Titel   The Social Construction of Vulnerable Areas in Sweden: the institutional mechanisms that produce, reproduce and transform urban marginalization

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Abstract

The term "*utsatta områden*", understood as *socially vulnerable areas*, is highly relevant within the Swedish criminal policy discourse where the Swedish Police Authority's definition of vulnerable areas function as both foundation and support for a variety of political strategies concerning social interventions as well as penal policies. However, the criteria of vulnerable areas have come to be linked together with a more general picture of insecurity and vulnerability that does not account for the wider range of problems in the individual's existence, as well as mean to legitimize social control and police interventions in marginalized areas targeting certain populations. The aim of this thesis is to investigate and understand the rationale behind classification and targeting of vulnerable areas as defined by the Swedish Police authority, by applying the theoretical framework of the entangled class-state-ethnicity nexus as proposed by Wacquant. Government policy documents are scrutinized and analyzed approaching a Bourdisian analysis where contextuality and reflexivity is applied in order to answer the research questions, that are; (1) in which way can vulnerable areas in Sweden be understood as subjects of territorial stigmatization, and what are the specific characteristics of territorial stigmatization in a Swedish welfare state context?; (2) how is the Swedish government constructing vulnerable areas, and can this construction be understood as a development of the welfare state towards *workfare* and *prisonfare* regulation I conclude by arguing that the Swedish government's articulation of vulnerable areas is a contributing mechanism in producing territorial stigmatization, and that the construction of vulnerable areas can be understood as a development of the welfare state towards *workfare* and *prisonfare* regulation, which mutually interact and function not as a response to criminal insecurity but to social insecurity.

1. Introduction

When typing the term "*utsatta områden*", the Swedish notion understood as *socially vulnerable areas*, in a Google search engine approximately 869 000 results are found. Socially vulnerable areas are discussed within a significant number of different authorities, newspaper articles, political debates, scientific research, social media and further on. The definition of a socially vulnerable area is dependent on the context and on who is using it, and a generally accepted definition of the notion as commonly discussed in the public debate, is missing (Riksrevisionen, 2020a; Riksrevisionen, 2020b; BRÅ, 2018a; BRÅ, 2018b). A commonly utilized definition, however, is the one by the Swedish Police Authority which define a socially vulnerable area as *"a geographically delimited area characterized by a low socioeconomic status where the criminals have an impact on the local community"* (Polisen, 2021, 7). The categorizing applied by the police is further divided into three different grades of severity, where '*severely socially vulnerable areas*' and '*risk-areas*' constitutes the two categories besides and to a more severe degree than '*socially vulnerable area*'. In the popular as well as the scientific discourse, socio-economic and criminal tensions are commonly related to socioecological explanatory models of disorganization and collective efficiency theory (Gerell et. al, 2020; Sampson et. al., 1997) where vulnerable areas are associated with discourses on uprising criminal phenomena such as shootings, gang violence, terrorism and money laundering (Sturup et al, 2018; Gerell et. al. 2021). On behalf of the government, a complete list of residential areas which meet the criteria for any of these definitions are published biannually to the public. The aim is to provide a situation picture of contemporary criminality and the residential areas affected, in order to allocate resources and thereby support security and safety for the public (Polisen, 2021). The lists from these reports have come to appear in several different contexts, both directly in practical police work as well as by other government agencies.

However, while functioning as both foundation and support for a variety of political strategies concerning social interventions as well as penal policies, the reports from the Police Authority have been criticized for lacking empirical substance and being substantiated on police officers' perceptions and subjective experiences of the residential areas. With concern to that, the different geographical areas labeled as vulnerable, are in fact not possible to compare either with each other or over time. Furthermore, the demarcation of certain residential areas has received criticism for risking to stigmatize its inhabitants (Riksrevisionen, 2020b). While some researchers are using this critique as a starting point for creating measurements with higher empirical validity (Guldåker et. al., 2021; Gerell, Puur and Guldåker, 2021) others have

presented a more fundamentally grounded critical approach to the mapping and demarcation of residential areas (Gressgård, 2017; Mulinari and Wolgast, 2020; Nafstad; 2022). As stated by Mulinari and Wolgast (2020), the reports from the Swedish Police Authority considering vulnerable areas have come to be linked together with a more general picture of insecurity and vulnerability that does not account for the wider range of problems in the individual's existence. Moreover, some of the criteria for being classified as a vulnerable area, such as the existence of parallel societies, function as a mean to legitimize social control and police interventions in marginalized areas targeting certain populations (Nafstad, 2022). Thus, the concept of crime and *who* the criminal is, is contested as it can be considered constructed based on different views and values (Becker, 1963; Sutherland, 1945). A constructionist view of deviance and criminal behavior implies a denial of completely pure and universal facts (Schuetz, 1953). From a socio-legal perspective, state law and criminality are understood with a broader interpretation including informal legal systems and a critical stance towards "law's rationality, neutrality, autonomy and power" which opens up the possibility to "search for questions that take us beyond the claims of the law or the intentions of the legislator" (Banakar, 2019, 16). A way of understanding the emergence and management of vulnerable areas from a socio-legal perspective is therefore to assume that Swedish criminal policy uses the law as a tool for shaping behaviors that reflect prevailing norms and values.

With this in mind, the theoretical perspective I have chosen to adopt to address the issue of vulnerable areas in this thesis is of great importance and therefore requires a brief account already at this early stage. Loïc Wacquant (2014) is suggesting a theoretical framework where ethnicity and social class is decisive for the opportunities and conditions that the citizen is allocated by the state. Altogether, state, class, and ethnicity form a nexus-triangle and offers a way to explain how political measures, socio-spatial distribution and punitive management of deviant behavior function to meet social straits or developments which are not in line with the state's political strategy. Moreover, social marginality is spatially distributed as *territorial stigmatization* which captures how the degradation of particular urban zones "affects the sense of self and the conduct of their residents, the actions of private concerns and public bureaucracies and the policies of the state toward dispossessed populations and districts in advanced society" (Wacquant, 2016, 1082). *Workfare,* where financially disadvantaged citizens are forced to submit to low-paid jobs and monitoring conditions, and *prisonfare,* the penal policy applied as a response to manage regulation of the poor that are neither provided by welfare support nor subjected to manage the workfare conditions, function dialectically to

regulate the poor (Wacquant, 2010). In the Swedish context, the idea that welfare and penal policy is mutually intertwined can be articulated as the punishment-welfare-nexus (Barker and Smith Scharff, 2021). This can be understood as an antithesis to the traditional logic of penal welfarism, which is assuming that welfare states with high emphasis on social security and equality put equal emphasis on humane criminal policy measures. Rather, the welfare state in terms of punishment and criminal policy should be understood in terms of a certain *internal logic of welfare state* (Barker, 2017). This concept elucidates how security and welfare can be guaranteed to its citizens, only by minimizing and conditioning efforts towards those who are considered excluded or undesirable within the welfare state.

With these theoretical perspectives as a starting point, we can consider vulnerable areas in Sweden as a construction based on certain values from the state, which seeks to be dealt with and addressed through criminal policy and law enforcement. This does not mean that certain geographical areas are not struggling with challenges or that the straits attributed to them do not exist. Rather, we can adapt an understanding of vulnerable areas as results of a certain historical and social context, instead of considering them as natural and inevitable phenomena. Moreover, while reports and debates considering vulnerable areas can appear alarming and present a Swedish society in collapse, Slater (2017) suggests that research on 'neighborhood effects' concerning how risks and resources are linked to certain geographical areas, is misleading. This type of theoretical perspective is argued to present consequences that would be predicted by the mere occurrence of poverty arranged by institutions with capitalist aims. Such research rather reinforces than cures spatial stigma. Therefore, research on vulnerable areas should not be on what is produced in the neighborhood, but on the production of marginality and "the effects of symbolic structures applied to neighborhoods" (121). Wacquant (2012) suggests that;

> *"...to avoid falling into the false realism of the ordinary and scholarly common sense of the moment, the sociology of marginality must fasten not on vulnerable 'groups' (which often exist merely on paper, if that) but on the institutional mechanisms that produce, reproduce and transform the network of positions to which its supposed members are dispatched and attached."* (Wacquant, 2016, p1078).

Thereby, we can declare the *construction itself* as the object of research, instead of the specific groups that are objects of the construction. The concern of this thesis is to explore how the

theoretical framework of Wacquant's state-class-ethnicity triangle can be understood in the Swedish context of vulnerable areas, with concern to the welfare-punishment nexus. Empirically, this will be investigated by exploring the classification and targeting of vulnerable areas as defined by the Swedish Police authority. Both aims will be addressed by scrutinizing policy documents from the Swedish government, published between 2014 and 2022.

1.2 Aim and Research Questions

The designation and application of vulnerable areas is acknowledged to be stigmatizing towards its inhabitants and serve as legitimation for various political efforts and methods, which in turn foster further marginalization and unequal living conditions. Thus, there are strong incitements to counteract stigmatization and potential state involvement of urban marginalization. The aim of this thesis is to explore how the marginalization of vulnerable areas in Sweden can be understood from the theoretical perspective of Wacquant's state-class-ethnicity nexus, with the addition of Barker's *internal logic of the welfare state* to better understand specifically the Scandinavian welfare state context. Furthermore, the aim is to empirically investigate and understand the rationale behind classification and targeting of vulnerable areas, with Wacquant's ideas of *workfare* and *prisonfare* strategies as the underlying theoretical assumption. A valuable contribution to the socio-legal field is thus to assume in the issue of vulnerable areas the premise that the legislator is not necessarily completely neutral or objective in the issuance of political and legal measures. My supposition is that the answers to these inquiries should be understood by exploring mechanisms such as legislation and policy formulation at government level, that contribute and interact in the pursuit of criminal policy. The following research questions are formulated in order to comply with the theoretical and the empirical aim respectively:

- In which way can vulnerable areas in Sweden be understood as subjects of territorial stigmatization, and more specifically what are the characteristics of territorial stigmatization in a Swedish welfare state context?
- How is the Swedish government constructing vulnerable areas, and can this construction be understood as a development of the welfare state towards *workfare* and *prisonfare* regulation? If so, in which ways?

Since the theoretical framework has a prominent role in this thesis, and since such a framework is intrinsically linked to a methodology where sharp boundaries between theory and method are

denied (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1994), a mere analysis of the above mentioned documents cannot be considered sufficient. Documents which can provide a contextual and historical analysis of the political discourse on vulnerable areas as well as developments within the Swedish criminal policy will serve as further material to answer these questions. All documents and the analysis carried out will be conducted according to a Bourdisian analysis where historical and social contextualization is a crucial addition to the text analysis.

1.3 Disposition

After this brief introduction to the topic and problem formulation, I will proceed by presenting a more profound historical contextualization of vulnerable areas and how they are linked to general developments in Swedish criminal policy. I will then proceed with a literature review identifying relevant debates linked to the research aim and identify research gaps. Thereafter, I describe my theoretical framework as well as methodology including empirical material. I present the empirical findings as a discussion divided into subchapters, and then conclude by summarizing my main findings and identify my contribution to the socio-legal research field.

2. Vulnerable Areas and Developments within Swedish Criminal Policy

In order to meet Bourdieu's (1991) argument that discourses should be analyzed with regard to history in relation to its own fields, the context and history of political decisions concerning socioeconomically vulnerable areas should be considered. It should furthermore be stated that in accordance with a Bourdieusian analysis, it is so to say intrinsic, that the selection process of the material as well as the events that contribute to the contextual analysis, is in itself part of the analysis. It is therefore inevitable not to claim that a certain part of the analysis takes place already in this section. Socially vulnerable areas as today defined by the Swedish Police Authority, cannot be considered an isolated phenomena which suddenly appeared at its conceptual invention in 2014. Furthermore, as stated in the introduction, the discourse on socially vulnerable areas is found in a variety of different fields and engagements, and the exact definition applied by the police seldom complies with the meaning given to the term in discussions within related fields. However, by looking at political initiatives from the government and municipalities in different housing areas with socio-economic challenges, it is possible to trace how the labeling of socio-economically vulnerable areas has been expressed even before 2014. In addition to this, there is a need to trace and identify different historical changes in Swedish criminal policy, as well as to acknowledge the characteristics and

implications of these with regards to the identity of Sweden as *the* welfare State (Tham, 2001). Consequently, the following contextualization of vulnerable areas positioned in the history of the Swedish criminal policy, cannot be considered complete or completely objective in a strict scientific sense. However, in accordance with previous mentioned constructionist view of deviance and criminal behavior, this can be understood as an interpreted and qualitatively assessed account of relevant developments with significance for today's framing of vulnerable areas.

Politicizing of Crime and a Social Democracy Solution to Housing Crisis

While the decline of the Swedish welfare state, with privatizations of state services, has been described as the starting point of decreased security and egalitarianism (Pratt, 2008:b), the politization of crime policy and a crime policy model substantiated by control theories started long before. To decide which era or event that should be considered as the starting point for a contextualization of the crime policy surrounding the discourse on vulnerable areas, is a challenge. It is however possible to identify a few junctions as early as in the 1960's which would have significance for today's crime policy, that is, the politization of crime policy as well as politician's need to show action through major political implementations. As stated by Andersson and Nilsson (2017), the criticism against the treatment ideology policy in the 60's, was the beginning of a macro perspective on criminology which had to be legitimized on its own terms. An extensive reorganization within the Police Authority was carried out in 1965 with emphasis on goal management and profitability, at the same time as criminal policy started to rely on short-term instead of long-term goals (ibid). When it comes to social problems of that time such as poverty and housing shortage, housing-projects in districts that of today often coincide with the areas designated as vulnerable, served as the solution. Since the post-war period, housing policy in Sweden has become an essential part of general welfare policy. The invention of *miljonprogrammet* [the million program] in 1965 was a political venture where the government intended to build one million housing units in order to solve the housing shortage, overcrowding and substandard housing. These rapidly built-up housing complexes, often in the outer parts of the largest cities, was a Social Democracy reform which eventually ended up in a surplus of apartments (Boverket, 2017). The construction of crime and the need for offensive measures of that time, has been interpreted as a strategy to hide loss of control in crime policy (Andersson and Nilsson, 2017).

