LUNDS UNIVERSITET

Stories of Violence and Perception of Safety in Public Spaces

Experiences of Migrant Women in Lund

Daniele Arnoldi

Department of Human Geography
SGEM08
Spring Semester, 2024

Examiner: Yahia Mahmoud
Supervisor: Anders Lund Hansen

Abstract

This thesis tries to convey the point of view of migrant women living in Lund in regard to their perception of safety and experiences of violence in public spaces. To frame this case, it is necessary to consider the state of politics in Europe, which in the past few decades has seen the existing right and far-right-wing parties gaining a lot of traction. With the increase of their popularity came restrictive policies on migration issues and their effect has been exacerbated the uncertainties for millions of people moving every year around the world. Together with other countries within the European Union, Sweden has been following the same trend and migration is now one of the most pressing topics of discussion in the country, but the focus of it seems to be delving around talks regarding migration as a primary cause of gang violence and other societal issues, putting aside questions concerning the condition of migrant women. From a critical realist standpoint and through the lenses of a framework that considers the ideas of bordering and othering, together with the spread of right-wing populism as a prevalent thread and their relations with violence against women and migrant women, the thesis investigates the repercussions of the intersection of these concepts in public spaces in the city of Lund. The data, gathered through the use of mainly semi-structured interviews, seem to point to increasing constraints that lead to difficulties for many migrant women to freely live the city, as their perception of safety is being influenced by harsh policies and the perpetration of acts of violence carried out by the dominant group. Considering the results, the case presents similarities with previous studies on the subject. Despite this, it stands on its own by showing how specific contexts and diverse backgrounds may present distinct sides of the same issue, opening new possibilities for further research.

Keywords: Migrant women, Lund, Sweden, Bordering, Othering, Populism, Public Spaces, Violence

Word count: 18990

Acknowledgements

This thesis is the expression of my personal interest. It is the product of months of readings, research and changes of mind, but it would have been nothing without the invaluable help of the participants. Thank you very much, for your friendliness and your courage. I hope I could convey your stories in the most accurate way possible.

I would like to thank Lund University for the opportunity given to me. I will never forget the experiences of the past two years. Special thanks to my supervisor, Anders Lund Hansen, for the conversations, the advices, for always finding the right words at the right time and for making sound clear even the most complex concepts. Me and my oftentimes slow brain really appreciated it.

Thanks to the friends and the wonderful people I have met in Sweden, together with the lifelong Italian friends. It is because of you if I have never felt lonely. Lastly, even if I would never find the appropriate way to express my gratitude, thanks to my family, always supporting me in spite of everything. Your influence on the person I am today is immeasurable.

Table of contents

1. *Introduction*

Looking at recent electoral results around Europe, the existing right and far-right-wing parties have been gaining support from people in the last few decades. Despite not fully agreeing on certain topics, such as joining the European Union (Mudde, 2007), radical-right parties slowly but constantly increased their popularity. As underscored by Snegovaya (2024), this trend started within Eastern European countries, in the aftermath of the URSS dissolution, and gradually spread to the western part of the continent. The reasons for the shift in Western Europe can be traced to the shrinking of blue-collar workers, historically left-wing voters and the failure of left-wing policies (ibid, pp. 37-39), which made people unsatisfied and suddenly created room for other narratives and discourses to fill in. Among those, populism is the idea that has been the most under the spotlight, has captivated a significant share of voters and has been used mainly by far-right parties (Pelinka, p. 9 in Wodak et. al, 2013). The definitions of populism have multiplied in the recent past and, as stated by Lazaridis et al., "It is difficult to agree on a consensual definition" (2016, p. 4). What is certain, however, is that among the core components of populism there is a strong disdain for migration and migrants. As expressed in the introduction of *Right-wing populism in Europe. Politics and discourse* by Wodak et al. (2013, p. xviii), "election campaigns were accompanied by - sometimes indirect, usually quite explicit - xenophobic, racist and antisemitic propaganda".

