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# **Governing Displacement in Times of Uncertainty**

–The role of local actors in placemaking for Ukrainian Displaced Persons in Malmö and Rotterdam

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## **Abstract**

The decision by the European Union to enforce the Temporary Protection Directive to respond to the inflow of Ukrainian displaced people in member states has resulted in a peculiar governance system that sets Ukrainian displaced people as an exceptional category of vulnerable migrants. Their stay is temporary, but as it is impossible to predict a date for Ukraine to be deemed a safe country again, it is likely that these people will stay in host countries for a long time. Ukrainian displaced people work, study, and participate in the host country's society. This thesis examines and compares how the local governments and civil society organizations of Malmö and Rotterdam, two European cities whose history has been shaped by migration flows and that host a very diverse population, provide incentives or constraints for Ukrainian displaced to make place in their new surroundings. Theoretically speaking, this thesis adopts the idea of placemaking, an experiential attachment of emotions and symbols to one's socio-spatial surroundings rooted in phenomenology, enriching it with insights provided by a critical phenomenology in which political actors are conceived as impacting the subject's experiences with their surroundings. To understand how this interplay between the political and the personal spaces plays out in reality, this thesis relies on an empirical investigation in which municipal officers, CSOs, and members of the Ukrainian community participated in semi-structured interview to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the governance systems of Malmö and Rotterdam. To understand what kinds of incentives and constraints most severely impact placemaking, housing, access to information, and social participation have been recognized as key components of placemaking that are deeply influenced by the actions of local governments and civil society organizations.

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# Table of contents

<b>1. Introduction</b>	1
1.1 Research questions	2
<b>2. Setting the scene</b>	3
2.1 Reasons for comparing Malmö and Rotterdam	3
2.2 Familiarizing with the essential terminology	4
2.2.1 Ukrainian displaced people	4
2.2.2 Local actors-driven placemaking	5
2.3 Philosophy of science	6
<b>3. Theoretical Framework</b>	8
3.1 Building the theory of local actors-driven placemaking	8
3.1.1 Placemaking: making of what place?	9
3.1.2 The process of placemaking	12
3.1.3 Placemaking, displaced people and cities	14
3.1.4 Filling the gap: local actors-driven placemaking	15
3.2 Local actors-driven placemaking in Lefebvre's spatial triad	17
3.2.1 Getting to know the spatial triad	17
3.2.2 Positioning placemaking	18
3.3 Main takes from theory	20
<b>4. Methods</b>	22
4.1 Case studies and comparative approach	22
4.2 Semi-structured interviews	24
4.3 Thematic analysis	28
4.4 Positionality	30
4.5 Limitations	31
<b>5. A snapshot of migrant governance in Malmö and Rotterdam</b>	33
5.1 Comparing the Dutch and the Swedish models	33
5.2 Comparing Rotterdam and Malmö's municipality-civil society networks	35
<b>6. Results and discussion</b>	39
6.1 Governance of UDPs in Malmö and Rotterdam	39

<b>6.2</b> Housing	45
<b>6.3</b> Access to information	50
<b>6.4</b> Social participation	52
<b>7. Conclusions</b>	55
<b>7.1</b> Final reflections	56
<b>Bibliography</b>	58
<b>Appendix A – Consent Forms</b>	66
<b>Appendix B – Interview Guides</b>	70
<b>Appendix C – Coding Handbook</b>	73
<b>Figures</b>	
Figure 1 – Philosophy of science	7
Figure 2 – Schematization of experience and its components	10
Figure 3 – Schematization of placemaking in the spatial triad	20
<b>Tables</b>	
Table 1 – Placemaking as “place-branding” and humanist placemaking	9
Table 2 – Lefebvre’s spatial triad	18
Table 3 – Interviews with municipal officers	26
Table 4 – Interviews with CSOs and NGOs	27
Table 5 – Interviews with members of the Ukrainian community	27
Table 6 – Operationalization of theory: themes	30
Table 7 – Comparison between Dutch and Swedish policy frameworks	35
Table 8 – Governance of UDPs in Rotterdam and Malmö	40
Table 9 – Rotterdam-civil society partnerships	43
Table 10 – Municipal housing solutions in Rotterdam over time	47



# 1. Introduction

This thesis explores the role played by municipal governments and civil society organizations in favoring or hindering placemaking for Ukrainian Displaced Persons (UDPs) in two cities, Rotterdam (the Netherlands) and Malmö (Sweden). Both cities are considered forerunners in migration- and diversity-related policies within their respective national frameworks. This thesis aims to investigate how municipal and civil society actors devised, implemented and evaluated the vast array of policies and initiatives aimed at fostering a sense of belonging and wellbeing for UDPs in their new, temporary, homes.

Placemaking refers to the experience-led process that let people attach personal, emotional and symbolic values to their socio-spatial surroundings. In both philosophy and geography, the concept revolves around a subject (experiencer) and an object (experienced), with little considerations on the way the socio-political environment can exert influence on the experiential process. This thesis, informed by a critical phenomenologist approach, acknowledges that local governments and civil society organizations do affect placemaking by providing facilitations and limitations related to the possibility UDPs have to forge deep emotional linkages with their surrounding environments. It follows that this work attempts to enrich the theoretical debate on placemaking by highlighting the role that the political and civil domains have on the process, framing this conception under the name ‘local actors-driven placemaking’.

This work proceeds with comparing the Swedish and Dutch reception systems for vulnerable migrant groups, zooming in on the local idiosyncrasies and strategies that are proper of Malmö and Rotterdam, providing an understanding on how local actors internalize, adapt and negotiate the larger national policy frameworks to fit them to their existing expertise and routines. An assessment of how the two cities presented as case studies organized the local governance of Ukrainians fleeing from the war is then presented.

Finally, through the employment of an empirical investigation based on semi-structured interviews with municipal officers, civil society organizations and members of the Ukrainian community, I delve into the way the cities of Malmö and Rotterdam originated specific incentives or constraints for placemaking, anchored in the key categories of housing, provision of information and social participation.



## 1.1 Research questions

This paper is based on two research questions:

**RQ1:** How can differences and similarities in local actors-driven placemaking for Ukrainian displaced people in Malmö and Rotterdam be explained?

**RQ2:** How are actions undertaken by the local government and local civil society organizations favoring or hindering the placemaking process of Ukrainian displaced people in both Malmö and Rotterdam?

RQ1 subsumes the overall scope of the thesis, putting in a comparative framework the institutional mechanisms underlying placemaking in the two cities employed as case studies. It also highlights the research gap this thesis aims to fill, namely the scarce interest in research on the relationship existing between vulnerable migrant groups, the local institutions responsible for their wellbeing, and how such institutions can sustain and foster a positive sense of place for the target group.

RQ2 derives from the former, but it provides an alternative orientation. RQ1 deals with similarities and differences between Rotterdam and Malmö when taking into account the relative institutional actors, therefore investigating how local expertise, experiences and institutional idiosyncrasies can account for such similarities and differences. RQ2 makes the complementary move of assessing how these affinities and deviations impact the lived experience of UDPs, allowing to shine light on the way the target group reads, internalizes, deals with and participates in the institutionally directed plans and policies aimed at supporting them.

## **2. Setting the Scene**

### **2.1 Reasons for comparing Malmö and Rotterdam**

It is a matter of fact that the very activity of comparing is something inextricably linked with the way we learn and make choices concerning the world around us. It then comes with no surprise that comparative cases are often employed in the field of social science research, for the simple reason that tracing differences and similarities between phenomena and facts is something that resonates with one of our inherent and most basic ways of reasoning (Azarian, 2011).

The cities of Rotterdam and Malmö are strong candidates in trying to understand and learn how local actors can be protagonists in negotiating national and supranational regulations, policies and routines to provide UDPs with opportunities to build meaningful connections with their socio-spatial surroundings.

Whenever we think of cities, population is one of the first facts to which we direct our attention. Focusing on the population only, the reasonableness of this comparative case would be short-lived: according to Statistics Netherlands, the population of Rotterdam is estimated at 664,071, a number that is considerably higher than Malmö which, according to municipal data, had a population of 357,377 as of December 2022. Observing the two cities under the respective ranking of the most populated municipalities makes them closer. Rotterdam is the second largest urban areas in the Netherlands, while Malmö stands third in Sweden, suggesting that both cities, despite being among the largest urban areas of their respective countries, live in conditions of subalternity with respect of the national capital (Gressgård, 2015; Scholten et al., 2019).

A rich body of literature illustrates how both Rotterdam and Malmö were, from an historical perspective, continuously subjected to important migration flows. This means that both cities had to build expertise and capacities in dealing with an ever more diverse population (Järtelius, 2000, Odmalm, 2005; Scholten et al, 2019, Van de Laar & Van der Schoor, 2019, Hackett et al., 2022). In the context of urban and migration studies, both Rotterdam and Malmö are exemplified as ‘superdiverse’ cities which, in the definition given by Scholten (2019, p.2), amounts to “a situation in which diversity itself has become so ‘diverse’ that one can no longer speak of clear majorities and minorities”. In both cities, people of full Swedish or Dutch descent are a numerical minority compared

to foreigners or people with a mixed background. What is more, both Malmö and Rotterdam have been identified as forerunners of national policies directed to immigrants. Their own local programs, policies and initiatives often serve as an inspiration or as a best practice that is then leveraged nationally (Dekker & Emilsson, 2015; Gressgård, 2015; Dekker & van Brugel, 2019; Hackett et al., 2022).

Researchers have already engaged with the similar historical, demographic and economic trajectories of Malmö and Rotterdam in comparative cases. A study published in 2015 by Dekker and Emilsson assesses the local differences and similarities between the two cities (and Berlin) with respect to integration policies. Additionally, in his 2005 book *Migration policies and political participation: inclusion or intrusion in Western Europe*, Odmalm typifies Rotterdam and Malmö as an ideal comparative case study for local migration policies that is reiterated, under different focal points, in almost every chapter of the book.

## **2.2 Familiarizing with the essential terminology**

### *2.2.1 Ukrainian Displaced Persons*

Since the outbreak of the war between Russia and Ukraine in February 2022, the European Union worked to provide EU-wide solutions that would provide immediate assistance to the people expected to flee from Ukraine, with the idea of providing means to depressurize the national asylum systems of member states (European Council Infographic). The EU's Temporary Protection Directive for Displaced Persons, a legal device that was first employed in 2001 to accommodate the large influx of people moving from the warring Balkans to the EU, came into effect once again in March 2022, and it is now expected to remain valid until March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024, with possible further extensions. The employment of the term 'displaced persons' instead of 'refugees' is not matter of a legal quibble. UDPs are not managed within the same legal framework with which the EU habitually deals with refugees and asylum seekers. To avoid making confusion between non-overlapping categories, this thesis employs the term 'Ukrainian displaced persons' to refer to all those people that are entitled to the Temporary Protection Directive for Displaced Persons.

According to the Directive, Ukrainian nationals, together with permanent and non-permanent residents who cannot safely and durably return to their country of origin, are

entitled to a series of rights that applies equally in all member states. These rights range from guaranteeing immediate access to employment, healthcare and education to assistance in finding suitable housing, as well as permitting relocations within EU member states.

These rights are formulated in a highly abstract manner, and it is up to each individual member state to make them operational according to their national legal frameworks and capacities. As rules are prescribed following general principles, their procedural implementation can be expected to be highly sensitive to the different national contexts. What is more, as explained by Meer et al. (2021) in a study on the relationship between local governments and housing for displaced migrants, municipalities typically are the first political entities to be faced with pressing issues concerning housing, employment, or social problems, and it is legitimate to expect to find differences in the way the supranational and national regulations with regard to UDPs are negotiated, interpreted, adapted and implemented among different municipalities.

### *2.2.2 Local actors-driven placemaking*

This thesis employs the idea of ‘local actors-driven placemaking’ as its theoretical foundation. The core of this concept lies in the somehow controversial definition of ‘placemaking’, which has been employed to indicate an array of unrelated phenomena in the field of geography.

According to humanist geographers, placemaking amounts to an attempt to make sense of one’s surrounding space, coupled with the development of a feeling of wellbeing in, and belonging to, one’s socio-spatial surroundings. This process is guided by lived experiences which originate emotions and thoughts, up to the point of symbolic abstractions (Habibah et al., 2013). Other important facets of this concept are the acquisition of a cultural endowment through socialization and reiterative interactions with the outside (Akbar & Edelenbos, 2021; Douglas, 2022), without forgetting the role that emotions, feelings and sensibility play in forging one’s coordinates to establish belonging, well-being and participation in society (Vasey, 2021).

The possibility of UDPs to make place in their new temporary homes is obviously seriously challenged: not speaking the language, finding themselves unrooted from a familiar landscape, the uncertainty surrounding the fate of their homes and dear ones in

the war context, are all factors that hinder their placemaking process. Several institutions in government and civil society work to help and support the most vulnerable groups. The idea is that the institutional efforts underpinning the support system for UDPs can play a paramount role in favoring their placemaking process, providing them with basic services (legal consultations, housing, language courses, medical support) but also through facilitating the socialization process with the locals and the creation of meaningful emotional linkages with their spatial surroundings through routine activities that involve interactions, creativity or fun. Local actors-driven placemaking, then, amounts to the roles and strategies that local institutions and civil society organizations play in favoring the placemaking process of a vulnerable group, providing it with the material and social conditions necessary to ‘make place’.

### **2.3 Philosophy of Science**

The ontology and epistemology guiding this research project are grounded in a critical phenomenological approach. According to geographer George Revill (2015, p.8), a critical phenomenology is one that “[...] recognizes the spatio-temporal specificity of experience, the ontologically generative qualities of theorizing that experience, and the politics animated and articulated by particular distributions of the sensible”. Critical phenomenology links the primacy given to experience with a critical look on how power structures and politics affect the nature of human experience. Critical phenomenology allows for a critique of reality that strongly underlines the experiential factor, without neglecting the existence of power structures and dynamics that do have an impact on experiential living (Simonsen & Koefoed, 2020). As explained by Lisa Guenther (2020, p.12), “[...] where classical phenomenology remains insufficiently critical is in failing to give an equally rigorous account of how contingent historical and social structures also shape our experience”. A critical phenomenologist approach recognizes that, ontologically, experience does not happen in a vacuum between the experiencer and the experienced. The very act of experiencing, and its consequences in terms of feelings, thoughts and abstractions, is framed within power structures and relations that deeply influence the experiential process. In research, this stance is translated as the need to politically situate the actors - critically investigating their positionality - and to understand them not only in terms of their subjectivity, but also in terms of their power relationships.