Government Criminology and a Politization of Victimhood

A second junction in the historical contextualization linked to today's vulnerable areas take place in the late 1970's. As shown by Sahlin Lilja (2022), insecurity was at this time still associated with economical strains such as unpredictability's regarding employment, housing, and availability to welfare. However, The National Council for Crime Prevention [BRÅ], a brand-new authority to cater for research and knowledge supply regarding crime and delinquency, was set up in 1974 and has come to play a crucial part in the Swedish criminal policy, with situational crime control as the primary method. Coined as *'government criminology'*, BRÅ performs practically applied criminology built on routine activity theory and control theories, on direct assignment by the government (Andersson and Nilsson, 2017, 143). These changed conditions for how crime should be prevented and combated were in line with a criminal policy which was earlier applied for the ones who break the law, to a criminal policy that function as a service for the conformist citizen. A politization of victimhood all the more came to function as a mean to legitimize offensive methods and interventions. Moreover, it was a crime policy where the citizens' rights were to be protected by the state from the criminal perpetrator rather than the citizen being protected from the state. With this politization of victimhood as a steppingstone, the criminal policy became during the 1980's an arena for political profiling, supported by the implementation of 'the general legal consciousness' (ibid, 164). The general legal consciousness served as a mean to legitimize the decline of inclusion of experts in the criminal policy arena, implying that a crime problem formulation is possible without regards to the experts and their knowledge. Pratt (2008:b) explains displaced expertise as a cause for having policy making to become a subject of public debate and scrutiny, which was further increased by the impact of media reporting with sensational styles rather than objectivity.

Restrictive Drug Policy as an Intrinsic Part of the Welfare State

The Swedish drug policy has been subjected to a substantial number of debates and criticism for being unnecessarily restrictive, emotionally driven and substantially pursued with no regards to experts. Pratt (2008:b) argues the Swedish history of restrictive drug policy to be an attempt of "bolstering weakening solidarity and national identity, but the cost has been further increases in imprisonment" (ibid, 288). Tham (2005) has shown how Swedish drug policy continuously has stuck to an intense drug control policy by a strategy of denial and by promoting repetitive methods despite lack of empirical grounds. He explains Sweden's

restrictive drug policy as a part of a general perspective of social policy, "which aims at giving everyone in Sweden social security via a system of common welfare" (Tham, 2005, 70). Thus, a restrictive and from a political point of view very, highlighted drug policy representing illegal drugs as the 'suitable enemy' (Christie, 2004) has come to be understood as a way to show action on the part of the welfare state and thereby maintain the trust of its citizens. There are thus to some extent divided opinions as to whether Sweden's tradition of restrictive drug policy is due to political attempts to maintain citizens' trust or whether strict drug policy can be considered part of the social democratic principle that everyone, including drug users, should be offered social security[1]. In any case, from a political point of view, there seems to be a tendency to cling to the image of drugs as the common enemy of society. As of today, the illegal drug market is still considered as one of the main challenges within criminal policy, as it is considered to give rise to various conflicts between criminal groups, which in turn lead to explosions, shootings, and deadly violence (Polisen, 2017; Brå, 2020). Open drug markets, including deadly violence and gang criminality is described as commonly occurred but also particularly difficult to handle, within socially vulnerable areas, due to the architectural construction of the neighborhoods where the housings of *miljonprogrammet* where built, where residential buildings are separated far away from traffic and have large inner yards visible from the apartments. These are functions that, nowadays, are described as contributing to the challenge for the police to perform their work in the affected areas (Riksrevisionen, 2020b).

Segregation and Socially Vulnerable Areas

Within the political discourse regarding how geographical areas with socio-economic difficulties are presented and the measures that should be taken to curb these areas, the recurring word *segregation* is seen as a contributing factor to social problems. The term is found in government reports and documents which describes the historical as well as contemporary issue of socially vulnerable areas. It is acknowledged that political efforts in the area of segregation have no clear domicile but have been the responsibility of different ministries over time (Riksrevisionen, 2020a). However, by following political initiatives and responsibilities, aimed at socioeconomically vulnerable areas, it is thus possible to find how the link between segregation and vulnerable areas has been articulated, as well as who has been entitled to define segregation as a social problem linked to specific residential areas. In 1995, The Flower

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[1] Regarding the latter reason, social security in this context seems to include supervisory, intrusive and legal measures which does not seem to be an alien at all to the Swedish welfare state. However, I will expand on these thoughts in chapter 6.4.

Investment [*Blommansatsningen*] was invented in 8 urban municipalities in Sweden, with the aim of make it easier for unemployed immigrants to enter the labor market through competence-enhancing measures but was also characterized by a long-term thinking with the ambition to collaborate and influence the attitudes of various actors (Integrationsverket, 2000). By then, the Ministry of Justice was the main responsible for inquiries regarding socioeconomically disadvantaged areas, with efforts aimed at supporting democracy and citizenship. The Ministry of Justice further invented The Swedish Integration Board [*Integrationsverket*] as a central managing authority for integration issues (Riksrevisionen, 2020a). Thus, the earlier investments in socio-economically vulnerable areas have had a pronounced focus on integration in terms of supporting immigrants to enter the labor market but above all to secure formal citizenship.

From *Blommansatsningen*, 7 of the municipalities continued the effort with The Metropolitan Investment [*Storstadssatsningen*] 1999-2004, of which 24 urban areas were subjected to social efforts. This urban development policy came to emphasis growth and labor market issues as the main solutions of the socioeconomically issues of segregation, for whom the responsibility was placed on the Ministry of Labor. In January 2007, the responsibility was mainly transferred to the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, a Ministry which was later discontinued (Riksrevisionen, 2020a). Between 2008 and 2011, 38 areas were involved in a number of municipalities agreements termed Local Development Agreements [*Lokala Utvecklingsavtal,* LUA], then termed development area [*utvecklingsområde*] (Regeringen, 2010). 15 of these became in 2012 classified as Urban development areas [*Urbana utvecklingsområden,* URBAN15] (Regeringskansliet, 2012; BRÅ, 2012). The inquiries of segregation came in 2016 to be subjected to the Ministry of Culture but was transferred to the Ministry of Labor in 2019 (Riksrevisionen, 2020a). There is thus a historical struggle over who is entitled to define the meaning of socially vulnerable areas. However, segregation is, as demonstrated above, a term whose meaning and thus penance has alternated focus between different areas, such as integration, the labor market, democracy, development and citizenship.

Fear of Crime Research and Intensified Police Work
During the late 1980's and further established during the next decade, the fear of crime discourse was brought to Sweden and articulated as '*otrygghet'* [insecurity]. Since then, criminal policy has come to be marred by more and more studies, often government-based, that measure insecurity and the fear of crime among the public. At the same time, insecurity has increasingly been linked to crime (Sahlin Lilja, 2022). BRÅ is continuously an active player in

the discourse on vulnerable areas and have published statistics concerning crime and experienced insecurity in socioeconomically vulnerable areas since 2009 when they were assigned by the government to support the work with LUA in *development areas*. The work continued while the term changed to URBAN15 as the notion to describe these areas (BRÅ, 2012). Today, the topic on *socially vulnerable areas* occupies a theme of its own on the official website of BRÅ. The theme *socially vulnerable areas* is further presented as a subtheme to crime prevention. Some of these reports presented by BRÅ rely completely on the definition provided by the Police Authority (BRÅ, 2018a) while other reports rely on a slightly different definition where the focus is on socio-economic factors rather than crime (BRÅ, 2018b). What signifies the body of research from BRÅ is a substantial focus on experienced insecurity of residents of these areas, regardless of definition or lack of definition, linked to crime and deviant behavior. Taken together, the discourse on socially vulnerable areas as presented by BRÅ offer a vast and complex picture of a societal challenge for the Police Authority.

In 2014, the Swedish Police Authority published their first report where a number of geographical areas were explained to be characterized by local criminal networks who had a destructive effect on the local neighborhood (Polisen, 2014). This report was substantiated by BRÅ's (BRÅ, 2014) conclusions on local criminal networks linked to geographical areas as a growing problem in Sweden, as well as subjective assessments from different police officers (Polisen, 2014). Thereafter, the criteria as well as the categorizations has been extended. In 2015, the Police Authority assessed a number of areas as *particularly vulnerable*. The characteristics of particularly vulnerable areas were the residents' poor propensity to participate in legal proceedings and poor possibilities for the police to perform their work, as well as the occurrence of parallel societies and violent religious extremism in the areas. Additionally, a number of areas were assessed as *risk areas*, a category of severity in between *vulnerable areas* and *particularly vulnerable areas* (Polisen, 2015). In 2017 followed by 2019, the criteria were slightly changed by putting a heavier emphasis on violent religious extremism (Polisen, 2017; Polisen 2019). In the latest report from 2021, the criteria for assessing the degree of vulnerability have remained almost unchanged, although the areas in the report are further described as "crime-attracting or crime-promoting sites […] which attract criminal actors due to the possibilities of crime and criminal activities" (Polisen, 2021, 15). In sum, the police's work to define and classify residential areas based on not only crime statistics and deviant behavior but further based on the estimated cooperation capacity of the inhabitants and, by

extension, the police's ability for social control of the areas, shows no signs of diminishing or ending.

Globalization and the Interwovenness of Social and Criminal Policy

Additionally, the effects of globalization have been discussed as a contributing factor to developments within Swedish criminal policy (Pratt, 2008:b). The implications for the Swedish welfare state are due to the assumption that "the homogeneity of the Scandinavian countries had played an important part in reaffirming egalitarian values, tolerance and trust" (Pratt, 2008:b, 282). Barker (2017) is suggesting the term *penal nationalism* to explain the coercive tools applied to respond to mass mobility where the aim of this strategy is to reassure members of the welfare state their material and social wellbeing. In sum, the idea of what social problems are and how they should be met have undergone a shift from referring in the 1960's to decrease poverty and emphasizing citizens' rights to be provided with social means such as housing. A paradigm shift within criminal policy as well as the state's need to show action through criminal policy, has eventually ended up in a modern criminal policy with focus on police capacity, manifested through the concept of insecurity as a counterweight to what has traditionally characterized the welfare state. Consequently, the contemporary policy seems to differentiate to a lesser extent between social and criminal problems, and the fear of crime which is highlighted by the government through the research by BRÅ is today substantiated by the discourse on '*otrygghet*' caused by crime. Combined with an increased globalization, increased immigration, and an increasingly heterogeneous population, it seems that the Swedish Government is handling social problems as criminal problems.

3. Literature Review

Two themes of literature have been identified as relevant with respect to the above mentioned problem formulation of vulnerable areas in Sweden; territorial stigmatization; and the nexus between punishment and social services in the context of the Nordic welfare state. Territorial stigmatization is here understood as a counterpart to research on 'neighborhood effects', where the latter is neglecting how stigma linked to spatiality interacts with the symbolic dimensions of place (Slater, 2013; Keene and Padilla, 2014). Territorial stigmatization on the other hand, puts emphasis on the symbolic powers the state exercise in the social as well as the spatial production and enforcement of urban marginality. Further on, it can be stated that the Nordic countries and thereby Sweden has a political history and tradition characterized by the Social Democratic welfare policy (Esping-Andersen, 1990), which in turn is assumed to be the basis

for how a certain criminal policy is conducted (Pratt, 2008a; Barker, 2008). Therefore, it is relevant to review research concerning the interplay between punishment and welfare in the Swedish and nearby context. Furthermore, the state government and criminal policy have common focal points with territorial stigmatization in terms of symbolic power and how urban marginalization is produced. It is therefore expected and inevitable that these two themes will eventually become intertwined, and the division utilized here should therefore not be considered utter but rather as an attempt to provide a coherent foundation underlying the problem formulation. The literature has mainly been retrieved from academic databases with LubSearch as a starting point. Keywords used, in a variety of combinations, includes *territorial stigmatization, urban marginalization, Wacquant, welfare-punishment nexus, welfare, social control, criminal policy, Sweden, Scandinavia* and *Nordic*. Eventually, the reference list of every article or book assessed as relevant has served as a further source.

3.1. Territorial Stigmatization

Territorial stigmatization is a well-attended and seemingly explored concept. When typing the concept on its own in the LubSearch search engine, 1153 articles or books are found. Limiting these to peer-reviewed and accessible at Lund University results in 651 items, however, when incorporating *Sweden* in the search, 13 results are found. While a few of these in fact does not consider a Swedish context, one provides counternarratives of the stigmatized neighborhoods (Fell et. al., 2021) and others concern the creation of social identities or resistance to the effects of territorial stigmatization from residents (Lalander and Sernhede, 2011; Sernhede, 2011; Listerborn et. al., 2020; Johansson and Olofsson, 2011; Johansson and Hammaren, 2011). Beach. et. al. (2013) is putting emphasis on the mechanisms that contribute to consequences of territorial stigma.

When widening the lens, it is clear that constructions of certain residential areas as problematic, is a widespread phenomenon throughout the world. The root of the theoretical starting point of territorial stigma can be found in the works of researchers who conceptualize urban marginalization and 'zoning'. Davis (2006) work on zoning is based on theories of post-colonialism and the struggles over urban space in the neo-liberal era, pointing at how the privileged populations is continuously fostering inequalities and "aggressively adapted the racial zoning of the colonial period to defend their own class privileges and spacial exclusivity" (ibid, 96). In recent years, there has been an increasing research and emerging literature around urban marginalization from various fields approaching various point of departures. These can

be found in the literature known as 'sink estates' in the UK, ghettos in Denmark, banlieues in France, 'Badlands', parallel societies, slums, or sensitive neighborhoods (Slater, 2018; Talalaeva and Pronina, 2020; Wacquant, 2001).

On a micro-level, researchers have explored residents' experiences as well as various strategies to give in to or orientate oneself to territorial stigmatization. Principally Wacquant has argued that territorial stigma is stigma produced by the public discourse which is affecting residents of marginalized urban areas towards self-demarcation and resignation of a degraded self-image (Wacquant, 2009). Various strategies to cope with this have been demonstrated such as to deny or diminished a relative sense of poverty, and to morally condemn 'the poor' even though those who judge belong there themselves (Shildrick and MacDonald, 2014). The submissive strategies as the inescapable response to territorial marginalization has been questioned by a range of scholars. Jensen and Christensen (2012) challenge Wacquant's conception of internalized territorial stigma concerning residents in marginalized areas in a Danish context, since most of the residents participating in their qualitative study articulated that even though they were aware of the stigma, they did not comprehend their place of residence as a bad place and therefore did not experienced shame or other feelings linked to pronounced stigma. This mirrors other researchers' results which has challenged popular discourses by exploring how resident presents counternarratives about the neighborhood blame, articulating a certain 'neighborhood pride' or belonging (Fell et. al., 2021; Fattah and Walters, 2020; August, 2012; Slater and Anderson, 2012). Whereas some of these coping strategies can be a way of managing territorial stigmatization (Wacquant, 2008; see also Jensen and Christensen, 2012 for a discussion), it has been argued that the experience of territorial stigmatization should be understood as a negotiation and process of ambiguities rather than a binary strategy of domination or resistance (Garbin and Millington, 2012). Moreover, residents experience territorial stigmatization in different ways depending on personal, social and environmental circumstances as well as the prevailing narratives and expectations of which their area is perceived (Pinkster, 2020). Grönli Rosten (2017) acknowledge this subjective experience and strategies for handling territorial stigmatization and adds a gendered perspective. However, these studies tend to understand the concept of territorial stigmatization as grounded almost exclusively in the personal and individual interpretation of stigmatizing actions and fail to take the overall executions of power from the State into account.

