedish citizen. You have everyday rights such as being able to start a bank account, to rent an apartment, to book an appointment at the doctor or the dentist, or just to become a member of your favourite clothing store. These are just some examples on actions that require the four last digits. The whole Swedish society is built upon these four numbers and they are used everywhere in many situations. As a Swedish citizen you do not have the need to recognise these different situations because you automatically have the right to the Swedish society.

However, a refugee without these four digits becomes an undocumented refugee and is therefore also excluded from even the most basic rights.

Hamid problematizes the costs of not having the right to a personal identity number in the Swedish society. Without this confirmation you are not valid as a legal person and will therefore not be seen as a human:

> "We are all humans and it doesn't matter where you are born. But unfortunately there is a system and politicians that say that a human is only a human if you have the four last digits. Otherwise, you are not considered as someone."

To not be "considered as someone" by society at large, and to be seen as a threat to the nation-state can have a large impact on the self-image of a person in that situation. The system alienates anyone who is not included in the welfare and automatically places these people outside the society.

3.2 Language and Sociocultural Aspects

The link between birth, the nation and your life becomes naturalised in language (Khosravi 2010: 2).

Language is an essential factor in the process of building a social connection to the Swedish society. Language has an unifying impact on society at large, and by limiting undocumented refugees in the learning process of Swedish one can suggest that this is another way of the Swedish society to exclude undocumented people because you do not have the right as an undocumented refugee to learn the language.

Without the language it will be difficult for the person to locate a new sense of belonging and inclusion. We identify ourselves with the language, and therefore one can see a major obstacle for those undocumented refugees not understanding the Swedish language. It becomes another issue not only to reach inclusion but it places an undocumented refugee in a socially isolated space, in a socially vulnerable position

towards the society. The Swedish culture will also be more difficult to comprehend when you are not able to interpret all those essential pieces revealed while unfolding a language.

Furthermore, language is not only a way of communication; language is also a tool for our cultural construction. Within this cultural construction our sense of our selves are constituted (Chambers 1994: 22-23).

The informants told me about the raising difficulties and doubt in identity when you start to forget own mother language, Dari. This is often happening because of the determination to learn the Swedish language on your own and with the help from support groups for example within the AGM. That puts you in an outmost difficult situation, knowing a little Swedish, maybe a little English and maybe some Farsi from the time spent in Iran. It challenges your cultural identity and your possibilities to communicate.

> "You get chocked the first time you arrive to a new country. You don't know anything. You don't know the language. And if you cannot understand the language you are like a blind person until you get one step further and know the language and can find some friends. It is difficult and heavy, different perspectives, some people come here and get in trouble, [with] money and rejections, and it takes an entire life. It is a long time, 5, 4, 6 years until you can come here and end your journey to a nation." (Morteza)

Ezat, sitting next to me at an antifascist café with a cookie and mineral water, helps me understand the essential trust a language can give to an undocumented refugees' belonging even though he does not have the right to participate in the Swedish society. He still managed to learn the basics in Swedish and he told me the positive effects he have got out of this:

> "I feel safe here. When I think about how I was before, when I didn't have anyone, then I am five steps further now. Back then I was fighting to get up and I have never been to school back in my home country. So

I learned the language and fought to learn faster, and by this way I could get myself a lot of friends and a larger network. And to do this the language is the first step."

3.3 Uncertainty

To live in a constant uncertainty and insecurity will have a major impact on an undocumented refugee' quality of life.

Talking to Hamid about this matter, he explains the insecurity of being undocumented and concludes what and whom that bares the responsibility for this:

> "Three months ago I was not sure if I could stay here in Sweden or not. Even though I have tried to learn the culture and the language and to get into the society and found a lot of friends, I was still unsure because of the politics that is going on here and shit like that… Can I stay or not? The ongoing asylum policies are a total failure."

Morteza told me about his long journey back and forth between EU countries before he became undocumented in Sweden. He was forced into the Dublin Regulation when he had his fingerprints taken in another EU country, but he wanted to apply for asylum in Sweden and travelled here. Because of his registered fingerprints in the EU member country, he was sent back and his case was supposed to be investigated there. However he decided to come back to Sweden to live as an undocumented refugee for 18 months before he could apply for asylum again, this time in Sweden. His view of being forced into the Dublin Regulation system is that it is a matter of life and death for a refugee, and that the system plays with human lives.

