What is the Problem of EBO?

A Poststructural Policy Analysis of the Swedish Reception System

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Master Thesis (SOLM02)
Spring 2020

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Abstract

Sweden was once known for its open and generous refugee reception, with a mindset that was different from its neighbouring countries. However, this has changed in recent years. Due to an increased influx of people seeking asylum in Sweden, restrictive measures were put in place. The political discourse on migration shifted from a welcoming narrative to enforcing border controls and limiting access to welfare for asylum seekers. In 2019, 25 years after the implementation of the Swedish refugee reception, a Government Bill was introduced that proposed a change in the EBO Act which required asylum seekers who live in their own housing (EBO) to live in approved municipalities, or they would lose the right to state subsidies. Drawing on Carol Bacchi's and Susan Goodwin's poststructural policy analysis approach along with Carol Bacchi's policy analysis *What's the Problem Represented to be*, this thesis analyses the underlying assumptions of the problem representation of the EBO Act, by challenging the taken-for-granted truth and knowledge regarding EBO. The main findings of this study show three evident problem representations of EBO, that is, it creates an unstainable reception system, it hinders the integration process for asylum seekers and increases segregation, and negatively effects municipalities. In short, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how the political discourse regarding EBO is an attempt to make Sweden less attractive so seek asylum in.

Acknowledgement

Writing this thesis has been a challenging and emotional roller-coaster, struggling with feelings of inadequacy and doubt. Yet, with the support of my family and my supervisor throughout this process, allowed me to keep pushing through. So, this acknowledgement is to everyone who has supported and encouraged me during this process.

To my mother Tiruye, my sister Hanna. Without your love, support, and patience I would not be here writing this acknowledgement to you. From a young age my mother has pushed me to pursue academia with an undoubtable belief in me. When times were good you were there to celebrate with me and when times were rough you were there to encourage me to do better. My sister Hanna who has been my rock and is the backbone to my perseverance. I thank you.

To my supervisor Anna Lundberg. Your guidance, reinforcement and immensely helpful comments have guided me through this process. During my times of doubt and failures you have uplifted me and given me new motivation. Showing me new perspectives on my knowledge has helped me become a more reflexive researcher and empowered me to improve my work. I owe you a deep sense of appreciation.

List of abbreviations

ABO – Anläggningsboende [Temporary facility housing provided by the Swedish Migration Agency, apartments, or large-scale accommodation centres]

AMS – Arbetsmarknadsstyrelsen [Labour Market Board]

EBO – Eget Boende [Own housing arranged by asylum seekers]

EU – The European Union

LMA – Lagen om Mottagande av Asylsökande m.fl. (SFS 1994:137) [Act on the Reception of Asylum Seekers and Others]

Prop. – Government Bill

SEK – Swedish Crown

SFS – Svensk författningssamling [Swedish Code of Statues]

SIV – Invandrarverket [Immigration Board]

SMA – Migrationsverket [Swedish Migration Agency]

SOU – Statens Offentliga Utredningar [the State's Public Government Reports]

WPR – What's the problem represented to be?

Table of content

1. Introduction

Sweden has been regarded for a long time as a nation with generous and open migration policies since post-war Europe (Krzyżanowski, 2018). However, in recent decades, the growth of migration flows has influenced European political interventions to control and to some extent, stop, the growing immigration influx. This has led to intensified political and legislative changes (Distinto, 2020). Sweden has also participated in policy changes, on a unilateral level, through EU legislation as well as on a national level with reforms concerning the asylum process, reception process, and access to welfare (Kazemi, 2021). A central strategy of the Swedish Government has been to make immigration to Sweden unattractive. By changing reception policies, limiting access to welfare during the reception period and ultimately changing what is an efficient reception structure both for the state and for the asylum seeker.

One controversial change, and central for this thesis, is the so-called EBO Act. This Act means that an asylum seeker can live in their own housing, instead of facility housing provided by the Swedish Migration Agency, without losing the right to daily allowance as stated in (SFS 1994:137 17 §). Undoubtedly, the debate surrounding housing for asylum seekers has been controversial for a long time. The discussion about EBO lies on two fundamental arguments, that is, how own housing affects the likelihood of a successful integration and a sufficient refugee reception (Sandström, 2020). However, in 2019, the Government Bill *Socially sustainable own housing for asylum seekers* (2019/20:10) was introduced. This Bill proposed a change in the EBO Act, which required asylum seekers to live in approved municipalities, that is, municipalities that are not considered to face socio-economic challenges. The proposed changes in the Bill were enacted in January 2020.

With approximately 57 % of asylum seekers living in their own housing (Swedish Migration Agency, 2022a), the proposed restriction on the right to EBO will affect most asylum seekers living in Sweden. Another essential aspect is that an asylum seeker who lives in their own housing, has the right to choose where in Sweden they want to live, whereas if they live in facility housing provided by the Swedish Migration agency, they have no right or a say in where they live in Sweden. If the asylum seeker continued to live in areas which were considered

socio-economic challenged, they lose their right to the daily allowance provided by the Swedish Migration Agency as stated in the Act (1994:137 17 §).

1.1 Research problem

Departing from my own experience as a child of an immigrant who migrated to Sweden in the beginning of the 1990s, I was interested in human rights, asylum laws and reception policies from an early age. By talking to my mother from a young age about her travel to Sweden and her experiences living here, a curiosity grew inside of me that is still strong till this day. I came to question how asylum laws and the reception system functions in Sweden and how it has changed since my mother's arrival in the 1990s to today's asylum seekers. This interest influenced my academic path as well as future occupation. With the opportunity to conduct an internship fall term 2021, it was obvious to me that I would choose a field that works with these questions. I had the opportunity to intern at the Swedish Migration Agency, where I was introduced to the legislative and practical work of the reception system in Sweden. Working alongside with the housing administrators I had the opportunity to witness first-hand how asylum seekers live and the daily work surrounding the reception system. I was then familiar with the primary legislation for the reception system, which is the Act on the Reception of Asylum Seekers and Others (LMA 1994: 137) (*Lagen om mottagande av asylsökande m.fl.*) and had the opportunity to discuss and problematise how various legal frameworks are operationalise with my colleagues. One segment of the Act that was, and still is till this day, highly interesting and controversial, was the EBO Act.

This led me to further analyse how the ongoing political and policy discussion surrounding asylum legislation and policymaking in Sweden has adapted a more restrictive character. Its primary effects that are distinguishable from a brief reading are: 1 the total number of granted asylum decisions from the first instance, the Swedish Migration Agency, has decreased significantly since 2016, which is the year with the highest number of granted decisions in the last decade, from 77 % granted asylum decisions in 2016 to roughly 26 % in 2021 (Swedish Migration Agency, 2022a). 2 since July 20th, 2021, new rules regarding residence permits were changed in the Aliens Act (UtlL, 2005: 716), that the primary rule for residence permits changed to time-limited residence permits which can only be granted if specific requirements are met,

such as financial independence (Swedish Migration Agency, 2021a). Lastly, 3 the changes in the EBO Act, that further limits the rights of asylum seekers in Sweden.

1.2 Aim and research questions

The EBO discussion is an expression of the fact that the Swedish welfare state has changed, including how asylum seekers and their rights to decide about their whereabouts are viewed. What led to the changes in EBO and how has the Swedish Government recently argued for a change? The thesis is foremost an empirical contribution. I describe and analyse recent proposals in Sweden which aim to restrict the right to influence where one can live during the asylum process. Where asylum seekers live during the asylum process is important, not least for themselves. Being involved in one's own life, by deciding where one wants to live, is important for well-being and the possibilities to establish oneself in Sweden and the labour market.

The issue of EBO is part of a larger discussion on refugee reception, which stems from the perception or idea that if conditions during the asylum process deteriorate, fewer refugees would come to Sweden. This thesis confirms what previous studies have found, that the Government has applied an increasingly restrictive migration policy in recent years, to make Sweden an unattractive country to seek asylum in. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to demonstrate and problematise the problem representation of the EBO Act, in the Government Bill of 2019. To be able to achieve this, I aim to answer the following questions:

1. What assumptions underlie the problem representation of EBO in the Government Bill (2019/20:10)?
2. What is left silent or ignored in the Governments Bill (2019/20:10) problem representation of EBO?
3. What effects are produced by the discourse surrounding EBO and the Swedish reception system?

1.3 Socio-legal relevance and situating the study

The aim of this study is relevant within the field of Sociology of Law as it addresses the functions and effects that legal propositions, more specifically on asylum reception, have on asylum seekers today. A predominant issue to analyse within Sociology of Law is the discrepancy between the objective of law and the actuality of law. Therefore, researching the disparity that exists between the ambition of reception policies and outcomes of these policies is highly relevant within the socio-legal perspective. Furthermore, I want to clarify that despite the importance of calling attention to, and emphasising the own experience of the asylum seeker, that is not the ambition of this thesis. My ambition is rather to analyse how the political discussion and the problem representation is underpinning the reception policy approach of the Swedish Government regarding the EBO Act. However, it is of great importance to recognise that while the direction of this thesis is on the political discussion and reception policy, the lives of the asylum seeker is the one who is affected by it, and with that, I will have it in consideration during the process of this thesis.

1.4 Outline

This thesis is divided into eight chapters. The first chapter is the introductory chapter that introduces the study's subject alongside aim, research question, socio-legal relevance and situating the study. The background chapter captures the political and legislative background and legal development of the Swedish reception system. This chapter presents an historical and contemporary discussion on the reception of asylum seekers and the development of EBO. Thereafter, the literature review chapter which discusses previous research that has been conducted within the field of the reception system, both internationally and nationally, with a specific focus on policy problematisation of reception policies for asylum seekers. The theoretical framework chapter presents the theoretical outline of this thesis, including key concepts. Followed by the methodological chapter together with the empirical material and reflections on limitations, ethical considerations, and reflexivity. Chapter six is the presentation of findings and chapter seven is the analysis. This thesis concludes with a summary and discussion on the analysis and recommendations for further research.

2. Legislative background and legal development

This chapter aims to provide a legislative background and description of the legal development in the Swedish reception system. This is to conceptualise the historical and contemporary discussion on the reception of asylum seekers. The first section is an overview of the legislative background of the characteristics of the reception system in Sweden based on the Act on the Reception of Asylum Seekers and Others (1994:137). Additionally, I present some undertakings with the restrictive policy changes, which mainly involves the Swedish Migration Agency, since this government issued agency is the foremost governmental organ of which the reception policies are implemented by. Secondly, I will present a fundamental aspect of the Swedish reception system and the focus of the present thesis, the EBO Act. This section is a point from which I develop the historical debate surrounding EBO.

2.1 Conceptualising the Swedish Reception System

In the 1970s most of the refugees who migrated to Sweden sought economic security and were in search of work, there were some refugees who sought asylum (e.g., from Chile). Consequently, migration was seen as an economic development for the country and therefore, the reception system was mainly aimed towards labour migration (Dahlstedt & Neergaard, 2017). However, after the economic crisis in the 1970s there was a recession in labour migration and Sweden witnessed a new form of migration, which was family reunification and refugees seeking protection through asylum (Mulinari & Neergaard, 2010). Since the end of the 1980s, the reception of asylum seekers shifted towards a restrictive nature, with extended reforms of the Aliens Act that included demands for documentation and restriction on whether one is qualified to obtain residence permit (UtlL 1989:529).