The individualistic focus has been criticized for the analytic attention on the *experience* of stigma as it tends to fuel the actual production of territorial stigma, rather than tracing the strategies and processes which are the basis for stigmatizing factors (Link and Phelan, 2001; Keene and Padilla, 2014). Slater (2017) notes that "very few studies have taken up the challenge of tracing the production of territorial stigmatization" (ibid, 116). A number of research is taking media production and discourse as a starting point. By applying quantitative discourse analysis on national newspapers in Germany, Poland, and France, it has been demonstrated how tainted housing estates are constructed and (re)produced as threatening places and as places belonging to others than those included in 'proper society' (Glatsche et. al., 2012). The production of urban marginalization manifests itself in a variety of situations, such as how urban inequalities are reinforced by uneven political recruitment as shown by Strömblad and Myrberg (2013).

In line with this, one stream of research concerns the political activation of territorial stigma, understood as "corrective political reactions driven by fright, revulsion and condemnation, which in turn foster the growth and glorification of the penal wing of the state in order to penalize urban marginality" (Wacquant and Slater, 2014, 1275). The penalization of urban marginality demonstrates how places have become associated with class position, reputation, and social status. This has been shown in Denmark where "spatial concentration of dispossessed households and the defamation of their neighborhoods are closely linked to the institutionalization of a dualized and asymmetrical housing market" (Schultz Larsen, 2014, 1386). Researchers have further identified how the importance of neighborhood reputation play a vital role for investment in the area. When an area is perceived as deprived, underdeveloped and 'risky', private sector operators tend to avoid investing there in the favor of more profitable options. This sustained economic disinvestment is thereby limiting opportunities for the residents (Rhodes, 2012). However, a substantial body of research problematize the implications of increasing investment in deprived neighborhoods based on economic and political incitements. The territorial taint has been shown to function as a rationale and ideological justification for a variety of state interventions such as 'neo-liberal engineering' (Thörn and Holgersson, 2016) and reincorporation of the deprived area into the real estate circuit of the city (Kallin and Slater, 2014). When it comes to the relation between territorial stigmatization and state interventions, Birk and Fallov (2021) highlighted the meso-level activity of social workers in Denmark, who carried out work on the ground at the same time as being top-down regulated to provide social intervention. Furthermore, Swedish school policy

has been identified as a stigmatizing factor when adjusting students to speak and write in Swedish, resulting in a reinforcement of 'otherness' to immigrant children, further amplified by the stigma attached to suburban areas around major cities (Johansson and Olofsson, 2011).

In sum, territorial stigmatization can be considered a well explored concept and different aspects of it is often found in connection with urban marginalization which is expressed slightly differently in different parts of the world. A vast majority of the above-mentioned research is focusing on the subjective experience of territorial stigmatization, as well as various defending strategies. While the production of stigma viewed as a marginalizing process is more unusual to find in studies, it is possible to find sporadic studies that explore these as found in media, political governance, and bureaucracy. Another stream of research connects more explicitly political and financial (dis)investments to territorial stigmatization. However, a gap is identified when it comes to how territorial stigmatization can be understood with emphasis on the stigmatizing mechanisms produced by the state apparatus in the context of urban marginalization in Sweden.

3.2. The Punishment-Welfare Nexus

A search on the *punishment-welfare nexus* as a precise concept result in 8 articles in LubSearch. The majority of these contribute to the treatment-punishment nexus and individuals' contact with the justice system worldwide (Henriksen and Prieur, 2019; Morash et. al., 2017; McNamara et. al. 2021; Healy, 2012; T. Schneider, 2021; Birkett, 2021). Two articles touch upon the concept from a more state-oriented perspective (Pitts and Hope, 1997; Barker and Scharff Smith, 2021). Notable is that all articles except Pitts and Hope's from 1997 are fairly new, and therefore indicates a small but perhaps beginning academic interest in the punishment-welfare nexus. However, the ideas of social control as a cornerstone in welfare society is well explored even further back in time, as I present below.

The interconnections between punishment on one side, and state policies aimed at compensating poverty on the other side, is widely explored both nationally as well as globally (Barker, 2017; Garland, 2001; Tham, 2001;Wacquant, 2009a). Wacquant (2001) argues that the penal system is used as an instrument for managing social insecurity which is a result of neo-liberal adjustments, economic deregulation and welfare retrenchment. Punishment models and welfare systems are often handling the same population, that is the poor, ethnic minorities, and other socially marginalized individuals. In democracies with an established welfare system,

researchers refer to this relationship as the punishment-welfare nexus (Barker & Scharff Smith, 2021). In order to grasp what a welfare state is, Esping-Anderson's (1990) is suggesting a commonly referred description and division of welfare state policies applied by nation states, where liberal welfare states are characterized by a modest social insurance based on means-tested social security. By contrast, social- democratic regimes offer more generous welfare services, with emphasis on workers' rights and class equalizing benefits (ibid). In line with the latter description, Sweden has historically been identified as 'the welfare state par excellence' (Tham, 2001, 410) or 'The Archetypal Social Democracy' (Cavadino and Dignan, 2012, 153). Swedish crime policy has been characterized by social engineering, rehabilitation and humanitarian values, and intimately linked to the Social Democracy welfare state model (ibid). The Social Democratic welfare model is solidarity-based and concerns for those who cannot care for themselves, a model which can be maintained only with most people in work (Esping Andersen, 1990). In Sweden, this has been accomplished by relying heavily on full employment and collective labor including female anticipation in paid work (Nilsson, 2017).

The punishment-welfare nexus is among a wide range of scholars assumed to constitute a specific direction, were high incarceration rates and a strong penal system is linked to states with weak welfare systems (Garland, 2001; Beckett and Western, 2001; Beckett, 1997). Simultaneously, more generous welfare states seem to approach a milder penal model (Pratt, 2008a). Furthermore, this assumption is very much in line with the theoretical starting point for researchers who have explored the Scandinavian or Nordic welfare system in connection to its seemingly low numbers of incarcerations as well a range of more mild tools within penal policy compared to other European countries (Lappi-Seppälää, 2016). Pratt (2008a) coined the term Nordic Exceptionalism to describe the low rates of imprisonment and humane prison conditions in Scandinavia which he argues to originate from the certain 'cultures of equality' that early existed in the Scandinavian countries through their welfare state model (ibid).

However, a line of researchers has challenged this image and point to the range of punitive practices in Nordic societies that goes against the Nordic exceptionalism thesis (Barker and Scharff Smith, 2021; Neumann, 2012). Reiter et. al. (2018) highlighted how incarcerated prisoners in a Nordic context experience "the power of the carceral state in Denmark in ways similar to those under more obviously harsh confinement regimes" (ibid, 92). Punitive measures applied by the state, such as isolation or remand policies have been criticized for their extremely offensive nature (Lönnqvist, 2020; Reiter et. al, 2018; Scharff Smith, 2017). These

interventions demonstrate how "these societies are not afraid to use intrusive formal social control extensively" (Barker and Scharff Smith, 2021, 1545). After all, provision of security seems to be one of the core aspects of the welfare state, even when interventions are oppressive or based on eligibility criteria (Hörnquist, 2020). It has even been argued that penal power goes hand in hand with expansion of the welfare state, since the very core of the Swedish welfare state ideology relies on labor and conditioned benefits (Cavadino and Dignan, 2012). This implies a welfare state model which in order to provide safety and security for its members, inevitably is forced to utilize offensive and punitive measures to guarantee economic resources and social control. In sum, a variety of different interventions and punitive practices which do not necessary fill up the prisons with a large number of prisoners, but which function as means to control and punish particular ethnic and socially marginalized groups, provide a more nuanced picture of the Nordic Exceptionalism thesis. While the acknowledgement of some sort of symbiotic relationship between punishment and welfare is well established among scholars, opinions further differ concerning the direction and complexity of the relationship. Researchers have repeatedly debated whether this proposed exceptionalism is a pretty permanent condition or a state that is on the wane (Cavadino and Dignan, 2012; Pratt, 2008b; Shammer, 2016; Todd-Kvam, 2018).

The core of the Nordic Exceptionalism thesis, the Swedish welfare state pictured as grounded in gender equality and inclusion, has been challenged by a range of researchers. Rather, the very characteristic of it should be understood as a duality of punishment and rehabilitation, or a Janus-faced penal regime (Smith and Ugelvik, 2017; Barker, 2012). Barker and Scharff Smith (2021) suggests *penal nationalism* as a modification to better capture this duality of how and under what conditions penal power is used in the Nordic context. Mulinari and Keskinen (2020) refer *the racial welfare state* to highlight how the idea of race is embedded historically in the formation of the nation-state giving expression to "the intertwinement of racialized social control and ordering that operates through policing and welfare state institutions" (ibid, 2). However, marginalized areas are not the first 'suitable enemy' (cf. Christie, 2004) subjected to populist discourses and expanded penal sanctions by the Swedish welfare state. A number of researchers have paid attention to how the expansion of penal law sanctions has focused on drugs, violence or sex crimes (von Hofer and Tham, 2013; Tham, 2005; Heber, 2005). Furthermore, a substantial body of researchers have identified how the punishment-welfare nexus takes shape by looking at developments in migration policy (Schierup and Ålund, 2011; Todd-Kvam, 2019; Barker, 2017). It has further been argued that Swedish crime policy has

been under change towards a discourse of 'law and order', increased populism and a crime policy mirroring liberal market values (Cavadino and Dignan, 2012; Tham, 2001). Andersson (2019) argues this assumed punitive turn in a Sweden context to be a misjudgment. Rather, he states that the criminal policy is still to be considered substantiated by welfare, however, the social-liberal rationality within the welfare criminal policy is resigning, in favor of Social-democratic work ethics care ideal.

A line of researchers connects these changes to transformation in a neo-liberal direction of the welfare state. Schierup & Ålund (2011) is linking the neoliberal development as well as 'managed migration' to increased segregation and unrest in Sweden. In a Danish context, Sandbjerg Hansen (2019) draws the conclusion that language and objectives of social work are affected and even defined by the neo-liberalization of the welfare state. Schultz Larsen (2014) is describing how the Danish State has "played a decisive role in shaping the housing market as an asymmetrical dual market" resulting in a 'structural engine' fostering processes of deprivation and segregation of urban areas (1400). Furthermore, Hörnquist (2020) suggests that the contemporary state discourse on security in terms of penal policy, regulation and welfare, is shaped by marketization and organizational control rather than increased centrality on security itself. Moreover, Gressgård (2012) demonstrates how discourses on security and lack of cohesion, opens up for politics containing intensified penal and social control of deprived residential areas in Malmö, so-called 'welfare-policing'.

In sum, aspects of the punishment-welfare nexus in a Nordic context are acknowledged among a line of researchers. While there previously seemed to be a consensus around a certain direction in the links between the welfare State and social control or punitive measures, it now seems to be widely recognized that the Nordic welfare State should not be considered merely humane and equal. On the contrary, it can be argued that the Swedish welfare State is two-folded with respect to its tendency to use the law as a mean to redistribute and implement welfare policies to those citizens who are considered eligible for protection, to the same extent as welfare must be limited and punitive legal measures tightened for those who do not belong to the state. This certain logic of the welfare state manifests itself in various policy measures that have an impact on areas such as drug, migration, and penalty policies, not seldom with a racialized undertone. For Sweden specifically, some speak of an increasingly predominant punitive turn, which can be linked to neo-liberal developments. While Wacquant's theories (2014) and his triangle nexus of class-state-ethnicity are both tested and applied in a variety of articles examining the links

between developments towards stricter criminal policy and marginalization of residents deemed as outsiders, there is a lack of research that take advantage of the complete triangle nexus in the context of Sweden's vulnerable areas. Furthermore, despite a vast body of research considering territorial stigmatization in the Nordic context, the discussion tends to consist more of the difficulties of reflecting subjective experiences of stigmatization, with Wacquant's concept definition. While a few researchers acknowledge the importance of highlighting how also territorial stigmatization should be perceived differently depending on context and individual, there are fewer studies that focus on stigmatizing actors and processes. Furthermore, in line with Banakar (2000), one of the crucial but more rare factors when approaching research based on a socio-legal design, is to not merely focus on the interaction between legal and social forces, but rather to "examine the way society is produced *within* the law" (Nelken, 1986 *referred to in* Banakar, 2000, 274). Wacquant's theoretical framework can provide a valuable tool in order to connect the affinities between the historical and renewed characteristics of the Swedish welfare state and urban marginalization of vulnerable areas. A study where Wacquant's framework is applied in full in a Swedish context concerning demarcation of vulnerable areas, where territorial stigmatization is understood as marginalizing production from above, is yet to be found in the literature and should therefore be considered a valuable contribution to the socio-legal research field.

4. Theory

I argue that, in order to sufficiently access hidden structures and objects corresponding to the research aim, it is necessary to go beyond the traditional understanding of urban marginalization as a symptom of socio-ecological processes, as well as demarcated social groups as the object of research. Through a theorizing of the triadic nexus where state, class and ethnicity are intimately intertwined in designation and degradation of urban space, it is possible to distinguish deep-rooted structures and causes underlying urban marginalization. Beneath follows a more thorough presentation of Loïc Wacquant's theoretical framework and those parts and concepts of his approach deemed relevant to this research. Since Wacquant's work rely heavily on concepts borrowed from Pierre Bourdieu's theory of fields, these will be explained closer. Additionally, Vanessa Barker has presented well acknowledged work on the paradox of punitive measures performed in the context of the Nordic welfare state model, which proposes a certain logic on the part of the welfare state regarding mild versus punitive governance. Taken together, these frameworks are suggested to provide a tailor-made exploratory and explanatory

model in order to understand the rationale behind classification and targeting of vulnerable areas in Sweden, with regard to the Swedish State's long history as an ideal welfare model.