> "It is a long way you know, it's like ten countries. And I was sent back [to the first EU member country that registered him] because of Dublin. Things happen and you lose so much but eventually you get a little. But you have to get something otherwise it will be a catastrophe for you […] You should not play with another human's life."

The constant limitations and the non-freedom of movement within the Swedish society is an always-present concern for an undocumented refugee. As the authorities, predominantly the police are on an endless hunt of eliminating freedom for those who cannot stay, using methods such as REVA and the Dublin Regulation, everything down to the smallest errand becomes an issue of safety. Any everyday task that is comfortable and assured for the Swedish citizen becomes not only a challenge but also an anxiety that is ever-present in an undocumented persons' life. Things such as taking the bus or the train, to go to the gym, to shop in the grocery store or to participate in a demonstration are all activities that emerge as difficult from a perspective of safety. Only not to have to hide on a secret address but also to be forced to be on your watch when you leave the house is an influential factor in the present progress of the creation of identity for an undocumented refugee.

I participated in several everyday situations where my informants had to hide or take cover from the society. This subject is always discussed, analysed and condemned by those it concerns. It is one of the major obstacles that are not only a problem to live with but also a widely discussed theme between all activists and contact persons in the organisations. Safety comes first. When an undocumented refugee needs medical care it is a risk-taking event. It is a critical moment of insecurity because of the risk that anyone, maybe a nurse or a doctor, break their confidentiality and reports back to the police. Just a phone call could have serious consequences. To participate in a demonstration together with the AGM is another example that requires careful consideration and a real-life risk for those undocumented persons who take part. Demonstrations usually involve presence of the police and it is of highest importance that undocumented persons stay out of high-risk situations when, for example, clashes between demonstrators occurs.

I participated together with a group of AGM-activists at a large demonstration in Malmö in the summer of 2014. The demonstration was against the Swedish new-Nazi party called "The Swedish Party" or "SVP". The demonstration intensified and became violent, and there was a large police group sent out to have control over the

demonstration[3]. The circumstances developed to a dangerous place to be for anyone – it was not only chaos and about 2500 people in one place demonstrating against the SVP followers, but the situation escalated quickly and there were clashes between the police and some counter-demonstrators as well. Whoever was at the wrong place at the wrong time could be removed from the site and taken in by the police. To make sure that my undocumented friends would not found themselves in this situation, we hid in a nearby church. Even after the demonstration was over, that side of town was still insecure. We had to sneak around and walk on the back streets not to be checked by the police or risking ending up in a clash between SVP followers and counter-demonstrators.

Although undocumented refugees in general are very good at analysing the risks being taken in different situations, some situations to take into account are the least expected ones, the ones where even the undocumented refugee cannot predict the high security risks.

One of my undocumented friends, lets call him Mohammed, lived on a secret address in Malmö and was active within the AGM. One night his neighbour had a party that ended up in a messy discussion and fight between the guests. Mohammed went downstairs to see what was going on, and was trying to help his neighbour to calm down the situation. What he did not know was that someone already had called the police – and when the police arrived they automatically wanted everyone at the party to sit down and demanded to see their IDs. Mohammed was at the wrong place at the wrong time. He was taken in and put in a detention centre, and was deported from Sweden back to Afghanistan within 3 months.

To be afraid of the society you live in, to never be able to build your social trust to the society and the people living within it (practically anyone could give you up to the authorities and at the same time there is always a risk that the police will catch you randomly on the street) is a constant reminder of that you do not belong *here*. Also, you are systematically excluded from society when you do not have the four last

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[3] The demonstration got a lot of attention in media because of how the police was handling the clashes of the demonstrators. http://www.dn.se/nyheter/sverige/fem-svart-skadade-till-sjukhus-efter-antinazistdemonstration/ (2016-02-08)

digits in a personal identity number. You do not belong to this society, to its structures. You live your life outside rights and obligations and outside the community. This essential acute presence has a direct impact on your identity. You are put in situations that make you question what 'home' really is – and you are not allowed to create a safe environment around the 'home' you are trying to create.