The number of refugees that arrived in Sweden in the late 1970s and 1980s increased significantly and new reception policies were presented. The Immigration Board (SIV) (now referred to as Swedish Migration Agency), took over the responsibilities of international migration instead of the Labour Market Board (AMS) (Prop. 1983/84:124). Furthermore, policies such as "Sweden-Wide Strategy" and "The Whole-of-Sweden Strategy" were introduced (Bevelander, 2010). These policies were established due to criticism from

municipalities, where most asylum seekers resided, that the growing number of immigrants was a burden on municipalities resources (Haberfeld et al., 2019). With the SIV delegating housing for newly arrived asylum seekers, the Government predicted a speedy integration process along with decreasing the financial burden of the municipalities, with new reception policies. Hence, the policies were intended to repeal the freedom of asylum seekers to choose their own housing and instead, live where SIV and municipalities mutually agreed upon (ibid.).).

In 1994 was when the Act on Reception of Asylum Seekers and Others (SFS 1994:137) was implemented (henceforth, LMA). The purpose of this Act was to encourage asylum seekers to become self-sufficient and no longer dependent on the state, by providing their own housing (EBO), for example. With this Act, an asylum seeker was entitled to the daily allowance whether they lived in their own housing (EBO) or the facility housing provided by the Swedish Migration Agency (ABO), with a maximum of 71 SEK per person (1994:137). Furthermore, this Act expected that, with the possibility to provide one's own housing, it would further the integration process, decrease segregation, facilitate job opportunities and that family and friends who have lived longer in Sweden would assist with learning newly arrived asylum seekers about Swedish norms and customs (Bevelander et al., 2019).

On the backdrop of the Swedish reception system and the LMA Act, the Swedish Migration Agency (hereinafter referred to as SMA) is the foremost governmental organ of carrying out the government issued policies, regulations, and legislation regarding the reception system of asylum seekers in Sweden, particularly the regulations regarding the EBO Act. Furthermore, the SMA plays an important part in the reception process for asylum seekers. Some of the SMA's responsibilities are offering asylum seekers housing and daily allowance that is intended to cover food, clothing, leisure activities, hygiene items and other costs of living (Swedish Migration Agency, 2022b). As of December 2021, there were 24 490 persons in SMA's reception system, that is, both persons with valid and invalid permits to be in Sweden. The individuals who are included in these statistics live both in their own housing (EBO) and the facility housing provided by the SMA (ABO). The last reported statistic on how many asylum seekers who live in EBO versus ABO from 2021 showed that approximately 35% lives in ABO and approximately 57% lives in EBO, 8% are registered as other accommodation (Swedish

Migration Agency, 2022a). With these statistics, we can see that EBO has been, and still is, the favourable housing option for the majority of asylum seekers.

2.2 The EBO Act

The central aim of this thesis is regarding the EBO Act. This section is to provide a thorough background of the history and the changes that led up to the political discourse and policymaking on the EBO Act that exists today. EBO has been a controversial question for a long time and there have been many legislative changes to the EBO Act since its implementation in 1994, let us start with an historical background of EBO. From the 1950s up to 1980s it was the Labour Market Board (AMS) that was responsible for providing housing for asylum seekers in Sweden and the municipality where the initial application for asylum was initiated, which was predominantly in bigger cities (Prop. 1983/84:124). This approach proved to be unmaintainable for the municipalities, due to the economic impact for the popular municipalities, and was therefore seen as a burden on their resources (Haberfeld et al., 2019). Which led to the implementation of the Government Bill (Prop. 1983/84:124). The Bill was in response to the lack of dissemination of asylum seekers across Sweden's municipalities and by encouraging other municipalities to take their responsibility with the reception of newly arrived asylum seekers it would become evenly distributed. Consequently, the position of this Bill was for the state to manage the inflow of migrations.

2.2.1 Own housing and independence

It was in 1994 when the EBO Act was implemented in the LMA Act (SFS 1994:137), because of the unsuccessful previous dispersal strategy. But before the implementation of SFS 1994:137 the Government Bill (Prop. 1993/94:94) was introduced. The Bill argued for asylum seekers independence, authority, and equal treatment to the native Swedes. The SIV was still managing the reception of asylum seekers, however, the change was for asylum seekers to have the right to choose their own housing and still be entitled to the daily allowance provided by the SIV whether they lived in EBO or ABO (Prop. 1993/94:94). On one hand, these changes in the EBO policy grew popular with asylum seekers and on the other, became equally unpopular with the municipalities that were sought-after by asylum seekers (Sandström, 2020). The Bill estimated

10% of asylum seekers would choose EBO instead of ABO, per contra, nearly 60% chose living EBO in municipalities nearby bigger cities (Boverket 2008).

Likewise, the LMA Act of 1994 advocated for asylum seekers to live in their own housing and that the reception system should encourage asylum seekers to primarily live outside of facility housing provided by the SIV to avoid becoming dependent on the reception system (SFS 1994:137). The ambition was to treat asylum seekers as adults with autonomy to reduce the passivation during the process. Furthermore, the aspiration of the Act was to reduce segregation and xenophobia since EBO creates more contact opportunities between asylum seekers and native swedes. As well as facilitates access to the labour market and a better introduction to Swedish society with the help of friends and relatives (Boverket, 2008). The mindset in reception policies in the early 1990s was to provide the asylum seeker with freedom of choice and to make them as self-sufficient as possible during a trying period, however this mindset came to change.

2.2.2 Making EBO less attractive

Despite the popularity of the 1994 EBO Act among asylum seekers, several official reports were critical of the policy. In 2003 the inquiry "Establishing in Sweden - opportunities for the individual and society" (SOU 2003:75) the Swedish Government examined the consequences of asylum seekers living in their own housing from the perspective of the municipalities and the SMA. The inquiry presents EBO as a short-term torment for asylum seekers, with overcrowding, conflicts with host families and several relocations. And a long-term integration problem with segregation difficulties and limited access to work opportunities (SOU 2003:75). Furthermore, the two significant problems represented in this inquiry was:

> 1. the asylum seekers - and above all their children - are disadvantaged during the asylum period and the integration of the host families is delayed and made more difficult.

> 2. those who live in their own housing stay, after receiving a residence permit, in the municipality in which they lived during the asylum period and contribute there in an unfortunate way to their own exclusion and the increasing ethnic segregation which also

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constitutes   a   societal   problem.
(SOU 2003:75, p. 41).

The problems presented in the inquiry for asylum seekers living in their own housing are deep-rooted difficulties to integration into Swedish society. Other identified problems according to the municipalities and SMA were false addresses to avoid the reduction on the income support, frivolous house rentals and unlawful trading of EBO addresses (SOU 2003:75). Moreover, asylum seekers living in EBO made it more difficult for municipalities, SMA and the county council to research them regarding school and health examinations. In an attempt to make EBO less attractive to asylum seekers, the income support was lowered in 2003, from 350 SEK for single people and 850 for families, respectively per month, and was removed altogether in 2005 (Prop. 2004/05: 28). However, the right to choose housing was still in force and roughly 50% of asylum seekers continued to live in EBO even though the withdrawal of the income support (Boverket, 2008).

2.2.3 Implementation of restrictive measures

From 2005 until 2016 not much was changed in the EBO Act, however, the subject was still in much discussion. However, in 2016, after the so-called "refugee crisis" the topic of EBO gained great attention in political discourse once again. In spite of a decrease in the proportion housed in EBO (Swedish Migration Agency, 2020), the desire of the Government was still to limit the attractiveness for asylum seekers to live in their own housing. Even though there was financial gain for the State that asylum seekers lived in EBO rather than ABO (as it costs significantly less) and would ease the pressure of the SMA, who often had had difficulties with finding suitable and affordable housing (Sandström, 2020), there was a clear aim that the negative consequences of EBO was in the forefront. In 2018 the inquiry (SOU 2018:22) was introduced which argued for a change and a "sense of order" in the reception system. The inquiry stated that the substantial utilisation of EBO among asylum seekers reinforces uneven distribution between municipalities and contributes to socially troublesome situations (SOU 2018:22). Some of the presented suggestions to handle this problem was to utilise all of Sweden's capacity and competence, focus on repatriation or established from the start and limit the need for EBO (SOU 2018:22 p. 22).

This resulted in changes proposed in the Government Bill (Prop. 2019/20:10) on Socially sustainable own housing for asylum seekers (*Ett socialt hållbart eget boende för asylsökande*). The objective of this Bill was to remove the right to daily allowance or special allowance if the asylum seeker chose to live in their own housing in areas that have socio-economic challenges (Prop. 2019/20:10, p. 8). The overall aim of this Government Bill was to e.g., reduce segregation and establish a socially sustainable reception of asylum seekers. However, the desired outcome of the Government Bill was not achieved, instead there was an increase of asylum seekers choosing to live in their own housing in socio-economic challenges areas. Therefore, an additional directive was issued by the Government (dir. 2021:71) "An efficient initial reception of asylum seekers", to potentially abolish the EBO Act. The objective is for all newly arrived asylum seekers to live in the facility housing provided by SMA and abolish the EBO Act altogether.

In this chapter I have presented a historical overview of the Swedish reception system and the legislative change in the EBO Act. As I have demonstrated, the reception system has changed, so has the responsibility of the SMA. The view on what the reception system should be and how it should be structured was modified based on how the political discourse conceptualised what a sustainable reception was. Furthermore, the perceived effects of EBO for asylum seekers have also changed significantly since its establishment in 1994. The perspective on how asylum seekers should integrate into Swedish society, how to conduct an efficient reception system and how to equally distribute asylum seekers across the country, has become the responsibility of the state rather than responsibility of the asylum seeker. The highlighted negative consequences of EBO became the focus point for Swedish politicians and authorities.

3. Literature review

With this literature review I aim to provide the means to understand and assess valuable research that has been conducted within the field of the reception system, both internationally and nationally, with a specific focus on policy problematisation of reception policies for asylum seekers. I will present an overview of previous research that consists of central understandings and differences among studies within the European and Swedish reception system, and research on housing policies. Consequently, this chapter provides important knowledge that this thesis builds on and also contributes to. Lastly, I present a summary, research gap and socio-legal relevance. Before proceeding with this literature review, I want to point out that the so-called refugee crisis of 2015 has had a major impact on the Swedish refugee reception, both in terms of values and in policy making, that is still strong till this day. However, the topic of housing for asylum seekers has been a controversial and highly talked about issue before 2015. I have therefore, decided to not primarily base this literature review on the aftermath of the so-called refugee crisis, but rather to present this literature review in a broader context that incorporates different aspect that has affected the underlying sentiment of a larger discussion on refugee reception internationally and nationally.

In order to present a relevant literature review and identify a research gap, I collected previous research from the following databases: LUBSearch, Google Scholar, Diva, JSTOR, and ResearchGate. For the selection process of finding relevant research, I used keywords such as, "reception system", "reception policy", "EBO Act", "housing policy" and "policy problematisation". Once a considerable volume of research was collected, I proceeded to skim and read the selected studies, which provided me with an understanding of how reception of asylum seekers in high income countries in the west has been researched previously. Additionally, previous research assisted me with how different theories and methods were implemented and in what way it can contribute to my research.