Not all migrants are treated equally by the people promoting this kind of propaganda. In fact, while certain categories of men (especially Muslims) are considered dangerous or not to be trusted, for the longest time women were and sometimes are still depicted solely as victims, people with no agency that follow their partner abroad. Women in migration were invisible for many decades and they started to be considered only in the 1980's, but it was after the mid 1990's that the field slowly started to gain more relevance. This shift coincided with a change in paradigm, which went from Women's Studies to Gender Studies, and started focusing "on the question of how gender asymmetry is a product of the social order, in institutional

and socio-political processes, and produces it at the same time" (Lutz, 2010 p. 1650). Despite being invisible during many decades of studies, women were and are the primary recipients of violence: migrant women experience violence in various stages of their journey, from the moment they leave their country to the moment they try to integrate in new settings (Jiménez-Lasserrotte et al., 2020; Freedman, 2016). Once they reach their destination, the violence they are subjected to varies and it could be, among the others, physical (Ticktin, 2008) institutional, (Gutierrez-Cueli et al., 2023) or a combination of different forms of it (Listerborn, 2015a).

Violence against women and migrant women can happen both in private settings and public spaces. Domestic violence is a widespread phenomenon taking place all over the world (Choi & Byoun, 2014; Rodríguez-Menés & Safranoff, 2021; Vasil, 2023) just like the one that takes place in public spaces (Yeoh & Huang, 1998; Memela & Maharaj, 2018; Holtmann, 2022). The latter, though, often gets downplayed, especially when talking about "mild" forms of harassment (De Backer, 2020), making it seem less violent and impactful than it actually is. Furthermore, violence may be hidden, as highlighted by Keygnaert et al. (2012), who presented the case of refugees and asylum seekers in Belgium and The Netherlands. All those components and nuances make the topic hard to investigate, nonetheless it is important to continue the research in order to uncover more and improve the condition of the women that are suffering.

Sweden is a fitting place to tackle violence against migrant women in public spaces and their perception of safety, due to a high intake of migrants and refugees during the past few decades and the recent changes in the political landscape. The country was in fact a major player during the European refugee "crisis" of 2015 and 2016, taking on the self-appointed role of *"humanitär stormakt"* (humanitarian superpower), a term used by former Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt, who was trying to make the centre-right Moderate party more progressive, and former Foreign Minister Carl Bildt (Simons & Manoilo, 2019). Since then, politics took a decisive turn to the right and the debate on migration has been a constant pressing topic, fueled by the words and actions of radical right parties. Especially in 2023, Sweden experienced what was called "*Korankrisen*", or "Quran burning crisis", a series of

incitements where people set fire to the Quran, with the most striking one being enacted by the Danish-Swedish politician Rasmus Paludan outside the Turkish embassy in Stockholm, which caused vehement protests.[1] All this confusion led to even stronger debates, but the narrative was shifted mainly by *Sverigedemokraterna* (The Sweden Democrats, or SD) onto blaming migrants for the gang violence that was spreading in the country, which tried to simplify a much more complex topic (see Ousey & Kubrin, 2018).

1.1 Aim and Purpose

Considering all the issues mentioned at the end of the previous section, sometimes it is easy to focus only on certain subjects and, as an end result, other topics deemed as less important or not politically advantageous get forgotten. While progress has surely been achieved in the past decades, Phillimore et al. (2021) showed that during thorny situations and emergencies (COVID-19 in their case) the already critical condition of migrant women gets even worse. Since the Swedish Government has been increasingly focusing on gang violence, border control and generally on restricting migrants' rights, the risk of setting aside questions regarding violence against migrant women is remarkably high. As a consequence, this thesis tries to contribute and expand the existent literature by addressing the current situation in Lund, Sweden. Lund, which is known to be a student city, presents heterogeneity and a lively atmosphere, due to the high number of students living in it and by surfing between the results on Google, it seems like the city is mostly perceived as a safe place. The general perception however may not be enough to address the topic of violence in a city, since oftentimes the conveyed message only reflects the opinion of the dominant group, excluding the point of view of the minorities. Hence, the aim of the thesis is to engage with migrant women living in Lund in order to give space to their perspective and talk about their experiences in public settings, with the goal to answer two research questions:

[1] https://apnews.com/article/politics-protests-and-demonstrations-sweden-turkey-istanbul-9ff6f1d4a2cc361ed265a786e31d4ee1

How do evolving border policies and political propaganda influence migrant women's perception of safety and experiences in public spaces in Lund, Sweden?