Undocumented refugees are a very vulnerable, exposed group. They are in the danger zone of being abused and taken advantage of, they are normally in an economically desperate state, and will do practically anything for money. This shows clearly in the way many undocumented refugees are forced to take very low paid, jobs on the black market. Some people work 13 hours a day, seven days a week and have a salary of 2000 SEK a month. This vulnerability is also taken advantage of in drug related situations where many of them become middle hands working for drug dealers.

The state of non-belonging, of insignificancy and the harsh life situation will also contribute to a sense of not matter to anyone. In effect, several of the undocumented refugees are caught in drug- and alcohol abuse. A drug- and alcohol abuse will deepen the feeling of being actively placed outside society in a space of non-existence for the undocumented person. Difficulties like an abuse are also problematic in the sense that there are very limited help options for abusing undocumented people.

3.4 Belong to All or Nothing

An undocumented refugee lives both outside and inside a mix of sociocultural worlds. The aim is to simplify the understanding of the otherwise abstract complexity of these interconnected sociocultural spheres of an undocumented refugees' belonging, and where in this belonging a new form of a cultural identity can take form. The different parts of this mix can be analysed further through the diagram below.
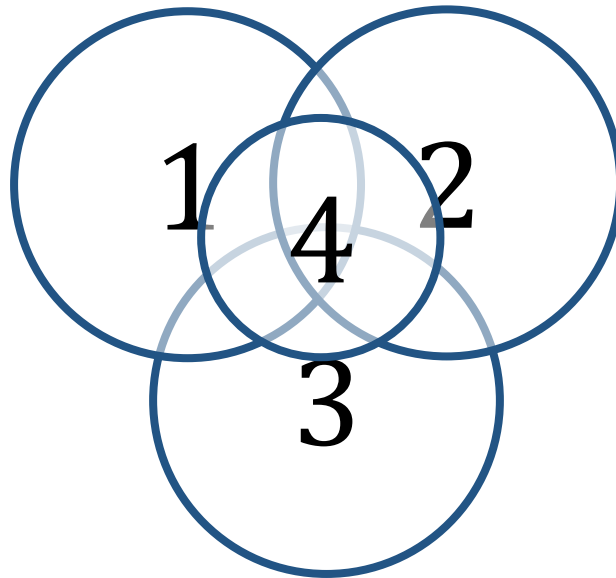
The spheres are divided into three interconnected circles that each represents the different sociocultural settings in which the informants of this study are all connected to in some way or another. The first circle represents the past life and history, language and origin of Afghanistan, the second circle symbolises the present life situation, the Swedish culture, the nation-state system and the Swedish language. The third circle is symbolising the sphere in which the networks of AGM and AR are active, the activism and group identity that these networks have developed.

The fourth circle that is overlapping the three first ones is signifying the final sociocultural world, although it is placed in a unique position; connected to the three major spheres but still located as an excluded, parallel one. It is this fourth sociocultural sphere I call "a space of non-existence". This sphere does not fit in to any of the other three major circles, though it is still part of all of them. It has its own parallel sociocultural community, both included and excluded at the same time. It is within this fourth sphere that the Afghani undocumented refugee creates his present belonging and identity.

Living within the fourth dimension makes you as an undocumented refugee belong to and become affected by each of the other circles, although you do not fully belong to either one of these sociocultural settings. You live your life excluded from the three spheres, even though the three spheres affect everything in your life. It is within the fourth sphere it is possible to establish a sense of 'home' in a mix in-between the

different sociocultural worlds, within this setting you try to reclaim your sense of 'home'.

Below Hamid explains that 'home' is not simply one place or a destination, nor is it something you can touch upon. 'Home' is a feeling, a sense of freedom, security and belonging. However you are obligated to fight for the feeling of 'home' to be able to own it.

> "I want to go back sometime. I haven't been back yet. Yes, I think I would have felt at home there, because I was born there. It was my childhood. I grew up there. You can feel at home in more than one place. We don't have any borders, we all fight for a world without borders and everyone should be able to feel at home wherever they want. That's what I want. You can't say Sweden or Afghanistan, we are free and you should be able to feel safe wherever you are."