4.1. Loïc Wacquant and Marginalization Processes

Loïc Wacquant (2008) is a sociologist famous for his comparative work on marginalizing processes in urban areas of France and the US. Wacquant applies the term *advanced marginality* as the elongation of advanced capitalism, to describe the social reality where socioracial relegation and exclusionary closure has evolved and entrenched due to the uneven development of capitalist economies and the decline of welfare states, negatively affecting the working class and ethnocritical categories. He presupposes the deep connections between market rule and penal policy in relation to the transition to neoliberal market strategy instead of a regulated economy based on the Keynesian model. The penal state functions as a mean to renavigate the focus from social insecurity at the bottom of the class structure, which in turn legitimizes the authority of the ruling elite even when social insecurity increases (ibid, 2020). Wacquant (2010) suggests four institutional logics articulated by the state to understand these connections. First, it is economic deregulation aimed at promoting the efficiency of the market economy. Second, the welfare state retrenchment is beneficial for commodification and streamlining of human labor, entailing workfare-conditions targeting lower-class recipients. Third, an expansive and intrusive penal apparatus is provided to regulate consequences of social insecurity, and fourth, the moralization of individual responsibility is spread in order to legitimize and motivate the market effects. Understood this way, "neoliberalism is a transnational political project aiming to remake the nexus of market, state, and citizenship from above" (ibid, 213). This is accomplished by the neo-liberal state through disciplinary social policy, *workfare*, and expanded criminal justice, *prisonfare*, whose theoretical inspiration origins from, although at the same time fills a gap, in the Bourdieusian model of the Right hand and Left hand of the state. Wacquant suggests we consider "a shift from the social to the penal wing of the state […] and the colonization of the welfare sector by the panoptic and punitive logic characteristic of the postrehabilitation penal bureaucracy" (ibid, 210). This implies a shift away from the welfare ideology where the Left hand of the state is becoming more supervisory and conditioned, eventually forcing the poor to enter a disadvantageous and low-paid labor market. The adverse changes in structural labor market conditions are organizationally linked to the *prisonfare* strategy performed by the Right hand of the state, where the punitive measures function as a response to manage regulation of the poor that are neither provided by welfare support nor

subjected to manage the workfare conditions. Taken together, these institutionally regulated forces interact and function not as a response to criminal insecurity but to social insecurity, generated by a fragmentation of the labor market, increased class differences and a hierarchical ethnic segregation that benefits particular groups. Wacquant (2010) argues this to be a response in order to;

> *"establish a new economic regime based on capital hypermobility and labor flexibility and to curb the social turmoil generated at the foot of the urban order by the public policies of market deregulation and social welfare retrenchment."*
> Wacquant (2010, 210)

Moreover, Wacquant (2016) stresses how marginalization is sociospatially distributed which should not be confused with idiom of the communal ghetto or traditional working-class districts. Sociospatial marginalization in advanced marginality is characterized by the lack of collective identity as well as a structural harbor for protection of the inhabitants against vulnerability. Based on this, we can understand all the urban marginalization in Europe as characterized by ethnicity instead of race, and a scattered composition of postcolonial migrants instead of the homogeneity found in the traditional term of American *ghettos*. This framework relinks class structure and urban structure from the ground up and can therefore dismiss an exclusive focus on the spatial dimension of poverty. The advanced marginality handled by the state through refiguration of expansive penal policy targeting urban areas is further constructing a discourse that fosters *territorial stigmatization* (Wacquant, 2009a). Territorial stigmatization is a form of symbolic violence, as it contributes to a systematic dominance by one class over another. It is symbolic in the sense that it legitimates imperative efforts, punitive measures and oppressive steering, which in turn are anything but symbolic. These measures are affecting residents on a physical, material and economical level. In his work *Urban Outcast*, Wacquant (2008) weds Goffman's theoretical concept on stigma of spoiled identities, with Bourdieu's concept of symbolic power which enables the sociospacial degradation in advanced marginality. This "taint of place" (ibid, 238) is affecting individuals due to their residential or original spatial belonging, but further intersect with discrimination based on class, ethnicity or race. The understanding of territorial stigmatization should not however, be restricted to the subjective experience of the individual but a "deeply consequential form of ramifying action through mental and objectal representation" (Bourdieu, 1991, 220–221 referred to in Wacquant et.al. 2014, 1275). The denigration of place does not merely affect the residents of blemished places,

but further the surrounding urban denizens, the service delivery of street-level bureaucracies, the outputs of specialists in symbolic production, as well as the views and thereby the decisions of state officials (ibid). Territorial stigmatization should therefore be understood as the weighted and accumulated product of processes ranging from the most intimate individual level to the highest structural and governmental level.

This holistic understanding of territorial stigmatization is relevant when trying to understand how the entire spectrum is characterized in a Swedish context regarding vulnerable areas. With the ambition to optimally answer the theoretical research question on the specific characteristics of territorial stigmatization in the Swedish welfare state, territorial stigmatization must be understood not merely as a theoretical concept on its own, but also in relation to Wacquant's entangled nexus of state, ethnicity and class, where the institutional interchange between *workfare* and *prisonfare* produce and reproduce urban marginalization. Similarly, in order to answer the empirical research question on the possible development of the Swedish welfare state towards *workfare* and *prisonfare* regulation, *workfare* and *prisonfare* must be understood in relation to their functions in the establishment towards a neoliberal political strategy as well as their purpose in extracting benefits from a growing urban precariat. In sum, Wacquant's theoretical framework functions as a typography to understand the entangled nexus between a seemingly growing need for the state to mark and downgrade specific geographical areas, and a political transition from welfare to workfare and austere criminal law measures. This understanding is relevant for my ambition to understand the rationale behind classification and targeting of vulnerable areas in the context of Sweden and the discourse on vulnerable areas.

4.1.1 Bourdieu's theory of fields

Wacquant rely heavily on Pierre Bourdieu (1991) and central concepts such as *capital, habitus, doxa, bureaucratic field, symbolic violence* and *social space*. These concepts are positioned within the state-class-ethnicity nexus and assist to "detect new forms of urban marginality, to identify state activities directed at producing it upstream and treating it downstream, and thence for sizing up emerging vectors of inequality" (Wacquant, 2014, p.1700). I will provide a brief description of the concepts considered as most relevant.

Bourdieu (1991) refers to *fields* to describe the social space where objects are located within relational environments of comparative character, which in turn are constituted by other relational environments. Thus, a field is a space were individuals, groups, organizations and

practices take place, and these behaviors or practices are characteristic and socially bounded to the specific field. The field usually shares a common *doxa*, that is, fundamental values that are so strongly established that they are rather seen as a taken for granted initiative about how the world relates. While Bourdieu's (ibid) understanding of capital goes beyond material possession, one can think of *social capital* as beneficial connections and social relations that function to help position the individual or organization in the field. *Habitus* is the sustainable qualities of the individual that are acquired and maintained through social processes from childhood and throughout life, characterized by the affiliation to a certain field. These characteristics set the framework for how the individual orients himself towards his surroundings, and therefore function as powers, which position the individual in both the social and physical world. Habitus is largely subconscious but gendered and class-differentiated and becomes embodied through performance such as speech and body language. The habitus is however always functioning in relation to habitus of other individuals' or groups', therefore completely impacted by social processes (Bourdieu, 1990b).

Fields are structured on a struggle for power between the different actors within the field as well as a struggle between other nearby fields. Battles can be fought vertical, between the dominated and the dominant, and a horizontal, between the Right hand (economic) and the Left hand (cultural) considering the different species of capital. By using the concept of *bureaucratic field*, Wacquant (2012) depicts how the state is not a coherent entity but a *space of forces and struggles* over the priorities, resource allocations and values of public authority, and in particular over how social problems are defined and how they should be met. Moreover, by understanding the power struggle, one can grasp how space is "one of the sites where power is asserted and exercised, and no doubt in its subtlest form, as symbolic violence that goes unperceived as violence" (Bourdieu, 1991, 126). *Symbolic violence* is thus violence that is exercised not by physically seizing other objects within or outside one's own field, but by simply exercising the position of power one possesses due to one's habitus and the combined capital that contributes to beneficial instruments.

4.1.2 Barker's internal logic of the welfare state

It has been debated whether Wacquant's theoretical framework is transferable to a Nordic context, due to certain characteristics of the Nordic welfare state. Therefore, I intend to annex this theory with Vanessa Barker's (2012) ideas of the Janus-faced Nordic welfare state, characterized by its own logic and functionality. Barker applies the concept of *the internal logic*

of welfare state to suggest that "welfare state preservation, the need to protect and provide equality and social security to those on the inside, is the driving force for its expansion, restructuring, and exclusionary tendencies" (Barker, 2017, 33). My intention when adding this concept to my theoretical framework, is to acknowledge the contextual discrepancies between the states originally subjected to the work of Wacquant, and the Swedish context as characterized by a Social Democracy welfare state model. My intention is furthermore to challenge my pre-understanding of contextual implications for comparative sociology, and thereby avoid, to at least some extend, being biased of a theoretically narrow field of view. Thus, Barker's concept opens up for a more contextualized and critical exploration of the constructions of vulnerable areas from a perspective of Wacquant. In order to comply with the aim and the research questions dedicated to this thesis, this supplement of theory is considered crucial to consider the specific context of the Swedish welfare state.

5. Methodology

In this chapter, I intend to describe and argue for applied methodological practices in this thesis. With concern to the theoretical grounding of the research questions, it is inevitable not to let theoretical and epistemological assumptions reflect the chosen research method. Therefore, in line with Wacquant's call for higher emphasis on institutional mechanisms and a Bourdieusian approach to the construction of the sociological object (Wacquant, 2016), a discursive analysis approaching Bourdieu's sociological tools in order to open up the empirical material and interpret it in relation to Wacquant's theoretical framework, is utilized.

I start by presenting my interpretation of reflexive sociology as coined by Bourdieu (1990a) and further explored in association with Wacquant (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). I continue by describing the Bourdieusian sociological approach (Bourdieu, 1999) to analyze relations of a social context which include the historical and social considerations of the fields as well as the relations in and in between the fields. Finally, I will provide a more detailed description of the data material, consisting of policy documents retrieved from the government's official website, which are containing descriptions or references to vulnerable areas. I also describe how these are sampled and assessed based on their ability to successfully address the aim and research questions.

5.1. Reflexive Sociology

Bourdieu has, despite his own work containing analysis of discourse, been critical of 'discourse analysis' as approached on language disconnected from its social context (Bourdieu, 1991; see also Sayer, 2017 for a discussion). Bourdieu is rather arguing for what he terms *reflexive sociology* (Bourdieu, 1990a; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). While encouraging critical studies of society and public activities (Bourdieu, 1990b) he is additionally arguing for the importance of a self-critical approach concerning power and knowledge position. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) are suggesting reflexivity as a method, a *sociology of sociology*, where the research is critically oriented towards the own research as much as towards the research object. The approach is critical in the sense that the researcher is;

> *"...questioning, in a continuous, active, and radical manner, both established forms of thought and established forms of collective life—'common sense' or doxa (including the doxa of the critical tradition) along with the social and political relations that obtain at a particular moment in a particular society."* (Wacquant 2004, 97)

My interpretation of *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) is that the purpose of studies in sociology, is that the method should help the researcher to detect and produce new objects and dimensions. In particular, these objects and dimensions are assumed to be mechanisms of the social world that the researcher would not be able to grasp with traditional, non-reflexive methods. This is completely in line with the underlying assumptions of social constructionism as forms the basis of how the aim and research questions in this thesis are formulated. It should thereby be acknowledged that the method presented in this chapter cannot be seen as selected solely as a result of aim and research questions. Instead, the described methodology should be seen as part of the scientific assumptions on which the formulation of these are based. However, in order to both correspond and prepare the opportunity to successfully answer the research questions, reflexive sociology can provide precisely the tools intended to deconstruct and expose the doxa of state policy.

This can be further explained by emphasizing one of Bourdieu's (1990b) cornerstones of reflexive sociology, the discrepancy between theoretical and practical knowledge and how the reflexive researcher ought to turn her attention to the instruments of objectification and their

effects on the social context being studied. This can be understood as a problem of translation between practice and discourse, which will not be visible unless the researcher can critically engage in the deconstruction of the doxa and habitus of its own position in relation to the research object. As suggested by Bourdieu, "one way to reduce one's own subjectivity is through the systematic reconstruction of one's own place in the structure of the social relations in which we are involved" (referred to in Zarycki, 2017). Therefore, the research process is not to be considered a linear process where the analysis is strictly limited to the empirical material. Rather, the research process can be understood as a performance of reflection back and forth in relation to the empirical material including contextuality, where the process itself continuously opens up for further analysis and insights.

5.2. Bourdisian Tools

Bourdieu's understanding of social life is that much of what influences us is below our reflexive radar, where discourse merely reflects the *habitus* of the subject who produces it (Bourdieu, 1991). Discourse analysis per se is thereby inefficient when emphasis is placed on the linguistic and textuality of the research object, since such analysis would merely reflect the social position of the research object as well as the researcher, understood from a reflexive methodological approach. To extract a discourse and analyze it independent from the fields in which they exist, is to ignore the power relations which holds together and shape the meaning of the entire discourse (Bourdieu, 1999). Discourses mean different things in different contexts and must therefore be analyzed with concern for the specific field and the very specific position in the field related to habitus and doxa. Moreover, the fields can never be considered completely autonomous but to some extent interrelated and socially affected by the internal as well as inter-relational struggle of other fields. The discursive study of these relations of a social context can therefore not restrict itself to the linguistic level but include the history and sociological reconstruction of the fields as well as the relations in and in between the fields (Zarycki, 2017). Classification and construction of vulnerable areas through legal and political policies should be seen as a practice-based activity by placing these measures in a context where they function in *exchange* of the social context (Banakar, 2000).

That means, rather than engaging in the production of the discourse on vulnerable areas, I intend to focus on the power effects and obscure structures in discourses within and in between different fields. In practice, this will be done by analyzing the background, history and former

definitions leading to contemporary signification and categorization of vulnerable areas, with the contemporary definition as applied by the Police Authority at the request of the Government as a point of departure. In line with Bourdieu's and Wacquant's (1992) methodological approach, my aim is not to investigate vulnerable areas per se but rather to investigate the constructive actions performed by those powers that produce and reproduce geographical demarcations and term these as vulnerable. This is challenging since any analysis of a discourse also implies an involvement in the construction and reproduction of hierarchies of discourses and the social actors who determines the discourses. Thus, by prioritizing government documents as my empirical material I potentially contribute to the reproduction of these documents as highest ranked in the social hierarchy. To avoid this scholastic fallacy (Bourdieu, 1988), I intend to continuously reflect on the difference between established considerations and facts, with consideration to my own habitus and the doxa belonging to the academic field. Moreover, this implies an acknowledgement from me as a researcher, where I submit to an ever-changing analysis during the research process. Therefore, my analysis can also never be claimed fully complete or finished, but rather a historically contingent product and constant work in progress.