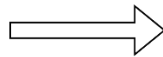
Epistemologically, the critical charge of this philosophy of science leaves room for an inclusion of difference in the approach (Simonsen & Koefoed, 2020), inviting to understand the subject as simultaneously sensible (in the sense of exploring the world through experience) and different, because endowed with a unique positionality in a complex political society. Knowing the other does not amount to a summarization of their experience, for true knowledge of a subject also involves their position in and relation to the power sphere. This framework suits well the overall scope of the topic of this thesis, bringing together knowledge derived from experience with the political and critical considerations that are necessary to deal with a group defined according to a legal-political terminology. Furthermore, critical phenomenology takes into consideration what pushes, facilitates and animates the courses of action undertaken by political actors such as municipalities and third-sector organizations, scrutinizing how such courses of actions impact the making of place.

Figure 1 provides a summary on how choices in terms of ontology and epistemology shaped the research.

**Figure 1** – Philosophy of science

## Ontology

A descriptive approach to experience is insufficient. Any account of what is experienced, and its consequences for emotions, thoughts and concept must acknowledge the political factor embedded in society.

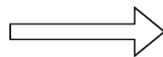


## Impact on the research

- Assess how institutionally driven placemaking is understood and experienced by municipal governments, civil society actors and members of the Ukrainian community, in accordance with their own positions;
- Consider local differences in dealing with diversity governance between Sweden, the Netherlands, Malmö and Rotterdam

## Epistemology

Critical phenomenology: linking experience and political structures in a critical fashion



- Theoretical framework grounded in placemaking (phenomenology), yet placemaking is also framed within Lefebvre's spatial trialectic (critical theory).

Source: Own elaboration based on Guenther (2020) and Simonsen & Koefoed (2020).

### **3. Theoretical framework**

#### **3.1 Building the theory of local actors-driven placemaking**

Placemaking has been long considered as a “fuzzy concept” that does not possess a specific area of semantic afferece (Redaelli, 2016, p.1). Considering that, within the social sciences, the term has been harnessed to signify a variety of concepts and phenomena, the first necessary step to build a coherent theoretical framework is to encapsulate the idea of placemaking within precise theoretical boundaries. This is achieved through a literature review which focuses on how placemaking is typically employed to indicate two macrophenomena: on the one hand, place-branding; on the other, a phenomenological understanding of the relationship between individual, social groups and their spatial surroundings. This second understanding of the term ‘placemaking’ originates in the humanist turn in human geography of the ‘70s. I will concentrate exclusively on the phenomenological one, being essential to come up with an understanding of placemaking that is coherent with the scope of this work. When it comes to placemaking conceived as “place branding”, an operational definition provided by Gyerin (2000) will suffice. Accordingly, placemaking as place-branding mostly deals with socio-economic processes emphasizing human capital and agency in place development, with a special consideration for the future that takes into account geography, ecology, policy and the role of culture. Table 1 illustrates the characteristics of each macrocategory.

**Table 1** – Placemaking as “place-branding” and humanist placemaking

	<b>Placemaking as “place branding”</b>	<b>Humanist placemaking</b>
Overall area of analysis	Growth-driven strategies to make a place more attractive to business and residents (Cox & Mair, 1988; Muster & Kovacs, 2013; Adua & Lobao, 2021).	Phenomenological making of place through experience, emotions, sociability.
Approach	Top-down, involving government and business (Cohen et al., 2019), with a growing interest in collaborative and inclusive practices (Cilliers & Timmermans, 2014; Akbar & Edelenbos, 2021).	Centers on individual or community level.
Critical remarks	Favoring gentrification (Cohen et al., 2019), accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, 2003; Harvey, 2004), increase in homelessness (Douglas, 2022), disempowered communities (Webb, 2014).	Assumes that the nexus between places and experiences happens in a homogenous way among different peoples and society (Simonsen & Koefoed, 2020); possesses many cognate concepts in the social sciences; often focuses on individual experiences and perspectives without tracing them back to the larger social scheme.

Source: Own elaboration.

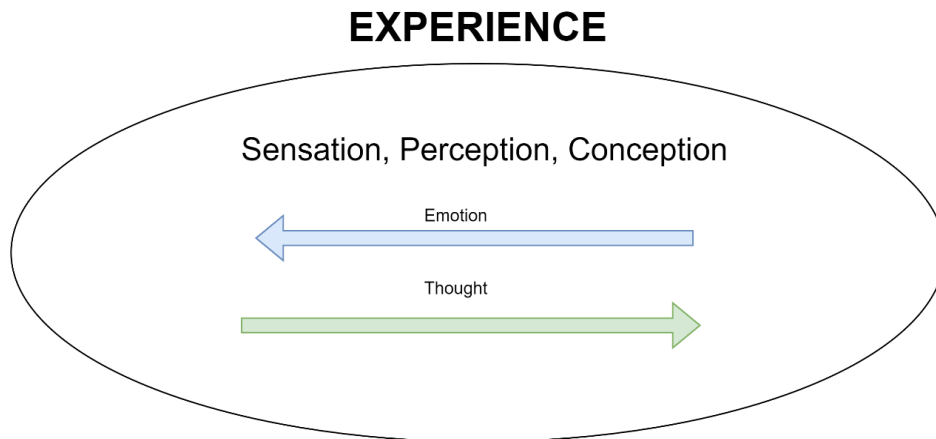
### 3.1.1 Placemaking: making of what place?

The humanist understanding of ‘placemaking’ refers to the tradition started through the seminal works of geographers Yi-Fu Tuan and Edward Relph during the ‘70s. Influenced by the philosophies of meaning and by the philosophical considerations on the nature of dwelling popularized by the writings of Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger, geographers came to address the relationship between human beings and their spatial surroundings via the concept of ‘place’. Understanding what place is constitutes the first necessary step to an appreciation of the idea of placemaking; it follows that a semantic deconstruction of the concept comes in handy. Making of place, but what place?



Both Tuan and Relph emphasize the fundamental phenomenological nature of place. Edward Relph captures this phenomenological take in his 1976 book *Place and Placelessness*, explaining that “[t]he foundations of geographical knowledge lie in the direct experiences and consciousness of the world we live in” (Relph, 1976, p.4). The relationship between experience, consciousness, and knowledge of places is further exemplified by Tuan (1991), who understands experience as being comprised of three factors: sensation, perception and conception. In his view, exemplified in figure 2, experience originates emotions and thoughts which further orient the relationship between experiencer and experienced. Emotion is intimately linked with individual sensation and with what originates from our senses. Thanks to the action of thought, sensations are abstracted by the subject, becoming perceptions, which can be understood as more general categories of relating to the world. Thought is further responsible for the ultimate abstraction that originates conceptions, those ideas originating from broad generalizations. The process goes on in both ways, with sensations upgrading to perceptions and to conceptions thanks to thoughtful reflections on the experienced. Yet, at the same time, emotions channel conceptions down to perceptions and then sensations, so that the experiencing subject has always ways to break down, enlarge or disregard altogether their built abstractions, as well as to retrieve the emotional responses that were rationalized into perceptions and conceptions. This double process lies at the basis of the making of places: places are abstractions from the immediate material world that are conceived through experience and the possibility of thinking upon it; at the same time, places are such because of their capacity to elicit emotional, intellectual, and symbolic responses from the subject that experienced such place.

**Figure 2** – Schematization of experience and its components



Source: Adapted by the author from Tuan (1991, p.8.)

This understanding of place that, paraphrasing Agnew (1987, p.28), amounts to turning spaces into “meaningful locations”, is of the utmost importance. Whenever we enter the realm of place, we are exploring how the total human factor composed of emotions, sense perceptions, rational thoughts and capacity for abstraction is being put in relation to space. Studying place consists in the appreciation of how humans enrich space, where space is understood merely as “[...] a-fact-of-life [that] produces the basic coordinates of human life” (Cresswell, 2004, p.10). In conclusion, the turning of space into an area of meaning necessitates a deep interaction between what makes us human, indicated by our capacity to feel, perceive and think, and a given object located in space.

Based on Tuan and Relph’s ideas, Douglas (2022) asserts that place is phenomenologically characterized not only by people’s experiences, but also by their interactions. This enforces the idea put forward by Corcoran et al. (2018) that places, in their emotional and cultural characterizations, acquire importance through subject-society coproduction due to the uses and values attached to them. Places do not become so through the blossoming of a single emotion or thought stimulated by an experiential perception of a specific object in space. Place is not there. Place needs to be built, experimented with, contested, used. In a certain way, place is always in process. It is never finished, as never finished is the possibility for human beings to experience, think and feel. If space is to become place, it needs to serve as a stage where human experiences flow for some time, allowing it to become, in the words of Holt-Jensen (1999, p.224), a “territory of meaning”.

Referring to a concept at the cornerstone of Lefebvre's theories on the production of space, it can be argued that place has a lot in common to appropriated space. Lefebvre describes it as "a natural space modified in order to serve the needs and the possibilities of a group [...]" (Lefebvre, 1995, p.165). Lefebvre acknowledges the importance of time in bringing the human factor to space, for an understanding of appropriation that does not take into account the rhythms of life would be insufficient (Lefebvre, 1995, p.166), highlighting once more how the attribution of meaning to space necessitates a manifoldness of emotional, rational and sensory responses that over time coagulates in the use and symbolic value that makes place. If we accept the idea that space is something given, existing regardless of human emotions and thoughts, then place arises whenever the totality of factors comprising human experience touches, plays and imbues with meaning a space. The understanding of time and interaction as essential components for the making of place has mostly been observed through the lenses of philosophical speculation and, thus, not being quantified. 'How much time?' or 'how many interactions?' are questions that have been consistently evaded. In any case, recognizing the fact that time and interactions are themselves factors that are profoundly influenced by subjectivity and social constraints should make it clear that it is the acknowledgment of their presence, rather than their meticulous quantification, to matter.

<p><b>Place:</b> A space imbued with meaning through interactions over time involving sensory experiences, emotions, thoughts, conceptualizations.</p>
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### *3.1.2 The process of placemaking.*

There can be no place without placemaking, for placemaking represent the process through which human experience attributes meaning, use and value to a locale.

<p><b>Placemaking:</b> The process that transforms a location in space in a place, a territory of meaning.</p>
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Research has often departed from the highly abstract conception of place, contextualizing it in specific settings to get an understanding of how place comes to be. The idealized and decontextualized human being that makes place has been popular in the field of philosophy; in turn, this philosophical conceptual infrastructure has been used as a blueprint to translate the inquiry in a geographical scenario. An example of this could

be constituted by Henri Lefebvre (himself someone used to crossing boundaries between philosophy and urban studies) and his concepts of “habiting” and “habitus”, which form the basis of his work *The Urban Revolution* (2003). By positing “habiting” as a first, quasi-primeval and subject-shaped way of living in the world, he goes on to criticize the complexity of modern urban life, acknowledging how a different, eminently political form of “habitat” has taken over the unmediated and natural habiting. By using habiting as a blueprint, he shows the contradictions embedded in the urban habitat. A similar course of action is undertaken here: the theoretical framework of placemaking serves as a fishy pond of ideas and concepts that can dialogue with the real world to show some features of it. Resorting to the theoretical speculations on place provides an excellent compass to situate any investigation on placemaking on a specific material locale, centered on a precise category of subjects. This leap towards the real world implies the necessity to put placemaking in connection with those theories that help investigate the case in question, allowing the abstract character of placemaking to enmesh and solidify with the locale and target group.

One of the major limitations facing place and placemaking is the proliferation of cognate terms that broadly address the same issue. The relationship between human beings and their surroundings through the lens of experience, sensory perceptions, feelings, emotions and thoughts is, at the current state of the affairs, still fractioned. Cilliers et al. (2015) in their study on the importance of storytelling for defining and producing places through emotions and abstractions make explicit reference to a ‘sense of place’. A set of studies comprising Lepofsky & Fraser (2003), Garmen (2015), and Shaw & Montana (2016) employ the terms ‘placemaking’ and ‘meaning of places’ almost interchangeably. Dupre (2018), in her literature review on the role existing between placemaking, the tourist industry and local residents, speaks often in terms of ‘place identities’ and ‘place images’. Benson & Jackson (2012), Marshall & Bishop (2015) and Friedman (2010) all employ the idea of place attachment to explain how places influence the emotions of people. Finally, there are many instances in which the attention to the places of everyday life and activities are framed in terms of ‘familiarity’ (Dyck, 2005; Platt, 2019; Felder, 2021). It appears evident that getting a holistic view on the experiential relationship between peoples and places is marked by the difficulty of having to navigate multiple keywords across multiple research fields. At the same time, the multitude of entry points to the appreciation of places signals the interest of scholars from a plurality of fields, with potential fruitful breakthroughs originating from critical

comparisons and syntheses of different approaches. This hints at the possibility of creatively yet soundly tap into theories and assumptions that belong to apparently distant fields of social research.

### *3.1.3 Placemaking, displaced people and cities.*

Cities are popular scenarios for placemaking research (Hou, 2013). The inherent complexity and the abundance of actors in the urban realm offer researchers plenty of valuable examples on the processual evolution of placemaking. What is more, since the built environment is now commonly conceived of as a commodity itself (Harvey, 2004), questions of placemaking become deeply linked with issues of economic development and political orientations.

The relationship between displaced migrants, usually understood in terms of asylum seekers and refugees, and their new locale has attracted the interest of researchers. This is due to the difficulty of making home far from home, the depersonalized system seeing the built environment as a commodity, and the legal-political system that defines who displaced people are and what they are entitled to, on both the global and the local scale (Çağlar & Glick Schiller, 2018). Not only are cities understood as offering better opportunities than rural areas, but cities are inherently more likely to host a diverse population, pointing out to an already built-in capacity to deal with diversity. Çağlar & Glick Schiller (2018, p.5) argue for the need to treat migrants “[... ] as social actors who are integral to city-making as they engage in the daily lives of cities through different and varied forms”, pushing forward the need to observe and study migrants as integral actors of urban life. The two authors make use of a sister concept of placemaking, emplacement, which they define “as the social processes through which a dispossessed individual builds or rebuilds networks of connection within the constraints and opportunities of a specific city” (Glick Schiller & Çağlar, 2014, p. 21). The two authors situate emplacement at the converging point of space (the given locale), place (the realm of meaningful, emotional surroundings) and power (what constraints or favors the very process of emplacement). Bjarnesen & Vigh (2016, p. 13) also understand emplacement as implying an understanding of place as a space to which a “socio-affective attachment” has been attributed.

The idea that “place matters” for displaced migrants (Weidinger & Kordel, 2020, p.2) has been theorized as fundamental to avoid isolation. It is seen as fostering feelings of safeness and security, making room for the idea that place has potential to get displaced people closer to their new socio-spatial surroundings. Alencar & Tsagkroni (2019), in a study of refugees’ integration in the Netherlands, analyze how meaningful places can improve civic virtue through networks of social relations. In addition to this, the feeling of belonging to a personal place is paramount to give the subject coordinates that allow for their identification as “being within and in between sets of social relations” (Vasey, 2011, p.26). This points out to the possibility for displaced people to use place as a secure base to build relations of friendship, trust and care, while also understanding the social mechanisms underlying work and welfare.