Hamid's statement concludes the traumatic and vulnerable process of finding a stable place to call 'home'. While forced to uproot the past when becoming a refugee, it becomes important to find a base to reground on in the present. To be able to find the security and feeling of safety that the regrounding process requires is difficult for someone that is undocumented, where you constantly are reminded that your presence are neither accepted nor respected by the Swedish society. It affects your identity while searching for that safe 'home', balancing between those spheres although still belonging to the space of non-existence, trying to identity yourself.

"I am not the same as I was when I left. But I still know where I come from and everything I was then." (Mohammed)

Mohammed is another example of what the complexity of belonging and identity for an undocumented person implies.

"To be undocumented only mean that I don't have any papers. It is just papers to me. I'm the same person anyway."

"I'm just an Afghani. But sometimes I feel sorry for myself, I don't know who I am… Afghani, Irani, an immigrant..."

Mohammed shows how multifaceted his identity is and how difficult it is for him to identify with any of his preferences. He is belonging to everything but at the same time he belongs to nothing. He told me these two statements at two different occasions. In the first statement he was making sure that he is definitely not identifying himself as someone that is undocumented. It is important for him to express that the lack of papers does not identify who he is. However, as can be read in the second statement, a constant reminder of not belonging in the society he lives in and that this constant status of not knowing, creates insecurity as well as victimises him. The status of not knowing where he belongs also makes him distrust his own origin (Mohammed lived as an undocumented Afghan refugee for many years in Iran before he fled to Sweden: thereof his reflection upon an Iranian belonging), as well as his present belonging in the Swedish society. For him, he is not even part Swedish but instead his identity is chosen by the society that categorises him as someone other than Swedish, an immigrant.

My undocumented informant and friend once held a lecture at Malmö University about the AGM and how it is to live as an undocumented refugee. After his session, the lecturer asked him: "What three things make you feel most like a Swedish person?" At first my friend did not understand the question, because, as he told me after, that the answer to that question was so obvious to him that he thought it was just as obvious to anyone else. The teacher had asked him again: "In what ways do you feel most Swedish?" My friend answered: "I cannot answer your question, because I'm not Swedish." Afterwards my friend and I discussed the questions, and he honestly could not reflect upon anything 'Swedish' about himself. However, as for me knowing this person for over a year, I could see major changes in how he portrayed the world around him, how his social acts had changed to the Swedish surroundings and culture as well as his usage of the Swedish language. But for him, it would never be an option to ever identify himself as Swedish, because Sweden never accepted him.

This is how strong of an impact the exclusion can have for the identity of an undocumented refugee. I knew that he would not portray himself as Afghani either, because the afghan society is not a society that he believes he would fit in, and therefore would not want to be associated with. But even though he left because of his distrust in the Afghan societal and religious structure, he would always talk about Afghanistan as his real home.

3.5 Idealise All or Nothing

For an undocumented refugee the identity is a constant conflict between his history from earlier life experiences, how the Swedish nation-state perceives him and what the society provides him with. In the middle of this conflict of identity, he is somewhat in the process of his regroundings of a new belonging, creating a home in the space of non-existence. The AGM and AR can support in finding a structure in life, and the meaningfulness of the networks become clear when the undocumented refugee can take on a role as a political activist. He idealises the life he was forced in to, and all that is gathered in his role as a human right activist and excluded role in society, and the role grows into a mission to inform the public about his rights to belong.

Another example of this conflicting situation is when the undocumented refugee idealises the aspect of not having the right to what he needs the most. A permanent residence and a citizenship is crucial to him, but because of the strong meaning of these, the feelings towards the need for the most essential keeping him from living a 'normal' life, becomes overwhelming. To counter these feelings, a kind of reframing and re-cooping of the world order develops as central issues for the individual. By reframing his critical need for a permanent residence to 'only a paper', it makes him re-cope and adjust a new understanding to the difficult situation.

This process is revealed when Ezat tells me about how uninterested he is in becoming a citizen. Because Sweden does not allow Ezat to officially become part of the society, he turns the concept of citizenship into something he rather reject and live without, and instead connects his feelings to the idealisation of the 'no-borders – no-nations' that the AGM and AR are fighting for.

"There exists something called citizenship that I don't have. Swedish. That for me is totally unnecessary. I don't need that to feel at home. It shouldn't exist… because we are all humans. A paper is not real and not human. But that is how it is, unfortunately… I don't like to have the need to come up to someone and say 'I have a Swedish ID' to prove we are all equally worthy."