5.3. Sampling

Wacquant (2008) claims that if we want to understand the struggle at the bottom of the sociospatial order, the state should be considered as the central focus of analysis. Text documents produced by the government in terms of different ministries and government councils, will therefore serve as empirical material to correspond to the research aim and questions concerning Wacquant's ideas of *territorial marginalization*, *workfare* and *prisonfare*. When visiting the official webpage of the Swedish Government Office, the search engine has been used to sort out relevant documents concerning vulnerable areas in between 2014 and February 2022. The time restriction is set due to the adoption in 2014 of the definition of *vulnerable areas* by the Swedish Police Authority, where the latter restriction corresponds to the fulfillment of the research project. 291 documents are found when writing the words "*utsatta områden*" [vulnerable areas] in the unfiltered search engine. When excluding press releases, articles, debate articles, speeches, web-tv and calendar events, 67 results are remaining. A number of these documents, referred to vulnerable areas in terms of sparsely populated areas around the country and could therefore not be considered relevant. A number of the documents were in terms of content duplicates i.e., law council referrals and propositions,

and therefore the number decreased slightly further. In total, 34 documents from the official website of the Swedish Government were assessed as relevant for the aim.

16 of these documents are produced by the Ministry of Justice, and concerns largely crime prevention and law enforcement efforts. Five documents are produced by the Ministry of Social Affairs, of which one of these also explicitly concerns crime prevention, while others have a quite different perspective presenting primary or mother care. Two documents are produced by the Ministry of Labor and relates to challenges in vulnerable areas linked to segregation. The remaining relevant documents identified are from Ministry of Trade and Industry, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education and the Swedish National Audit Office. They have a variety of content such as inquiries concerning leisure centers, sustainable development, efforts aimed at counteracting segregation and again, law enforcement efforts. A majority of the sampled documents are so called 'government assignments' which is described as following:

> *"The government can commission government agencies to investigate various issues. This may, for example, be about investigating the effects of laws and regulations. The results can then be used as a basis for the government's work."*
> (Regeringen, 2022)

A few of the documents are law propositions, which is a proposal from the government to the Parliament, either to introduce a new law or to change or introduce new guidelines to an existing law. There are furthermore a few committee directives, which are drafted directives that specify when a state inquiry is to be appointed. Another few are reports or assessments published after a government assignment, proposition or committee directive has been performed. Two of the documents are the so called 'spring budget' [*Vårbudget*] from 2017 and 2021 respectively, which is the suggestion from the government on how to finance different political investments. A substantial number of the documents, regardless of category, concern themes whose significance extends beyond involving vulnerable areas. For instance, one government assignment aims at developing an action plan for crime preventive parental support. In this document, there can be found several themes or subjects which are important on their own but relates not merely to vulnerable areas, such as youth crime, the importance of schooling, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and evidence-based research. Although these subjects are not directly linked to the research questions formulated in this thesis, this

does not mean that they are deemed irrelevant for the analysis. The core of the analysis is to deconstruct the content and context of the documents, thus gaining an understanding of how the use of the term vulnerable areas gets its meaning in a specific context. All documents sampled for the analysis have been listed in Appendix 1.

Moreover, a number of documents have been identified as relevant for the contextual and historical analysis. These have been identified initially through the Google search engine and thereafter through a snowball effect and qualitatively assessed and selected due to their informative character. The crucial guidelines when searching for informative documents, were whether they could provide the research with information concerning those particular residential areas described as vulnerable. To avoid bias such as if I would search merely for the names of the areas, I in lieu traced political investments and initiatives from the government and municipalities in different housing areas with socio-economic challenges. Moreover, I was striving to find a red line back in time by identifying how urban marginalization has been articulated historically in the political discourse in Sweden before the contemporary definition applied by the Swedish Police Authority, that is before and until 2014. The sampling has been limited to documents provided by the government, public administrations, and authorities, in order to stay within the aim where the state constitutes the research object. The sampling of documents for the contextual analysis has been proceeding throughout the project, as uncertainties and inquiries during the research process has created new needs to add more information to the background. These documents are added to the literature list.

The material has been read through and analyzed systematically and repeatedly with the research questions as guidelines. The approached methodology and material advocate a contextual presentation of the findings and therefore, the result of the analysis is an intertwined presentation of what has emerged in the material collected through the sampling process from the Government's website, which is supported by the historical and contextual background analysis. A number of quotes are presented in the analysis, with the aim of emphasizing and demonstrating the reliability of the analysis. The original language of the material is exclusively Swedish, and all quotes presented are therefore translated from Swedish to English by me. The findings will be presented below according to different themes that categorically link the different findings in the analysis. The themes are neither exclusively nor totally limited to each other, nor should they be seen as themes in terms of a strict thematic approach. Rather, the division below should be seen as a qualitative presentation based on the relevance of the

findings and their derivation to the above-mentioned theoretical perspectives and concepts. Addressing the research questions will therefore be done by systematically presenting the findings and continuously linking it to the research questions. Thus, answering the question regarding in which way can vulnerable areas in Sweden be understood as subjects of territorial stigmatization, and what the specific characteristics of territorial stigmatization in a Swedish welfare state context are, will require content from several parts of the analysis. Respectively, to answer how the Swedish government is constructing vulnerable areas, and whether this construction can be understood as a development of the welfare state towards *workfare* and *prisonfare* regulation and if so, in what ways, will require a holistic overview of the findings. By maintaining the state as the central research object, emphasizing the importance of the historical and social context for understanding how constructions fulfill meaning to phenomena, as well as to remain in a constantly reflexive and self-critical state, it can be considered possible to produce knowledge that can successfully answer the research questions.

6. Analyzing the Construction of Vulnerable Areas in Swedish Policy Documents

As will be demonstrated below, socially vulnerable areas in Sweden are within the sampled material objected to a line a various attributes such as '*otrygga*', dangerous, criminal, victimized, resource-poor, non-profitable, the exception *from* the welfare state, exotic, 'the others', and so on. These constructions have implications for how vulnerable areas are considered and the type of efforts suggested. I will demonstrate and elaborate on these findings further down. The following division and presentation of the empirical findings should be considered as a chain of thoughts in order to gradually and coherently address the aim and the research questions. Although the separate findings are in themselves important, the most crucial strength is how they contribute to the contextual intertwining of arguments. I present the findings and their interconnects by linking relevant theoretical concepts and framings as presented in the Theory chapter. Before presenting the findings in different sub-chapters, I will give a brief overview of content and how the sub-chapters are connected to each other through a conceptual and theoretical chain, which starts at the first sub-chapter and then builds on in a chronological order.

I will start by presenting how the lack of a uniform definition of vulnerable areas is causing a merged impression of what a vulnerable area is and not is, thereby defining the habitus of residents living in these areas. This identification of a conceptual confusion is completely crucial to understand how mechanisms of territorial stigma produce and reproduce attribution and an established understanding of vulnerable areas. I continue to present how this image of vulnerable areas is characterized by being the *exception* in comparison with other geographical areas, and how this exception forms the basis for presenting vulnerable areas as constantly and to a greater extent in need of assistance and support from higher instances. It is thereby possible to understand vulnerable areas as the exception *from a traditional and seemingly well-functioning welfare state*, and how this function to fuel the symbolic power of the state. I proceed to discuss how there is little or no acknowledgement to insecurity as experienced by residents in vulnerable areas, which could account for a wider range of problems in the individual's existence other than crime, thus confirms the assumption that vulnerable areas are considered vulnerable exclusively due to crime rates. The symbolic power that the state has acquired by constructing vulnerable areas as exceptions in need of support, combined with a seemingly one-sided focus on crime as the cause of insecurity, legitimizes symbolic and embodied state violence in terms of an increased *prisonfare* strategy. It is then possible to understand how this exceptional vulnerability based on unilaterally assumed occurrence of crime function to legitimize intrusive efforts and monitoring measures within the geographical areas concerned, and further on the residents of vulnerable areas for which I conclude is mirroring *social panopticism*. I link these findings, together with previous arguments, to an increased focus on penal instead of social policy, where the occurrence of social support is substantiated by monitoring and conditional measures. In the next sub-chapter, I highlight the implicit links between vulnerable areas and ethnicity, which in the material are left unspoken but circumscribed and associated with a chain of discourses regarding gang criminality, parallel societies and honor-related crimes, as one of the main characteristics of a territorial stigmatization which is produced and reproduced on a state level. This reproduction of established forms of doxa is further explored in the next theme, where I continue to describe how the constructed need for support and efforts is articulated as a particularly complex issue which requires special efforts in terms of united and coordinated actions between all-compassing actors. This call for cooperation on state level can be understood in terms of how the state is assisted by the bureaucratic field which functions as a space of forces and struggles over the problematization of social and criminal problems, fostering a self-supporting strategy that reproduce the constructed picture of vulnerable areas. Finally, with the sum of above

mentioned findings, I describe how vulnerable areas are constructed as a threat to the traditional image of the Swedish welfare state, although they rather pose a threat to the machinery of the Swedish welfare strategy, amidst changes that are pulling towards a workfare and prisonfare strategy in terms of conditional social interventions, a government pursuit of profitability and increased penal policies targeting populations who are not considered entitled or mediated to belong to the Swedish welfare state.

6.1. Conceptual Confusion Fostering Territorial Stigmatization

Significantly prominent and constantly recurring in the material, is the concept's flexibility and spread with the lack of a uniform definition. In the material, *vulnerable areas* are mentioned, as well as *socially vulnerable areas* or *socioeconomically vulnerable areas* [*utsatta områden, socialt utsatta områden* and *socioekonomiskt utsatta områden*]. The National Audit Office [Riksrevisionen] utilize socioeconomically vulnerable areas [*socioekonomiskt utsatta områden*] to describe "geographical areas that are and have been the subject of specific government action due to the areas' high concentration of social and economic challenges according to official statistics" (Riksrevisionen, 2020a). It is sometimes explicitly specified in the different documents that the concept applied is derived from the police authority's definition. This can be identified such as when the Prison Service are directed to execute a trial program for crime desistence[2] and they are said to be required to include at least one of the "by the Police Authority defined particularly vulnerable areas" in the program (Regeringsbeslut, Ju2018/02430/KRIM). However, in BRÅ's report on vulnerability, insecurity and trust in socially vulnerable areas, the definition of a socially vulnerable area is based on income, withdrawal of income support and a high proportion of young residents (Brå, 2018b). The same report was initiated by the government in order to map measures to prevent and counter crime and increase safety in socially vulnerable areas. The government is then stating that in these areas it is more difficult to maintain social and legal order, the problems with crime are particularly prevalent and there is a breeding ground for pro-violent extremism (Regeringen, Ju2015/09346/KRIM). These are some of the criteria included in the definition from the Swedish Police authority, however, as presented in the following report by BRÅ, these are not criteria explicitly applied in the assessment. Hence, a similar concept is used to define but also

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[2] The program is a coordinated support from the Swedish Prison and Probation Service and local community actors which means that Prison inmates who want to stop committing crimes are offered to participate in an incarceration program while they are under surveillance after parole. Regeringen. (2016). Inslussning – en idéskiss. Rapport från Inslussningutredningen. JU2016:E.

to refer to residential areas whose criteria have a completely different meaning than the police authority's definition of vulnerable areas. Consequently, the various but slightly similar concepts tend to slide between different uses and applications, however with the common denominator that they all refer to degraded residential areas and the residents linked to these tainted places.

In most cases of the sampled material however, the concept appears without any comment or clarification to specify the definitions of the geographical areas referred to (see for instance; Regeringen, Dir. 2020:32; Regeringen, Ju2015/09350/PO; Regeringen, S2021/06575). It also occurs that the different terms are used alternately in one and same document, where there has thus been a limited definition but simultaneously there is the use of another term to refer to the same definition. This can be found in a government assignment from the Ministry of Labor, regarding social efforts aimed at vulnerable areas where the definition of vulnerable areas mirroring the one utilized by the Swedish police Authority, at the same time as *areas with socioeconomical challenges* are mentioned to refer to these (Regeringen, A2020/02651).

The concept confusion is clearly acknowledged in a line of reports and documents. The National Audit Office confirms that "the meaning of segregation or what defines a socio-economically vulnerable area differs between different subject areas" (Riksrevisionen, 2020a, 10). The Governments Official Investigations [*Statens Offentliga Utredningar*] acknowledge how comparison of places of residence tends to apply different terms to refer to the areas that are largely associated with socio-economic challenges and crime (SOU, 2021). In line with this, BRÅ states that the different terms are often applied:

> *"... without any clear definition, but often refer to areas that are characterized by extensive problems with ethnic and economic segregation, high unemployment, low level of education, insecurity, criminal networks and high ill health rates."* (Brå, 2018a, 14).

Thus, there is widespread recognition of a conceptual mix within the discourse on vulnerable areas, which however, does not sufficiently problematize the phenomenon. I argue there to be crucial consequences when negatively attributed concepts are deployed and established, a 'taint of place' (Wacquant, 2009a), which is affecting individuals due to their residential or spatial belonging. The application of slightly different concepts without a clear or delimited definition

causes the concepts and their meaning to merge. This merged impression of what a vulnerable area is or not, is the strongest and most devastating stigmatizing mechanism, which theoretically mirrors *territorial stigmatization* (ibid). By presenting the image of vulnerable areas as established and concrete, through seemingly objective explanations of what a vulnerable area is, the government has exercised one of the most crucial criteria for how territorial stigmatization works. This symbolic violence performed by the state, function to degrade those residential areas which accommodates problem populations such as poor residents or foreigners. The devastating consequence of territorial stigmatization as performed by the government is the result of symbolic violence in terms of embodied and material violence on the residents. The individuals who live in these areas are deidentified and generalized, and their habitus is defined based on the *construction* of the vulnerable area. The residents are stigmatized based on a mental and objectal representation of the disadvantages and shortcomings applied to such representation. Although the stigmatizing effect is briefly accounted for by the National Audit Office (2020) it does not seem to imply a consideration in practice, since the concept confusion and the widespread application of different terms is found in essential parts of the material.