What are the multifaceted forms of violence experienced by migrant women in public spaces within the city of Lund?

1.2 Choosing Lund

The choice of focusing on the city of Lund for the project has different motivations. Sweden has been at forefront of promoting and adopting multiculturalism for decades, but migration issues were not at the top of politicians' agenda in the 1960's and 1970's (Borevi, 2013). The issues and discussions surrounding the topic increased with time and different political shifts produced different policies. The results of those policies are not to be discussed here, but they were and still are particularly important for the southernmost region of Sweden, Skåne. The region has been the entry point for many migrants and refugees for decades, and it used to take in a big share of them. With the rising popularity of far-right-wing parties among the people living in the region, however, less and less refugees were taken in (from 2766 in 2016 to 769 in 2020, per Swedish Migration Agency), a clear sign of the changing direction of Sweden's politics.

When talking about migrants, refugees and multiculturalism, Malmö, which is the most populous city in Skåne, is always mentioned, admittedly for the wrong reasons. Countless news, conveyed in a sensationalistic fashion, can be found on the internet or heard on the media outlets about how many of the city's problems have their roots in the high number of people with foreign background living there, constantly putting it in the eye of the storm. On the other side Lund, the third most populous city in the region and distant roughly only 16 km from Malmö, is recognized for other features, namely the University. It presents a different situation migration wise, with the foreign population composed mainly by students being 23.7% in 2023,

compared to 35.9% of Malmö.[2] Given those premises, investigating Malmö make sense in a way and researchers focused their attention on the city, while Lund did not receive the same consideration.

Following this line of thought, I felt that Lund was a bit of an underexplored area in regard to migration issues and an investigation conducted about the city could be beneficial both to uncover the uniqueness of the case and contribute to the body of literature already existent on the subject. Moreover, after having lived in Lund for almost two years, I learnt to appreciate the city, but at the same time I also started to notice certain dynamics at play that are very fascinating to me. For those reasons, the project was born, slowly took form and turned into this thesis.

1.3 Structure

Chapter 1: introduces the topics that will be faced in the thesis, specifies aim, problem statement and research questions. It explains why the case presented was chosen and which motivations pushed the author to tackle it.

Chapter 2: details the thoughts about methodology and methods used. It will state considerations about the research design and all the steps that were necessary in order to carry out qualitative research, but also the limitations that may have occurred during the process.

Chapter 3: goes in-depth into the major theories and concepts that are taken into consideration in order to exhaustively comprehend the experiences of migrant women. In particular, notions of bordering and othering will be introduced, followed by an analysis of how populism deals with migration issues. The last two subsections will discuss the other two major components of the research, which are public spaces and sexual and gender-based violence.

[2] https://www.scb.se/en/finding-statistics/statistics-by-subject-area/population/population-composition/population-statistics/

Chapter 4: serves as an overview of the political background of the European Union and presents global migration issues, from surveillance to political propaganda. Examples and cases from around the world and various state members of the EU will be presented, in order to display multiple connections between words and actions of governments, media coverage and the increasingly harsh treatment that migrants have been receiving.

Chapter 5: delves specifically into a literature review of violence against women and migrant women in public settings. The first part aims to address and describe different contexts in the global north, to demonstrate that the issue is not related only to global south countries, while the subsequent part follows the trails of incidents surrounding mainly Muslim women and tries to spark more engagement on the research topic.

Chapter 6: displays the results of the data gathered and tries to contextualize them in the research scope. Primarily, the aim of the section is to give space to the interviewees' voices, reporting their points of view and individual experiences. Secondly, the author will try to analyze the conversations, highlighting, where possible, the connections with the theoretical framework and previous research. Lastly, new paths for future research will be considered, as new challenges arose from the interactions with interviewees.

Chapter 7: ties the thesis together and tries to give a satisfying answer to the research questions formulated in the introduction.

2. Methodology

This section discusses the methodological framework of the thesis. The first subsection will discuss the author's perspective, as the positioning in regard to the philosophy of science is a necessary clarification in order to get a better comprehension of the whole project. The second subsection of the chapter continues to address questions regarding the author's positionality and some of the struggles that originated from the analysis process. The third segment of the chapter tackles the research design, which lays its foundation in a qualitative approach, proposing a case study, with the chosen method for gathering data being the one of interviews. The fourth subsection tries to uncover the extent of the limitations, while the last part reflects on the ethics regarding the method for gathering data.