4. The Activist Networks

As the previous chapter analysed how the Swedish society is one sociocultural world that an undocumented refugee is not able to participate in, as well as the difficulties in not being able to belong within the context of origin, it is of equal significance to analyse the impacts of the third sociocultural sphere that the undocumented refugee is somewhat more part of. This dimension is found at a grass root level in Malmö. I found that it is the operating organisations that are creating the safe space where undocumented refugees are welcome and therefore stands as an opposite force to the Swedish society. The organisations stand for inclusion, human rights and equality for all people. As the organisations are structured as spider webs, with very large, wide and interconnected relations, connecting at several different levels both inside and outside the Swedish society reaching those being rejected by the nation-state, these organisations function as networks.

In Malmö there are several organisations that actively support undocumented refugees and asylum seekers in different ways. It is within this sphere that the informants finds these helping and supporting networks.

4.1 The Asylum Group Malmö

The AGM is a non-profit, party-politically and religiously independent grass root organisation located in Malmö and has been active in helping refugees since 1991. This organisation support undocumented refugees and asylum seeking refugees in their everyday lives. AGM has its foundation in the belief of the global fight for freedom, equality and solidarity for all. Until this vision becomes true, AGM will continue with their work by changing peoples' situations to the better and actively advocate the human rights to become applied and practically used in the Swedish society.

AGM is also a member of FARR, The Swedish Network of Refugee Support Groups, an umbrella organisation for private initiatives and groups working to strengthen the right of asylum (URL 11).

The AGM is built upon giving undocumented refugees economic, political, and juridical as well as social support in their everyday life. Undocumented refugees usually come in contact with the network by people they randomly meet or through friends who are already members or have been in contact with the network before. Sometimes AGM also receives emails or text on Facebook from undocumented refugees who ask for someone to help them. People who want to become contact persons are invited to an introduction meeting with representatives from AGM.

As the AGM is a flat organisation where every voice and opinion weighs equally, and the vision of the organisation is to learn from each other and the people you meet along the way, you do not have to have any previous experience or knowledge to become active. However, during the participant observation, I found that some of the most active and supportive members of this group have a more significant impact in deciding on how to develop the organisation as well as on the social codes and restrictions.

Economic Support

The economic part is one important pillar of the network. Because the harsh situation many undocumented refugees live in, they are often dependent on the economic support given by AGM. By being assigned a contact person you are entitled to apply for financial relief every month. To be able to give funding, activists are collecting money through several different activities throughout Malmö. It can be collected through private donors, selling coffee and food at demonstrations or by arranging different events sharing the current situation of undocumented refugees etc.

The economic funding should first be used as a contribution to rent. However, if the person does not have any other income, as from example the Social Security, then the contact person is welcome to apply for additional economic funding that will help the applicant to pay other costs such as food and medicines.

Juridical Support

By helping undocumented refugees with their individual cases, AGM brings hope to those who do not know how to handle their juridical situation. AGM offers legal

counselling by lawyers, often law students, interested in human rights and the rights of refugees and asylum politics. You can also get help with preparations for upcoming interviews, often from activists studying law, but sometimes the AGM have the opportunity to be supported by activist lawyers as well. By understanding how the authorities work and what the authorities ask of you, it can help the undocumented person to feel a bit more secure knowing his rights.

As an undocumented person has to hide from the authorities in the Swedish society, he has to stay at a secret address. However, to be able to receive papers from the authorities or money from the Social Security, he needs to have an official address as well. The contact person will therefore sometimes register the undocumented person on their own private address or find someone who is willing to register theirs. In this way the authorities will not know where the undocumented refugee actually lives but they can still take part in the process as well as apply for money.

Advocacy and Social Support

AGM is actively working with their political belief in various ways. The political missions vary in proportion. Political messages and debates can be spread through local manifestations and demonstrations or through different workshops, the Internet or by accepting different invites to speak for and educate others.