6.2. Constructing Vulnerable Areas as the *Exception* from the Welfare State

Vulnerable areas are, sometimes together with sparsely populated areas, the *exception*. The material tends to add vulnerable areas to descriptions of how and where measures should be carried out in society in general, such as in a government decision from the Ministry of Justice, which concerns the increase of the number of police employees and how these have been distributed "in different regions and geographical sub-areas *such as socially vulnerable areas and sparsely populated areas.*" (Regeringsbeslut, Ju2021/02238, p4, [the author's italics]). This presents vulnerable areas as different and necessary to pay special attention to, without giving an explanation as to why this would be the case in the specific situation. Vulnerable areas are often described as needing general support to a greater extent than areas that are not considered socio-economically vulnerable. Stating in the material that "some people are more vulnerable to crime than others. This applies not least to people in socially disadvantaged areas" (Regeringen, Dir. 2020:32, p6), an exceptional vulnerability is attributed to *all* citizens living in vulnerable areas. Moreover, this is, as presented below, a tendency that is found in political issues related to criminal policy but also in general issues.

In a committee directive from the Ministry of Education concerning children's extended right to *leisure center* [fritidshem] it is argued that "students who can be assumed to have the greatest need for compensatory measures are students to parents living in areas with socio-economic challenges" (Regeringen, Dir. 2021:101, 4). However, the right to leisure center is already means-tested and thereby should be granted to students within socioeconomically vulnerable areas *if assessed* to meet the relevant criteria. The quote above is thereby considered superfluous and can be interpreted as a biased and prejudiced assumption based on the inherent doxa of the Ministry of Education, concerning the competence and need for support among children living in certain residential areas. Further statements on how to carry out interventions and measures that specifically target vulnerable areas are identified in government decisions concerning primary care, child health care or maternity care (Regeringsbeslut, S2018/00722/FS; Regeringsbeslut, S2021/06575; Regeringsbeslut, S2016/06724/FS). It is not clear in the material, why expecting mothers or children in vulnerable areas are considered in need of support to a greater extent than expecting mothers or children outside vulnerable areas. Even when poorer health conditions are defined within vulnerable areas, as one of the criteria often mentioned when defining socioeconomical deficient areas, it does not account for individual variations or subjective expectations on support. It does, however, function as a strategy to cluster and essentialize these population groups as 'dysfunctional' families with 'deficient' capacities as if these were root causes for social exclusion. Such construction recalls the 'moral underclass discourse' as identified in the US and the UK, originating in neoconservative political discourse (Levitas, 2005).

When it comes to crime and penal policy, vulnerable areas are constantly described to be high priority or in need of special efforts. In reports or Law Council Referrals from the Ministry of Justice, the situation in vulnerable areas is described as effort-intensive due to a crime-promoting environment and that special attention should be brought to the situation in these areas (Regeringen, JU2016:E; Regeringen, Ju2019/01525/L5). Furthermore, in a government assignment by the Ministry of Justice (Regeringsbeslut, Ju2019/02681/PO), drug traffic is described as one of the main issues in the crime policy field and assumed to both take place and cause insecurity in vulnerable areas. Paradoxically, the same document describes that drug use is occurring within a variety of social groups and is also found outside the user groups commonly known to the police, and that the web-based drug market has a markedly increased growth. There is no explicit indication of what the drug trade does to the safety of internet users, or in other parts of geographical areas where this 'variety of social groups' is located. Thus,

vulnerable areas are specifically mentioned as in need of increased safety, despite the fact that at the same time there are descriptions of drugs occurring with a flow in society for which vulnerable areas alone can hardly be burdened.

Quite opposite, but analytically intertwined with the tendency to present vulnerable areas as the deviating phenomena, vulnerable areas are sometimes explicitly described as non-deviating compared to other areas despite the fact that they are considered vulnerable. An example of this is in a government decision regarding efforts to access incorrect accounting linked to organized crime, where it is written that "the existence of incorrect population registration as a contributing factor to incorrect payments from welfare systems is not limited to areas that are particularly vulnerable, but can occur anywhere in society" (Regeringsbeslut, Fi2020/02991/S3, 3). Paradoxically, this cannot be understood as anything other than a reinforcement of the construction of vulnerable areas as deviant and different since the statement itself testifies to an underlying preconception or doxa about the object. Consequently, there is a tendency on behalf of the government to repeatedly emphasize vulnerable areas in societal issues that are spread across social, criminal as well as business policy fields. Either way the emphasizing of vulnerable areas is expressed in negative or seemingly positive terms, the implications are a certain forced substandard *social capital* (Bourdieu, 1999) which sets the boundaries for how and what the residents are considered capable of.

The Swedish government has good reasons to strengthen the image of vulnerable areas as deviant, different and the exception that stands out from the image of Swedish society. *Nordic exceptionalism* as coined by Pratt (2008:a) has long served as an ideal image of what an inclusive and prosperous society with a humane legal system might look like. Sweden as one of the members of this exceptional proof of nation-state's ability to stick with low incarcerations numbers has traditionally been the image outward for 'the welfare state par excellence' (Tham, 2001, 410). When Swedish exceptionalism is substantially eroded or even assumed to soon meet an end (Schierup and Ålund, 2001), it is useful to consider developments that are not in line with the state's traditional image as *exceptions*. By repeatedly constructing and articulating unattractive socioeconomic shortage and deteriorating living conditions as an exception that completely deviates from the norm, the government then has a greater opportunity to retain the confidence of the majority of its citizens, instead of signaling loss of control.

6.3. Insecurity Equals Crime – Towards a Prisonfare Strategy

According to the government there is a pronounced lack of safety and security in vulnerable areas (Regeringen, A2020/02651; Regeringen, Ju2015/09346/KRIM; Regeringen, Ju2015/09350/PO). Although this unsafety and insecurity is sometimes referred to as *experienced*, with reference to the national security surveys conducted annually by BRÅ (2021), this experience is nevertheless confirmed by reports of criminal acts which are described to take place in the areas.

> *"The perceived insecurity has increased and is particularly prevalent among women, and among people living in socially disadvantaged areas in the metropolitan regions. In these areas, mainly but not only concentrated in the metropolitan regions, shootings, criminal networks, tendencies towards parallel societal structures and norms of honor also affect the living conditions of many people, not least children and young people."*

(Regeringen, Dir. 2020:32, p3).

When efforts are advocated for in vulnerable areas, these are often described as a mean to combat crime and increase the security as experienced by the residents living in these areas (Regeringen, Dir. 2020:32), stating "crime prevention work is a central part of creating a safe society for all" (Regeringsbeslut, Ju2015/09346/KRIM, p2). Same tendencies are found in a government assignment from the Ministry of Education, establishing a need to target early and coordinated interventions at children and young people in vulnerable areas, due to the assumption that these are exposed to or expose others to crime (Regeringen, U2020/00363/S). In the National Audit Office's examination of the effectiveness of targeted state subsidies for socially disadvantaged areas, an exception is hinted as the nature of the subsidies seems to be aimed at improving the living conditions of residents at several different levels. However, it is stated already in the introduction, that many of these efforts are framed by the government's cross-sectoral reform program and long-term strategy to counteract "crime and perceived security, unemployment, school results, overcrowding, community service and participation" (Riksrevisionen, 2020a, 9). Thus, even when there is to some extent recognized how deficiency of socio-economic as well as welfare-eligible assets can pose a risk to the living conditions in vulnerable areas, these risks are somewhat linked to crime rates and its implications.

Consequently, no matter what *kind* of efforts that are needed (financial, social, criminal law etc.) they are still articulated as the measure to secure crime prevention or combating crime in these areas.

To further understand the predominant focus on crime and crime prevention as a main measure to improve safety and quality of life for individuals, it is useful to consider the historical transformation of socioeconomical vulnerability as a political point at issue. As described in chapter 2 of this thesis, the task of establishing and implementing social measures aimed at improving life in geographical areas that are considered to be socio-economically vulnerable has historically traveled between different ministries within the government. Today, the issue of socioeconomically vulnerability is mainly placed at the Ministry of Labor. However, the sampling of material derived from the official website of the government, resulted 16 documents produced by the Ministry of Justice, in comparison to 5 documents from the Ministry of Social Affairs and 2 documents from the Ministry of Labor. This tendency on the part of the Ministry of Justice, to deal with issues that are considered to be associated with vulnerable areas, indicates a predominant focus on crime and criminal law solutions as both the cause and consequence for the situation in vulnerable areas. Thus, despite vulnerable areas' associations with factors such as economic vulnerability, low education level, unemployment and segregation, which reasonably could be treated predominantly as social problems with the need for protective factors that support individuals on different personal levels, the distribution in government policy documents shows that the problem of vulnerable areas is perceived as a criminal policy problem. This argument is substantiated by Sahlin Lilja (2022) who argues for "the emergence and establishment of a fear of crime research discourse in Sweden" (23) based on the "inherent theoretical assumptions on crime, fear of crime and the causes of crime, largely derived from Signs of Disorder, or Broken Windows theory" with suggested solutions "singularly oriented towards increased police and penal control" (ibid, 25). These findings are further confirmed from research indicating that overall focus within crime policy tend to be on "how to improve police responses to (risks of) crime through community involvement, rather than questioning the broader effects of policing and the idea that policing is about safety and security for all" (Gressgård, 2016, 12).

While the threat to residents' safety could be constituted by other factors, such as fear of losing their freedom of expression, concerns about economic stability or feelings of not fitting into the norm of society, these factors are left almost completely unseen in the material. Sahlin Lilja

(2022) has identified a historical transition in Sweden of the concept of '*otrygghet*' [insecurity]. While *otrygghet* has had different associations over different decades, the concept of *otrygghet* is today almost exclusively associated with crime. Furthermore, this means that methods for strengthening people's security, are today oriented "in a single direction: efficient police, more security cameras, a strong and continuous police presence, facilitate the police's crime-solving work, bans for people who create insecurity…" and so on (ibid, 24). As described by Mulinari and Wolgast (2020), vulnerable areas have come to be linked together with a more general picture of insecurity and vulnerability that does not account for the wider range of problems in the individual's existence. The absence of an acknowledgement of such wider range of problems in the individual's existence in the discourse on vulnerable areas in governmental policy documents, confirms the assumption that vulnerable areas are more or less vulnerable exclusively due to crime rates.

These findings can be understood by postulating how the state function as a bureaucratic field, consisting of a historical and ongoing struggle over how social problems should be defined. While social problems and the solutions to the traditionally seemed be emphasizing to work against poverty and arrange housing for everyone, socioeconomical vulnerability is of today transferred to certain geographical areas as if they were the root causes to social straits. This shift reflects a general societal trend that advocates criminalization and legal action to remedy social problems (Wacquant, 2009a). Moreover, the emphasis on crime and deviant behavior as the main reasons for individuals experience of insecurity can be understood as a shift towards a criminal policy in line with an increasing *prisonfare* (Wacquant, 2010) strategy.

6.4. A Swedish legitimation for *Social Panopticism*

As identified in the material and discussed above, vulnerable areas are constructed as the exception which further function as an explanatory model to depict the residents as exceptionally vulnerable. Borrowing a core concept from Bourdieu (1999) of *symbolic violence*, it is possible to identify how the assumed and perhaps sometimes exaggerated vulnerability of residents in vulnerable areas function as a mean to perform symbolic and embodied state violence. Thus, this exceptional vulnerability assumed, function legitimizing for intrusive efforts and monitoring measures within the geographical areas concerned.

An example of such symbolic violence comes from the Ministry of Social Affair's call for the municipalities to assess any risks and take measures against social problems and vulnerability

due to the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. The decision states that special efforts should be brought to areas with 'socioeconomical challenges' due to increased social insecurity for young adults caused by lack of presence of adults (Regeringsbeslut, S2020/05273/SOF). It is not further explained what such risks could be in concrete terms, but it is clearly expressed that monitoring measures in terms of making sure that there are present adults, is the solution. Symbolic violence is here the state exercise of power which can occur on the occasion of a pandemic which the state considers itself entitled to problematize and later assume that it causes consequences that hit certain groups particularly hard, despite the fact that it is not clarified why consequences of Covid-19 would hit specific geographical areas harder than others. Again, we are facing a 'moral underclass discourse' (Levitas, 2005), made possible by symbolic violence which is prerequisite for embodied violence in terms of possible monitoring and physically restrained efforts applied to the residents of vulnerable areas.

In 2017 the Ministry of Education commissioned the National Agency for Education and the National Board of Health and Welfare to carry out development work on a general level that will curb interventions so that children and young people receive early and coordinated efforts (Regeringsbeslut U2017/01236/GV). Three years later, the commission was adjusted in such a way that the assignment will in particular focus on special risk groups among children and young people in socially vulnerable areas (Regeringsbeslut, U2020/00363/S). It is here stated that:

> "*In socially vulnerable areas, there may be risk factors that, for example, mean that children and young people expose others to crime or are themselves exposed to crime. Therefore, it is important to have early and coordinated efforts that can help prevent crime, norm-breaking behavior and crime among children and young people.*"
>
> (Regeringsbeslut, U2020/00363/S, p2).

This demonstrates an attributing of social and symbolic capital, or *habitus*, to the children of vulnerable areas, mirroring Gressgård's (2016) argument that "their marginalized status in society is coded as a security threat" (ibid, 14). Moreover, gangs and criminal environments linked to vulnerable areas function as legitimation for special efforts aimed at children and young people. The Ministry of Justice are proposing a new sanction for juvenile offenders,

youth surveillance[3], implying "sanctions that enable society to respond better with clear responses to serious crime, especially in vulnerable areas" (Regeringen, Ju2019/01525/L5). The work and presence of the police in vulnerable areas is described as highly important (Regeringen, PROP. 2016/17:100, 30) and when it comes to social interventions, these are preferably monitoring measures such as 'increased presence of field workers' (Regeringsbeslut, A2020/02651, p3). This attributing of habitus in terms of social risks, legitimizes interventions where the lines between police and social measures are blurred, functioning as *Welfare Policing* (Gressgård, 2016). Gressgård builds her arguments on how crime prevention as a concept is vaguely defined with the lack of a clarification concerning the relationship between safety and security. This 'safety-security nexus' implies that "crime prevention has less to do with preventing people from violating the law and more to do with securing order and regulating spaces in urban areas designated as problematic" (ibid, 9). Thus, the construction of vulnerable areas as particularly difficult to handle from a criminal policy point of view, function as a mean to legitimize and support efforts *also* to target young people who traditionally have been considered protected *from* criminal proceedings and punishment. Thus, when "the coercive 'will to power' is entwined with the care-oriented 'will to empower'" (Gressgård, 2016,11), when the boundaries are stretched by the government both considering what efforts can be made but also for *whom* should be subjected to these.