The recognition of the role played by power in the creation of meaningful places for the wellbeing of displaced people is of unalloyed relevance if we are to understand how their placemaking process plays out in the urban realm (Uitermark, 2012). Power, in its political and economic meaning, brings forward a variety of factors that do play an active role in favoring or hindering the making of places, as already acknowledged by Çağlar & Glick Schiller (2018).

#### *3.1.4 Filling the gap: Local actors-driven placemaking*

The role that legal-political institutions and civil society organizations play in favoring or hindering the readability and ease with which people can establish a meaningful relation with their socio-spatial surroundings has been superficially acknowledged, but not thoroughly investigated (Akbar & Edelenbos, 2021; Edelenbos, 2021; Soye & Watters, 2022). This means that there is need for more investigations in the way local actors can actively support and facilitate the placemaking of vulnerable migrant groups in urban areas.

Institutions are better understood as both the formal and informal bodies that present society a set of contextual features constraining or incentivizing social action for individuals (Diermeier & Krehbiel, 2001). Odmalm (2005) further posits institutions as embodying historical trajectories and decisive watershed moments, suggesting that attitudes towards constraining or empowering vulnerable migrants have been constructed over time. While institutions are understood as being closely related to the rule of law and

the government apparatus, civil society organizations are conceptualized as cause-oriented, bottom-up initiatives characterized by reliance on volunteer work and a stated detachment from the state and its associated political activity. They occupy an ideal middle-ground between the private and public sphere (Fine, 1997). Their alternate position with respect to government does not necessarily translates in antagonism. Many civil society initiatives accept public funds to finance their activities, and several governmental bodies engage in fruitful partnerships with civil society organizations to carry out projects and devise policies.

<b>Institutions:</b> The formal and informal bodies tied to governance that present individuals constraints or incentives for social action.
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<b>Civil society organizations:</b> Cause-oriented, bottom-up initiatives that are detached from the state apparatuses.
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Semprebon (2022) underlines how civil society organizations are valuable actors in supporting and providing inputs about policies for displaced migrants. He also underlies how these third sector actors deliver fundamental services, ranging from language courses to moral support, often in partnership and with the financial support of the local government. Yet, there is a paucity of studies regarding the impact of civil society actors on the placemaking process (Webb, 2014). Regarding institutions, the attitude of local governments towards displaced people are arguably better represented in the literature, as municipal governments are easily framed as main agents with regards to managing and governing displaced people's affairs (Schiller, 2015; Doomernijk & Ardon, 2018). However, the exact mechanisms and routines that lie at the basis of local actors-driven placemaking are yet to be identified and discussed upon. Empirical investigation is essential to reach a better understanding of them.

With the above discussion in mind, it is possible to formulate an operative definition of local actors-driven placemaking. Local actors-driven placemaking amounts to the role and actions that local institutions and civil society organizations play in providing opportunities and incentives for placemaking.

<b>Local actors-driven placemaking:</b> The the ways in which local institutions and civil society organizations provide opportunities for placemaking.
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## 3.2 Local actors-driven placemaking in Lefebvre's spatial triad

### 3.2.1 Getting to know the spatial triad

To study placemaking in a real-world scenario, it becomes necessary to ground a highly abstract concept within the multitude of phenomena, actors, relations and events that animate places. A route that has already been experimented with consists in employing Lefebvre's spatial triad as a grid that helps illustrate how placemaking unfolds in relationship to actors involved, the subject's perspective and the constraining or facilitating factors anchored in the political and social conditions. This can be seen in Akbar & Edelenbos (2021, p.2), where their research process is guided by an acknowledgment that “[h]e [Lefebvre] states that the actual value of space lies in the human experience that is attached with the space—which he called as ‘lived space’”. Furthermore, Cilliers & Timmermans (2014) make explicit references to the spatial triad as a reference system in their assessment on the importance of participatory planning related to the public placemaking process.

First appearing in *The Production of Space* (1991), the concept of spatial triad refers to an urban spatial theory that understands urban spaces as being simultaneously constituted by the built environment and social processes (Leary, 2005). Lefebvre understands the urban as a field in which the social and built environments are mutually constitutive and inseparable (Lefebvre, 1991). The core of the spatial triad lies in a trialectical understanding of space as an interplay between spatial practice (objective space, originally *espace percu*), representation of space (conceived space, originally *espace concu*) and space of representation (lived space, originally *espace vecu*). Lefebvre posited that the elements of the spatial triad are an analytical deconstruction, for they actually coexist with each other. This is to say that most spatial phenomena can be placed in all three categories, some of their properties and dynamics being easier to detect by focusing on one element of the triad alone.

Spatial practice “embraces production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation” (Lefebvre, 1991, p.33). It represents the physical environment of the city, which is directly perceivable via the senses (Leary-Owhin, 2015). It also comprises the intuitive learning individuals go through to perform routinized and standard actions in space, ensuring the smoothness of



the everyday functioning of society (Watkins, 2005; Leary-Owhin, 2015). Representations of space are the codes, symbols and materializations of the groups in society that hold the most political power (Yuncu et al., 2022). This second category is the level of space in which technology and science are acted upon any given environment to master and administer it (Leary, 2005). Lefebvre saw representations of space as the dominant spatial category in our society, given their intimate relation with power (Watkins, 2005). Finally, space of representation amounts to the realm in which emotional (and, in Lefebvre’s original conception, also artistic) and power-detached interpretations of urban space take over. It is in the space of representation that we see how the daily use of space by people is guided by memories, symbols and images that are not rooted in power-dictated representations of space, but rather by the direct, intimate and reiterative experiences people make with their surroundings (Lefebvre, 1991; Leary, 2005; Leary-Owhin, 2015). Table 2 provides a summary of the trialectic spatiality, in preparation for assessing its potential for understanding placemaking.

**Table 2** – Summarization of Lefebvre’s spatial triad

<b>Element of the spatial triad</b>	<b>What does it amount to?</b>	<b>Who creates it?</b>
Spatial practice	Physical environment, routinized spatial events	Everybody, it is an intuitive process required to perform the basic actions in space.
Representation of space	Codes, symbols, images, and their materializations in space.	Social groups endowed with the most power.
Space of representation	Emotional, symbolic and artistic value given to spaces by living them.	People in their daily usage of space, imbuing it with cultural and emotional meaning independently of its representations by powerful groups.

Source: based on Lefebvre (1991); Leary (2005); Watkins (2005); Leary-Owhin (2015).

### *3.2.2 Positioning placemaking*

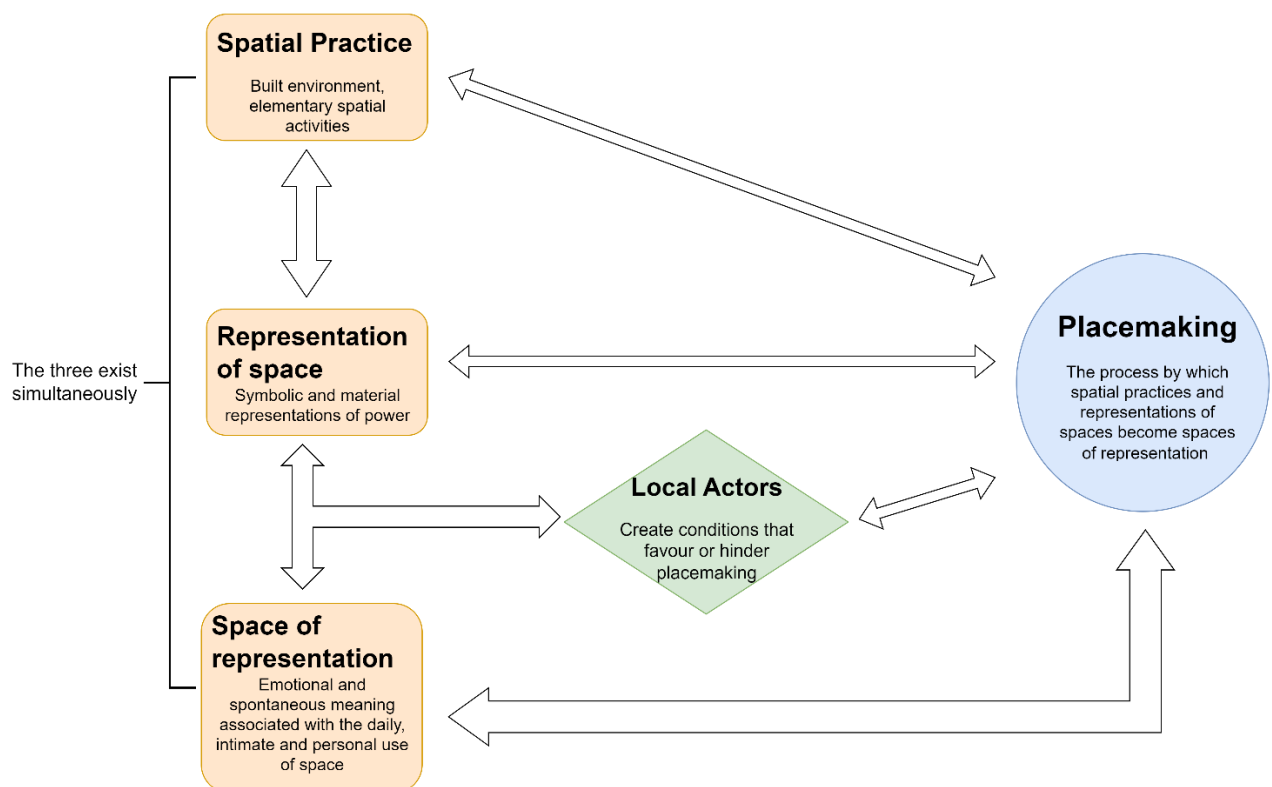
I consider placemaking as the process that creates spaces of representation. Placemaking allows for the surrounding environment to acquire an emotional and symbolic meaning for a person or group within society, making it a lived space.

The process of placemaking permits spatial practices to become spaces of representations. It is the process that leads human beings to develop feelings of attachment for their own home, the neighborhood they walk through daily, the park they sit in sunny days. Through placemaking, experience let concrete objects in space acquire symbolic and personal values, thanks to the possibility of imbuing those concrete objects with emotions and thoughts. That being said, I want to stress that conceived spaces can also be subjected to the placemaking process, for there are always instances in which spaces conceived and built according to power-related logics are reappropriated, changed and signified by their inhabitants. The idea is that the intimate relationship between human beings and their need to make place cannot always be annihilated by what elites make of a certain area (Wacquant, 2008). In the context of this thesis, it is necessary to remind that displaced immigrants are constantly subjected to power dynamics in their attempt to make place. Their possibility to stay in the destination country is dependent upon established laws. Political discourses often address immigrants as problems or resources, impacting their possibility to make place. Moreover, their experience of their socio-spatial surrounding is a process that is often mediated by figures of authority. Their first housing is usually provided by municipalities, and social services and civil society organizations supply them with information and push for their participation in society. It is for these reasons that I think it would be wrong to consider placemaking as an apolitical phenomenon that only involves the built environment. In this sense, the adoption of a critical phenomenologist approach to research helps in realizing and assessing how the experiential process at the basis of placemaking is affected by contingent phenomena that originate in the social and political context of the experiencer, such as the ease and quickness with which people can get correct information, the appropriateness of their living conditions, or the different options they have in socializing.

Positioning local actors in the triad constitutes a harder challenge. Institutions, that I earlier defined as tied to governance, can easily be seen as originating in representations of space. Civil society organizations, on the other hand, are closer to a bottom-up and community-based understanding that makes them closer to lived spaces. However, they are also subjected to the rules of law and many of them receive fundings via governing bodies, or actively partner up with them. For the sake of simplicity, I understand CSOs as sitting at the border between the two. This statement does not contradict Lefebvre's overall conception of the spatial triad, for he places explicit emphasis on the fact that the three spaces exist simultaneously, their separation being a necessity of analytical scrutiny

(Lefebvre, 1991). To give an example, a building being used to temporary house immigrants could be studied according to his physical properties (spatial practice), the political implications of placing temporary accommodations in a specific area, with the kind of rules and services therein provided (representation of space), and as an emotional base for those people that will start experiencing their spatial surroundings, make community and understand the new society (space of representation). Figure 2 provides a simplified graphical representation of what has been discussed in this section.

**Figure 3.** – Schematization of placemaking in Lefebvre’s spatial triad



Source: Own elaboration based on Lefebvre (1991) and Odmalm (2005).

### 3.3 Main takes from theory

As a result of the previous theoretical discussion, this section summarizes the main points that led to the conceptualization of local actors-driven placemaking and its relationship with Lefebvre’s spatial triad. The five main points are:

- 1) The acknowledgment of the phenomenological roots of place, and thus of placemaking as the making of place mediated by the richness of human experiences.

- 2) The recognition that an apolitical and decontextualized appreciation of placemaking is poor. In this sense, a critical phenomenological understanding of placemaking helps in giving a picture that is closer to reality, for placemaking is never a process that just involves a subject and an object in space; on the contrary, the political sphere provides contingencies and social mechanisms that do act upon the placemaking process.
- 3) Placemaking is an important process for people that experienced forced displacement, helping them get the coordinates necessary to navigate the host society and be active participants in it, while also relating with care and intimacy with their own socio-spatial surroundings. Cities are excellent sites to study this.
- 4) Local actors connected with the political character of the urban realm, namely local governments and civil society associations, are known for the role they play in providing incentives and constraints to the placemaking process, especially when targeting vulnerable groups. For this reason, I speak of local actors-driven placemaking, and stress the importance to examine the local governance systems acting on displaced people to appreciate how the political sphere brings forward incentives and constraints.
- 5) By referring to Lefebvre's spatial triad, placemaking can be seen as the process that allows individuals and communities to make experience and create lived spaces starting from spatial practices (concrete objects in space) and representations of space (the political organization and symbolism of space).

## **4. Methods**

### **4.1 Case study and comparative approach**

The study of the impact of municipal actors on placemaking for UDPs achieves its best if theory can be linked to what is happening in the world. For this reason, I decided to employ a case study approach in which relevant actors from Rotterdam and Malmö, as well as representatives of the target group, could be interviewed to assess how placemaking rolls out in different urban realities.