The backbone that permeates all the above-mentioned pillars is the invitation to the social world - the collective sphere and trust that is constantly created and built upon within the network. Though, the invitation has much more to offer than just support and new friends within AGM. The social encouragement is indirectly linked with the Swedish society on several different levels: it helps people become aware of their rights as well as their obligations and gives undocumented refugees a chance to stand up for these rights by becoming politically active. It connects undocumented persons with Swedish citizens and gives an opportunity to integrate. Being part of this network is also a good way to learn the language. The AGM becomes the intermediate, extended arm between the parallel world of the undocumented refugee and the Swedish society.

AGM has regular member meetings both weekly and monthly, and both these meetings are located on a secret address so that everyone will be able to come without feeling afraid. On the weekly meetings the focus is on how to continue developing the organisation, how to develop its structure, how to reach out with political messages or how to collect money and invite more people to become members. The monthly meeting focus on the social sphere – people meet and drink coffee and tea, and sometimes eat together. On this meeting you tie new connections, plan activities together and have the possibility of having legal counselling and guidance, only to name a few of the different activities.

An important event is the "asylum party" that is held a couple of times a year. It is a large event connecting different organisations with the same political agenda as AGM. The asylum party invites everyone to come together to build bridges between people and to enlighten and highlight the current situation of undocumented refugees as well as to collect money to financially support those in need. Demonstrations and manifestations are also used as common social activities to come together as one united group, sometimes also with the goal to collect money. The largest event, strongly connected to AGM although registered as an independent non-profit organisation, is The Asylum Relay.

4.2 The Asylum Relay

The AR started in 2013 by a former undocumented young Afghan refugee who is also an active member of the AGM, as a way for refugees who are affected by the on-going asylum politics to reach out to the Swedish society and to make people listen to their stories. The AR is based upon a manifestation march by foot once a year, although with slightly different destinations and focus. Activists and refugees walk together to educate, enlighten and discuss with people on the way. Another important aspect is the attention from media. 2013 the AR marched from Malmö to Stockholm during one month for more humane asylum politics. 2014 the relay marched for about three weeks from Malmö to the destination of Visby on the island Gotland, where the goal was to actively participate and make sure that the AR participants had the chance to raise their voices at the largest Swedish political venue called Almedalsveckan, where all major parties and politicians are being represented. 2015 the march set

focus on the Swedish politics of deporting illegal immigrants, and people marched several days to one of Sweden's largest deportation centre in Åstorp, where they expressed their compassion for those locked inside the deportation centre.

The structure of the organisation has a voluntary planning group that anyone is welcome to contribute to. The AR is organised in a way that makes it possible for everyone to join who shares the same vision and political agenda, but the planning group has the overall responsibilities divided between them, such as food, places to sleep on the way, questions from the media and security for the participants. A paradox that should be noted here is that during this march, the police have never approached the participants, even though the AR is talking openly in media about undocumented refugees rights and that the public should listen to these people's stories.

The AR is called a "relay" because you can participate as much and for how long as you want and then hand over your engagement to someone else. During 2014, there were about fifty people who walked all the way from Malmö to Visby and an estimated 300 - 400 people in total that participated in the relay, in some way or another.

The central aspect of the AR is the social support that is built through the group identity. The core is based on shared goals, common enemies and that many of the AR participants already are connected to AGM or other organisations that share the same belief; in this way many participants already know each other briefly.

4.3 We, Us and the Enemy

"We want everyone who come to Sweden to feel safe and feel like they belong here with us" (Hamid)

So what is it that makes the networks create a group identity that embraces young undocumented refugees the way that AGM and AR do? There are some aspects that are fundamental in the creation of a very strong "we" within socially connected groups like AGM and AR. Even though people would share language, religion and

common experiences and live at the same place and share both ethnicity and gender, it would not be enough to create a fundamental sense of belonging together. It is not until people share a project with a common goal and all individuals fill their own part, that a strong "we" develop (Hylland Eriksen 2004: 51).

So for a strong we to accrue, there has to be something more added for the dynamics to unite the group as a "we". This is particularly strong within AR whereas the unity of the group is the most significant key of the movement. Hamid tells me about his thoughts about the AR and what common goal he thinks represents the network:

> "In the union we are like a family, a new family and this family will guide us and become one and everyone will be part of the society. Our network will grow larger in society."