2.1 Ontology and Epistemology: Brief Reflections

For the past five months, during the put in writing of the thesis, questions regarding my perspective have been cyclically coming to mind and at times it felt like it has been quite hard to firmly position myself in a precise realm or as a follower of a specific paradigm.

Despite this, I started off with the idea of moving within a critical realist sphere, and the results can be seen in multiple parts of the project. Critical realism was born from the ideas of Roy Bhaskar and other British social theorists and at the core of it does not "presume that the structures of reality are somehow self-evident or even directly observable" (Gorski, 2013, p. 659). The world is in fact seen as theory-laden, but not determined by the theories themselves. Some sort of reality exist and is out there, but each theory proposed to offer an explanation is the result of a process of interpretation and personal experience, hence, any attempt to uncover events also means attempting to understand the underlying mechanisms that are not visible (Danermark et al., 2002).

Various concerns arose during the interviews and the analysis process, where sometimes I found myself thinking that I was floating towards the edge of the critical realist orbit, due to a strong connection with the concept of situated knowledge (Haraway, 1988). Ultimately, also thanks to a more thorough reading of the literature (specifically New, 2020) I realized that the critical realist approach reflects the work done on this thesis. To be more accurate, in the presentation of the case for this thesis, ontology can be defined as realist while epistemology is closer to constructivism (Erickson, in Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 120). I believe that with this approach I could capture some of the nuances of the case and show implications that would have not been seen otherwise.

2.2 Positionality

Positionality is of significant importance in qualitative research. As a white male from Italy, when I was younger (guiltily) I did not even realize the number of privileges I had solely because of my gender and my skin color. Fortunately, things have changed from more than a decade ago, so when I decided to tackle this topic, I was fully aware of the risks undertaken. Especially during the interviews, I tried my best to reduce the power imbalance by carefully listening and trying to have a dialogue instead of guiding the interviewees to determined points of interest in the research. In this way I tried to get a fresh and deeper understanding of different perspectives that, before the conversation held with migrant women, I only knew about through academic papers and books.

But after one of the first interviews, despite thinking of myself as a clean slate, I realized that news, media and stories heard influenced me more than I thought it could be possible. This sudden “awakening” happened during the analysis of the notes taken during one of the first interviews, where I gained awareness of how I very much misinterpreted the words of one of the participants. In fact, while talking about the perception of safety, my brain immediately thought that the feeling of danger described was connected to a high number of migrants living in a specific area, while clearly that was not the reason the interviewee felt that way. Needless to

say, I felt a sense of embarrassment, but at the same time I knew that jumping back in the literature could have given me a more suitable direction and a different approach.

It was this way that I found a lifeline in the idea of situated knowledge (Haraway, 1988). I firmly believe that the concept of objectivity in qualitative research is fundamentally flawed, especially when considering that objectivity was for the longest time synonymous of research conducted by white males. It is by following Haraway's lead that I have dived back in the project with the mindset of giving more significance to the interviewed migrant women's words, instead of my own previous knowledge and preconceptions. For this reason, I am convinced that I was able to put myself in a new position and I moved between the lines of semi-structured and unstructured interviews. Acknowledging the partiality of the research was a key component of my approach and, conscious of the concepts of reflexivity (Sultana, 2007), empathy (Finlay, 2005) and the influence of emotions (Blakely, 2007), in this project I tried to avoid "speaking for them" and at the same time strived to spotlight the interviewees' stories and experiences.

2.3 Research Design

2.3.1 Methods

The start of the project was characterized by overwhelming ambition and optimism. Investigating violence against migrant women in public spaces in Lund made me think of different methods I could have used to uncover a delicate topic like this. While the idea of tackling the issue presenting a case study was pretty much straightforward, the road to gather data was definitely bumpier.

Inspired by Bell (2008) and following the guide of Latz (2017), the idea of utilizing the photovoice method seemed fitting for my purpose. Unfortunately, I quickly realized that creating and being a part of a network of migrant women willing to participate in the research would have been an arduous task, mainly because of difficulties in getting in contact with them and organizing a group, but also because

of the fact that in Scandinavia during the winter, due to some weather conditions and darkness, there is a tendency to use public spaces less frequently (Larsson & Chapman, 2020).