Although this thesis stems from a socio-legal perspective, this literature review does not exclusively consist of publications within this discipline. Rather, I chose to include a variety of disciplines to be able to present a nuanced and broad literature review that discusses the more restrictive nature reception system and how it affects asylum seekers. I believe by doing this, it

deepens the knowledge and perspectives on how to conduct this kind of research within numerous disciplines. The majority of research that is presented derives from disciplines such as, Social Science, Policy Studies, Political Science, Human Rights Studies, Ethnic and Migration Studies, Migration and History Studies and much more.

3.1 The concept of reception system in a broader context

In order to demonstrate the concept of the Swedish reception system, it is of relevance to put it in a wider context. This section looks at how different understandings and perspectives on reception systems and its policies have been researched previously in Western Europe countries. Brekke and Brochmann (2014) states that the concept of what a reception system is differs substantially between EU countries today. The ambition of the EU is to establish a harmonised reception system for asylum seekers across all member states, however, the outcome and reality of how it is structured varies. There is an overall consensus that the reception system ought to provide asylum seekers with adequate conditions, integration opportunities and maintain social rights. Brekke and Brochmann argues that even though there is a common goal of minimising the differences in migration and reception policies between the member states, the dissimilarities in integration efforts and welfare systems makes it difficult to achieve it (Brekke & Brochmann, 2014).

There are however similarities between Scandinavian countries as they are known for their comparable welfare model, that is defined by universal access, beneficial benefits, and considerable public involvement. Yet, these countries have very different reception systems. Brochmann and Hagelund (2011) demonstrates how these countries with seemingly similar welfare state policies, ambition towards sustainable integration and labour opportunities, turned out to have contrasting perspectives on integration for immigrants. They argue that the discussion on immigration and integration is based on a normative appropriateness of immigration, integration, and reception policies. There are distinct differences in what the normative appropriateness is between Sweden, Denmark, and Norway. The Swedish approach lied on a liberal view where multi-culturalism and diversity were the focal point. The Danish approach was characterised by its discourse around e.g., anti-Islamic views and cultural clashes. And the Norwegian approach was somewhat in the middle. Despite the clear differences in the

countries approaches to immigration policy, Brochmann and Hagelund state that all the countries share the perspective that entering the labour market is the crucial path to achieve integration (Brochmann & Hagelund, 2011).

3.1.1 Uncertainty and waiting

A common theme in both the Western European countries and Swedish reception system is the sentiment of *uncertainty* (e.g., Brekke, 2004; Whyte 2011; Kazemi 2021). In Brekke's *While we are waiting* (2004) he highlights the ambivalence position asylum seekers are in during the reception process. This is, according to Brekke, due to the complex dilemma of promoting integration but simultaneously preparing for repatriation. With the focus on understanding the experience of an asylum seeker waiting for a decision on their asylum application, Brekke draws attention to the importance of making the process meaningful despite the possible outcome. However, as he argues, Swedish reception policies aspire to execute this two-tracked policy but lack in the sense of not making the waiting time meaningful for asylum seekers (Brekke, 2004). Furthermore, he argues that the feeling of uncertainty is also connected to the lack of consistency in housing for asylum seekers. This is mainly because of the financial shortcomings that come with being an asylum seeker. Because there is a lack of financial stability for many asylum seekers, the consequence results in inconsistent housing and constant relocations for many asylum seekers (Brekke, 2004).

Another factor that plays into the feeling of uncertainty, is waiting and inadequate trust in authority. Whyte (2011) highlights how the waiting period for asylum seekers in Denmark is structured by uncertainty. The notion of uncertainty had different outcomes for asylum seekers, both in terms of planning their future and lack of trust in authorities (Whyte, 2011). He argues that the uncertainty and temporariness in the asylum system is structured by inconsistency and blurriness, He means that because the asylum period lacks consistency in how the authorities decided upon asylum decisions, the asylum seeker questions the competence in individual case workers as well as the ability for the authorities to recognise truths in their testimonies. Since the asylum process is fundamentally based on asylum seekers' credibility, mistrust is a critical component in the decision process. This in turn, fuels the feeling of uncertainty for many asylum seekers, which leads to another important aspect that Whyte sheds light on. That is, how

the feeling of uncertainty can physically and psychologically affect asylum seekers. He calls attention to how waiting can cause a feeling of isolation from the outside world (Whyte, 2011). He argues that being in limbo, not knowing what the future holds, combined with an underlying mistrust for the authorities impacts the waiting period and feeling of uncertainty for many asylum seekers.

Kazemi (2021) takes on another perspective on uncertainty during the asylum process. She, like Brekke (2004) and Whyte (2011) calls attention to how the temporariness and uncertainty of the waiting period in the reception system, however, she problematise the ways in which the reception process is uncertain by highlighting the conflict between universal human rights and the nation's interests in protecting its population. Kazemi questions the withdrawal of access to the welfare resources and how this causes asylum seekers a sense of uncertainty and a feeling of unworthiness in relation to the rest of the population (Kazemi, 2021). She argues that the long waiting period and uncertainty in the reception system is the incentive of hopelessness and with that, the aspiration of becoming established in the country is diminished. The long waiting times for a decision perpetuate asylum seekers' opportunity to integrate and hinders a prosperous participation in society in the long haul (Kazemi, 2021).

3.2 The Swedish reception model

As mentioned previously, reception policies across Europe have undergone a substantial change since the 1990s. The focus has mostly been on integration, but the approach to become integrated into society has changed. Borevi (2014) highlights an important distinction in the reception system between other European countries and Sweden, that is, the Swedish welfare state model. Sweden was or even is, characterised by its generous welfare policies which traces back to the mid-1900s, after World War II. She argues that the welfare state model was known for its distributive benefits that was intended to benefit the whole population, including exposed groups in Sweden. Prior to the 1970s, this model was defined by a strive for inclusiveness and view on solidarity, equality, and universality for labour migrants, so they had the same opportunities as natives. This was the central process for labour migrations to integrate into the Swedish society (Borevi, 2014).

However, this view on integration and access to the welfare state changed. Barthoma et al., (2020) and Sager and Öberg (2017) call attention to how the concept of the welfare state and reception policies has changed from the 1990s and onwards. Barthoma et al., argues that the change advocated for asylum seekers to take responsibility for their own lives rather than depending on the welfare state, that included economic, housing and integration responsibilities. Many restrictions were put in place, such as, restrictions on family reunification, international cooperation, and border security. They argue that the fundamental purpose of what the Swedish welfare model once stood for, faded away. With an unprecedented influx of refugees and asylum seekers reaching Europe and Sweden, the welfare state was at risk (Barthoma et al., 2020).

3.2.1 Own housing for asylum seekers

This brings us to a central policy in the Swedish reception model as well as for this thesis, own housing for asylum seekers. Housing is a fundamental aspect in terms of integration, producing an efficient reception system and establishing a safe environment for asylum seekers. However, housing can cause some uncertainty and instability for many asylum seekers. Borevi and Bengtsson (2015) analyse housing policy by highlighting the tension between choice and need in housing for refugees and asylum seekers. They problematise how, on the one hand, that housing, being a part of the welfare state, is understood as a politically constructed social right that all ought to have access to. On the other hand, housing is not administered by the state, but the market, contrary to other welfare sectors and thus enables, what they refer to as negative freedom (Borevi & Bengtsson, 2015). Furthermore, they problematise why authorities and politicians minimise the importance of individual choice of housing for the purpose of elevating other policy agendas. The three presented arguments are: "(1) the legal status of the new arrivals (*legal status argument*); (2) the special needs and limited resources of newcomers (*resource argument*); and (3) the prioritisation of collective political goals about social environments in the integration of newcomers (*neighbourhood argument*)" (Borevi & Bengtsson, 2015, p. 2603, emphasis in original).

Borevi and Bengtsson continue to call attention to the fact that refugees and asylum seekers encounter a lack of resources in the housing market. Undoubtedly, the fact that they are new to

the country plays an important role, alongside language barriers, insufficient knowledge about administrative procedures and inadequate information about "the rules of the game in the housing market" (Borevi & Bengtsson, 2015 p. 2604). With this in mind, one might think that politicians and authorities would consider housing paternalism as more critical for asylum seekers, Borevi and Bengtsson argue. However, since the reception of asylum seekers usually is crisis-driven with aiming towards short-term solutions, finding shelter is considered to be more important than reflecting upon the asylum seekers individual autonomy (Borevi & Bengtsson, 2015).

Additionally, Myrberg (2012) argues that the subject of newly arrived asylum seekers' housing has been a prominent subject in Swedish political discourse. He highlights how housing for asylum seekers entailed new challenges for the Swedish welfare state and its fundamental belief in integration, social citizenship, and shared responsibility. Through his research he underscores the criticism from three municipalities in Sweden, Malmö, Södertälje and Botkyrka that primarily viewed asylum seekers living in EBO as unsustainable (Myrberg, 2012). In his opinion, this criticism is legitimate because the municipalities highlight the unpredictability and underfunding during the reception process, along with increased segregation and unemployment. Despite that Myrberg agrees with this critic he emphasises an important aspect: "but here also lies a danger that the municipality does not always seem to take into account, namely that the criticism of the EBO law can be turned into a criticism of, and a problematisation of, the new arrivals rather than of the refugee placement policy" (Myrberg, 2012, p. 74).

3.2.2. A shift in Swedish reception model policies

Since a central focus of this thesis is what made the discussion surrounding the reception system become more restrictive, I, therefore, find it important to explore scholarly studies where such research has been addressed. As mentioned previously, the so-called refugee crisis of 2015 represented a symbolic change in reception policies across Europe, including Sweden. Even though the topic of migration and reception was a subject of debate and had considerable headroom within political and policy discourse, the drastic change in attitudes on migration in Sweden was to some extent a consequence of the events of 2015 (Hagelund, 2020; Sager &

Öberg, 2017; Abdelhady et al., 2020; Barthoma et al., 2020). The shift in reception policies has had many effects for asylum seekers in Sweden. Such effects are characterised by limitations during the reception process. Sandström (2020) highlights the aftermath of Sweden's open reception policies during the 'refugee crisis', which opened the door for many critics, which led to not only new reception policies but also a different political discourse on migration in the EU (Sandström, 2020). She emphasises different measures of the restrictive reception policies, e.g., access to the welfare system and asylum seekers access to EBO in certain municipalities. As mentioned previously, one of the responses to the new more restrictive reception policies was the discussion on asylum seekers' own housing.

From being a nation who prided itself on upholding an open and welcoming policy reform for the refugees who were seeking safety and being the nation within the EU who received the highest number of asylum seekers per capita. Became soon thereafter, a nation who adapted reception policies which met the minimum standard of the EU (Abdelhady et al., 2020; Barthoma et al., 2020). Abdelhady et al. (2020) argues that the dominant discourse regarding Sweden's open policy reforms during this period was perceived as something negative, they state that the openness was the catalyst for the new restrictive reception policies, which are evident till this day. Furthermore, they call attention to how the extensive limitations on reception policies influenced and were influenced by mainstream media and political discourse, which left the restrictive shift in reception policies unquestioned, and instead seemed appropriate, "Mainstream media and political discourses of a refugee crisis were left largely uncontested and used to justify restrictive asylum policies [...]. Representing the inflow of refugees as an institutional crisis, however, led to a drastic shift in asylum policies, which were tacitly accepted on pragmatic grounds" (Abdelhady et al., 2020, p. 123).