The idea to focus on municipal governments stems from a rich literature concerned with the idea that local governments are at the forefront in managing issues concerned with immigration, especially during times of emergency. Schiller (2015) makes use of the concept of paradigmatic pragmatism to explain how local governments tend to adopt a more instrumental logic in dealing with migrations and politics of diversity, stressing the gap that exists between “coping with concrete problems” (Schiller, 2015, p.1123) in the urban realm and the more idealist policy framework that is adopted at the national level. This instrumental approach opens the possibility for local governments to actively engage with civil society organizations and initiatives, creating networks of mutual learning and support to carry out the desired task through concrete actions (Akbar & Edelenbos, 2021). Accordingly, having the possibility to arrange interviews with municipal employees and members of NGOs and CSOs has the potential to show how municipal governments are often in the position to negotiate, reinterpret and adapt to their context the national policy frameworks, highlighting the role that the local plays in successful migration governance (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017). The pragmatic orientation of local actors also justifies the theoretical focus of this work centering on placemaking rather than integration, assimilation, multiculturalism or participation. Despite the official position of national governments, in municipal affairs there is a tendency to accommodate, incorporate and combine those approaches to immigrant governance in novel ways, for responses to tangible pressures and problems necessitate creative, immediate and novel solutions (Schiller, 2015; Mepschen & Duyvendak, 2019). Focusing simply on integration or assimilation policies implies the possibility of missing out on the complexity of the urban realm, while placemaking can be used as a more holistic theoretical framework to show the impact of city-level politics on the lived spaces of migrant groups.

Comparing the cases of Rotterdam and Malmö is connected to the expectation that what happens in municipalities cannot be fully understood by referencing only to the larger national policy frameworks. In their comparative study on the multilevel governance underlying immigration policies in Rotterdam, Malmö, and Berlin, Dekker et al. (2015) provide compelling evidence to suggest that the way local actors shape, orient and actualize policies directed to migrant groups is best understood as a complex and localized interplay between the larger national policy framework and the local political settings. They speak in terms of “various two-ways of multilevel interaction” (Dekker et al., 2015, p. 652), and I take this as suggesting the need to understand the way in which national policies are framed, interpreted, adapted and even contested in the local context, taking into account the existing expertise, know-how and networks peculiar of each municipality. A comparative case that takes these factors into account can show how certain constraints and incentives for placemaking originate at the nexus between the abstract national policies and the concrete operations that municipalities are expected to carry out.

The arrival of UDPs is a new phenomenon to which local actors had to adapt quickly. Comparing how the strategies and attitudes of local actors changed over time with respect to UDPs can contribute to a better understanding of how to improve the governance of a rapid influx of people in an urban area, as well as to assess what are the best strategies to front this issue. The novelty of the phenomenon and the gap in the existing body of literature about the role played by local actors in the good governance of UDPs means that coming up with *a priori* criteria on which to base the comparison between Malmö and Rotterdam is an impossible task, as theory alone fails to provide an exhausting list of indicators to evaluate the phenomenon. Because of this, a thorough empirical investigation that allows municipal officers, CSOs and members of the Ukrainian community in both Malmö and Rotterdam to inform the research has proven to be a pivotal process in the establishment of a set of criteria that helps guiding the comparative case.

Since local actors-driven placemaking attempts to get an understanding of how the political and civil society apparatuses create incentives or constraints for placemaking, a contextualization on the governance systems for vulnerable migrants in both Sweden and the Netherlands is necessary. What is more, as shown by Dekker et al. (2015) and Schiller (2018), local governments tend to internalize national policy frameworks in a

way that is both coherent and adapted to the local idiosyncrasies in terms of expertise, existing networks, resources and political orientations. For this reason, a zooming-in on the municipal governances of Malmö and Rotterdam is also undertaken and presented in Chapter 5. On a final note, in view of UDPs representing a special category of vulnerable migrants, data extracted from the semi-structured interviews was instrumental in representing an accurate picture on how the arrival of UDPs in Malmö and Rotterdam brought forward new and peculiar policies and initiatives, thus helping in getting a sound and grounded understanding on how the conceived space of both cities was organized in response to the inflow of UDPs.

## **4.2 Semi-structured interviews**

To get a better view on the strategies implemented by local actors to govern the arrival and stay of UDPs in Malmö and Rotterdam and the way those were perceived by UDPs in both cities, I conducted a total of 16 semi-structured interviews with municipal officers, people active in NGOs, charities and CSOs, as well as representatives of the Ukrainian community.

I decided to employ interviews as the main method for gathering data as my interest lied in allowing interviewees to express, explain and describe their experiences and ideas in a natural and conversational way, without resorting to a standardized questionnaire (Eyles, 1988). This is in line with a phenomenological preference for approaching research. My willingness to engage with a variety of actors on a sensitive theme motivated me to take a more personal approach to the research process. Moreover, I realized that interviews could be more easily tailored to the specific actor I was dealing with, allowing me to dig deeply in the different logics of the participants, unearthing existing doubts, conflicts and considerations that spontaneously rose during the flow of the conversation (Valentine, 2005). Furthermore, the conversational nature of the interviews allowed me to easily be referred to other organizations or representatives of the Ukrainian community, as they were often extemporarily mentioned during the flow of the dialogue. This was very helpful to get access to some people, or to confirm that the actors I was planning to interact with were effectively relevant players.

Out of the 16 interviews, 8 were conducted in Rotterdam, 7 in Malmö and 1 in Lund. In Rotterdam, I conducted interviews between October and December 2022.

Interviews in Sweden took place between February and April 2023. In Rotterdam, 5 of the interviews were conducted online to accommodate the needs of the interviewees, though the interviewees were all based in the city. In Sweden, only 1 interview was conducted online. Since not all interviewees could grant me the same amount of time, the length of interviews varies between 35 mins to 1.5 hours, with 1 hour being the average time dedicated to each.

As interviews were semi-structured, I relied on three interview guides that I drafted in relation to the person I was about to interview. One interview guide specifically tackled municipal officers, another one was directed to people active in CSOs, and the last one was tailored to representatives of the Ukrainian community. The interview guides were updated and fine-tuned during the research process, as access to new information made me restructure some questions and themes to better fit the newly obtained understanding.

Given the sensitive nature of the stay of UDPs in the EU, I prepared an informed consent form that I handed in or sent via email to participants in advance of each interview. I used the consent sheet to let participants know of their right to withdraw their participation at any time, to ask me to erase parts of the interviews whenever they wanted to and to request their consent for recording or taking notes during the interviews. I granted them anonymity, so that only details about their organizations are specified here.

I grouped the interviews under three categories: municipal officers, CSOs and representatives of the Ukrainian community. Considered the fact that many UDPs could not speak English, and that I did not have the means to afford a translator, I found it easier to reach out to members of the Ukrainian community who were long-established residents of the city who turned to support their fellow nationals at the outbreak of the war. This is especially true for Rotterdam, where both the municipality and civil society organizations acted in very protective ways towards UDPs. Because of this, all but two members of the Ukrainian community were also active (some even in the form of a paid job) in organizations supporting UDPs. In this sense, they problematize my division because of their simultaneous belonging to two categories. At the same time, I found out that these interviewees enriched my research in invaluable ways, for they were able to provide a natural bridge between the Ukrainian community and the local actors involved in their governance, bringing forward perspectives peculiar to their own positionality. Tables 3,



4, and 5 resume the interviews I conducted according to the three types of participants I identified.

In Rotterdam, I was able to get in contact with a person working for the municipality, specifically looking for housing for UDPs, via the professor who was supervising my internship. They then referred me to another individual working in the same unit. In Malmö, I was able to get in touch with a municipal officer by sending an email of inquiry to the City of Malmö. When it comes to contacting civil society organizations, I adopted the same strategy in both Malmö and Rotterdam. On the one hand, I sent emails or walked in the premises of the most well-known and established ones, as I expected them to have programs supporting UDPs. On the other, I relied on Google and Facebook searches to identify smaller or newer organizations. Members of the Ukrainian community were, as mentioned before, either themselves working for organizations, or referred to me during some interviews as people that could enrich my research with their own perspective.

**Table 3** – Interviews with municipal officers

<u>Interview n°</u>	<u>Municipality</u>	<u>Role of interviewee</u>	<u>Themes</u>
1	Rotterdam	Employed in the Crisis Unit	Municipal housing for UDPs
2	Rotterdam	Employed in the Crisis Unit	Municipal housing for UDPs, provision of welfare and information, networks, legal status of UDPs, coordination of activities
3	Malmö	Managing living arrangements of UDPs	Municipal housing for UDPs, provision of welfare and information, networks, legal status of UDPs

Source: Own elaboration.

**Table 4** – Interviews with CSOs and NGOs

<u>Interview n°</u>	<u>Municipality</u>	<u>Organization</u>	<u>Themes</u>
4	Rotterdam	Rode Kruis	Support for UDPs at reception centers, networks.
5	Rotterdam	RefugeeHomeNL	Housing UDPs with private individuals, creation of the organization as a response to the arrival of UDPs, difficulties experienced by UDPs in adapting to the Netherlands.
6	Rotterdam	Vluchtelingen Werk (Dutch Refugee Council)	Legal status of UDPs, provision of information
7	Rotterdam	takecarebnb	Housing UDPs with private individuals, networks
8	Malmö	Skåne Stadsmission	Legal status of UDPs, networks, provision of welfare services, social integration
9	Malmö	Röda Korset	Provision of welfare services, social integration, networks
10	Malmö	MalmöIdeella	Coordination of activities, social integration
11	Malmö	Malmö Helps	Creation of the organization as a response to the arrival of UDPs, difficulties experienced by UDPs in adapting to Sweden, provision of information.

Source: Own elaboration.

**Table 5** – Interviews with members of the Ukrainian community

<u>Interview n°</u>	<u>Municipality</u>	<u>Organization/Ukrainian displaced person</u>	<u>Themes</u>
12	Rotterdam	Ukrainian House Rotterdam	Social integration, perceived weaknesses in the reception system, networks
13	Rotterdam	Stichting Mano	Housing for UDPs, social integration, networks
14	Malmö	Ukrainian displaced person	Legal status of UDPs, provision of information and welfare, perceived weaknesses in the reception system
15	Malmö	Ukrainian displaced person	Difficulties experienced by UDPs in adapting to Sweden, social integration
16	Malmö	Meeting Central Ukraine in Lund	Creation of the organization as a response to the arrival of UDPs, difficulties experienced by UDPs in adapting to Sweden, provision of information and

Source: Own elaboration.

### **4.3 Thematic analysis and operationalization of theory**

After transcribing the content of the interviews, I proceeded to analyze the recurring themes illustrated in Tables 3 to 5, keeping in mind their relevance to local actors-driven placemaking. Given the number of interviewees and the wide variety of themes touched during the various conversations, I opted for performing a thematic analysis anchored on three codes that I found to be the most recurring and relevant: housing, provision of information, and social integration (alternatively framed as participation in the receiving community). The relevance of these themes for local actors-driven placemaking lies in the fact that questions of housing, access to information and social integration are situated at the border between conceived and lived spaces. NVivo, a software for qualitative analysis, was used to conduct the coding process (the coding handbook is presented in Appendix C). To aid the contextualization of the research, I also employed a ‘governance’ code to understand the degree to which the governance of UDPs at the municipal level is similar or exceptional with respect to the pre-existing traditions and policies.

The theme of housing is the most discussed in the existing literature. The provision of adequate housing is often seen as a necessary first step to allow forced migrants to develop a feeling of belonging to their new locale (Ager and Strang, 2008; Brown et al., 2022). In other words, as underlined by Robinson et al. (2007), Rowley et al. (2020), and Brown et al. (2022), getting access to adequate housing is paramount because, aside from providing shelter and basic wellbeing, it also constitutes the ideal base from which community is appreciated and sociality is experienced. The “process of socio-spatial inclusion and rooting” (Semprebon, 2022, p.151) sees housing as the most important prerequisite, stressing the role that having a place to call ‘home’ plays in rooting in society (Relph, 1976). From a placemaking perspective, the house is understood as the first space that is made place, constituting an ideal conception of lived space whose meaning, significance and emotional value is created and reproduced daily. For UDPs, the issue of housing ties together the conceived space with the lived one: as the group includes people coming from different socioeconomical background, finding adequate housing for the more disadvantaged of them is something that necessitates the intervention of local authorities, usually in the form of municipally provided housing.

Access to correct and up-to-date information was also a key recurring theme throughout the interviews. As UDPs’ legal status sets them aside from refugees and asylum seekers, the previously acquired knowledge from municipalities and CSOs was

perceived as insufficient. Moreover, the extension of their directive meant a general reorientation from short-term to long-term plans, with changes in the ways services are to be provided. Getting correct and timely information concerning their legal status is paramount for UDPs. All the UDPs interviewed reported that accessing information on the legal nature of their temporary stay helps in making them feel more serene and safe. Organizations aiming at supporting UDPs have consistently mentioned the struggle to stay constantly updated. This is not only related to the legal status of UDPs, but also to the many questions that UDPs have regarding their surroundings. Many participants highlighted that UDPs request information regarding a wide array of issues, from schooling to biking rules. In this context, local actors have generally acknowledged the need to form extended networks with other urban players, just to be able to point out to the organization, person or institution most likely to answer any specific question.

Finally, social integration was reported as being of paramount relevance to allow UDPs make sense of their new locale. The possibility of partaking in activities with people outside of their own group is understood as being important for the establishment of relations of trust and friendship that extend beyond their own community, signaling an opening and a willingness to be active participants in their new locale. At the same time, given the temporaneous character of their stay, initiatives aiming at bringing together Ukrainians to socialize are also considered important, for the possibility of exchanging news, opinions and values between peers was also a recurrent theme. In addition to this, the creation of a routine based on activities that allow the subject to be in touch with other people permits placemaking to take into account the possibility of absorbing, understanding and personalizing different cultural values, norms and rules.

Table 6 summarizes the chosen themes, their relevance for placemaking, and the specific analysis conducted on each theme.

**Table 6** – Operationalization of theory: themes

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Relevance for Placemaking</b>	<b>Details on the analysis</b>
Municipal governance of UDPs	Depiction of the organization of the conceived space for the target group, highlighting incentives and constraints pertaining to the local governance.	Degree of collaboration between municipality and civil society; responsibilities of the municipality; courses of action undertaken so far.
Housing	Potential to have a place to call home, ideal base from which sociality is exercised and socio-spatial surroundings understood and internalized.	Type of housing (temporary or standard); choices in terms of location; options available for UDPs; challenges in finding suitable housing options.
Access to information	It helps create a feeling of serenity and safety in the host country; in general, knowing where to go and who to ask for information eases the understanding of one's socio-spatial surroundings.	Time required for the temporary directive to be concretized nationally and locally; barriers to access to information.
Social integration	Creation of routines based on work, educational, or leisure activities that help normalizing life; possibility to repeatedly engage in a variety of way with the new socio-spatial surroundings so as to internalize, understand, and symbolize them.	Degree to which municipalities and CSOs favor UDPs' social integration; barriers to social integration; role played by CSOs in supplying activities and classes that bridge the gap between UDPs and the host society.