It is the significant work of the middle-hand networks of AGM and AR, justifying of the individual's life while forced into the non-existence parallel world, as well as the common goal for the social group that is keeping these networks together. The aspects of language, ethnicity and origin are placed on a second level of importance to the group.

Another important factor of the identity of the group is that "we" have the same enemy that can hinder or destroy the common goal of the group (Hylland Eriksen 2004: 51). As the organisations are built upon trust between its members and participants, it becomes clear that these groups also have a strong disbelief and mistrust towards "the others", in this specific case it is foremost the Swedish nation-state including its authorities. The Swedish nation-state becomes the symbolic threat to an undocumented person's life. Adding on another enemy, the far right wing political party The Swedish Democrats (SD). For the members of the networks, SD represents the mind behind the xenophobic and racist opinions in the Swedish society.

While discussing with Ezat, one of the members of the AR, he tells me about his feelings against The Swedish Democrats party leader Jimmie Åkesson (with a demonstrating hand beating on his chest):

"We are religiously and politically independent, all parties are welcome except from… you know who… But no, they are also welcome to discuss with us. The first time I met Jimmie I thought: What is he saying? What is he saying? You feel so… like hit right in the chest."

Within this challenging setting, many undocumented refugees find comfort, support and security within the AGM and AR. Because many of these people lack belonging to both their past lives and their present situations, the networks become essential not only in the sense of belonging but they also fulfil crucial parts in the making of something existent to identify yourself with.

Although, however closely related to these networks you become, the networks do not have the power to rescue or pull you out from the space of non-existence that you are forced to live within. The networks, as discussed before, are in practice a fundamental part of many undocumented persons everyday lives but they are not able to become more than what they are. Still, the networks cannot replace the gap between you as undocumented and your past life and experiences, neither can it replace the gap between you and the Swedish society.

4.4 A 'Me' and a 'We'

Being able to participate in demonstrations is one of the few ways for undocumented refugees to stand up for their rights and defend themselves. These different situations are full of paradoxes that influence one's identity. On one side you are excluded and alienated from everything, afraid and not allowed of belonging. On the other hand you have to take those risks to continue to live your life – you have to go to the grocery store, intervene at a party and so on, and if you want to fight for your rights you also have to participate in high risk situations.

Another reason of why so many of the undocumented refugees are active or connected to either of these networks is not only based on the before mentioned mainstays, or the group identity "we", but on the recognising of the individual. Each person who is willing to become active in and/or connected to these groups are given a special status that is reflecting the opposite of what the Swedish society send out.

As an undocumented refugee you are considered as the main reason of why this social movement exists. You are no longer an invisible, illegal human, but the centre of power, care and attention. You become *real* in contrast to the non-existence, ignorance and prejudice from society. Within these networks you are not only seen as a human with rights but you are in the spotlight of an on going political struggle against the current societal structure. You become the representative and ambassador for the on-going fight for equality and solidarity and for all people to be represented and included by human rights. This influences an undocumented refugee's identity and represents the contrary to the ever-present fear of the society. The networks become the channel between the real world and the parallel space of non-existence, connecting them with what is needed on the 'inside'.

> "They become members to have something to belong to and to get supported and because it feels good when everyone is welcome to join us. Those who are new in Sweden or those who already arrived here before feel that 'yeah this place is made for us and they understand us'. What do we feel? What things do we need? We can contact and help people. We have all experienced it and know how it is." (Ezat)

However, though the above mentioned aspects are important fulfilling parts for an undocumented person, Hamid told me that even though he is very thankful for all the support these networks has given him, he cannot get people involved to not perceive him differently as soon as they know he is undocumented.

> "As soon as people know you are undocumented everyone change their attitude towards you. Even those within the Asylum Group. I know they want to help and everything like that… they are good people. But they still change and talk to me differently. I know they don't mean it but they still think I am worth less."

When continuing the discussion from Hamid's point of view, the networks are therefore another sphere of his life puzzle that he cannot control and fully participate in. He is being identified on other terms even within that sphere that is supporting

him. He is never allowed to fully identify himself without any outside forces participating in that process.

'Being' is not a fixed attribute, characteristic or something that a person does or does not have, however it is tied to the contexts of interaction with others and is in constant movement and change. 'Being' is therefore not only a belonging but also a becoming (someone) (Jackson 2002; 13).