To add to this point of view, Barthoma et al., (2020) argues that the "crisis" made it possible for a subnational policy shift and legislative change to Swedish reception policy, wherein social, economic and political domains initiated an anti-immigration attitude. The discourse on migration and reception policy changed from the welcoming and generous thinking to a "protecting" the state thinking. Thus, the narrative was not on safety for the refugee but rather on safety for the state. Barthoma et al., highlights that during this shift, Sweden sent forth a strong message to people who tried to enter the country, with border checks and implementing

restrictive rights during the reception process (ibid.). Sager and Öberg (2017) also echoes this sentiment, by emphasising that the policy changes that took place after the "crisis" have had the most symbolic meaning on Swedish asylum politics. They argued that the "crisis" opened the door for changes in the welfare system, whereby the once fundamental belief in equality for all Swedes has turned into "institutionalised inequality and segmentation of access to rights" (Sager & Öberg, 2017 p. 10).

3.3 Summary of reviewed literature

What previous research concludes, is that the main issue within the reception system is the lack of integration. This is evident not only in Sweden but across the EU. Integration is a focal point in many reception policies, however, as these authors argued, the approach to attain integration varies and can sometimes be viewed as counterproductive. This is because of the fact that integration is equated to access to the labour market (Brochmann & Hagelund, 2011; Borevi 2014). However, the main focus of the reception policies aimed towards "protecting" the state, rather than defending the rights of the asylum seeker. Therefore, critical aspects both for the individual and for integration, such as housing, was not a primary focus of the Government (Borevi & Bengtsson, 2015). However, previous research has argued that own housing serves as a critical component for asylum seekers, in the sense of finding safety as well as it creates a sense of belonging to the society (Sandström, 2020). Furthermore, what has also been discussed is that the current reception system in Sweden is described as uncertain, this is due to the lengthy reception periods, not making the reception process meaningful, and the ambiguous living conditions (Brekke, 2004; Whyte, 2011). Lastly, the arguments for the restrictive changes in reception policies and the Government's sentiment towards asylum seekers rights, was essentially because of the so-called refugee crisis. Previous research concludes that the shift in Swedish reception policies was a consequence of the change in the political discourse on immigration (Hagelund, 2020; Sager & Öberg, 2017). The narrative that the Swedish welfare state was at risk because of the unprecedented number of asylum seekers (Barthoma et al., 2020).

4. Theoretical framework

In this chapter I will present the theoretical framework for the thesis, that is, Carol Bacchi's and Susan Goodwin's (2016) post structural policy analysis which builds upon Foucauldian poststructuralism. This theoretical point of departure allows the researcher to challenge the "taken-for-granted" assumptions and presumptions of "problems" in policies. Hence, the objective is to "trouble" consensus of problem representations in policies. This theoretical starting point, along with Carol Bacchi's *What's the Problem Represented to be*? discourse analytical approach to policy analysis, that builds upon this premise, provides the thesis to challenge the common oversight of perceiving policies as self-evident, neutral, and necessary in times of crisis. Firstly, I will present an outline of the theory, following a conceptualisation alongside the concepts of governmentality and discourse, that will influence this study.

4.1. Poststructural policy analysis

As this study seeks to understand the problem representation of the EBO Act, undeniably, policies play a critical role. We exist in a society that is saturated with policies. An array of regulations and legislative rules shapes our daily lives which affects our way of thinking and acting. In Carol Bacchi's and Susan Goodwin's (2016) *Poststructural Policy Analysis* they take on a poststructuralist approach based on a Foucauldian perspective on policy analysis that provides an understanding of how knowledge has a central role in how we are governed. Taking on a post structural lens, it is of importance to identify some typical characteristics of this approach. First and foremost, the questioning of what is viewed and accepted as "truths" and "knowledge". This approach addresses the heterogeneous practices, especially knowledge practices which constructs the hierarchical and establishment of inequality between people. Worth noting is that the poststructural approach to policy analysis seeks to address consequences, that is, effects of discourses and subject positions in policies, not possible outcomes of the policy. Bacchi and Goodwin emphasises that the effects of policies involve an open and changeable process of which meaning making is central (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016).

Knowledge, from a post structural view, is not seen as "truths". It is rather a human construction that needs to be questioned and problematised and is therefore more than merely regulations

and legislative rules. A primary source of knowledge is the government, which covers several forms of actions that intend to guide, shape, and influence the behaviour of people (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). *"Knowledge"*, such as that produced in research, is no longer treated as "truths" or as a set of "true" statements about "reality". Instead, "knowledges" are seen to play a critical role in governing practices and in the making of "reality" [...] the production of "knowledge", through research, is understood to be a form of political practice" (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 15). A poststructural perspective on the production of "knowledge" is viewed as a strategy for the government to sustain a kind of power over people and groups in society. With this in mind, then, analysing "knowledge" is questioning the taken-for-granted belief system and questioning presumed "knowledge" (Bacchi, 2020).

4.2 Conceptualising poststructural policy analysis

This approach covers several concepts based on a Foucauldian inspired poststructural perspective. In this section I will provide the concepts of governmentality and discourse to be able to conceptualise how this theoretical framework can perform as an analysis on Swedish reception policies on the EBO act. Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) emphasises that how these concepts are applied and conceptualised do not have a fixed meaning or application, because it would contradict the poststructural essence of analysing a deepened understanding of knowledge production. Therefore, the view on concepts in this approach departs from an assumption that concepts are a strategy on how one shall proceed in the analysis. Ergo, the undertaking when conceptualising the concepts in the following, is to comprehend how to use them and what purpose they serve for the analysis (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016).

4.2.1 Governmentality

The concept of governmentality, coined by Foucault, stems from an interest in understanding how governments can exercise power over populations or motivate a population to govern themselves through certain "rationalities" and "technologies" (Banakar & Travis, 2013). The concept fused the words "govern" and "mentality" which symbolises contrasting ways of thinking about governing, hence, govern-*mentalities*. Government is seen in this context as an

activity meant to shape, guide, and influence the conduct of people. How governments govern a population is through "rationalities" and "technologies", which are described as "the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex, form of power" (Foucault, 2009, p. 144 in Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 42). Altogether, this concept promotes challenging unaddressed ways of thinking that steer and structure how governing transpires and what it allows us to become.

In the concept of governmentality, problematisation plays an important role. The point of departure is to problematise political rationale, by questioning knowledges and discourses in governing processes to identify what makes it thinkable and practicable. Challenging the conception of government and governing, by identifying deep-rooted problem representations, and disassembling the notion of taken-for-granted reasoning about politics. Furthermore, a common assumption is that governments are responding to "problems" existing outside of its sphere is incorrect, instead, Bacchi argues that "problems" are 'created' or 'given shape' in the very policy proposals that are offered as 'responses'" (Bacchi, 2000, p. 47- 48). So, the fundamental objective is to problematise governmental practices and activities by analysing the knowledge they produce.

4.2.2 Discourse in policy analysis

The concept of discourse is an ever-present approach within contemporary political and social science. Discourse is conceptualised in endless ways by numerous theorists, which makes it a complex and sometimes ambiguous concept. Since this thesis takes on a poststructural approach, the definition and operationalisation of the concept of discourse is based on a Foucauldian conceptualisation. The understanding of discourse is "socially produced forms of knowledge that set limits upon what it is possible to think, write or speak about a given social object or practice" (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 35). Briefly going back to the perception of knowledge, it should not be understood as "truths", but rather what is perceived and accepted truths. The focus of this concept is to explore *what* is said and not *who* said what, it may be complex to distinguish *what* from *who,* in the sense that people generally associate certain

groups to certain discourses. However, the essence lies on *what* is said for something to be *sayable* (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016).

With incorporating elements of discourse analysis to policy analysis, Bacchi (2000) argues that it assists with 'demystifying' discursive constructions of problem representations, by examining different ways of thinking in governments problematisation. It also stresses the need to address the course of action policy problems are created in a discourse. Undoubtedly, discourses have real-life effects. However, it is important to explain what effects that poststructuralist refers to. Bacchi and Goodwin elaborates on what effects discourse can have in what Foucault's calls discursive practices, what they call discursive effects. These effects cover how discourses can limit different ways of thinking, limit what can be said and, in that way, create negative effects on a certain group and positive effects on others (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016).

As mentioned earlier, the purpose of undertaking these concepts is to comprehend how to use them and what purpose they serve for the analysis. As I have presented, the poststructural approach allows the researcher to analyse and challenge deep-rooted assumptions, presumptions, and taken-for-granted notions of problems and how the problem is presented in policies. The perspective of this theoretical framework lies on that knowledge production constructs hierarchical positions and creates inequality between groups in society. This highly relevant for this thesis, as I seek to analyse the problem representation of EBO and the rationale behind the change. The purpose of utilising the concept of governmentality is to analyse unquestioned ways of thinking and problematise political rationale, by questioning the knowledge it produces. Lastly, the aim of applying the concept of discourse in policy is to explore the discursive effects of the problem representation.

5. Methodology and qualitative methods

The purpose of this chapter is to present the methodological framework that has formed this thesis and to demonstrate the ways in which the collection of the data has been selected. Building on the theoretical framework of poststructural policy study, this chapter illustrates the methodological approach to demonstrate and problematise the problem representation of EBO, with Carol Bacchi's (2009) *What's the Problem Represented to be*? approach to policy analysis. For this chapter to be cohesive and structured I will first present Bacchi's discourse analytical approach with a thorough description of the questions, as they lie as the foundation for the analysis. Thereafter a section on the description of the selected research material and collection process. Following issues of methodological limitations, validity and lastly ethical considerations and reflections.

5.1 What's the problem represented to be?

Policy is about meaning creation and our task is to identify how meaning is created (Bacchi, 2009, p. 7).

Carol Bacchi's (2009) discourse analytical approach *What's the problem represented to be*? (henceforth referred to as WPR) to policy analysis provides an innovative and structured technique to conceptualise and analyse policies. This approach embodies the poststructural essence by challenging the "taken for granted" notion of "object", "subjects" and "problems" in policy analysis (Bacchi, 2009). Bacchi argues that even the concept of 'policy' should be questioned and put into a wider context that covers national, international, and historical aspects (Bacchi, 2009). The term 'policy' in society implies that there is something wrong and something needs fixing and is therefore perceived as a positive action to solve a "problem". However, government policies contain implicit representations of the actual problem, and instead the policies address that something is in need of change, and therefore a policy is produced.

Bacchi writes that 'there are no problems separate from the proposals purported to address them' (2009, p. 15), which conveys an understanding that government policies are strategies in themselves (Tawell & McCluskey, 2022). Viewing the 'problem' as if it lies outside of the

policy process is as if one is blinded to the actual problem. Hence, the actual concept of policies needs to be critically scrutinised. So, when analysing government policies, one needs to problematise the policy in itself to be able to identify what *is* the underlying problem that needs to be fixed. Policies create 'problems' and instead of responding to the 'problem' the government are actively creating the 'problem'. Therefore, this methodological approach aims towards highlighting hidden assumptions and discourses which shapes how some problem representations are dominant (Bacchi, 2009).