The tendency by the Swedish government to simultaneously increase social as well as penal interventions mirrors Wacquant's ideas of how neo-liberal penalty is spreading in a European context. While Wacquant (2001, 401) argues this "activation of policing functions of welfare services" to be the difference between how the US and Europe punish the poor, where Europe emphasizes social control of problem populations and the US relies on an increased carceral population, there are further reasons to claim that the difference will be particularly prominent in Scandinavia due to its long-established welfare tradition. S*ocial panopticism[4]* has been described as characteristic and logical in a bureaucracy which willingly uses its social services for monitoring methods in order to control problem populations (Wacquant, 2001).

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[3] Juvenile surveillance is a proposal for a new sanction for young offenders, which can be applied in cases where juvenile care or youth service is not considered sufficient with regard to the criminal value of the crime, the nature and the juvenile's previous criminality.

[4] Social panopticism is coined by Wacquant to describe how penalization of poverty in Europe, mainly refers to France and neighboring countries "obeys a logic that is more *panoptic* than retributive or segregative, with the significant exception of foreigners" (Wacquant, 2001, 407).

Furthermore, social panopticism can be understood on a continuum of state surveillance (Mulinari and Keskinen, 2020) ranging from monitoring measures imposed by the court to excessive police presence in the targeted areas, and at the other end conditional social interventions such as coercion to attend repetitive meetings with the social services to obtain financial support. Social support has thus become a tool of the State to control citizens, rather than a tool for the individual to fulfill and made possible to control one's own life. Understood this way, social efforts aimed at controlling and regulating socioeconomically disadvantaged residents of vulnerable areas function initially as symbolic violence, however, transforms into embodied violence in terms of restrictions on individual freedom and in a long-term future expectations and opportunities. However, to show sides that seemingly completely break with Nordic exceptionalism thesis should, according to Barker and Scharff Smith (2021, 1541), not be interpreted as anything other than "the resilient structures of a Nordic society that are far more conditional, exclusionary and nationalistic than conventionally understood". To use vulnerability as a motive to apply intrusive measures can be understood as merely another key in a *penal nationalism* strategy (ibid), to uphold a state power that relies on symbolic and embodied violence.

6.5. The Implicit State-Class-Ethnicity nexus in Sweden

As stated in chapter 2, the term *segregation*, often with contributing factors such as immigration and integration, has historically been a common term in the discourse on vulnerable areas. However, in the material from 2014 and after, this is discussed in one document only where explicit links between segregation, vulnerable areas and to some extent ethnicity, are identified (Regeringen, Dir. 2017). It is here suggested that interventions should aim at strengthening individuals' abilities to take part of their rights as human beings, something which in turn is threatened by for instance discrimination due to ethnicity. Thus, the responsibility is put on the individual herself, since the core effort of breaking segregation is positioned at the individual's ability to act in accordance with the government granted rights; a strategy which is neglecting structural and historically embedded racism. When it comes to the rest of the material, the links between vulnerable areas and ethnicity are left unspoken. This assumed colorblind ideology is well acknowledged within the research field. Mulinari and Keskinen (2020) highlighted how Swedish police officers claimed their police practices to be race-neutral and based on facts, while in fact described practices were based on and reproducing preconceptions on whiteness and race. The authors link this contradiction to the structural dilemma of the welfare state, which

is inherently built on, and upheld by, racial hierarchies and the equating of whiteness with nation-state belonging but obscure it by highlighting the role of social factors and colorblindness (ibid).

It is however possible to trace the implicit links between vulnerable areas and ethnicity, by a chain of discourses regarding gang criminality, parallel societies, honor-related crimes and oppression as well as pro-violent extremism. The material shows a frequently linking of vulnerable areas with honor-related violence and oppression. Honor-related violence is depicted as something foreign and difficult to grasp, hence the need for collaboration with organizations that have expert knowledge in this area (Regeringsbeslut, A2020/02651). While honor-related violence and oppression is about maintaining common norms and values that prevail in one's own family or similar collective contexts, it is also generally agreed that honor-related oppressions cannot be linked to a certain culture or ethnicity. Thus, it is not clear why honor-related oppression and violence is assumed to be more common in vulnerable areas since the general definition does not account for socio-economic position or can be linked to geographically distributed crime. It is further argued that "the complex problems that characterize these areas can also be a breeding ground for pro-violent extremism" (Regeringen, Dir. 2020:32, p3). The Swedish Police Authority (2019), one of the criterions when assessing whether an area is severely vulnerable is the occurrence of pro-violence extremism which is specified to Islamic extremism. However, The Security Police (Säkerhetspolisen, 2019) declare pro-violent extremism as individuals or groups who are held together by an ideology and advocate, promote, or commits violence or coercion in order to achieve changes in public order which in turn is a threat to democracy. The direction of the political beliefs that underlie pro-violent extremism can vary, and it is not stated in the material whether or from which direction the government considers there is a threat. Moreover, the material is frequently problematizing "tendencies towards parallel societal structures" in vulnerable areas (Regeringen, Dir. 2020:32, p3). The discourse on parallel societies "exotify and essentialize everyday phenomena – negotiating norms, social control, and finding solutions when these norms are violated without involving the formal state apparatus." (Nafstad, 2022, p7). By highlighting how the government is attributing this exotification into vulnerable areas, it is possible to question why negotiating of norms or finding solutions outside the formal state apparatus deserves particular attention within vulnerable areas compared to other geographical areas.

What these discourses have in common in the material is that they are attributed to vulnerable areas as something essentializing within a socio-economically disadvantaged context, while in fact both negotiating of norms, extreme political ideologies or strong values restrained by a social context such as family, can be found within all social classes and residential areas. Understood this way, the problematization of honor-related oppression, parallel societies and pro-violent extremism positioned within vulnerable areas is rather concerned with dysfunctional lifestyles and deviant values which differ from values of the Swedish government. This interpretation is substantiated by Wacquant, Slater and Pereira's (2014) argument on how residents of deprived areas are "nearly always painted in darker and more exotic hues than their demography warrants" (1274). This argument further mirrors findings from previous research which speaks for that ethnicity and immigrant background are 'underground categories' in the definition of vulnerable areas as defined by the Swedish Police Authority (Nafstad, 2022, p7).

Wacquant (2014) explains how "the rise of the penal state moulds race as a modality of classification and stratification, by associating blackness with devious dangerousness" (ibid, p1695ff). Even as there are differences between the US and Europe's tendency to racialize and discriminate against residents based on ethnicity[5], there are similarities in terms of classifying and associating unwanted others with negative attributes. Wacquant proposes peculiar European phenomena such as the opening of giant detention camps reserved for irregular immigrants combined with increased border controls and strict asylum procedures, with the opposite of the European tradition of charter trips to the European continent. This "selective targeting and preferential confinement of foreigners issued from the West's former empires" (ibid, 1696) is constituting a useful boundary between them and us which is reproduced by the state in advanced marginality.

At the same time, the occasional acknowledgements made in the material concerning how discrimination based on ethnicity is a threat to individuals' constitutional rights, implies a need to combat segregation mechanisms on a structural level. Despite this consideration, responsibility from a state level to identify marginalizing mechanisms in terms of territorial stigmatization, is completely left behind. Instead, when it comes to government decisions concerning efforts against racism and hate crimes (Regeringsbeslut, A2020/02245), vulnerable

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[5] What distinguishing the European context from that of the US, is the focus on 'ethnicity' instead of 'race', as well as the "*conjoint, twofold accentuation* of *both* the social regulation *and* the penal regulation of social insecurity" (Wacquant, 2001, 407).

areas or any concerns about how racism can be linked to geographical areas or segregation, are not mentioned. This tendency to approach discrimination and marginalization with the individual as a starting point, as well as discrimination as an act performed by individuals, is to neglect the structural implications of territorial stigmatization from a state level as well as how denigration of place affects the views and thereby the decisions of state (Wacquant et.al. 2014).

Sweden has an identity to signal tolerance and inclusion, which seems to be maintained in the government's formulation of vulnerable areas where ethnicity or ethnic affiliation is left explicitly unconcerned. In contrast, the material reflects a tendency to make certain behaviors exotic or deviant, however only when they occur in vulnerable areas. Thus, the words and formulations that point to discrimination have been eradicated, without showing consideration for the underlying causes and effects of ethnic discrimination. Similar reasoning has been demonstrated by Brännström (2018) who identified how Swedish courts communicate that there is no link to discrimination based on ethnicity, if an alleged discriminator does not verbally relate her acts to ethnic affiliation. Brännström further identified how the Swedish courts understood 'ethnic affiliation' as 'race', despite the fact that the Swedish Parliament recommended the government in 1998 to erase the term 'race' from all legal texts, due to its negative associations (ibid). Taken together, discrimination on the grounds of race as well as ethnicity, do not disappear because they are not explicitly stated. On the contrary, it may be even more difficult to see the historical and structural causes that underlie discrimination, something that the government does not consider in its construction of vulnerable areas.

6.6. A self-supporting strategy

There is a clear and recurring description of how collaboration between sectors and authorities at different state levels is a necessity to improve the situation in vulnerable areas (Regeringen, Dir. 2020:32; Regeringsbeslut, S2020/09554). The constructed need for support and efforts is articulated as a particularly complex issue which requires special efforts in terms of united and coordinated actions between all-compassing actors. In a government assignment, it is stated that:

> *"A special focus in the development of local government cooperation against organized crime must be directed at the special problems that are found in particularly vulnerable areas. In order to be able to fight organized crime at the local level, which is judged to be serious or extensive, not only targeted measures*

against the ongoing crime are required, but also a broad collaboration that aims at the causes of the crime. The joint government work carried out within the initiative against organized crime must therefore be coordinated and carried out in parallel with the crime prevention work that currently takes place between the police, municipalities and other actors at local level, especially in the areas identified as relevant to local government cooperation." (Regeringsbeslut, Ju2015/09350/PO, p5).

These united actions concerns both crime prevention and social efforts, as when the Ministry of Justice instructs the police authority to, together with the Public Prosecutor's Office, the Economic Crimes Authority, the Security Police, the Tax Agency, the Swedish Prison and Probation Service, the Swedish Enforcement Agency, the Coast Guard, the Swedish Customs, the Swedish Migration Board, the Swedish Social Insurance Agency and the Swedish Public Employment Service, to pay certain attention to problems in vulnerable areas where an "effective and long-term coordination between the joint government cooperation against organized crime and the local crime prevention work" is directed (Regeringsbeslut, Ju2015/09350/PO, 1). These findings are in line with Gressgård's (2016) consideration of how "collaborative authorities in Sweden have initiated crime-preventive empowerment programs aimed at enabling the formation of local community bonds and capabilities, in conjunction with intensified pre-emptive order enforcement by the police" (ibid, 10). Social efforts are thus equated with services which complicates and prevents crime, as these are considered harmful to the state, thus, the call for united actions on a state level is state-oriented and concerned principally with the measures which benefits the state.

By understanding the Swedish state in terms of Bourdieu's (1991) bureaucratic field, these findings indicate an allocation of the problematization of vulnerable areas, where a line of authorities and actors are not only entitled but further expected to share responsibility for political shortcomings. A more widespread and cross-sectoral collaboration as articulated by the government, can be understood as a state strategy where efforts and measures are conditional and means-tested in relation to each other. This is in line with Wacquant's ideas of a reciprocal *workfare* and *prisonfare* respectively, rather than the caring versus punitive hand of the State. Echoing previous research on the duality of penal policy in a Nordic context, one could say that the citizens are "grasped by the left and the right hands of the state simultaneously" (Ugelvik and Dullum, 2012, 10).

This call for collaboration on a multi-sectoral level can further be identified as a self-supporting strategy where different fields take advantage of the bureaucratic function to reproduce the constructed ideal picture of vulnerable areas. Thus, the Government instructs BRÅ to map measures to prevent and counter crime and increase security in socially vulnerable areas. It is here stated that BRÅ ought to study "which measures can contribute to strengthening the relationship between the population and the judiciary, as well as between the population and other authorities and actors involved in crime prevention work" (Regeringen, Ju2015/09346/KRIM, p2). In turn, the government is referring to BRÅ when stating that young people are particularly susceptible to the gang culture and lifestyle found in vulnerable areas (Regeringen, JU 2016:E). Hence, the presumed need and call for collaboration and united actions can thereby be understood as not only a strategy to enlarge and exaggerate the construction of vulnerable areas by involving all-encompassing sectors of society, but further as a self-supporting strategy to uphold and utilize the usefulness of *territorial stigmatization*. As discussed above, where the construction of vulnerable areas is valuable as a counterpart to the image of Swedish exceptionalism and function as legitimizing for the approaching of social surveillance, the Swedish government have a lot to gain from a collaborative strategy where the Right hand in highest position with its increasing *prisonfare* strategy, simultaneously gets assisted by the Left hand through a monitoring *workfare* strategy.

6.7. The Threat Against the Welfare Machinery

With the above-mentioned findings as a starting point, it is possible to draw a line of thought were the construction and reproduction of vulnerable areas as the deviant exception of the Swedish exceptional welfare state, function as a shield within the bureaucratic field of the State as well as outwardly for spectators, to maintain the increasingly raging image of an all-including and humane welfare democracy. In a government assignment from the Ministry of Justice, it is stated;

> *"In recent years, a special focus has been placed on the development of organized crime in certain residential areas. Common to these areas is that they are characterized by socio-economic segregation, high unemployment, low levels of education, high ill-health rates, large youth groups and limited opportunities for social mobility among the residents. Organized crime in these areas has had a significant impact on the local community. The development has also led to difficulties for community representatives to work on the sites, which in the long run contributes*

to a distrust of society as a whole. This is a development that is worrying and must be counteracted.”

(Regeringsbeslut, Ju2015/09350/PO, p3).

The quote serves to demonstrate a line of interpretations of how vulnerable areas can be considered useful in the maintaining the ideal picture of Sweden as a generous welfare state. Firstly, when it is described that the situation in vulnerable areas is a direct threat against the welfare, since poorer opportunities to partake in the welfare system is prepared, reasons such as difficulties in recruiting professions to these areas are stated (Regeringsbeslut, S2021/06575). This implies that if one cannot recruit appropriate competence to a geographical area, one can hardly expect these areas to remain or become desirable and profitable, a leaning towards a more market-orientated political strategy. This reasoning can be understood supported by Schierup and Ålund (2011), who has identified a shift in policy discourses emphasizing profitability and individual responsibility. The call for, in an implicit manner, create profitability in terms of monetary desirable residential areas is well acknowledge in Wacquant's ideas of the neo-liberal market strategy as a vehicle for producing and maintaining advanced marginality. In the Swedish context, this argument is echoing Schierup and Ålund's (2011) statement of how "merging of integration policy with new policies for economic growth and social inclusion through business-friendly policies is evident in a range of public reports" (49) as well as Gressgård's (2016) identification of how emphasis on community-restoration is articulated as a necessary contribution for a functioning economy. Consequently, market-orientated actions to foster monetary profitability is not an alien to contemporary Swedish social policy.