Source: Own elaboration.

## 4.4 Positionality

Research is a process driven by human beings. As such, research is inevitably influenced by the perspectives, experiences and opinions of the researcher. As someone with a deep interest in philosophy, I felt compelled to ground my theoretical framework on the abstract reflections and reasonings that lay at the basis of a philosophical understanding of geography. At the same time, my interest in discourses, which I understand as the way each individual constructs their own reality according to their own words, has made me more inclined to favor conversational, quasi-spontaneous methods for gathering data, privileging the narration of experiences, sensations and considerations over hard and easy-to-measure facts.

Since I am an individual that never experienced any kind of forced displacement, I can only understand what UDPs have gone through via their own recollections and my personal empathy. On a final note, during 2022 I had the chance to work for 7 months for a social cooperative managing several projects directed to asylum seekers and refugees in Italy. Through that experience, I was able to get in close contact with vulnerable

migrant groups, understanding the difficulty that displaced people have in making sense of their lives after a violent uprooting from their native land. That experience also let me understand the many shortcomings and inconsistencies of the Italian reception system, which I reckon as being something that motivated me to try to understand what incentives and constraints national political systems offer for allowing displacing people to make place.

## **4.5 Limitations**

The first limitation of this thesis is that it deals with a very novel phenomenon. The arrival of UDPs in European cities started in March 2022, and the existing body of literature on their governance and stay is almost nonexistent. Considering this, this paper explicitly addresses a gap in research, yet it would greatly benefit from some parallel research endeavors.

Looking at theory, there is no consensus among researchers about what term best represents the meaningful, symbolic and emotional relations that subjects establish with their surroundings though experience, nor is there consensus on the best methodological tools to investigate it. In any case, human geography is known for dealing with semantically uncertain terms, and nothing has stopped researchers from talking in terms of regions, spaces, places, territories or landscapes. Local actors-driven placemaking was a term I coined to narrow down the scope of this research. More effective or intuitive nomenclatures could make the concept easier to grasp.

Given that I employed semi-structured interviews, my research is essentially qualitative in nature. Consequently, I cannot provide with certainty some quantifiable information, such as the time that it takes for people to create their lived space (as mentioned in Chapter 3), or a scale-measured degree of satisfaction that UDPs have with respect of their housing situation and the quality of services provided to them. Still connected to favoring interviews, I found it very difficult to approach UDPs due to the language barrier, the impossibility of affording a translator and, in the case of Rotterdam, because of the very protective attitude of the municipality towards them, which even prevented journalists from approaching the municipal premises hosting UDPs. For this reason, during my stay in Rotterdam, I had to rely on the experiences and reflections of Ukrainian nationals working in NGOs supporting UDPs. In Malmö, I met with UDPs that

had all achieved high levels of educational attainment, could speak English fluently and were of a good socioeconomic status. It follows that I collected the experiences and the points of view of some of the better-off among UDPs, and relied on their recollection of the perceptions, difficulties and experiences of the community at large. I could access a very limited number of personal narrations concerning the individual experiences of UDPs in Malmö and Rotterdam. At the same time, as most of my interviewees were somehow community leaders, I could draw from their positionality as being representatives of the community, thus being exposed to anecdotes, confidences and stories that they share with me.

Comparative cases are a fascinating yet tricky business. In Chapter 2, I gave reasons as to why Malmö and Rotterdam are strong candidates for a comparative case on placemaking for UDPs. However, I found out that many of the papers and monographies I studied for this thesis were lacking reasons for comparisons, jumping directly to the creation of criteria of comparison which were poorly justified in relation to their local context. I took what I think is a grounded and sound route in shaping the comparative case, but I reckon that a thorough study on the way the social reality of cities can be compared is still lacking.

## **5. A snapshot of migrant governance in Malmö and Rotterdam**

### **5.1 Comparing the Dutch and Swedish models**

In the last decades, in an attempt to defend and promote Dutch culture and ideas throughout society, the Netherlands have consistently set forth assimilationist policies (Scholten, 2011). Dekker et al (2015) understand Dutch policies according to three main pillars: 1) integration is the migrant's responsibility; 2) what counts is one's potential, regardless of their background; 3) policy measures are to facilitate everyone, not just a specific group. Given these considerations, the central government has little to say in terms of special plans for favoring immigrants' blending into Dutch society, as immigrants are supposed to take care of themselves. In this sense, municipalities are in the position of taking matters in their own hands, devising local-scale plans to deal with issues connected with immigration. They often establish active partnerships with civil society actors to raise awareness, increase involvement, and create a network of reliable partners. A small government that creates policies for society at large is consistent with the idea advanced by some scholars that sees the Netherlands as undergoing a shift from a welfare state to a 'participation society', in which the involvement of the individual is central and the state is not expected to embark on costly welfare programs, for the state should reorient itself towards making sure that society creates the conditions for everyone's talents to flourish (Delsen, 2015). Within a participation society, municipalities are also supposed to take on more responsibilities as they are, as already mentioned, often the first governmental bodies that have to measure up against concrete problems.

Despite this overall orientation, refugees and asylum seekers are recognized as vulnerable people needing some kind of governmental intervention. They are expected to take Dutch integration courses to smooth their process of assimilation in Dutch society, and the attendance of these courses plays an important role in obtaining government's benefits and legal support (Alencar & Tsagkroni, 2019). However, research underlines how the government's role in the governance of asylum seekers and refugees is still too small, as municipalities are still pressured with having to pay for benefits and to provide accommodations on the extremely scarce Dutch market (Geuijen et al., 2020)



Sweden is commonly typified as the ideal welfare state, where citizens enjoy substantial social benefits from cradle to grave (Svallfors, 2004). It is also known as a state that usually accepts a relatively high quota of refugees and asylum seekers, compared to other EU member states (Emilsson & Öberg, 2022). Since the introduction of the 2016 Settlement Act, the central government has reoriented its relationship with municipalities concerning the managing of refugees and asylum seekers, with the centralized Migrationsverket (Migration Agency) retaining general responsibilities about asylum seekers and refugees, while municipalities are responsible for arranging their housing (Fry & Islar, 2021; Emilsson & Öberg, 2022). The introduction of the Settlement Act resulted in national dispersal plan, aiming at resettling refugees and asylum seekers nationwide, avoiding their concentration in specific areas. The national policy paradigm has also been understood as being in a shifting phase, away from multiculturalism and closer to universalism, where policies only engage with citizens' rights and obligations. Even the implementation of programs aimed at allowing vulnerable migrants to learn Swedish and access the job market are, since 2010, responsibility of the central government through the National Employment Agency (Dekker et al., 2015).

In 2005 Odmalm referred to Sweden and the Netherlands as the European countries that were most closely following multiculturalist principles in devising their policies towards migration. Today the case is quite the opposite: both national policy frameworks tend to avoid references to specific groups within society, although the ways in which they do so are different. In the Dutch context, the push towards assimilationism is underpinned by a willingness to uphold the national identity and values, thus assimilating immigrants within the local culture. Sweden has been more cautious with this, preferring to take an even more abstract take on the matter, simply referring to citizens' rights and obligations, but without an assimilationist push. While the Netherlands prefers a smaller government that just accompanies immigrants into a full assimilation in society, Sweden acts in a markedly centralized way, to the point that municipalities are explicitly responsible for the provision of housing only. This makes Dutch municipalities somehow more creative in implementing plans, for they are granted a larger space of maneuver by the central government. Table 7 provides a comparison between the Dutch and Swedish national policy frameworks.

**Table 7** – Comparison between the Dutch and the Swedish national policy frameworks

	<b>Netherlands</b>	<b>Sweden</b>
Form of government:	In transition to participation society	Welfare State
Policy Framework:	Assimilationist	Shifting from multiculturalism to universalism
Role of central government in managing vulnerable migrants:	Weak	Strong
Role of municipalities in managing vulnerable migrants:	Strong role, questions of housing and welfare (education, healthcare, work) are also the municipality's responsibilities.	Solely responsible for living arrangements.

Source: Own elaboration based on Svallfors (2004), Odmalm (2005), Delsen (2015), Geuijen et al. (2020), Fry & Islar (2021), Emilsson & Öberg (2022).

## **5.2 Comparing Rotterdam and Malmö's municipality-civil society networks**

To understand how the conceived space of both Malmö and Rotterdam creates incentives and constraints for the placemaking of UDPs, I proceed to a closer look at the way both municipalities work with vulnerable migrant groups. To get a good grasp of what is going on in the cities, I relied both on the literature on the reception systems as well as on the interviews with municipal officers and civil society organizations.

The municipality of Rotterdam strives to put forth color-blind policies that do not discriminate among the many ethnic and religious groups that live in the city (Dekker et al., 2015; Interviews 1 and 2). In a certain way, the national ideal of a small government is mirrored in municipal affairs; in the context of the management of vulnerable migrant groups, the municipality subsidizes NGOs, civil society organizations and professional groups to execute policies (Odmalm, 2005; Dekker et al., 2015). Rather than intervening directly, the municipality prefers to provide funding to groups that are already active in society, thus creating a network of partnerships between the local government and local

organizations. Odmalm (2005) recognizes that this course of action tends to favor the creation of civil society initiatives that are either created or joined by immigrants with the scope of helping newcomers settle in the city. Odmalm further discusses how these initiatives display a high degree of political character, as they act in close collaboration with the municipality. These initiatives signal shortcomings, situations of unease and influence Rotterdam's policies with their own insights, perspectives and experiences on the field. The idea of empowering civil society organizations with a markedly migrant-oriented perspective can be interpreted as a good incentive for placemaking: the active involvement of people with a migrant background in the enactment of policy measures allows to adjust the shot, as the implementation of policies is structurally sensitive to the previous experiences of migrants. These organizations, being anchored in civil society, are more action-oriented, aim at social change and are more willing to act as intermediaries between newcomers and the municipal government (Povrzanović Frykman & Mäkelä, 2020). A main disadvantage of this model is that, as the municipality bestows funding to civil society organizations, the latter have a high degree of dependency on the overall political orientation of the city council to function effectively. Dekker & van Breugel (2019) identify no less than six turning points in Rotterdam's integration policies between 1978 and 2018, with the role, scope and responsibilities of subsidized organizations varying accordingly. The strength of the 'Rotterdam system', that as already mentioned often sets examples that are then adopted nationwide, may lie in the municipality's knowledge of the organizations and initiatives animating civil society, thus allowing it to pick up the best partners to carry out any desired policy.

From this understanding it is possible to infer that the incentives and constraints for placemaking in Rotterdam are largely driven by local actors. The municipal-civil society collaboration in carrying out policies is horizontal, locally oriented and sensitive to the city's context (Dekker & van Bruegel, 2019). Issues of housing, welfare, and provision of correct and up-to-date information rely on the network between the municipal government and its civic partners, with the overall direction set up by the political components of the city council. During times in which anti-immigrants discourses are having the upper hand in the city council, pro-immigrants civil society organizations constitute themselves as political opponents. During times in which the city displays a willingness to work hard to support immigrants, those very organizations turn into essential political allies.

Quite contrary to Rotterdam, the municipality of Malmö usually communicates and executes plans having central governmental agencies as main partners (Emilsson & Öberg, 2022). As found out by Dekker et al. (2015), Malmö also orientates policies in a non-discriminative way, but the city also acknowledges that diversity should be treated as a resource, something that is not explicitly stated in the context of Rotterdam, possibly because of the recent shift of paradigm in the Netherlands towards the promotion and defense of Dutch culture and ideals. In Malmö, civil society organizations are marginal players (Dekker et al., 2015), and, according to Odmalm (2005), those organizations that target migrants are more akin to social and leisure clubs than political initiatives. This picture is consistent with the more recent findings of Törngren et al. (2018), who acknowledge how the Swedish strong welfare state has left little area of intervention for civil society, with the exception of the amenable activities of sport and culture. In this view, the municipality and civil society are better understood as operating parallelly and independently from each other, in sharp contrast with the high degree of collaboration witnessed in Rotterdam.

A watershed moment in recent history that changed the relationship between the municipality of Malmö and civil society organizations was the 2015 migrant crisis, which also originated the 2016 Settlement Act discussed above. Interviewees 3, 8 and 9 all agreed that the experience acquired in 2015 was instrumental in better tackling the arrival of UDPs. In that year, Sweden welcomed almost 180,000 refugees, many of whom were unaccompanied minors. Most of these asylum seekers accessed the country via the Öresund Bridge, thus turning Malmö into an emergency reception center (Deverll & Hansén, 2019). Povrzanović Frykman & Mäkelä (2020) describe how, in the four last months of 2015, the Swedish Migration Agency was receiving an average of 1000 applications per day, while in the peak month of October as many as 2000 migrants set foot in Malmö daily. This unprecedented influx of people concentrating on a single municipality paralyzed the Swedish reception system. Authorities needed six weeks to devise a proper plan and, in that gap of time, civil society stepped in (Povrzanović Frykman & Mäkelä, 2020). Fry & Islar (2021) investigated how the pressing humanitarian concerns pushed civil society organizations and private individuals to quickly start supplying services that were previously thought of as the sole responsibility of the state and/or municipality. They described it as a process characterized both by frictions and alliance-buildings. Unlike Rotterdam, where municipal-civil society collaborations are a well-oiled cog in the city bureaucratic machine, many civil society

organizations participating in Fry & Islar's study expressed some degree of dissatisfaction with having to supply services they considered to be the municipality's responsibility, strengthening the idea that the Swedish migration regime sees government and civil society as separate actors. At the same time, it is important to underline that this crisis opened up the possibility for experimenting with different ways of providing welfare and social services. As the emergency called for a closer association among civil society initiatives and the municipality, an unprecedented knowledge exchange took place. Municipal officers witnessed first-hand how the bottom-up practices offered by civil society were supplying the shortage of top-down governmental services, enriching their understanding of successful practices for support, cohesion and inclusion. The same study, however, also shows how Malmö went back to the original status quo once the emergency calmed down. Municipal officers interviewed in 2020 admitted of having sporadic contacts with civil society. Civil society organizations, on the other hand, reported better communications between them, while also emphasizing how they prefer to see themselves as providing complementary services to the municipal ones, in no regime of collaboration (Fry & Islar, 2021). These findings see the example of horizontal governance of 2015 as largely driven by an unforeseen emergency.

Going back to local actors-driven placemaking, it appears that, apart from the emergency of 2015, Malmö fits the general picture of the Swedish case, with the municipality and civil society organization working independently from each other. The wellbeing of vulnerable migrant groups in terms of housing, social services, and benefits is provided by the government, both at the municipal and at the central level. Civil society organizations fill the gaps left untouched by the municipality, either by working with very marginalized people or by favoring access to information, welfare services and leisure activities (Interviews 8 and 9).