As a consequence, I decided to shift my focus on organizing a focus group by contacting associations operating in Lund. Here, I found myself struggling again, mainly for my own mistakes. I underestimated how this process can be lengthy, as struggles in getting in touch with key figures and broken communications slowed down the whole operation. From this setback came the decision of fully diving into interviews. Both using a private network, the help of friends and social media, I was able to talk with migrant women living in Lund in an attempt to understand and convey their perspectives through the conversations held with them.

2.3.2 Case Study

"We study a case when it itself is of very special interest"
(Stake, 1995, p. xi).

The avenue chosen in order to present the research is the case study method. Gerring, despite admitting the difficulties of defining a case study, describes it "as an in-depth study of a single unit (a relatively bounded phenomenon) where the scholar's aim is to elucidate features of a larger class of similar phenomena" (2004, p. 341), but numerous other definitions surfaced during the years, each one with a slightly variation from the others. Among the advantages of case study, of great importance is the possibility that it gives to the researcher to get closer to the subject, creating the premises to question assumptions and hypotheses, some of which are inevitably wrong (Flyvbjerg, 2006). The knowledge derived from a case study could be very valuable, inasmuch can provide a deeper understanding of multifaceted events.

Gerring's definition of case study helps in sketching a general idea of what a case study could be, but for this project, I am mostly guided by Stake's concept of it. In *The Art of Case Study Research* (1995), Stake is more interested in the uniqueness of a case, he wants to hear stories, he puts emphasis on interpretation. That is also what I am trying to achieve, as I want to better understand the situation in the context of

the city of Lund and understand the meanings. Therefore, this research is not necessarily a mean to understand other cases as well. Sure, there might be connections and similarities between this case and another one tackling the same subject and the references to the literature might be numerous, but in telling the stories of migrant women living in Lund I am not aiming for generalization.

2.3.3 Interviews

"Interview because I am interested in other people's story"

(Seidman, 2006, p. 7)

While the original plan for this project was different, interviews were considered from the start as one of the main methods in order to increase the knowledge on the subject. Interviews in qualitative research, which were initially employed in fields such as anthropology and sociology in the early 20th century, have become increasingly popular with time. One of the reasons for this can be found in the richness of insights that the method can provide while investigating feelings, experiences or social practices of groups, and the meanings that they attribute to those living experiences (Edwards & Holland, 2013). The most used types of qualitative interviews are semi-structured and unstructured (ibid, p. 29) which provide different kinds of freedom, but despite the differences between the two, both aim to foster a conversation instead of a rigid set of questions and answers. After all, "listening is the most important skill in interviewing" (Seidman, 2006, p. 78).

There were only a few requirements I was looking for when trying to connect with the participants. First, of course, the women had to be adults. Second, the women had to have migrated to Sweden. Third, they had to live in Lund during the time of the interview. Aside from those three conditions, anyone who wanted to talk to me was more than welcomed, with no distinctions between religions or backgrounds. During the interviews carried out for this project I obtained written consent about how the data would have been used, except in one case, where the interviewee personally granted to me oral consent, with mention to Lund University guidelines, obtained after asking her if it was appropriate having the conversation, to which the

participant replied affirmatively. The total number of interviews is nine, the duration of each conversation was not fixed and it swinged from 35 minutes to more than 1 hour, depending on the interviewee's schedule. There were no recordings, upon request of the initial participants, but there were no objections from them of me taking notes. Because of this, I decided to keep the same procedure for the subsequent interviews, as despite the limitations, it worked fairly well and let me keep some consistency in the methods. For this exact reason, during the analysis, only a handful of direct quotes will be presented, but it is my belief that those words and/or sentences are important to the participants, as they put a strong emphasis on them during the conversations we had together. Privacy was very relevant for all of the interviewees, hence all the names in the analysis are completely fictional and there are no associations between the names used and the origin of a specific person. Still, to give some context to a heterogeneous group of people, the participants allowed me to either mention their religion or their generic birthplace (e.g., North Africa, East Asia). In this way I was able to guarantee anonymity, but still provide enough information for the cases to be better understood.