Indeed, certain discourses are more attractive to different groups within society based on how it generates opportunities for them. As well as discourses simultaneously creates limitations for other groups. Consequently, the subject-position in the discourse assigns meaning in relation to the other, that is, for example, the migrant as opposed to the citizen. This creates legitimacy where certain actions and certain groups are perceived as preferable in contrast to others by its positioning (Bacchi, 2009). Thus, the use of government policies can be problematic in the sense that it upholds interests of some by undermining the interests of others, and by problematising policies one is possible to confront the destructive effects that may occur, as Bacchi argues:

> [...] presumes that some problem representations benefit the members of some groups at the expense of others. It also takes the side of those who are harmed. The goal is to intervene to challenge problem representations that have these deleterious effects, and to suggest that issues could be thought about in ways that might avoid at least some of these effects (Bacchi, 2009, p. 44).

Policies are part of producing, reproducing, and reifying the very 'problem' the policy is set out to fix. Hence, how the 'problem' is represented is of great relevance. In fact, how the 'problem' is formulated and presented contribute to all sorts of indications of how the 'problem' is considered, how the people affected are thought about and how to reflect on oneself (Bacchi, 2009). This approach stresses the importance of problematisation in the presentation of the 'problem' at hand, which decreases the complexities of the 'problem' formulation in government policies (Bacchi, 2009). This in turn makes this approach a useful analytical tool for critically investigating the existing political discourse on reception policies in Sweden. Central to a WPR analysis of problematisation of the reception system policies is Bacchi's

analytical strategy that is made up of six questions that aim towards calling attention to important elements of problem formulation. These questions will be used as a guiding tool for analysing the problem representation of the EBO Act in the Government Bill (2019/20:10).

1. What is the 'problem' represented to be in a specific policy?
2. What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the 'problem'?
3. How has this representation of the 'problem' come about?
4. What is left unproblematic in this 'problem' representation? Where are the silences? Can the 'problem' be thought about differently?
5. What effects are produced by this representation of the 'problem'?
6. How/where has this representation of the 'problem' been produced, disseminated, and defended? How could it be questioned, disrupted and replaced? (Bacchi, 2009)

Question 1 addresses how the 'problem' is formulated in the policy in a straightforward fashion. This question aims to pinpoint the implied problem representation. To be able to recognise how the problem is represented, it is essential to identify what solutions are granted. In doing so, the perceived problem will be identified and made visible. Essentially, this question aims at identifying what the policy is hoping to change. This is what Bacchi calls 'working backwards' and it provides the researcher with clarity in the analysis and overcomes the common mistake of working towards problem-solving (Bacchi, 2009). Even though this question is presented in an uncomplicated manner, the question is not necessarily straightforward to answer. In an effort to conceptualise how the problem is formulated one must identify and challenged the presented solutions, however, policies are often presented in a complex way with various solutions. Thus, more than one problem representation can be found within the policy and these representations may contradict each other. This is why Bacchi emphasises that even though this question is a challenging one to answer, it is crucial to understand the actual problem.

Question 2 serves as an apparatus to analyse the assumptions and presuppositions that are embedded in the problem representation. This also encompasses epistemological and ontological supposition. Here, it is important not to confuse the assumptions and presuppositions of the policy makers i.e., the government with the arguments within the

problem representations. Bacchi argues that this question aims to exceed what is in people's heads to be able to notice what creates the arguments, what type of "knowledge" the arguments lie on and what type of "knowledge" are essential for statements to be considered comprehensible (Bacchi, 2009). Thus, this question aims towards identifying the conceptual premises that underpin problem representations. This question undertakes the task of questioning "What is taken-for-granted?" and "What is not being questioned?". These are important questions to ask in a WPR policy analysis because it can unveil *what meanings need to be in place for something to happen* (Bacchi, 2009, p. 5.). Utilising Foucault's concept archaeology, one can discover the reasoning behind the problem presentation. It is, however, challenging to reveal deep-rooted presuppositions, but thankfully has Bacchi presented some discourse analytical tools for assistants. Tools such as *discourse*, which considers conceptual logics that is, presumptions, values, and assumptions to adequately explore further what is the meaning behind the policy. Along with, *binaries* or *dichotomies* by questioning where and how they function to understand the problem. Together with *key concepts,* Bacchi views these concepts as abstract labels that are rather undefined and can be associated with different meanings. As well as, looking for *categories*, more specifically *people categories*, to be able to analyse how they function to give meaning to the problem representation (Bacchi, 2009).

Question 3 incorporates two interconnected objectives. One objective focuses on specific processes and resolutions that contributes to the development of identifying the problem representations. The other objective is to understand how conflicting problem representation can subsist over time and space. Here, Bacchi applies Foucault's concept of genealogy, which allows the analysis to question *how we got here from there* (Bacchi, 2009, p. 10). This concept aims towards pinpointing specific moments in time where critical conclusions were made. This is because the purpose of the concept is to disrupt the notion of a "natural" development and eliminate the taken-for-granted assumptions regarding problem representation. Not only allows this concept to problematise processes, but also stresses the need to identify power relations, which in this context means to recognise influential groups that impact the creation of the problem. Hence, this question functions as a guide to underline the circumstances that allowed the development of a problem representation and assumed dominance (Bacchi, 2009).

Question 4 involves a more critical aspect than the other presented questions. The focus here is to question *what fails to be problematised*? (Bacchi, 2009, p. 14). In other words, the inadequacy of how the actual problem is formulated in the problem representation. It is important to clarify that it is not to question whether there is another way of viewing the issue, but rather how specific policies are regulated in how they present the problem. This question provides a reflection and inspection on what is silenced in the problem representation. By calling attention to the limitations of how the problem is represented, one is able to observe contradictions in the problem representation. Furthermore, this question enables the research to problematise why certain problem representations are dominant while others are silenced, why some elements are perceived as problematic and some as not. Here, can comparing problematisation of a specific issue over time and cross-culturally, become very useful, in the sense that it identifies why a problem is shaped in a particular way (Bacchi, 2009).

Question 5 is based on what kinds of effects problem representation can produce for certain groups in society. Bacchi presents here three essential effects: discursive effects, subjectification effects, and lived effects. Discursive effects build upon Question 4, which concerns deep-rooted assumptions that are produced by problem representation and its related discourse *limiting the kinds of social analysis that can be produce*d (Bacchi, 2009, p. 16). This limitation affects other ways of thinking and what can be said, and can therefore, have a negative effect on a specific group. Subjectification effects highlight how "subjects" are compromised in problem representation, which *makes certain subject positions available* (ibid.). This lies on the premises that discourses construct social relationships and influence how we understand ourselves and others. Bacchi argues that discourses within policies shape how we act and how we think about groups because policies can be presented in a biased way. This is done by positioning groups in contrast to another by condemning one group. Lastly, lived effects are related to "real life" consequences of problem representations. The attention here lies on material effects that directly affects lives, for example, abolishing governmental financial support (Bacchi, 2009). These interconnected effects relate to what Foucault calls "divided practices" which is based on the idea of separating groups from one another. With this question the ambition is to analyse who is responsible for the problem representation.

Question 6 aims towards analysing the existence and probability of argumentation to undermine the taken-for-granted "truths" in the problem representation. This question is two-sided, on one hand it highlights the practices that establish and authorise a specific problem representation. On the other hand, this question allows for reflection on different kinds of doubts that questions a widespread problem representation (Bacchi, 2009). This invites the researcher to decompose dominant discourses. As well as explore who, within a society, has access to those discourses, this is to understand the connection between the speaker, the audience and the discourse (Bacchi, 2009).

Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) have later added a seventh question that serves as a self-problematisation tool. By applying the six questions of WPR to one's own approach and problem problematisation one can recognise the impact of one's own positionality, both in terms of the analysis and in the problem representation one identifies (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). The reasoning for this added seventh question is to consider one's own position within the historical and cultural context that forms knowledge, which is the essence of the poststructural approach.

To conclude this presentation of the WPR question, I will utilise question one, two, four and five as these questions are in accordance with my aim and research questions. The focus of this thesis is to analyse the problem representation of EBO (question 1), what presuppositions and assumptions are evident in the representation (question 2), what silences and ignored factors are evident in the representation (question 4) and lastly, what effects the problem representations produces (question 5). Because the ambition of this thesis is not to analyse how the problem representation has come about or how it has been defended, I have decided to exclude question three and six.

5.2. Selection of research material

The selection of the empirical material only consists of the Governmental Bill *Socially sustainable own housing for asylum seekers* (Prop. 2019/20:10). This Government Bill was presented in September 2019 and enacted in January 2020. This Bill was the foundation for an amendment in the *Act on the Reception of Asylum Seekers and Others* (SFS 1994:137), to

restrict the rights to influence where asylum seekers can live during the asylum process. It should be noted that, amendments have been added to the LMA Act from its implementation in 1994 till 2021. But as this study does not attempt to analyse all changes regarding EBO, the chosen material was based on the relevance for the specific aim of this study. I, therefore, decided on to only utilise this Government Bill as it represents a pivotal change in the reception policies. This Government Bill discusses the restrictive measure for asylum seekers if they seek own housing in so-called socio-economic challenged areas. The Bill rests on an agreement between the Government, the Liberal and Center Party, and is 49 pages long in total. Furthermore, all statements that are presented in the findings and analysis chapters are translated into English. As this thesis is based on the WPR approach, the previously introduced questions performed as my predesigned codes. To be able to find the documents I used the search words: "EBO" and "Eget boende för asylsökande" (own housing for asylum seekers). The selected empirical material for this study was collected from the Swedish Government's website (Regeringen.se) where all public documents from the Government are published. The material is in Swedish and was in its actual form during the analysis.

Furthermore, the selection was also due to that this empirical material is publicly available for anyone and can provide more credibility for the thesis, in the sense that the same study can be carried out with the same empirical material and in that way, ensure reliability (Bergström & Boréus, 2012). Additionally, the empirical material also encompassed a variation of political opinions from different political parties, which I found to be relevant to present a nuanced political discourse. Even though there seems to be a political consensus on the topic of EBO, as presented in Chapter 2, there are some differences. However, this thesis is not interested in the different stands of different political parties, it is rather what is the dominating political discourse on the problem representation of the EBO Act. The empirical material does not include politicians and lawmaker's written and spoken statements in the media. Even though those aspect could bring some relevant and interesting aspects, I chose to only utilise the Government Bill (2019/20:10) as the aim of this thesis is not analyse who said what, rather how the Government presented the problem of EBO and the arguments behind it.

5.3 Methodological limitations

The limitations of WPR as methodology, faces the very issue qualitative researchers often encounter, that is, the considerable amount of dependence of the researcher's own interpretations. As a researcher, believing that one is completely objective to the field in which the research is conducted, is improbable. However, WPR incorporates this reflexivity a great deal. Both in the way the poststructural essences of problematising knowledge shines through, which makes one challenge the notion of knowledge that is presented in the analysis. But also, in the added seventh question to the analysis which makes one question one's own positionality. Not to pretend that one is ever to be objective to the research, but it makes one at least question it. Despite this, the WPR approach is seldom critiqued in the literature (Tawell & McCluskey, 2021), since WPR is not interested in identifying possible contrast between policies, it might be useful to combine other approaches if that is the aim (ibid.).

5.4 Ethical consideration and reflections

When conducting research, there are important aspects that the research must have in mind, that is, ethical considerations and reflexivity. Ethical considerations deal with the underlying relationship between the researcher and the object of the research. That is, how the research will affect the subject of the research, which is the reception system and asylum seekers in this thesis. As this study exclusively analyses policies of the Swedish Government there are specific aspects to discuss and reflect on. As mentioned, the empirical material that I worked with for this thesis is publicly accessible governmental documents that are attainable to the general public, however, there are ethical considerations that should be acknowledged.