## 6 – Results and discussion

**RQ1:** How can differences and similarities in local actors-driven placemaking for Ukrainian displaced persons in Malmö and Rotterdam be explained?

**RQ2:** How are actions undertaken by the local government and local third-sector organizations favoring or hindering the placemaking process of Ukrainian displaced persons in both Malmö and Rotterdam?

This section showcases the results of the empirical data gathering in both Malmö and Rotterdam, linking them back to the theory to provide meaningful answers to the research questions underpinning this thesis.

To better explain the differences and similarities in local actors-driven placemaking for UDPs in the two cities chosen as case studies, this section starts with an overall description of the governance systems put in place to deal with the inflow of people from Ukraine. This step is important to understand what variations (if any) the arrival of UDPs caused to the existing models described in Chapter 5. An analysis of the governance system is also relevant as it amounts to a first scrutinization of the nature of the conceived spaces in both cities, thus pointing out to how the local actors, through their networks and expertise, organized themselves to tackle the crisis.

The rest of this chapter is dedicated to explaining and comparing how local actors were able to impact the placemaking of UDPs through providing housing, access to information and the possibility to partake in social encounters. In this context, the incentives and constraints for placemaking typical of each governance system are assessed vis-à-vis the experiences of UDPs, highlighting the efficacy and shortcomings of such strategies in both locations.

### 6.1 – Governance of UDPs in Malmö and Rotterdam

Table 8 lists the main features of the governance of UDPs in Rotterdam and Malmö, taking into account the features of the respective national contexts. Data were extracted from the interviews with municipal officers and civil society organizations.

**Table 8** – Governance of UDPs in Rotterdam and Malmö.

<b>Rotterdam</b>	<b>Malmö</b>
<p><b>Are UDPs allowed to attend inburgeringstraject (integration courses)?</b></p> <p>Not allowed nationwide</p>	<p><b>Are UDPs allowed to attend SFI (Swedish for Immigrants) and other integration courses?</b></p> <p>Not allowed nationwide</p>
<p><b>What political body has the most direct responsibilities towards housing, welfare, and education for UDPs?</b></p>	
<p>Municipality</p>	<p>Migrationsverket (National Migration Agency); Municipality (only housing)</p>
<p><b>Quota of UDPs allocated by the government to the veiligheidsregio (safety region) for whom the municipality of Rotterdam is responsible:</b></p> <p>2000 (regardless of whether they live in municipal or private housing)</p>	<p><b>Quota of UDPs allocated by Migrationsverket to the municipality of Malmö:</b></p> <p>600 (only those in municipal housing, the municipality does not know how many UDPs are living on their own or with their host families)</p>
<p><b>Section of the municipality responsible for the governance of UDPs:</b></p>	
<p>Crisis Unit</p>	<p>Social Housing Unit</p>
<p><b>Nature of partnership with NGOs and CSOs:</b></p>	
<p>Close collaboration. The municipality subsidizes NGOs and CSOs, leveraging on their areas of expertise to ensure the presence of reliable partners in the fields of legal consultations, first sheltering, matching with host families and the management of facilities.</p>	<p>Almost non-existent. The municipality retains responsibility over housing only and does not need to rely on any third-sector organizations.</p>

<b>Is there any actor that attempts to coordinate and map all the initiatives born in support of UDPs to optimize their governance?</b>	
Yes, the municipality acts as a main coordinator.	MalmöIdeella, an umbrella organization gathering many civil society initiatives in the city, has a list and map of local initiatives to favor their encounter and exchange of ideas.
<b>Acknowledged challenges for CSOs:</b>	
Get access to correct information; overreliance on volunteers.	Get access to correct information; get to know who does what in support of UDPs.
<b>Acknowledged challenges for the municipality:</b>	
Fit initiatives (especially in housing) specifically directed to UDPs to the non-discriminatory paradigm under which the municipality usually acts.	The municipality necessitates to coordinate with Migrationsverket before taking up any initiative to support UDPs outside of the area of housing, from healthcare to encountering social workers.
<b>Are there any organizations that were created as a response to the inflow of UDPs in the city?</b>	
Yes: RefugeeHomeNL (nationwide, joint effort between Red Cross, Save the Children, Salvation Army, takecarebnb and the Dutch Ministry of Justice); Ukrainian House Rotterdam (municipality-NGO partnership)	Yes, MalmöHelps.

Source: Own elaboration.

The temporary nature of the EU Directive concerning UDPs means that these people are currently excluded from accessing the regular language and integration courses that Sweden and the Netherlands provide to asylum seekers and refugees. The organization of language courses, educational opportunities and general efforts towards a social participation of UDPs are mostly taken by civil society organizations. In the Netherlands, they can usually rely on the municipality for funding (Interviews 6, 7, 12, 13), while in Sweden funding is usually easier to achieve through applying to EU or county-level funds, with most actions towards integrating UDPs happening in collaboration with established education- or leisure-oriented actors such as Folkhögskolan or ABF



(Arbetarnas Bildningsförbund, study circles headquartered in most municipalities), as discusses during Interviews 10, 11 and 15.

In both countries, the municipal governance of UDPs largely mirrors the findings of Odmalm (2005), Dekker et al. (2015), Fry & Islar (2021), and Emilsson & Öberg (2022) discusses in Chapter 5. The Dutch government decided a quota of UDPs to be host in Rotterdam's security region (a Dutch administrative body centered on a municipality that should coordinate local and national actions during emergencies and crises), and the same happened in Sweden with Malmö. A chief difference here regards the specific group of people the municipality is responsible for: in the Netherlands, UDPs are registered in the national registry by the municipality (Interview 2), and the municipality retains responsibility not only for housing, but also for issues of welfare, education, and integration in the job market. Accordingly, the 2000 UDPs allocated in Rotterdam comprise both people accommodated in municipal housing and those staying in private accommodation or host families. This is because the municipality remains responsible for their wellbeing, accentuating the decentralized nature of the Dutch governance model. Conversely and coherently with what was described in Chapter 5, in Sweden Migrationsverket retains responsibility over UDPs, with the only exception of housing for those eligible to receive a free accommodation from a municipality, which is warranted to the individual *kommun*. It follows that the role the municipality plays with respect to UDPs is considerably smaller than in the Netherlands, for the municipality directly engages with housing issues only, the rest being a responsibility of the central migration agency. It follows that the 600 UDPs allocated to Malmö only comprise those in need of municipal housing, for, as stated during Interview 3 "we do not know how many Ukrainians are staying with friends, relatives or on their own in Malmö, it is not our responsibility. We have responsibility for the quota of 600 that receives housing though us, Migrationsverket takes care of the rest". In Sweden, the role played by the municipality is far more limited than in the Netherlands, as municipalities partner up with Migrationsverket in an attempt to carry out the dispersal system of newcomers that was first introduced in 2016, with no other direct responsibility (Fry & Islar, 2021).

The limited role Swedish municipalities have in the direct governance of UDPs makes the Social Housing Unit within the municipality the main holder of responsibilities towards UDPs. The situation is far different in Rotterdam, where the municipality gave responsibility to UDPs to the Crisis Unit, a unit that was described as "bringing experts

in project management during times of crisis” (Interview 2) and that was already active during the COVID-19 pandemics. The Unit is responsible for housing and welfare, developing localized plans via governmental funds. Although the Unit was described as “temporary, outside the regular working of the municipality [...], it will end when a way to stabilize the situation is found” (Interview 2), its way of operating strikes as largely reminiscent of the standard Rotterdam model, for it relies on extensive networks with third-sector organizations to implement its policies and gather feedback. An enumeration of the partnerships between the municipality and civil society that were presented to me during the interviews in Rotterdam is presented in Table 9. It highlights how the governance of UDPs in Rotterdam is better understood as a network between the municipality and partners in civil society, with a high number of volunteer personnel involved.

**Table 9** – Rotterdam-Civil Society partnerships.

<b>Partner organization</b>	<b>Role played in the governance of UDPs</b>
Red Cross Rotterdam	Presence of volunteers to support location managers in the temporary centers where UDPs are identified and registered with the municipality. (Interview 4)
RefugeeHomeNL	Helps the municipality in alleviating pressure on public housing by matching UDPs with host families within Rotterdam for three months. It monitors the cohabitation and let the municipality know if UDPs in question will need municipal housing (Interview 5).
Dutch Refugee Council	Specialized in legal consultations for UDPs, works in collaboration with the municipality to provide information (Interview 6).
Radar VWO (manages some community houses in Rotterdam).	Employer of personnel within the Ukrainian House, which is funded by the municipality (Interview 12).
Stichting Mano	Manages some locations where UDPs are accommodated in collaboration with the municipality, while also providing language/educational courses (Interview 13).

Source: Own elaboration.

In Rotterdam, the municipality is aware of the initiatives supporting UDPs in civil society, and it has the capacity to co-fund some of these. The municipality is perceived as more active towards UDPs, even going so far as to establish the Ukrainian House, a social center for community building where Ukrainians and Dutch volunteers can organize distribution of first necessities, a variety of classes, Q&A sessions with the municipality and the employment agency, as well as a variety of social amenities such as birthdays celebrations. It follows that, in Rotterdam, the municipal government has good means to keep a well-rounded picture on the various initiatives that support UDPs. On the opposite side, the municipality of Malmö only concentrates on housing, as mandated by the government. In Malmö the idea to find, map and bring together all the CSOs which are active in the support of UDPs happened at the level of civil society. MalmöIdeella, an organization that gathers more than 1,200 associations in Malmö and that has always been active in supporting vulnerable migrant groups (Interview 10), came up with the idea of creating a map and a list of all the civil society initiatives dealing with UDPs. While in Rotterdam the municipality organizes weekly or bi-weekly meetings with its partners, in Malmö it was MalmöIdeella that gathered relevant actors and sponsored a plenary meeting to discuss and assess the status of governance of UDPs. This course of action confirms the findings of Törngren et al. (2018), according to which the end of the 2015 crisis brought the relationship between the municipality of Malmö and civil society back to normal status, with little mutual interactions.

To sum up, the local governance models active in Malmö and Rotterdam in response to the inflow of UDPs largely reflect the pre-existing standards. The main challenges tackled by both municipal government and CSOs are different in the two cities, for they are consequences of two different systems. In Malmö, the municipality is in contact with the UDPs it houses, but any problem outside of housing, such as accessing the healthcare system or meeting social workers, needs to go through Migrationsverket, adding what was perceived to be an “unnecessary step” (Interview 3). However, the quality of the communication with Migrationsverket was reported as being excellent, thus mitigating the lengthier process. In Rotterdam, the municipality adheres to the national paradigm of not directing any policy to a specific social category. However, the legal framework governing UDPs necessarily sets them outside other groups, for they are able to start working without the issue of a VISA and are eligible to temporary forms of accommodation. During interview 2, this issue was encapsulated as follows:

“Sometimes you have to do something special. And some time you have to be very aware... especially with housing, there’s a big problem with housing in Rotterdam, so we saw in the beginning of the war that many many people wanted to help the refugees, but you must keep that real and right, so that it doesn’t come against you when other people see that you’re doing more for the Ukrainians. [...] It’s difficult to balance.”

For CSOs, the biggest challenges lay with accessing information that is correct, especially those concerned with legal rights and obligations. Many of the rights given to UDPs were described in such abstract forms, and decisions from the central government were being communicated so slowly, that many organizations in both Malmö and Rotterdam reported frustration over the difficulty of accessing information or even getting contradictory data, especially during the first months of 2022. In Rotterdam, CSOs collaborating with the municipality also lamented a decline in public interest for UDPs, leading to a decline in volunteers that were actively involved in their projects.

## **6.2 Housing**

Access to adequate and secure housing has already been enshrined as a key element in placemaking for vulnerable migrants. Housing, as emphasized by Rowley et al. (2020) not only satisfies the primary need for shelter, but also constitutes a secure point of departure from which the surrounding community is understood. In terms of placemaking, housing is arguably one of the first elements in space experienced and internalized by the subject. This attaches emotional and symbolic meaning to it. In other words, the provision of adequate housing conditions is paramount for people to make experience of ‘home’. According to Relph (1976, p.39), “[h]ome is the foundation of our identity as individuals and as members of a community [...]. Home is not just the house you happen to live in, [...] it is an irreplaceable center of significance”. The turning of a housing space into a home is, in the context of this thesis, a complex phenomenon. It happens at the intersection between the conceived, political space, and the lived experiential space of individuals. UDPs are granted different options in terms of housing. However, those unable (or unwilling) to either live with host families or pay for their own accommodation must apply for municipal housing. In each municipality, and quality and location of these accommodations are determined by social and political circumstances,

emphasizing the importance of adopting a critical phenomenological approach to better assess the impact that the political has on individuals' experiences.

UDPs who are assigned to municipal housing in Malmö are placed in one of 250 apartments scattered around the city. The Social Housing Unit works in close collaboration with other units within the municipality to find apartments suitable for UDPs. Apartments mostly belong to real estate companies; rent and utilities are paid by the municipality (Interview 3). The apartments are furnished, and municipal employees “check the apartments every month, making sure the tenants are also home to be aware of discomforts” (Interview 3). Furthermore, UDPs receive a contract with the municipality that looks like a standard second-hand contract, though UDPs do not pay rent. Apartments given to UDPs respect all the requirements Swedish law prescribes for permanent housing (Interview 3). The logic governing the stay of UDPs in the apartments is simply “to let them stay there as long as the Directive is enforced” (Interview 3). So far, the Social Housing Unit has never had to rely on third-sector organizations for the management of facilities, as municipal employees are responsible to carry out the monthly checks. During Interview 3, I was explained that the scope of the monthly checks is not only to make sure whether interventions in the maintenance of the apartment are needed, but also to interact and listen to the people living there, with a special attention for the elderly, who might suffer from severe isolation. Despite the fact that the municipality has explicit responsibility for living arrangements only, the monthly meetings with the Ukrainian tenants were described as important moments for municipal employees to check on the general wellbeing of individuals and families.

During interviews 14 and 15 with UDPs in Malmö, Ukrainians expressed general satisfaction with the quality of the apartments. A fact that was particularly appreciated, during Interview 15, is that the municipality can assign a new, larger apartment in case of familiar reunification. This is done by putting efforts in providing the new apartment is approximately in the same area of the old one in case the UDPs work or children attend school. Both interviewees reported feeling like normal tenants, having their own privacy and space sufficient to carry out their daily activities in serenity. Critiques were directed to the housing policies to the state-system level, in particular against the dispersal rationale. They reported people they became friends with during their stay at Migrationsverket hostels during their first weeks in Sweden were sent to small towns in the countryside with little job opportunities and almost no possibilities to socialize or

engage in activities organized by CSOs. A second critique concerned the length of time it takes for Migrationsverket to decide in which the UDPs should be sent. Nevertheless, the fact that people could express preferences and give reasons for being placed in a specific municipality (such as having a work contract or having kids in schools in the area) was appreciated, though these preferences could not always be satisfied. In this sense, Malmö was identified as an advantageous location to be housed in, for the appropriateness of the housing provided, coupled with the manifoldness of supporting activities for UDPs organized by CSOs with a long experience in migrant-oriented support and activities (Odmalm, 2005), originated a safe, personal, engaging, and lively environment to be placed in.