The interviews were carried out between February and May 2024 in different locations, like parks, playgrounds or cafés in the city of Lund. In one instance, the interview was carried out at the participant's house, while in two instances the interviews were performed online, using Computer Mediated Communication (MCM). The language used in interviews was English. When small problems of communications arose, both the interviewer and the interviewees could make use of some translation tools (e.g., google translate. More on this in the next section). After the conversations, I had a routine of sorts that helped in getting a more rounded version of the stories and also helped with the analysis performed at a later time. I usually spent between 20 to 45 minutes to read through my notes, try to organize them and write a bit more while my memory was still fresh in recalling exact words. This procedure was very beneficial and definitely was a central part of the process, as I believe it made me achieve more satisfactory results.

2.4 Limitations

The research presents some flaws. Above all, and as already mentioned in the methods section, time constraints partially due to my own mistakes limited the extent of the research. Although nine interviews were conducted, the deviations from the original plan have affected some of the outcomes during the analysis. As a novice in research, I take on the responsibility of this shortcoming and also learnt a very valuable lesson.

On second instance, and as already mentioned in the previous subsection, being a white male most likely influenced all the conversation I had with the participants. Despite my best efforts, some power imbalances (male – female, white man – minority, researcher – researched) were still present to some degree. Understandably, during the interviews some thoughts might have been concealed, perhaps as a consequence of a lack of trust, or maybe because some of the memories and experiences were too personal to be told to a stranger. Aware of Listerborn's experience during her interviews conducted in Malmö, where she "felt that some of the women were trying to please by telling of positive experiences, while their body language told a different story" (2015a, p. 105), I tried to pay attention to this possible circumstance but, as far as I could tell, it did not seem to be that way in this research.

Concerning the language, the limitation was negligible. All the participants could communicate in English, but occasionally some Swedish words were used. In some of those cases, although my knowledge of the Swedish language is limited, I could translate them, but in the circumstances where I did not know a specific word, I would simply use a translation website to get a grasp of it and then wrote the word in my notes in order to research it better during the analysis process, for the purpose of putting it in an appropriate context.

It is to be noted that by using interviews as the only method for gathering data, I missed out on the possibility of implementing a triangulation procedure with data gathered in other ways (e.g., focus group). Furthermore, the whole process of setting them up, together with the subsequent analysis performed, has been quite time

consuming, even if absolutely necessary. Lastly, since the interviews were not recorded, I had to rely mostly on my notes, which sometimes were very scatterbrained, and my own memory in recalling precise words and ideas.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

Since the interview method is the only one utilized in this project to gather data, ethics are of great importance and must be considered thoughtfully. In the interviews conducted, for all the participants, although to different degrees, anonymity was key. For some it was their name, for some their origin, for some the amount of time spent in Sweden; hence why during the analysis part the personal information regarding them is going to be very vague and what is displayed is only and exclusively how they wanted to be represented.

On a second note, I made sure to be as clear as possible in explaining what the scope of my project was before fixing an interview. In this way, if someone changed their mind, they could freely contact me and tell me about their decision. Sure enough, the foundation of the thesis relies on very personal experiences and I would have fully understood if the participants had no desire in sharing their stories. Furthermore, at the start of each interview, I reminded them again that they could stop at any time if they felt uncomfortable during the conversation.

Lastly, I tried to be as respectful as possible, both in the way of presenting myself and during the conversations and I had the feeling that the majority of the participants felt a bit more relaxed because there were no recordings during the interviews. While this was most likely limiting (see the previous section), I preferred giving absolute priority to their feelings and to the creation of an informal environment. Hopefully, I managed to succeed at least in that.

3. Theoretical Framework

In this section the theoretical framework of the thesis will be presented. The chapter goes through different concepts that lay the foundations necessary as a mean to display the current situation of migrant women. The first two subsections tackle the concepts of bordering and othering, which go hand in hand in a close relation and the consequences on migrants. Next is a dive into the intricate subject of populism, an essential part required in order to understand the rhetoric and the narrative of many right-wing political parties and the negative effects of their words and actions. The fourth subsection addresses the idea of public space, with Lefebvre as a starting point, followed by a gendered perspective that explains how the way public space is constructed influences the experiences of women that live it. Lastly, the fifth subsection delves more into migrant women's perspectives and digs into the discourse of sexual and gender-based violence.