During the process of this study, I came to realise some ethical considerations that was relevant for this study, which was what type of knowledge that was produced and how there could be a risk of producing certain knowledge that could undermine the position of the asylum seeker. Within the poststructural epistemology, questioning knowledge is at the centre. This made me question how the knowledge that I question could reproduce the power relations that I tried to challenge. As Bacchi (2009) argues, the researcher is never outside of the knowledge production and problem representation that the researcher seeks to problematise. Furthermore,

the character of the subject for this thesis can be viewed as sensitive, as it covers inequality for a specific group, I was therefore mindful of how I demonstrated this issue (Prior, 2003). Being aware of this, I attempted to analyse as systematically as possible, to be able to both sample and analyse the empirical material justly so that the thesis can be empirically grounded (Bauböck, 2008).

Additionally, the presented quotes and statements that are demonstrated in the analysis are translated from Swedish to English by me. This, to some extent, influences how the translation is presented. Although, I want to clarify that the attempt was to translate the texts as directly as possible. It is, however, important to note that the translation will have an impact on how the essence of the statements and quotes are understood, in relation to my prior knowledge on the subject. Also, it is relevant to bear in mind that how the research material is interpreted is dependent on the observer, which includes my personal background, opinions, and experiences. Bacchi (2012) stresses a similar point of view when conducting a WPR analysis by emphasising self-problematisation, which means that as a researcher one needs to have a critical eye on your own analyses and question "one's own presuppositions and assumptions" (Bacchi, 2012, p. 7).

As mentioned, this study is concerned with power relations, political views, and statements, undoubtedly, there are potential biases in the analysis. Here, I reflect on my own position as the researcher and my relationships with the subject of this thesis. Myself being a child of an immigrant, a Swedish citizen with my own political opinions and a devotion to equality and human rights, it is arguably unavoidable for the analysis to not hold some bias to a certain extent. Along with the fact that the chosen field of research has been personally motivated, which also affects how I, as a researcher, perceives the phenomena in question. It should be noted that this research is not motivated by presenting my own political agenda, however, this research is motivated by a difference of opinion in how the current reception system is handled. Nevertheless, this thesis does not address political ideologies that support the policies, rather, it addresses the problematisation in policies. Therefore, differences of opinions on a political level should not infiltrate the analysis, but rather be a reflection on my role as a researcher.

6. Presentation of findings

This chapter presents the findings. As mentioned, my aim is to analyse and problematise the problem representation of the EBO Act. To be able to do so, the Government Bill *Socially sustainable own housing for asylum seekers* (Prop. 2019/20:10) was selected for analysis. This Government Bill is an amendment to the existing reception law *Act on the Reception of Asylum Seekers and Others* (SFS 1994:137). This presentation of material lies as a foundation for the analysis in the following chapter. The Government Bill expresses that the reception system of 1994 is inadequately produced, specifically in regard to the EBO Act. Moreover, the Bill states that EBO has serious negative consequences for the integration process, for the municipalities as well as for the asylum seeker. The Bill argues for the daily allowance or special allowance as stated in (SFS 1994:137 17§; 18§) to be removed for asylum seekers who arrange their own housing in areas that are considered to have socio-economic challenges (Prop. 2019/20:10). The Bill argues that the EBO policy has severe consequences for the asylum seeker as well as society. It states that there are significant problems with own housing and the need for this change, according to the Government is based on:

> It is particularly worrying that the possibility of own housing risks leading to serious negative social consequences both for individuals and for the local community. One such consequence is that certain areas to which asylum seekers move suffer from increased problems with socio-economic challenges. The own housing can e.g., lead to increased segregation and deteriorating planning conditions for the municipalities. In the long run, this can make it more difficult for asylum seekers and host families to establish themselves in both working life and society. There is also a risk that deteriorating planning conditions will contribute to difficulties for the municipalities in offering welfare services, such as schools and health care, to both asylum seekers and other municipal residents. Other examples of negative consequences that can affect the individual are extreme overcrowding, insecure living conditions and frequent moves. The opportunity for own housing is also considered to lead to psychological and physical illness, unemployment and difficulties for children and young people to cope

with   school.

(Prop. 2019/20:10, p. 7)

6.1 "There are significant problems with own housing for asylum seekers"

In this section I apply Bacchi's (2009) first question that seeks to analyse what is the problem of EBO represented to be in the Government Bill (Prop. 2019/20:10). With this question I aim to pinpoint what the implied problem representation of EBO is and what solutions of the problem are presented and, in that way, understand the actual problem. As Bacchi emphasised, more than one problem representation can be found within a policy, I have therefore divided this section into three parts which consists of the most noticeable problem representations in the Government Bill. As stated in the quote above, there are multiple problem representations in regard to own housing for asylum seekers. That is, the problem of an inadequate and unstainable reception system, the problem of segregation and integration and the problem for municipalities.

6.1.1 The problem of an (un)sustainable reception for asylum seekers

One of the most emphasised problem representations of own housing for asylum seekers in the Bill is that it contributes to an unsustainable reception system. The aim of the Bill is to encourage asylum seekers to a higher extent, to live in areas where there are conditions for a socially sustainable reception. Both in terms of the Government to administrate and for the asylum seekers themselves. That will, according to the Bill, reduce negative social consequences that arise when asylum seekers live in their own housing (Prop. 2019/20:10). The demonstration of the unsustainable reception system is based on lack of an organised reception. This implies that there needs to be a more controlled reception system so that the Government, SMA and other authorities can regulate certain aspects of the reception processes. That includes more frequent contact with SMA employees and asylum seekers. Moreover, housing for asylum seekers was predominantly a municipal commitment in the EBO Act of 1994. However, in the Bill the shift in responsibilities was clear, from municipality-level to state. As the responsibility

of creating a sustainable reception lies on the state, it means that the Government and SMA have authority in how the reception system should be structured, how the problem of EBO is represented and what solutions seem suitable.

> The reception of asylum seekers is primarily a state commitment. The Government's starting point is that the reception of asylum seekers should be arranged so that, among other things, it promotes an efficient process, [...] and ensures a socially sustainable reception for the individual.
> (Prop. 2019/20:10, p. 10)

> However, the proposal does not mean an actual restriction on freedom of movement or that an asylum seeker is deprived of the right to live in areas with socio-economic challenges. The proposal instead encourages asylum seekers to live in such areas where there are conditions for an orderly and socially sustainable reception.
> (Prop. 2019/20:10, p. 15)

> The Government's proposal means that asylum seekers' opportunity to live in their own housing in areas with socio-economic challenges is limited. The proposal should therefore lead to fewer asylum seekers living in such areas and create incentives for them to instead live where there are better conditions for a socially sustainable reception. This in turn should reduce the negative social consequences of asylum seekers' own housing.
> (Prop. 2019/20:10, p. 20)

Albeit the Bill predominately highlights the problems of EBO in regard to the reception system, from a state perspective, it also stresses the negative social consequences for the asylum seeker. The Bill argues that the changes relating to EBO will lead to better social conditions for children and women. As it states that if more asylum seekers lived in facility housing (ABO), the SMA and other authorities have the responsibility to provide protection and safety for vulnerable groups. With more asylum seekers living in ABO, the authorities have better possibilities to early detect violence against children and women or honour-related violence, which

subsequently have positive effects from a gender equality perspective (Prop. 2019/20:10). For asylum seekers living in EBO, the experience can lead to damaging effects. Described as "negative consequences that can affect the individual are extreme overcrowding, insecure living conditions and frequent moves" (Prop. 2019/20:10, p. 7). It is clear that the Bill argues that EBO has detrimental ramifications for asylum seekers. It is especially noticeable in regard to women and children. The Bill claims that asylum seekers living in their own housing with low housing standards, results in children suffering both psychologically, psychically, and socially. Furthermore, the Bill points out how EBO can affect women's opportunity to participate in integration activities and exercises.

> The proposal is therefore mainly expected to lead to positive effects from a children's rights perspective, mainly through better housing conditions and better integration conditions. It should also lead to fewer children living in extreme overcrowding or suffering from ill health which can affect schooling negatively. Furthermore, it can make it easier for the authorities to identify and detect at an early stage the existence of various types of problems related to patriarchal structures and honour cultures within a family or group.
> (Prop. 2019/20:10, p. 23)

> Both women and men as well as girls and boys are affected to varying degrees by the proposal. The Government assesses, e.g., that the proposal can have a positive effect in terms of women's life situation and opportunities to take part in initiatives and activities. [...] The Government assesses that this may have the consequence that women's activity level and participation in initiatives may increase. The reason for this is that it is more common for women who live in facility housing to participate in Swedish language courses, internships, or other employment than women who live in their own housing during the asylum period. In the longer term, this could create the conditions for a faster establishment in working and social life for these women, which should be positive for equality between women and men in society.
> (Prop. 2019/20:10, p. 23)

6.1.2 The problem of integration and segregation

As stated above, another problem representation of the EBO Act is how it can lead to increased segregation and reduced integration for asylum seekers. The issue of segregation and integration has been prominent in the discourse of EBO but conceptualised from different perspectives. The Bill unquestionably states that asylum seekers living in their own housing in areas that are considered to have socio-economic challenges, are affected by segregation, and these immigrants will have difficulties to integrate into Swedish society (Prop. 2019/20:10). The Bill argues that living in areas with socio-economic challenges limits the opportunity for asylum seekers to "get off to a good start" in the reception system (Prop. 2019/20:10 p. 7).

One of the fundamental aspects of the Swedish reception system is for asylum seekers to integrate into society, both in terms of societal norms and customs and in the labour market. The Bill demonstrates the importance of integration, and that the reception of asylum seekers should incorporate how integration can be possible in a sustainable manner: "The Government considers that the proposal should also promote establishment in the long term and thereby improve the possibilities of achieving the integration policy goals" (Prop. 2019/20:10, p. 24). That asylum seekers live in socio-economic challenged areas means that asylum seekers do not have the opportunity to penetrate the labour market and Swedish society. The Bill argues for more asylum seekers to live in facility housing provided by SMA where they believe the conditions for integration are better and thereby, reach the integration policy goals.

> An important starting point is that it should be easy to integrate into Swedish society. From that perspective, the Government takes seriously the problems that exist with own housing and which clearly risk both counteracting the individual's opportunities to get off to a good start and integrating into Swedish society and to complicate society's tasks and support. According to the Government, there is therefore reason to introduce rules that limit asylum seekers' opportunities to live in their own housing in certain areas during the asylum period. In view of the problems associated with own housing, a restriction on the possibility of own housing should be aimed towards getting more asylum seekers to live where there are conditions for a socially sustainable reception and thereby reducing the negative social consequences of asylum seekers' own housing.

6.1.3 The problem of conditions for planning for municipalities

Last but not least, the problem representation of how EBO impacts the resources of municipalities across Sweden. This problem representation is two-sided. On one hand, the Bill demonstrates how the uneven distribution of asylum seekers results in certain municipalities having to take more responsibility in the reception of asylum seekers than other municipalities. This entails economic consequences for the municipality, such as not being able to improve conditions for planning in the areas that already are considered to have socio-economic issues. On another hand, the Bill highlights how the unequal dissemination of asylum seekers leads to difficulties for municipalities to offer welfare services to asylum seekers as well as other residents (Prop. 2019/20:10).