Housing was perceived as much more of important issue in Rotterdam. Nijskens & Lohuis (2019) consider how continuous migration to the main Dutch cities puts pressure on an already scarce housing market. Supply in rent-regulated social housing fails to keep pace with substantial arrivals in the short run, and the arrival of UDPs in Rotterdam was perceived as extremely problematic for the housing situation (Interviews 1 and 2). Unlike Malmö, in Rotterdam it was immediately clear not only that providing standard apartments for UDPs would have been an impossible task, but also that finding enough temporary (subjected to less regulations) housing solutions would have been impossible in the short term. Because of this, the municipality’s communication team, during the first arrivals in March, campaigned for Rotterdammers to host UDPs in spare rooms or unrented apartments- This was done employing the expertise of Takecarebnb and the newly created RefugeeHomeNL, NGOs that match refugees with host families for a three month-long cohabitation. The concerted action between the municipality, Takecarebnb, and RefugeeHomeNL resulted in more than 60% of the UDPs assigned to Rotterdam living with host families. The municipality deployed a series of temporary strategies to accommodate UDPs outside of the host family system, as illustrated in Table 10.

**Table 10** – Municipal housing solutions in Rotterdam for UDPs over time.

<b>Type of housing</b>	<b>Time</b>
Temporary shelters on big sites	First arrivals of Ukrainians in the Netherlands (March)
Cruise ships	April - September
Temporary housing scattered around the city and smaller ships	Summer - now

Source: Own elaboration.

The extraordinary pressure brought about by UDPs on Rotterdam's social housing system is exemplified by the drastic decision to employ cruise ships to house them between April and September. As of December 2022, two smaller ships still housed UDPs, with the idea of gradually clearing temporary accommodations in unused buildings over 2023.

Interviews 1 and 2 confirmed that, with respect to appropriate housing, the municipality has had tied ends due to two main reasons: on the one hand, the strict rules applying to permanent accommodations meant the municipality had no time to ensure the availability of these in any short or medium amount of time; on the other, as the municipality is guided by a non-discrimination paradigm, they felt it inappropriate to allow Ukrainians to be put in the regular social housing system when other residents have been queuing for more than 10 years, something that was then confirmed as impossible to do from a legal standpoint too. The municipality found temporary accommodations scattered around the city, explicitly to avoid concentrating UDPs in a single area (Interview 2). They were mostly retrieved from buildings that were in the process of being converted to a different use. The municipality ensured shared cooking facilities on those sites. Being temporary solutions, the accommodations are not designed for long-term stays of families, something that was lamented consistently by the Ukrainian community (Interview 12).

The complex housing situation in Rotterdam generates mixed feelings from a placemaking perspective. Interviews 5 and 7 brought up the fact that living with a host family was met with enthusiasm by those UDPs that had lost everything back home. These UDPs were already eager to be part of Dutch society as soon as possible. Benefits of living with a host family include speeding up Dutch learning, better access to Dutch values and norms, as well as the possibility of accessing the personal network of the host families for job opportunities. In this sense, cohabitation can be considered as a placemaking experience. This has more to do with being comfortable with one's social surroundings than finding a permanent place to call home. A challenge that was consistently brought up during both interviews was how to keep people in the loop after the months have passed. RefugeeHomeNL underlined the struggle behind finding a second suitable host family for UDPs, as the municipality can't ensure to offer temporary housing for people outside of the municipal housing scheme. The challenge was perceived as big because many host families withdraw from the program after the

summer. Furthermore, as many UDPs work, the additional problem of finding a host family at reasonable distance from the working place arose.

The municipality, thanks to its extensive network with CSOs and via the Ukrainian House, knows of the difficulties experienced by UDPs in their short-term accommodations. Living on cruise ships, for instance, was seen as unsustainable in the long run, as people had little to no control over their routines and, as the kitchens there required specialized personnel, UDPs could not even decide what to eat (Interview 12). The temporary nature of municipal shelters was welcomed to get closer to a regular life, yet being placed in temporary locations also means obeying rules (such as not drinking alcohol and taking care of common areas with people outside of familiar or friendship kinships) that were seen as originating “[...] a super controlled environment that is not good for mental health [...], many people found it hard to adjust to an environment where their lives are already figured out” (Interview 12).

In conclusion, Malmö’s housing strategy was seen as favoring the possibility of turning the received accommodations in actual lived spaces. As the apartments given to UDPs are standard ones, they provide the space and privacy for individuals and families to create their own routines and have a familiar place to call home to feel attached to. Conversely, Rotterdam’s situation appears more complex. Pushing UDPs to live with host families was treated as a great opportunity for those people already planning to integrate into Dutch society as soon as possible. Nevertheless, the co-habitation only lasts for three months. Municipal officers reported satisfaction with their capacity of finding suitable temporary accommodations around the city despite the crisis gripping Rotterdam’s housing market. Yet, the temporary nature of the accommodations was perceived as a substantial obstacle for placemaking.

Future orientations concerning the housing of UDPs in Malmö amount to keeping them in municipal apartments as long as the Directive remains in force. In Rotterdam, there appears to be no concrete possibility for placing them in more appropriate accommodations. The general hope is that, as UDPs learn Dutch and start working, they will eventually be able to rent a place on their own around the city, unless a law to integrate UDPs in the regular social housing scheme is created.



### 6.3 Access to information

An easy access to up-to-date and correct information was reported to be a central issue for UDPs in both Rotterdam and Malmö (Interviews 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16). The relevance of accessing information for placemaking is twofold: on the one hand, many interviewees reported the psychological need for UDPs to know details about their stay in the host countries, thus building a feeling of safety and security connected to the reassurance that “we are not going to be kicked out from here” (Interview 15). On the other hand, several CSOs and NGOs admitted that the range of questions UDPs needed an answer for amounted to a lot more than the knowledge of their legal rights and protections, with questions ranging from “is it safe to drink tap water?” (Interview 15) to “how do I get a bike?” (Interview 13).

Knowledge of the rights, protections, and benefits connected to the temporary stay were the immediate areas of focus for supporting organizations. However, as it became clearer and clearer that UDPs would stay indefinitely, organizations reoriented their provision of information, attempting to cover those areas left untouched by legal authorities. The fundamental role played by CSOs in supplying information is exemplified by this quote from MalmöIdeella: “[I]ast year it was really about information: question mark, question mark, question mark. Everything was going really quick. There were so many people that wanted to learn Swedish, find a job, go study and everything... It was very hectic.” (Interview 10).

In Rotterdam, the governance system brings about two main advantages: first, the extended network between the municipality and third-sector actors means that organizations also talk between themselves, therefore making it easy to point out to the actor most likely to provide the information needed. As an example, the Dutch Refugee Council reported being in contact with the municipality and other organizations to sponsor its specialization in legal consultations (Interview 6). The second advantage proper of Rotterdam is the establishment of the Ukrainian House, a physical touching point between municipality, CSOs, and the Ukrainian community. The Ukrainian House is able to gather a lot of information on the needs and doubts of UDPs, and to send signals in the network to suggest improvements or the need to spread some specific kind of information. For instance, anticipating the possibility of UDPs being exploited on the workplace, the Ukrainian House endowed itself with a consultant from HalloWerk (an employment agency tied to the municipality) as soon as 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 (Interview 12).

In Malmö the limited role played by the municipality means that the main providers of information are Migrationsverket or CSOs. The main weakness perceived by UDPs revolves around the slowness of having to deal with a centralized agency that provides packaged answers that do not necessarily apply to the local context (Interview 16). The role of CSOs in providing support for accessing information is then considered fundamental. Several CSOs active in Malmö declared their unwillingness to treat UDPs differently from other people in need (Interviews 8, 9, 19), the mantra being “we need to help everyone” (Interview 9). This willingness not to discriminate not only derives from the ethical positionality of CSOs, but also from the realization that tensions could simmer between UDPs and asylum seekers or refugees, given that UDPs, apart from the possibility to start working immediately, were also given the exclusive right to travel for free by the county’s public transportation agency (a decision that was withdrawn on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2022). Even though this possibility was positively met by UDPs as a way to explore their surroundings, make good memories, and take advantage of their leisure time to distract themselves (Interviews 14 and 15), it was also acknowledged that free travel constituted a debated issue, with many CSOs expressing their discontent at the exclusion of asylum seekers and refugees from Skånetrafiken’s act of solidarity (Interviews 9 and 10). It follows that CSOs preferred to act in such a way as to embrace newcomers in general rather than UDPs in particular (Interview 8). Notwithstanding the tendency to avoid explicit references to a single target group, CSOs did undertake concrete measures to provide information to UDPs. MalmöIdeella assumed a coordinating role in mapping out all the initiatives active in the support of UDPs within the municipality, and it also acted in a way similar to the Ukrainian House in Rotterdam in signaling problems to other authorities concerning needs and vulnerabilities of UDPs, realizing that the most fragile women among them could be easy victims of prostitution rings. MalmöHelps, an organization that was established during the first arrivals of UDPs in Sweden, is the local actor that most explicitly targets UDPs, for it was born as an informal safety net between Russian- and Ukrainian-speaking friends in Malmö. MalmöHelps took great steps in formalizing itself as an organization and to support UDPs during their stay in Malmö. During interview 11, MalmöHelps explained the difficulty of emerging as a successful organization in a field already populated by big, established, and trusted actors such as Skåne Stadmission, Sweden Helps, the Red Cross, or Save the Children, yet the fact that the people active in the organization could speak either Russian or Ukrainian allowed an immediate closeness with the target group, allowing them to become a key provider of

information. According to MalmöHelps, the time of the first arrivals of UDPs was complex and hectic as far as information is concerned, with contradictory pieces of information arriving from the same interlocutor, or with explanations that were too vague and general to be of relevance. As time passed, the centralized Swedish system was able to put forward focused plans and directives, clearing the field. As a conclusion, the role of CSOs in providing information to UDPs was substantially appreciated, as governmental entities were perceived as more distant from the target group, and as slower in elaborating requests (Interview 16).

## **6.4 Social participation**

Being active participants in the host city's society has a vital important role for placemaking due to the two reasons outlined in Chapter 4. Firstly, the possibility of mingling with other people in a variety of contexts, from working places to language classes, allows the subject to understand their socio-spatial surroundings, exchanging experiences and opinions with others. Secondly, the possibility of working, studying, or partaking in leisure activities helps in creating a routine that normalizes life. This permits a deeper attachment to one's locale via repeated social interactions.

Language is arguably considered the main barrier to social participation. The exclusion of UDPs from the standard language classes normally provided to asylum seekers and refugees is still a matter of discontent for the UDPs in both Malmö and Rotterdam. The role played by CSOs in organizing language classes is then fundamental. In Rotterdam, a general reorientation of the governance of UDPs happened after summer 2022, when it was decided to pupils in the regular Dutch system. In that period, most of the efforts by CSOs were concentrated upon teaching English (both in the Ukrainian House and by Stichting Mano), as it was seen as a skill that would benefit people even back in Ukraine. As it became clear that UDPs were going to stay indefinitely, efforts were undertaken to grant Dutch language classes (Interviews 12 and 13). In Malmö, the Red Cross and Skåne Stadmission let UDPs know that they were welcomed to their already active language cafés (Interviews 8 and 9), while MalmöHelps devised language classes specifically targeting UDPs (Interview 11). Once more, some of the largest and most established NGOs preferred to maintain an inclusive approach to all newcomers. During the interviews, it was consistently reported that majority of the UDPs was willing

to make concrete steps into learning the language, appreciating the work done by CSOs in facilitating their participation in the host city's society.

Interviews 2 and 3 confirmed that the absolute majority of UDPs is regularly employed. The question of getting a job was considered to be a first priority by UDPs, because, as explained during Interview 12 “they are not acquainted with social welfare, they were not mentally prepared to have someone give them housing and money for free”, implying the fact that majority of UDPs was already considering how to get a job abroad when leaving Ukraine. CSOs were particularly active in organizing workshops with employment agencies in both Malmö and Rotterdam, signaling once more the important role they play in bridging the gap between UDPs and the host society (Interviews 10, 11, and 12). Nonetheless, a recurrent source of frustration brought in during interviews concerned the fact that many people are employed in menial jobs that are far below what they used to do in Ukraine. The lack of proficiency in either Dutch or Swedish explains the skill mismatch, yet the UDPs interviewed acknowledged the fact that their host countries are losing the possibility to employ a skilled workforce (Interviews 11, 12, 14, 15, and 16). Rules concerning recognition of foreign titles or laws allowing for a smoother transition to the job market are usually undertaken centrally, and municipalities acknowledged that, although being aware of university graduates working at Burger King, there is very little room for action on their side (Interviews 2 and 3).

A variety of leisure activities is being provided by CSOs in both Malmö and Rotterdam. In both cities, I observed a tendency from those CSOs that were already active in supporting vulnerable migrant groups to integrate UDPs in their regular classes or courses, while organizations such as the Ukrainian House or MalmöHelps are aiming more for UDPs specifically. Interviews 12 and 15 highlighted how the possibility to attend sport or art courses organized by Ukrainians for Ukrainians has a stabilizing effect on UDPs, as many of them do not know English. It was also considered as something positive for their mental health, as UDPs are able to engage in activities in an environment that is closer to that of their home country. Lastly, UDPs themselves are often in charge of these classes and courses, which they can adapt to their personal skillset to benefit the community. In the Ukrainian House, for instance, UDPs with degrees in psychology were organizing art therapy sessions. In Malmö, the Red Cross employed a UDPs working as a yoga teacher, and MalmöHelps pays some UDPs who are active within the organization. CSOs, through their creation of leisure activities, are able to recognize the skills of some

UDP in a way that, at this time, rarely happens on the job market. In this sense, they are seen as important for empowering the community and provide them with role models (Interview 12). This appears to be especially true in those CSOs that explicitly target UDPs, as larger and more established CSOs are reported to be more cautious in involving UDPs. During Interview 16, the interviewee said they were sad and frustrated when one of the most famous NGOs in Malmö declined their offer to collaborate, in spite of the fact that the interviewee had matured an important CV in Ukraine that was very relevant to the mission of the organization in question.

## 7 - Conclusions

**RQ1:** How can differences and similarities in local actors-driven placemaking for Ukrainian displaced people in Malmö and Rotterdam be explained?