3.1 Bordering

The discussion around boundaries and borders experienced a newfound attention throughout the 1990's (Newman & Paasi, 1998). Van Houtum & Van Naerssen, which stated that "Bordering processes do not begin or stop at demarcation lines in space. Borders do not represent a fixed point in space or time, rather they symbolise a social practice of spatial differentiation." (2002, p. 126), were among the first scholars to try to define the evolving concept of borders. Particularly, they highlighted how "the actual placement of strangers is often conceived of as a threat to nationally cohesively ordered space and identity" (p. 130), putting the emphasis on the importance of migration and, in retrospective, almost sending a warning on how easily bad policies could worsen a delicate situation. What the authors wrote more than 20 years ago has become more than evident nowadays: the focus of many is to "hunt" for differences because considered dangerous, instead of seeing them as an opportunity for enrichment.

Fast forward twenty years, migration quickly emerged as one of the hottest topics in current day politics. Simmons and Kenwick (2022), who delved into the discourse around border security, introduced the concept of border orientation, which is "*the extent to which the State is committed to the public, authoritative, and spatial display of control over territorial entry and exit at its national borders*" (italic in the original text, p. 5). This definition serves as a measure to understand a country orientation, which can range from relatively permissive to controlling, depending on the policies adopted. More interestingly, they also exhibited a connection between right-wing populism and concerns regarding border control, showing that this kind of rhetoric heavily influences the people's opinion on the matter: in this way, practices of bordering become part of everyday life.

Yuval-Davis, Wemyss and Cassidy tackled the issue from a similar perspective. In the introduction of *Bordering* (2019) they wrote that "borders and bordering have moved from the margins into the centre of political and social life" (p. 1). This has, of course, a political significance, but what also implies is the exacerbation of bordering within the territory of countries, different from the classic forms of control performed on physical borders that divide any state. The authors argue that processes of bordering are heavily influenced by neoliberalism and neoliberal globalization, pointing out three main connections. First, neoliberal globalization drastically increased cross-border mobilities of people, goods, service and capital, fostering surveillance practices both on and within countries' borders. In second instance, the mentioned mobility caused changes in the labour market which led to a "neoliberal restructuring of capitalism" (p. 12), where companies relied more and more on flexible labor and workers coming from outside the country. Hence, questions of accessibility became relevant, with governments controlling passports and visas and having great power over the flow of people, with the risk of discrimination being very high. Lastly, with the exacerbation of neoliberalism, economic and social inequalities became more polarized, both between different countries and within the countries themselves, worsening the situation of people that migrate with the hope of improving their living conditions.

3.2 Othering

The “hunt” mentioned at the start of the previous subsection is what could be defined as othering. The concept of other was introduced by Spivak (1985, 1988) and the consequent focus on practices of othering has gone through many discussions. Nowadays Paasi, while revisiting Von Houtum & Van Naerssen article from 2002, describes it as “a complex, dynamic and malleable phenomenon, which is historically contingent, political and politicised phenomenon that often finds new forms and tends to multiply borders” (2021, p. 20). The choice of using the words “multiply borders” is very interesting, and it refers to the creation of new borders within a country’s borders. The concept has an intricate nature and “the discursive differentiation between “us” and “them” seen through the lens of spatial bordering” is at the center of the scholars’ interest, as noted by Van Houtum & Van Naerssen (2002, p. 125), but at the same time a need for carefulness is required, in order to not trivialize the subject.

Of fundamental importance in the concept of othering is the recognition of distinct power dynamics between groups of people, with one of them feeling threatened while firmly holding control. Regardless of some examples coming from non-western countries, othering has been mainly and widely discussed from Western countries perspective, with the “self” being indeed western people and the “other” being a minority (Sonnis-Bell & Ryan, 2018). Heavily influenced by Said’s work, Sonnis-Bell put the emphasis on how the process of othering is completely arbitrary and defining the “other” has also become a way to define the “self”, leading to very tangible consequences that span from discrimination to violation of human rights.