Given the circumstance that the municipality, with socio-economic challenged areas, has to provide welfare, such as school and health care for asylum seekers, can result in that asylum seekers would not be provided with appropriate services. The Bill argues that for some asylum seekers, specifically children, might fall through the cracks and would not be given an appropriate reception. This in turn, impacts the possibilities for integration and for the reception as a whole. The Bill demonstrates that many municipalities where a large number of asylum seekers live, are in favour of this Bill (Prop. 2019/20:10).

> According to the investigation, the effects for both individuals and society appear to be clearly negative in municipalities that have for a long time received a large number of asylum seekers living in their own housing and in municipalities with significant problems with socio-economic challenges. Furthermore, the extent and dignity of the consequences of own housing appear to be more serious today than on previous occasions when they have been highlighted. One explanation for this is probably that since the mid-1990s it has been largely the same municipalities that have received many asylum seekers living in their own housing and that in these municipalities socio-economic challenged areas have been established where asylum seekers apply. This

development has in turn led to these areas being hit by increased problems with socio-economic challenges.

(Prop. 2019/20:10 p. 7)

The proposal is expected to reduce the concentration of asylum seekers in residential areas with socio-economic challenges and mean that asylum seekers live to a greater extent in the Swedish Migration Agency's housing or in areas where the conditions for integration are better. The consequence of this can be expected to be that municipalities that have areas with socio-economic challenges are relieved and that their conditions for offering welfare services to both asylum seekers and other municipal residents are improved. If a higher proportion of asylum seekers choose to live in the Swedish Migration Agency's facility housing instead of in their own housing, the municipalities' planning conditions should also be improved.

(Prop. 2019/20:10 p. 21)

6.2 Summary of the findings

With applying Bacchi's first question for this chapter, I was able to identify the problem representation of EBO. The findings from the empirical material show three distinct problem representations, that is, an unstainable reception, integration and segregation difficulties and effects for the municipalities. It is however clear that all these three recognisable problem representations are intertwined. The Bill demonstrates that each problem is affected by another problem. It is therefore difficult to make sense of what problem representation came first or what is the most significant problem in regard to EBO. Despite this, the Bill is written by the Government with an obvious purpose of highlighting the negative consequences of asylum seekers living in their own housing in socio-economic challenged areas. However, there are some positive aspects that the Bill presents: "Properly used, one's own housing can also be positive for the individual. Such positive aspects can be the opportunity to get closer to Swedish society and the labour market, the feeling of normality and self-determination" (Prop. 2019/20:10 pp. 6-7). Despite these positive attributes of EBO, it is evident that the Government

portrays own housing for asylum seekers as unstainable for the reception system and for the individual.

7. A poststructural policy analysis of the problem of EBO

Indeed, the discussion surrounding EBO is an expression of the fact that the Swedish welfare state and the perception of a "successful" reception has changed. But what has led to the changes in EBO and how has the Swedish Government argued for this change? In the following chapter, I present the results of the analysis in relation to the aim and research questions of this thesis, as well as, the material, selected theoretical framework and previous research. As I have already established what the problem of EBO is represented to be, according to the Government Bill (2019/20:10), I will in this chapter analyse what lies behind the problem representation of EBO. To be able to conduct this analysis I apply three of Bacchi's (2009) questions. The first question exploits what underlying understandings and assumptions of the problem representation that is visible, i.e., what type of "knowledge" the argument builds on. The second question allows for the analysis to question the silences in the problem representation and thus, emphasise what is left unproblematic. The last question provides the analysis with what effects can be produced by the problem representation, ergo what are the consequences for asylum seekers in Sweden with this portrayal.

As I have presented in the previous chapter, the problem representation of EBO pointed to an unsustainable reception system for the individual and society, with integration and segregation difficulties, and negative effects for the municipalities. This representation of EBO as a problem, lies as a foundation for the analysis. With a clear understanding of what the problems are, allows the analysis to further investigate the underlying factors that play a role in how the problem of EBO is represented and conceptualised. Bacchi (2009) argues that governmental policies can be seen as a strategy in themselves, as it upholds the interests of some by undermining the interests of others. So, by analysing the seemingly hidden assumptions, silences, and effects, the strategies can become visible.

7.1 What assumptions underlie the problem representation of EBO?

In this section I seek to analyse the assumptions and presuppositions that are embedded in the problem representation. This is the second question within the WPR approach which aims towards investigating what type of "knowledge" the arguments lie upon and what type of "knowledge" is essential for the representation to be considered legitimate. With the concept of governmentality, the unaddressed ways of thinking that guides and structures the governing of asylum seekers, becomes visible. This question incorporates the commonly taken-for-granted notion of policies and problem representations. Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) emphasise the importance of questioning and analysing deep-rooted problem representations and "knowledge", because it allows for a deeper understanding of what is the actual objective of the policy. This in turn allows for an understanding of what meanings, presuppositions and assumptions need to be established for this problem representation to exist. This includes well-established cultural values and opinions that, as a rule, is a social unconsciousness. In other words, something that is strongly imprinted into our way of thinking and comprehending that reinforce the problem representation.

7.1.1 The assumption of a sustainable reception

There is a clear assumption that the current reception system is not sustainable because of the lack of integration into Swedish society. So, what is a sustainable reception for asylum seekers? Undoubtedly, integration is a critical aspect in terms of what is considered to be a sustainable reception, which Myrberg (2011) also stresses. The Bill argues that whilst EBO is still in effect, the level of integration that the Government seeks, will not be achieved. The Bill states that if asylum seekers live in their own housing in so-called socio-economic challenged areas, the problem of segregation will still have a strong impact on the reception. This is also in accordance with what Sandström (2020) highlights as a critical factor in what the assumption of a sustainable reception and integration is. She means that the taken-for-granted notion that living in close proximity to "Swedes" will automatically lead to integration for asylum seekers. This signifies that the assumption of a sustainable reception is based on a problematisation of *social* integration. The Bill states that:

A critical starting point [for asylum seekers] is that it should be easy to get into Swedish society. From that perspective, the Government takes seriously the problems that exist with own housing and which clearly risk both counteracting the individual's opportunities to get off to a good start and integrating into Swedish society. (Prop. 2019/20:10 p. 7).

The assumption here is that the problem of own housing is connected to social integration. That is, in smaller municipalities where SMA facility housing is located, the problem of ethnic segregation is less prominent than in bigger cities, where EBO is more favourable. If, however, the assumption of a sustainable reception was focused on *economic* integration, EBO would not be ruled out. In contrast to the strong disapproval towards EBO, the Bill also mentioned some positive effects in terms of economic integration, "Properly used, one's own housing can also be positive for the individual. Such positive aspects can be the opportunity to get closer to Swedish society and the labour market." (Prop. 2019/20:10 p. 6). In regard to economic integration, EBO can thus have positive consequences for the asylum seeker, and it can even enhance the chance of integration. Despite this, the underlying problem of own housing is – according to the Government – that it hinders social integration, which is clearly more important than economic independence, according to the Bill. But this also means that there is only one way to integrate into Swedish society, as stated in the Bill, and that is for asylum seekers to be close to "Swedes".

7.1.2 The assumption of own housing

Another distinct assumption concerns the conditions of own housing. The Bill argues that own housing is overcrowded, it has a negative effect on the well-being of asylum seekers and that it negatively affects children's schooling. The Bill also portrays own housing as a gender-based oppression. As it emphasises the patriarchal structures and inequality between men and women. The Bill argues that living in ABO would decrease such inequality as it opens the door for women to become more independent, as if though the housing settlement can counteract such an issue. The Bill does not, however, express how the Government would improve gender-

based oppression, but simply states that it would improve as if it is common knowledge. Giving the assumption that EBO is negative for the asylum seeker, the Bill does not highlight what the conditions and experience are according to asylum seekers themselves. This is what Borevi and Bengtsson (2015) call the neighbourhood argument, which is apparent in the way that the Bill is giving priority to the collective political agenda on how to improve social conditions and integration of asylum seekers, rather than the actual housing conditions and experience for asylum seekers.

Furthermore, there is an assumption of asylum seekers that do not "choose" to live in ABO after the legislative changes, being irresponsible. This is evident in the way that the Bill portrays the EBO living conditions and firmly suggests that it affects children and their well-being. It is as though, the Bill views on one hand, that asylum seeking parents are actively making a choice that has harmful consequences for their children if they do not comply with the changes. On another hand, the Bill demonstrates as if the parents are not aware of what are the best living conditions for their children, and in that way, characterise asylum seekers as incapable of making beneficial decisions about their children. This is something that Bacchi (2000) stresses, that is, problems are actually created or given shape in the proposal that are offered as a response or a solution to the actual problem (Bacchi, 2000). Furthermore, by stating that the proposed restrictions on EBO are aligned with the Directive 2013/33/EU and stating that "In the Government's opinion, therefore, the rules now proposed must be believed to be more favourable - or less restrictive - for asylum seekers." (Prop. 2019/20:10 p. 17). This statement conveys that the Government's assumption of the changes in EBO should be regarded as beneficial for asylum seekers. Simultaneously, it disregards the responsibility of providing families with financial stability, by the mere fact that the Bill states that the appropriate measures are taken and that asylum seekers are well-informed of the changes.

7.2 What is left silent and ignored in the problem representation of EBO?

In this section I highlight what fails to be problematised in the problem representation of EBO. I seek to emphasise critical aspects that need to be discussed so that the ignored problems in the problem representation are visible. By calling attention to the absences of important elements that shapes the problem representation, it becomes clearer to identify gaps, contradictions and roots of the problem representation, even though this analysis does not consist of historical or comparative aspects. I have demonstrated in Chapter 2 the legislative development of EBO and historical events in Chapter 3, which can provide the reader some understanding of how the problem representation of what has led up to why EBO is shaped in this particular way. This question provides a reflection and examination on what is silenced in the Bill's proposal. Drawing attention to what is said and what is not said, makes it possible to discover discourse effects (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016), which uncovers what is said for something to be sayable.

7.2.1 Silence of ABO

The Government Bill demonstrates the negative consequences of EBO and how this policy contributes to e.g., insufferable housing conditions, psychical, psychological, and social distress, and segregation. There are multiple perceived notions of how EBO negatively affects the individual and society, which the Government stresses in the Bill. However, there are evident silences about ABO. The Bill fails to demonstrate the consequences of ABO for asylum seekers. Leaving the negative consequences of ABO out of the discussion and not recognising the individual circumstances that influence different housing choices, is problematic. With the concept of governmentality, this can be viewed as the Government is guiding and influencing the rationale of EBO and ABO, by primarily painting a picture of EBO as negative and essentially, counterproductive to the Swedish reception system. Furthermore, this could be seen as what Borevi and Bengtsson (2015) highlight as being the reason why authorities and politicians minimise the importance of individual choice of housing. They argue that the reasons behind downplaying the individual choice is because of the legal status of asylum seekers, the limited resources, and prioritisation of political goals. In this case, it seems as

though all three of these reasons are included and provided an explanation to why the Bill does not discuss the negative consequences of living in ABO.