The results of this thesis strongly suggest that in spite of their acknowledged similarities in terms of superdiversity (Odmalm, 2005; Scholten et al., 2019), the governance systems of both Malmö and Rotterdam are considerably influenced by the respective national frameworks, as foretold by Dekker et al (2015). The differing orientations of the conceived spaces in Malmö and Rotterdam translated in tangible differences for local actors-driven placemaking. In Rotterdam, the municipal government proactively engages and subsidizes CSOs in enacting policies and supporting UDPs, originating a rich network in which actors talk with each other and problems are tackled collectively. In Malmö, the limited role afforded to municipalities in the governance of UDPs meant that CSOs rarely talk with local authorities and with each other, and that they pragmatically support UDPs in those fields in which the government is perceived as slow to act, such as in the provision language courses and social opportunities.

In both cities, initiatives that specifically target UDPs became reality shortly after the first arrivals. In Rotterdam, the Ukrainian House arose from a partnership between the municipality and a NGO; conversely, in Malmö, MalmöHelps started as a group of friends informally providing basic necessities to UDPs, and it grew to become one of the most important players in supporting UDPs in the city independently from municipal support.

Both cities had to act quickly to accommodate UDPs, and they also had to deal with an unfamiliar legal framework governing the stay of UDPs. In this sense, local actors did display a degree of paradigmatic pragmatism (Schiller, 2015), providing creative solutions to face the emergency situation that were born from the need to give quick and tangible reliefs to UDPs. This can be seen in Rotterdam's struggling with housing, with cruise ships and temporary buildings being used by the municipality, or in the attempt by MalmöIdeella to bring together the supporting organizations within the city to reinforce networks between CSOs and evaluate the effectiveness and state of the affairs of UDPs in the city.

**RQ2:** How are actions undertaken by the local government and local third-sector organizations favoring or hindering the placemaking process of Ukrainian displaced people in both Malmö and Rotterdam?

Informal polls carried out by CSOs and municipal governments indicate that an absolute majority of UDPs would remain in Malmö and Rotterdam if given the opportunity (Interviews 2, 3, 10, 12, 14), especially those who, coming from Eastern Ukraine, have very little to return to. From the perspectives gathered during the interviews with members of the Ukrainian community, it seems that local actors were effectively capable of devising strategies and policies aiming for a long-term support of UDPs, allowing them to meaningfully and emotionally experience their socio-spatial surroundings. Accordingly, it seems that time does play a role in placemaking, and that the longer UDPs stay, the more local actors can fine tune policies and strategies to facilitate their integration and participation in society, thus facilitating the creation of lived spaces for UDPs.

In Rotterdam housing remains a hot issue, given that the only option the municipality has is to put them in temporary housing units or push for their stay with host families. On the opposite side, UDPs reported housing as the flagship of Malmö's governance. Currently, access to information appears easier in Rotterdam where, traditionally, the local government and CSOs work closely with each other and are able to capillary spread information. In Malmö, UDPs reported some discontent with the slowness of the system, but CSOs provided valuable help in accessing information and explaining the system. Finally, CSOs in Malmö and Rotterdam were confirmed to be fundamental players in bridging the gap between UDPs and the host city's society, providing not only language courses and workshops for job seekers, but also a variety of leisure activities that UDPs deemed fundamental to retain a sense of normality in their daily routines (Interviews 12, 13, 15, 16).

## **7.1 Final reflections**

The arrival of UDPs in EU member states is a very recent phenomenon, and the current state of research on the local governance of it is still at its embryonic stage. For this reason, I preferred to opt for a theoretical framework that is anchored in a recognized yet

fuzzy phenomenon, placemaking, that also makes room for questions investigating the political and governmental influences on the making of place.

I must admit that employing a comparative case study make the process of planning, writing, and improving this thesis longer; nevertheless, given the novelty of the phenomenon in question, I found it extremely useful to be able to compare different governance structures and courses of action, for it allowed to get a much clearer picture than the one I would have obtained by focusing on a single city alone. Again, the stay of UDPs is an unfamiliar and fresh event, and with hindsight I can say that by engaging with two different locales I was able to get a far better understanding on an occurrence which lacks extended scientific coverage.

Future research on this very theme could focus on a variety of inspirations that I considered but then discarded. This migration flow is heavily gendered, with the elderly, mothers, and children accounting for almost the totality of the displaced people. An investigation into the gendered nature of migration and placemaking that, among many other things, could take into account the relationship between home, family, and place could certainly find fertile terrain. I had to be creative and critical in the selection of the themes that I understood to be the most important ones for placemaking, yet I acknowledge that other dimensions could be investigated under a comparative perspective, such as the precise dynamics underpinning the integration into the educational and work environments. As scientific publications become more available, it could well be worth it to delve deeply in just one of the themes that I selected, such as comparing housing policies across a variety of cities. Finally, I anchored my investigation on urban environments, but nothing prevents UDPs to be housed or find a host family in a peripheral, rural area. Studying the dynamics of placemaking in small and rural settlements could certainly enrich the literature on vulnerable migrant groups.



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# Appendix A – Consent Forms

## Rotterdam

### Information Sheet & Consent Form

#### Summary of the project

The goal of this research project is to investigate the role played by the municipality of Rotterdam and the third-sector and civil society initiatives active in the city in governing, supporting and assisting Ukrainian displaced people that found shelter in Rotterdam fleeing from the conflict.

This project specifically focuses on the degree to which certain initiatives can foster “placemaking”, understood as the establishment of meaningful emotional connections to someone’s socio-spatial surroundings, through activities such as encountering the locals, receiving adequate housing, having opportunities for socializing, provision of education and the receiving of good-quality information concerning the legal framework that governs Ukrainian displaced people, and the rights and benefits they are entitled to.

Furthermore, this project aims at understanding how the relevant local actors are dealing with the uncertainty that characterizes the status of Ukrainian displaced people. As it is impossible to predict even remotely an ending date for the conflict in Ukraine, the relationship between these people and their (supposedly) temporary homes is subject to change, from a temporary, emergency-related stay to a more long-term commitment to rooting in their new surroundings. The way in which relevant actors have been changing their plans, policies, activities and initiatives in light of this uncertain conditions is another focus this project aims to investigate.

#### Name and contact of the researcher

Jacopo Frati ([ja2787fr-s@student.lu.se](mailto:ja2787fr-s@student.lu.se))

#### Data Gathering

The aim of this interview is to gather data on:

- the current policy framework governing Ukrainian displaced people in the Netherlands;
- getting to know other relevant pieces of research that can enrich and complement the current project;
- understanding the role of the local municipality and third-sector actors in favoring placemaking for Ukrainian displaced people;
- learning how relevant actors responded to the time- and policy-related uncertainties concerning the immediate future of Ukrainian displaced people.

#### Confidentiality and data protection

The collected data will be used for an aggregated analysis and no confidential information or personal data will be included in the research outcome.

## Voluntary participation and individual rights

Your participation is voluntary and you can stop at any time. When you participate in the research, you have the rights to request more information about the data collection, analysis or withdraw the consent and ask data erasure before the dataset is anonymized or manuscript submitted for publishing. You can exercise your rights by contacting [ja2787fr-s@student.lu.se](mailto:ja2787fr-s@student.lu.se)

## Consent Form

Upon signing of this consent form, I confirm that:

- I've been informed about the purpose of the research, data collection and storage as explained in the information sheet;
- I've read the information sheet, or it has been read to me;
- I've had an opportunity to ask questions about the study; the questions have been answered sufficiently;
- I voluntarily agree to participate in this research;
- I understand that the information will be treated confidentially;
- I understand that I can stop participation any time or refuse to answer any questions without any consequences;
- I understand that I can withdraw my consent before the dataset is submitted for approval.

Additionally, I give permission to:

	YES	NO
I give permission to audio record the interview		
I give permission to use quotes from my interview (name will be anonymized)		

Name of research participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## Malmö

# Information Sheet & Consent Form

## Summary of the project

The goal of this research project is to investigate the role played by the municipality of Malmö and the third-sector and civil society initiatives active in the city in governing, supporting and assisting Ukrainian displaced people that found shelter in Malmö fleeing from the conflict.

This project specifically focuses on the degree to which certain initiatives can foster “placemaking”, understood as the establishment of meaningful emotional connections to someone’s socio-spatial surroundings, through activities such as encountering the locals, receiving adequate housing, having opportunities for socializing, provision of education and the receiving of good-quality information concerning the legal framework that governs Ukrainian displaced people, and the rights and benefits they are entitled to.

Furthermore, this project aims at understanding how the relevant local actors are dealing with the uncertainty that characterizes the status of Ukrainian displaced people. As it is impossible to predict even remotely an ending date for the conflict in Ukraine, the relationship between these people and their (supposedly) temporary homes is subject to change, from a temporary, emergency-related stay to a more long-term commitment to rooting in their new surroundings. The way in which relevant actors have been changing their plans, policies, activities and initiatives in light of this uncertain conditions is another focus this project aims to investigate.

## Name and contact of the researcher

Jacopo Frati ([ja2787fr-s@student.lu.se](mailto:ja2787fr-s@student.lu.se))

## Data Gathering

The aim of this interview is to gather data on:

- the current policy framework governing Ukrainian displaced people in Sweden;
- getting to know other relevant pieces of research that can enrich and complement the current project;
- understanding the role of the local municipality and third-sector actors in favoring placemaking for Ukrainian displaced people;
- learning how relevant actors responded to the time- and policy-related uncertainties concerning the immediate future of Ukrainian displaced people.

## Confidentiality and data protection

The collected data will be used for an aggregated analysis and no confidential information or personal data will be included in the research outcome.

## Voluntary participation and individual rights

Your participation is voluntary and you can stop at any time. When you participate in the research, you have the rights to request more information about the data collection, analysis or withdraw the consent and ask data erasure before the dataset is anonymized or manuscript submitted for publishing. You can exercise your rights by contacting [ja2787fr-s@student.lu.se](mailto:ja2787fr-s@student.lu.se)

## Consent Form

Upon signing of this consent form, I confirm that:

- I've been informed about the purpose of the research, data collection and storage as explained in the information sheet;
- I've read the information sheet, or it has been read to me;
- I've had an opportunity to ask questions about the study; the questions have been answered sufficiently;
- I voluntarily agree to participate in this research;
- I understand that the information will be treated confidentially;
- I understand that I can stop participation any time or refuse to answer any questions without any consequences;
- I understand that I can withdraw my consent before the dataset is submitted for approval.

Additionally, I give permission to:

	YES	NO
I give permission to audio record the interview		
I give permission to use quotes from my interview (name will be anonymized)		

Name of research participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix B – Interview Guides**

### **Guide A: Municipalities**

#### **Arrival of UDPs**

When did UDPs start to arrive in the city?

In your opinion, was the municipality ready to handle the influx of these people? Why or why not?

Has the municipality devised and implemented any special plans applying to UDPs?

#### **Network with civil society**

Does the municipality coordinate with third-sector actors in implementing plans directed to UDPs? If so, in which areas?

How would you evaluate the nature of this collaboration? Does collaborating with civil society bring forward any positive outcome?

#### **Housing**

How do you provide housing for those unable to support themselves? Did you, or are you still, experiencing any issues connected with finding accommodation to UDPs?

#### **Information and services**

What other areas concerning the wellbeing of UDPs fall under the responsibility of the municipality?

Concerning the other responsibilities and activities promoted by the municipality and directed to UDPs, how do you make sure that information about such activities is accessible and understandable?

Do you provide any service specifically directed to understanding the basic things about the host society (education, job market, health care)?

#### **Evaluation**

Can you detect any change of orientation from short-term plans to long-term commitments?

In the course of your job supporting UDPs, have you realized that some practices, partnerships or routines were not working? If so, how did you cope with the problem?

## **Guide B: Civil Society Organizations and NGOs**

### **Arrival of UDPs**

Did you start providing support to UDPs as soon as they first arrived in the city?

[Only for those organizations established as a response to the arrival of UDPs:] What factors pushed for the creation of this creation?

To what degrees were the initiatives and activities already provided by this organization able to support UDPs?

Has your organization devised and implemented any special plans applying to UDPs?

### **Network with municipality**

Are you in a partnership with the municipality for the provision of services to UDPs?

Did you collaborate with the municipality even before the arrival of UDPs?

How does your expertise support the municipal plans for governing UDPs in the city?

How would you evaluate the nature of this collaboration?

### **Information and services**

What are the kinds of activities that you provide that support UDPs the most?

How do you make sure that information about such activities is accessible and understandable?

Do you provide any service specifically directed to understanding the basic things about the host society (education, job market, health care)?

Do you provide any occasion for socialization, both among members of the Ukrainian community and with society at large?

Have you experienced any challenges in your work supporting UDPs? If so, how did you tackle them?

### **Evaluation**

Can you detect any change of orientation from short-term plans to long-term commitments?

In the course of your job supporting UDPs, have you realized that some practices, partnerships or routines were not working? If so, how did you cope with the problem?

### **Guide C: Members of the Ukrainian Community**

What kind of services and activities are the most urgent when UDPs first arrive in the city?

Is information about the support network for UDPs spread and accessible? Do UDPs know to whom they can refer to if they have questions, doubts, or are experiencing whatsoever discomfort?

To which degree are UDPs integrated in the host society? Are they able to find jobs and/or receive educational opportunities as per the European directive?

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the system in place in the city?

From what you could see, have there been any improvements in the system?

Do UDPs have a satisfying social life? Are there specific spaces provided for their socialization, both within the community but also with people in general?

## Appendix C: Coding Handbook

### Municipal governance of Ukrainian Displaced People

Investigation in the way the municipalities of Malmö and Rotterdam organized themselves to respond to the arrival of UDPs. It refers to the degree of similarity between the governance of UDPs and the governance of other vulnerable migrant groups as presented by the literature.

#### Subcategories:

Municipal units responsible for the governance of UDPs; Types and quality of the services provided; Degree of collaboration and contact with civil society organizations; Uncertainty.

### Housing

References to housing options available to UDPs, their overall quality and the supposed impact on their placemaking.

#### Subcategories:

Municipally provided housing; Housing with host families/individuals; Quality and impact on life of the various housing options.

### Provision of information

Assesses the ease, correctness and accessibility of information for UDPs. Information is intended as comprehensive of questions concerning legal status, rights, access to benefits and welfare, and more trivial yet important questions concerning daily life in the host cities, such as “Where do I get a bike?”, or “How do I open a bank account”?

#### Subcategories:

Barriers to access information; Information mismatch between central government, municipality and civil society.



## **Social Activities**

Investigates the ways in which social activities can speed up placemaking. This code looks at who (and where) provides social activities, whether social activities are open to everyone or to the target group only, and the perception and experiences of UDPs regarding the possibility to join such activities.

### **Subcategories:**

Types of social activities; Making place through encounters.