4.5 Conflicts in Networks

Even though the strong group of "we" is absorbing most of the members of the networks, these social groups are not without issues. There are several conflicts and problems inside of these groups as well as between them, some about ethnicity, some about values and some about who is going to be the unofficial leader(s). The undocumented refugees stay in these social movements because they do not have many other choices to be supported in. Because of their situation they somewhat have to be connected to these networks. The majority I talked to also wants to be actively part of the networks.

During my participant observation the networks went through some difficult times with conflicts and members thinking differently that tested the networks' essence and core belief. There were several different reasons behind these problematic circumstances. Conflicts occurred when some of the former undocumented refugees taking leading positions within the groups, trying to lead the rest of the undocumented refugees in different directions. Also, when other former undocumented refugees suddenly changed their values and opinions, not longer matching the visions of the networks. These conflicts created instability within the groups. In addition to these matters there are also smaller groupings within the networks. Not all approve of or like each other, which creates tensions at events and other occasions, but also generates problems outside the sphere of the AGM and AR.

The shift of values happened as soon as these persons had secured their future by finally, some after several years, being accepted for asylum in Sweden. They started to express racist thoughts about other ethnic groups in Afghanistan, particularly the

Hazaras. In the social media, someone commented on a photograph with executed Hazaras, that he "would like to pee on them". Another former undocumented refugee sexually harassed two of the contact persons within the AGM during the march with the AR. These contradictive attitudes and actions created uncertainty within the groups and affected the trust between the members. This led to intensified difficulties between the different groupings within the networks and is still affecting the members. Some got suspended or excluded from the networks because of their involvement in those actions.

5. Conclusion

In this thesis I aimed to answer the question *"What does it mean to live as an undocumented refugee in Malmö?"* and two additional questions: *"How does an undocumented refugee construct a belonging within the context he lives in?"* and *"Does the activist organisations The Asylum Group Malmö and The Asylum Relay have an impact on undocumented refugees' construction of belonging, and if so, in what way(s)?"*

My findings while conducting this research were able to answer these questions through a holistic, sociocultural way. My participant observation unfolded much more than I could have ever imagined when writing a thesis on a Bachelor level. I was able to develop a deeper insight of how an undocumented refugee lives his life in a parallel sphere while not recognised by the Swedish society. Also, how humans have an essential need of a stable centre, a home, a belonging where they can fill their own individual role, and what a crucial part activist organisations can have in that process.

This thesis has answered the research question(s) by examine the migrant politics of EU and the nation-state system, and what direct and indirect consequences this has for the life of Afghan undocumented refugees in Malmö. It has also studied their connection to the activist networks of the AGM and AR.

I have presented and analysed the different sociocultural spheres that the undocumented refugee is linked to: the circle of the past life experiences, culture and language from Afghanistan, the present sphere within the Swedish context with culture, language and the 'illegalness', and the sphere in which the AGM and AR is working in diverse ways in favour for undocumented refugees.

These sociocultural settings are all somewhat part of the everyday life but none of these settings are actually inclusive enough for the undocumented person to live in and create a belonging to. The perceptions from the Swedish society and the past Afghan cultural influences as well as the sociocultural movement within the networks pushes their identity in different directions, and the person is always trapped in-between the one he wants to be and the one the present and past societies think he is.

As a consequence to these aspects, a fourth sociocultural sphere exists. The parallel space of non-existence is attached to and in many cases dependent on the other three spheres, yet this space is still excluded and placed in an ambivalent position in relation to the rest. Within this space of non-existence exist all those obstacles and difficulties that an undocumented refugee is exposed to every day. It also embraces the sociocultural dynamics that can be argued as a parallel local community, inhabited by Malmö's Afghan undocumented refugees.

Time will tell how the newly established arrangements in the EU and in Sweden will influence the parallel community of undocumented refugees, and if the undocumented refugees will grow in numbers as a consequence to the more strictly applied migration policies. One can reflect upon how these issues will develop in the future and how the current societal structures of the nation-state system will be able to find ways to include these people in society, and if not, how these people will further adjust to, and find new ways of, coping with their difficult living situation. As much as the Swedish society can neglect the undocumented refugees, they still exist. They do also, in theory, have the same human rights as the ordinary citizen.

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