Barthoma et al., (2020) echoes a similar sentiment, as they argued that the shift in the reception policies, after the so-called "refugee crisis", the objective of the policies was to protect the Swedish welfare state and not to protect or focus on what is necessarily best for the asylum seeker. With this in mind, it is difficult to decide whether one type of housing is better than the other. It should be noted that I do not seek to decide what is better for asylum seekers, but rather discuss what is silenced in the problem representation. This also highlights how the Bill fails to recognise the diversity between asylum seekers, in the sense that what could be considered the best alternative for one individual, might not be the best for another, as Sandström (2020) argues. For this reason, the presented benefits of EBO cannot be appropriately estimated without incorporating ABO in the problem representation.

7.2.3 Silence of self-determination

Undoubtedly, the restriction on own housing is affecting asylum seekers' right to self-determination. As I and previous research has argued, being able to determine one's own life, by deciding where one wants to live, is important for the well-being and the possibilities to establish oneself in Sweden. Even though this Bill argues that "[...] the proposal does not mean an actual restriction on freedom of movement or that an asylum seeker is deprived of the right to live in areas with socio-economic challenges" (Prop. 2019/20:10 p. 15). The Bill leaves many asylum seekers without a choice. Indeed, asylum seekers autonomy is in general not the objective of reception policies. This is in line with what Borevi and Bengtsson (2015) call attention to, the reception of asylum seekers is generally crisis-driven, so, the objective is to find temporary housing solutions rather than considering the asylum seekers individual autonomy. This is evident in the Bill, as it does not point to the problematic effects of the removal of the daily allowance. Instead, the Bill downplays the effect and seemingly finds it appropriate to use the main source of income as an incentive to achieve the political goal. As the Bill notes to the fact that the daily allowance is the primary source of income for many asylum seekers, it will facilitate the political goal.

For many asylum seekers, however, the daily allowance is the only source of income and has great significance for daily living. A policy instrument that is linked to the daily allowance should therefore, in the Government's opinion, be able to influence asylum seekers in their choice of residential area in an appropriate manner. (Prop. 2019/20:10 p. 14)

With the understanding that the daily allowance provides as the only source of financial resource for many asylum seekers, the option of not following the restriction on settling in the restricted areas, will cost the asylum seeker greatly. In fact, the financial penalty of not adhering to the restriction would lead to further segregation, in the sense that it would make an already impoverished group more impoverished. As a result of this, asylum seekers would become more financially vulnerable, and their lives become more unstable. This is in accordance with what Brekke (2004) writes about, as he means that the financial precariousness and ambivalence of the housing situation produces the feeling of uncertainty. As a consequence, this ambivalent position that many asylum seekers live in, only leads to passivity and perpetuates asylum seekers' opportunity to integrate, which contradict the main ambition and fundamental core of the Swedish reception system.

7. 3 What effects are produced by the representation of EBO?

In this last and final question, I apply the fifth WPR question. With this, I seek to analyse the discursive, subjectification, and lived effects of the problem representation, the presuppositions and assumptions, and the silences. From a poststructural perspective, discourse is viewed as "socially produced forms of knowledge that set limits upon what it is possible to think, write or speak about a given social object or practice" (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 35). This question builds on the premises that discourses construct social relationships and have an impact on how we understand ourselves and others (Bacchi, 2009). Since policies are often presented in a biased manner, as we can see with EBO, it also affects how we understand certain groups, in this context, asylum seekers. Bacchi emphasises that, by positioning a specific group in contrast to other groups, i.e., asylum seekers contra citizen, assigns meaning to both groups which also creates different kinds of limitations for specific groups in society. My focus here is on how the

restrictions of rights to decide where one wants to live and how the removal of daily allowance affects the lives of asylum seekers.

The discursive effects, which involves how discourses can limit different ways of thinking, limit what can be said and, in that way, create negative effects on a certain group and positive effects on others (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). A prominent discursive effect is the argumentation and exacerbation of asylum seekers as in need of governing, which is supported by the assumption that asylum seekers are accountable for the declining societal development. This is evident in how the political beliefs, assumptions and reasoning have produced this knowledge of refugee settlement and assigned meaning to what a sustainable reception is. From a poststructural perspective, this can be seen as a strategy for the Government to maintain power over groups so that their political agenda is preserved and perceived as true. Indeed, the proposed solution in the Bill lies on the basis of their characterisation of asylum seekers, thus, that the suggestive changes are in agreement with the perception that asylum seekers are dependent on control by the Government. For that reason, assigning asylum seekers to live in facility housing rather than alongside the rest of the population, seems, according to the Bill, justifiable and rational. As a result of this, the rights and self-determination of asylum seekers are neglected, or at least, not a primary interest. Rather, the objective is to define the "truths" of how asylum seekers ought to live.

Moreover, the subjectification effects, that is, the effects of positioning groups in contrast to each other, shape the understanding of the problem and themselves (Bacchi, 2009). A critical aspect in analysing the problem representation is to explore who is presented to be responsible for the problem. There is a clear understanding that the Bill is portraying the asylum seeker as a threat to the Swedish welfare state and is to blame for the declining reception development. This is in line with what Barthoma et al., (2020) and Sager and Öberg (2017) who argue, that the welfare state is perceived being at risk due to the influx of asylum seekers. The subjectification effects in this Bill illustrate a noticeable distinction between asylum seekers and Swedish society, in the sense that Swedish society and the welfare state need protection. This perceptin if based on the underlying assumption that asylum seekers are responsible for deteriorating conditions. Here, we can see a clear differentiation between asylum seekers

opposed to Swedes, because the responsibility of the negative consequences of the reception system lies on the asylum seekers and not Sweden's policy reforms.

Lastly, the lived effects, incorporate how the discursive effects have real-life outcomes. That is, how the problem representation can directly impact aspects such as integration, segregation, and the material effects, for example, removing governmental financial support (Bacchi, 2009). The most obvious and significant real-life consequences is the removal of the daily allowance. By specifically using the daily allowance as an incitement to fulfil the Government's ambition, the Bill directly points to the fact that the Government purposely puts asylum seekers in an economically exposed position. Hence, assuming that asylum seekers who are financially vulnerable would create a sustainable reception. Another important effect is the possibility of alienation for asylum seekers, in the sense that the assumption of asylum seekers who continued to live in EBO in so-called socio-economic challenged areas, are perceived as irresponsible. Thus, creating a potential effect where the asylum seeker is perceived as consciously making a decision that would threaten the welfare state.

These interconnected effects relate to what Foucault (in Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016) calls divided practices which is based on the idea of separating groups from one another. Building on Foucault, the effects of the problem representation of EBO and the perception of asylum seekers can be viewed as problematic in themselves. The discourse in the Bill upholds and reproduces an unquestioned "truth" of asylum seekers as a burden to the societal structure. In that respect, the perceived "truth", perpetuated by the Government, can be regarded as oppressive on one hand, and productive on the other. In the sense that it clearly demonstrates the accepted and legitimate type of knowledge about asylum seekers, housing, along with striving to create an unachievable idea of the Swedish society by restricting asylum seekers self-determination. Additionally, the Bill produces and reproduces the meaning of who is considered beneficial or disadvantageous to the Swedish welfare state. The effects of the problem representation of EBO furthers the ambition of making Sweden an attractive country to seek asylum in.

8. Concluding Discussion

The aim of this thesis has been to question and problematise the problem representation of the EBO Act. The discussion surrounding EBO is an expression that the political discourse and migration policies has taken an increasingly restrictive turn. This research has demonstrated that this discussion is also part of a larger debate on refugee reception, that derive from the idea that if conditions during the asylum process deteriorates, Sweden will become an unattractive country to seek asylum in. The arguments that lie behind the problem representation of EBO is that it is an interference on integration, it creates segregation and is perceived to be a threat to the Swedish welfare system. What the problem seems to be becomes evident in the sense that the rationale behind the changes in the EBO Act direct the responsibility of the declining reception on to asylum seekers. Consequently, the root of the problem is asylum seekers themselves because the Bill presents the changes as a "choice", which asylum seekers can either obey or disobey.

The ambition with this concluding discussion is to highlight the compelling aspects that have emerged through this research and challenge the notion of "truth" that is presented in the problem representation. With an understanding that policies arrive out of historical and cultural events, it is important to discover the underlying reasons for this change (Bacchi, 2009; Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). This study aimed toward highlighting the characteristics of the Swedish reception model, which was based on the values of the welfare state. I demonstrated how Sweden use to be different from our neighbouring countries, Denmark and Norway, with an open and generous reception system, that believed in autonomy and freedom for asylum seekers. However, these values that once was strongly imprinted in the Swedish outlook on migration, has changed significantly. As mentioned previously, the shift in Swedish migration policy and reception system was to some extent a consequence of the so-called refugee crisis (e.g., Sandström, 2020; Hagelund, 2020; Sager & Öberg, 2017; Abdelhady et al., 2020). As Sandström argued, this historical event opened the door for the Swedish Government to make a change. Since then, the Government has implemented restrictive changes both in terms of migration laws, e.g., stricter border controls and reunification laws (Barthoma et al., 2020), and within the reception system, with the EBO Act. This shows that the once seemingly liberal

country with multi-culturalism and diversity values (Bochmann & Hagelund, 2011), has become more alike our neighbouring country Denmark, with their restrictive refugee reception.

Furthermore, drawing on the findings in the analysis, three evident problem representations was identified: unstainable reception, integration and segregation difficulties, and the effects for the municipalities. As I mentioned previously, these three problem representations are intertwined, in the sense that each of these problems are affected by another. However, it is clear that the Government Bill portrays EBO as the obvious root of all of these problem representations. As Bacchi (2009) and Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) demonstrates, we can see that this representation of EBO is presented as a taken-for-granted truth of the Swedish reception system. That is, as long as asylum seekers do not comply with the restrictive changes in reception policies, the Swedish reception system and asylum seekers themselves, will continue to struggle with these issues. With this research I applied the concept of governmentality to challenge the taken-for-granted truths and knowledges that this Government Bill produces as well as to highlight how the problem the Government is set out to fix, in actuality, is created in the problem representation they present. With this said, what this research results in is that the actual reason or problem of EBO is not that asylum seekers live in so-called socio-economic challenged areas, but rather, that it is an attempt to make Sweden less attractive to seek asylum in. Lastly, the discussion on EBO is still highly discussed in Sweden, with the ambition to abolish the Act completely. The future of the reception system in Sweden is unclear, however if this research is an indication on what is to come, then, the lives of asylum seekers will be greatly affected.

8.1 Recommendations for future research

As mentioned, the aim of this thesis has been to analyse the problem representation of the EBO Act, identifying underlying assumption that underline the representation, critical aspects that needs to be included in the representation, and what effects this representation can have for the asylum seeker. Drawing on the analysis and limitations with it this research, a recommendation to further this research is to incorporate aspects that was not included in this thesis. That is, analysing a larger set of data over a longer period. This could enable the research to discover

patterns and distinction to a larger extent than what this research did. It could also be relevant to incorporate aspect that is evident in the findings of this empirical material, that is, gender aspects. As the current research is mostly focused on the benefits and disadvantages of EBO, it could be highly relevant to research the benefits and disadvantages of ABO. Analysing how ABO contributes to a sustainable reception system, both for the asylum seeker as well as the state. Another highly important factor that could further the research within this topic would be to include the perspectives of the asylum seeker. Incorporating the insight of the people who are affected by the restrictive measures of the Swedish reception policies could enrich the understanding and the effects of the restrictions of rights to decided where one wants to live.

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