Secondly, it is further described how certain actions needs to be in place in order to reach out to individuals who lives there, such as within maternity care where links are drawn between education level, lack of care affecting women's health and deteriorating primary care in socio-economically vulnerable areas (Regeringsbeslut, S2016/06724/FS; Regeringsbeslut, S2021/06575). The formulation of the threat against an equal welfare distribution and thus the extraordinary need for help in vulnerable areas can be understood as problematic in at least two ways. First of all, the assumption that e.g., expectant mothers in vulnerable areas would be in special need of support, is generalizing and fail to consider individual differences or needs of residentials. And second, the tendency to link scanty living conditions in terms of economy, health, low-degree education and unemployment with certain neighborhoods, is very similar to

criticized studies on 'neighborhood effects' (Slater, 2017). Taken together, when discussing vulnerability of individuals based on where they live, it is more likely that the stigma around the marginalized area will be strengthened and that this will to a greater extent include all of its inhabitants without concern to individual resources and needs.

Thirdly, the threat against welfare is assumed to be caused by organized crime which affects the state's ability to efficiently and fairly provide and distribute the resources on which Swedish welfare is based, as when The Ministry of Justice argues that "organized crime poses a threat to a democratic society and is one of our great challenges." (Regeringsbeslut, Ju2015/09350/PO). Moreover, violations of the welfare system are described as an increased, and well worth fighting against, phenomena (Regeringen, Dir. 2020:32). Organized crime is here understood as deeds which extends from improper use of welfare resources to gang violence, shooting and open drug markets. By explicitly articulating organized crime as a threat to democracy and the welfare system, the government makes it look as if the blame for social problems is outside their own power. However, as the material points to clear and recurring links between vulnerable areas and gangs, shootings and other descriptions of organized crime, an association is formed that leads to vulnerable areas being part of the root of the problem. Thus, the ambition to create a *suitable enemy* (Christie, 2004; Wacquant, 1999) is both well recognized and useful for the Swedish government. Thus, vulnerable areas fulfill a purpose by functioning as the exception from the welfare state, but furthermore to function as a legitimation for an increased *prisonfare* strategy.

My three above-mentioned arguments have a common denominator, the call for individual responsibility, aimed at all citizens but especially targeting residents of vulnerable areas and other groups people deemed as the exception, does not comply with the traditional welfare strategy. The inhabitants of vulnerable areas are expected to take responsibility for the situation, *or else* it is their own welfare and the right to social support that are at stake. This 'moralization of individual responsibility' (Wacquant, 2010) can be understood as a shift towards an increased burden on both the individual and the community in terms of responsibility for one's own livelihood as well as the surrounding environment. We have seen during this analysis how the government's economic deregulation aimed at promoting the efficiency of the market economy, together with measures that point to the occurrence of a conditional workfare strategy, are increasingly pointing to a welfare retrenchment. Furthermore, an expansive and intrusive penal apparatus, which should be understood not merely as increased incarcerations but on the wider

scale of monitoring and patronizing measurements based on symbolic power, is provided to regulate consequences of social insecurity. Responsibility is placed on an individual or community level, to take responsibility for the situations which the Government has created, that is the transition from an ideal-typical social-democratic policy to a more liberal, market-oriented strategy. Consequently, as Sweden is trying to uphold a generous welfare strategy, for its entitled and included citizens, relying on *crimmigation*[6] and targeted penal interventions (Barker, 2013) it becomes possible to claim that *equal* welfare distribution in its innermost meaning is not the ultimate goal of the Swedish government. It should rather be argued that vulnerable areas pose *a threat to the machinery of the Swedish welfare state.* It can be concluded that vulnerable areas are exposed to territorial marginalization by the government, and there are special characteristics for this in a Swedish context. Furthermore, the aggregated results show that there are signs that Sweden is increasingly abandoning its traditional welfare strategy and approaching a mutually functioning *workfare* and *prisonfare* as theorized by Wacquant. I will develop these conclusions in more detail in the next and final chapter of this thesis.

6. Conclusions

This thesis has contributed to the socio-legal field by approaching a critical stance towards law's neutrality and power, by questioning the underlying power structures behind classification and targeting of vulnerable areas on state level. A couple of limitations should be highlighted. Socio-legal research is inherently critical, and it is therefore conceivable that I am biased by the doxa that belongs to my field of research. Furthermore, during this research, I have intended to, instead of dealing with vulnerable areas as the research object, examine stigmatizing processes performed by the Swedish government. Although my approach and methodology constitutes good conditions for this, it cannot be determined with certainty how this thesis is perceived by the recipient. After all, there is a risk that the thesis and its results may contribute to stigmatization. On the other hand, in order to be critical, it is not enough to position oneself as such. A critical approach should rather be *performed* in order to make an impression in practice. These considerations should therefore be regarded as limitations that in accordance with the applied reflexive approach, drive research and reasoning forward by

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[6] The criminalization of integration law, see for instance Stumpf, J. (2006). *The Crimmigration Crisis: Immigrants, Crime, and Sovereign Power,* 56(2) American University Law Review 367.

critically challenging findings and analyses, rather than limitations that lower the value of the study.

As discussed repeatedly during this thesis, method, theory and empirical results are interwoven based on stated epistemological assumptions, and it is therefore inevitable that the results of the study do not appear to express similar interweaving. Hence, it is time to summarize and clarify the intertwined and accumulated results of the study related to aim and research questions. In order to accurately answer the research question concerned with in which way vulnerable areas in Sweden can be understood as subjects of territorial stigmatization, and what the specific characteristics are of territorial stigmatization in a Swedish welfare state context, it is necessary to first understand how the Swedish government construct vulnerable areas.

The Swedish government is constructing vulnerable areas as the exception *from* a traditional and seemingly well-functioning welfare state. What constitutes the exception relating to vulnerable areas, is that the areas and hence their inhabitants are in a need of protection to a greater extent than other citizens, both in general terms and in severe situations. There is an overall consensus that links insecurity entirely to crime where suggested interventions are aimed at decreasing crime rates. Moreover, at a state and government level, there is a lack of uniform and coherent understanding of what a vulnerable area is. Nevertheless, the term is used generously in various fields where vulnerable areas are described as socially-, economically-, labor market-wise-, and physically weak in resources. This picture is fueled by the police authority's definition, which is focused on crime and insecurity, and constructed as both the basis for but also risks for further increased vulnerability. This blurred, however strongly established through seemingly objective explanations, image of vulnerable areas, set the limits for the social capital allocated to the inhabitants of vulnerable areas. This substandard social capital, defined through the discourse the deficiencies of vulnerable areas, sets the boundaries for how and what the residents are considered capable of and affects expectations and self-image. In view of the findings as demonstrated above, it is inevitable not to conclude that vulnerable areas are exposed to a 'taint of place', where residents are marginalized based on, but not solely due to, their spacial belonging. Thus, the Swedish government's articulation of vulnerable areas is a contributing mechanism in producing territorial stigmatization.

Is now possible to trace the characteristics of territorial stigmatization in a Swedish welfare state context, where two aspects are particularly prominent. Firstly, territorial stigmatization fills a meaning by being precisely the exception *from* a traditional and seemingly well-

functioning welfare state. It can therefore be said that territorial marginalization in a Swedish context has a special purpose which is to fuel the symbolic power of the state. Thus, with the aim of this thesis to understand the rationale behind classification and targeting of vulnerable areas it is possible to understand how territorial stigmatization fulfills a purpose for the government, when they through increased symbolic powers, are retaining the people's trust, despite the fact that there are predominant factors that indicate that the welfare state is heading for its decline. Second, what is furthermore prominent about territorial marginalization in a Swedish context is the lack of acknowledgement of how the distribution of ethnicity relates to the inhabitants of the disputed areas. What at first appears to be a colorblindness or intention not to discriminate against residents based on ethnicity, seems to be a sham maneuver as the material shows clear links between vulnerable areas and the government's way of attributing these to exotic and culturally deviant behavior. Consequently, it seems to be a tendency commonly identified in a Swedish context, which is to try to hide how discrimination based on ethnicity as a result of historical classifying and associating negative attributes to postcolonial immigrants, still characterizes and reproduces in contemporary social and criminal policy. As so, I argue that vulnerable areas specifically through the government's construction of these, are exposed to territorial marginalization, and that the rationale for this in the Swedish welfare context can be traced back to the government's need to increase its own symbolic power in order to retain the confidence of its citizens instead of signaling loss of control, as well as a tendency to try to ignore how racial discrimination is a result of historical and underlying causes. It thus seems that these findings fill a gap previously identified in the field of socio-legal research, regarding how territorial stigma constructed and maintained through legal policies is particularly pronounced in the Swedish welfare context.

Looking at how the Swedish government construct vulnerable areas has provided an understanding of what territorially stigmatizing processes look like in a Swedish context. Thus, by adding the line of thoughts postulating that territorial stigmatization in the Swedish welfare context serves a purpose, it becomes possible to understand how the state *is assisted by* the bureaucratic field to define the social problem of socioeconomically disadvantaged areas. The reasoning or measures proposed where social support is in focus, tend to link social interventions with the need to prevent crime, leading to a *social panopticism* where the boundaries between welfare and legal interventions are intertwined. It furthermore becomes prominent that spacial marginalization and intensified criminal policy is not a coincidence, but a step towards an advanced marginality. This strive towards advanced marginality is prominent

concerning two identified processes; social panopticism in line with increased workfare conditions; and how the state uses the concept of vulnerable areas through a self-supporting strategy, with the aim of legitimizing an increasing prisonfare. As so, I argue that the construction of vulnerable areas can be understood as a development of the welfare state towards *workfare* and *prisonfare* regulation, which mutually interact and function not as a response to criminal insecurity but to social insecurity. Consequently, I argue that this study has applied Wacquant's framework in full in a Swedish context concerning demarcation of vulnerable areas, where territorial stigmatization is understood as marginalizing production from above, and thereby contributed to an until now prevailing gap within the socio-legal research field. Considering that this study has emphazised the state as the object of research inevitably brings with it a lost bottom-up perspective where those who are exposed to territorial stigma get the chance to share their knowledge. For future studies, a more comprehensive mixed-method study is therefore proposed where knowledge is produced both from above *and* below, with the intention of presenting an even more comprehensive understanding of how Wacquant's state-class-ethnicity nexus can be understood in a Swedish context.

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Appendix 1.

Record number: Ju2015 / 09346 / KRIM *Assignment to the Crime Prevention Council to map measures against crime in socially vulnerable areas.*

Record number: Ju2020 / 02483 / PO *Assignment to set up pilot projects aimed at business activities linked to organized crime.*

Record number: Ju2015 / 09350 / PO *Assignment to the Police Authority and other relevant authorities to develop the joint government initiative against organized crime.*

Record number: Ju2019 / 02681 / PO *Assignment to the Police Authority to strengthen the fight against illegal drug trafficking.*

Record number: Ju2018 / 02430 / KRIM *Assignment to the Swedish Prison and Probation Service on trial activities with inclusion programs.*

Record number: Ju2021 / 02238 *Assignment to the Crime Prevention Council to evaluate the investment in 10,000 more police employees.*

Record number: A2020 / 02651 *Assignment for social initiatives in vulnerable areas.*

Record number: A2020 / 02245 *Assignment to carry out a survey of knowledge within the framework of the plan against racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crimes.*

Record number: S2020 / 09554 *Assignment to develop an action plan for crime prevention parental support.*

Record number: S2020 / 05273 / SOF *Assignments on situation pictures and measures in the municipalities to prevent social problems and vulnerability.*

Record number: S2018 / 00723 / FS *Assignment to follow, analyze and support the agreements on increased accessibility in child health care 2018–2020.*

Record number: S2016 / 06724 / FS *Assignment to the Swedish Agency for Health and Care Analysis to follow up the Government's investment in maternity care and other initiatives for women's health 2015–2019.*

Record number: S2021 / 06575 *Assignment for competence supply in primary care*

Record number: Fi2020 / 02991 / S3 *Assignment to set up a pilot project to access incorrect population registration linked to organized crime.*

Record number: U2020 / 00363 / S *Modification of the assignment to carry out development work for early and coordinated efforts for children and young people and extended time for the assignment.*

Record number: U2017 / 01236 / GV *Assignment to carry out development work for early and coordinated interventions for children and young people.*

Record number: IJ2010 / 1965 / IU *Assignment to the Swedish Public Employment Service, the Swedish Social Insurance Agency and the police authorities to cooperate with municipalities that have local development agreements.*

Dir. 2021: 101 *Extended right to a leisure home? Committee directive from the Ministry of Education.*

Dir. 2020: 32 *A parliamentary security committee. Committee directive from the Ministry of Justice*

Dir. 2019: 94 *The municipalities' responsibility for crime prevention work.. Committee directive from the Ministry of Justice*

Dir. 2019: 85. *A strengthened legal process and increased prosecution. Committee directive from the Ministry of Justice*

Dir. 2017: 33 *Establishment of a delegation against segregation.*

Law Council referral from the Ministry of Justice. *Youth monitoring* Published February 13, 2020

Law Council referral from the Ministry of Justice. *Camera surveillance in law enforcement - a simpler procedure.* Published 02 May 2019

Ordinance (2016: 398) on support for outdoor environments in certain residential areas.

Ordinance (2018: 151) on state subsidies to municipalities with socio-economically disadvantaged areas.

Ordinance (2008: 348) on urban development work

Prop. 2018/19: 155. *Strengthened criminal law protection for blue light activities and the exercise of authority.* Bill from the Ministry of Justice

Prop. 2016/17: 100 *2017 spring economic bill.*

Prop. 2020/21: 100 *2021 economic spring bill.*

Skr. 2020/21: 53. *The National Audit Office's report on targeted government grants for socio-economically vulnerable areas.*

Skr. 2020/21: 108. *The National Audit Office's report on the Police Authority's work in vulnerable areas.*

Skr. 2020/21: 133. *National strategy for sustainable regional development throughout the country 2021–2030.*

The Ministry series and memoranda from the Prime Minister's Committee. *Long-term reform program for reduced segregation in 2017-2025. Published 2016-07-05.*