An ulterior layer about the subject surfaced with the Russian invasion of Ukraine at the start of 2022. Since the beginning of the war, in fact, the majority of the European Union members, including the notorious anti-migration ones, decided to open their borders to welcome the Ukrainians who fled the country, providing them with shelter and overall aid. This propositional behavior is definitely different from the previous actions executed in the reception of refugees. Paré (2022), recalling and analyzing the events of the 2015-2016 migrant “crisis” in Europe, underscored how people coming in from Syria, Afghanistan and other countries in the global south

were (and still are) not welcomed, with governments putting a considerable amount of resources in practices of securitization and media building and reinforcing the idea of "other". The reason of this divergence can be traced in a "new" way of expressing hostility against migrants and refugees that involves race. Claiming to protect a European identity (but actually referring only to whiteness and Christianity), politicians such as Viktor Orbán were at the forefront of this campaign. Depicting Muslims as invaders, engaging in discourses about religion and values, making comparisons that supposedly highlighted the differences between Ukrainians and Muslims resulted in a strengthening of the idea of othering which, as explained earlier, is completely arbitrary.

3.3 Populism

As briefly mentioned in the introduction, defining populism is a hard task. In the European context, populism became an umbrella term connected mainly to far-right-wing parties, but since those parties could be very much different from each other, it seems unclear what the word is assumed to represent. As stated by Lazaridis et al. (2016, p. 3), "What is it supposed to express: a value system, an ideology, a political style or a way of using narratives?" Due to its multifaceted nature, scholars have had difficulties in finding a common ground. What is clear is that the parties that are defined as populists are against globalization and all claim or rather believe to voice the will of the people. As a consequence, those parties consider the people as a homogenous group, a unique entity and display nationalistic ideas that directly lead to the exclusion of who is not considered to be part of the group, namely minorities, thus creating the category of the "other". The connection with concepts like people's sovereignty over a territory, nativism and generally nationalism is strong, but each party has subtle differences with other parties. As reported by Lazaridis et al. (2016), while some retain extreme views, others have started shifting their behavior towards a fabricated de-extremization, in an attempt to gain more support and be power holders in mainstream politics, a process that has been working, as reported later in chapter 4 of this thesis. This can be related to previous studies carried out by Wodak, which distinguished an "oppositional habitus" and a "governmental habitus" (2015,

p. 47), as a way to explain the compromises made by far-right-wing parties in order to be accepted as a part of a governing coalition.

Wodak et al. (2016) also identify a common gender aspect in the narrative of the mentioned parties. In fact, while on the surface they may declare that they endorse policies that supposedly should be favorable to women's well-being, with a quick analysis of their words and actions it is possible to see how gender discourses are used for propaganda purposes. The real goal is still to create the "other" category, which in many instances refers to Muslim people. As discussed in the next chapters in the Danish and French case, this type of storytelling consists in diminishing "their" values while simultaneously claiming that "our" values are better, but in a contradictory way women still end up being recipient of detrimental policies that instead of guaranteeing freedom, do the exact opposite.

Although social media are not dominated only by right and far-right parties and politicians (Postill, 2018), what seems to associate those parties with each other is also the presence of a strong and charismatic leader, usually but not anymore necessarily male, that makes heavy use of media or, more recently, social media and "employ *front-stage performance* techniques" (Wodak et al., 2013 p. 28). The prime example is certainly Donald Trump, but even limiting the scale to the European Union it is easy to find figures that fit this description: Silvio Berlusconi earlier and Matteo Salvini later in Italy, Viktor Orbàn in Hungary, Marine Le Pen in France are all figures that use social media as primary channel of propaganda, taking advantage of the power that those means of communication hold.

3.4 Public Space

Many definitions of public space have been proposed during the past 50 years and across different disciplines, from geographers to architects, going via anthropologists, but for many *The Right to the City* (1968), *The Urban Revolution* (1970) and *The production of Space* (1974) by Lefebvre were invaluably inspirational and the starting point of many discussions both on space and public space. The work of the French philosopher is in fact of fundamental importance and

by making sense of his analysis it is possible to read into a critique of how capitalism commodifies and/or privatizes anything, abiding by the rules of the markets even when it should not be possible, to the detriment of people's well-being. Especially in *The Urban Revolution*, while talking about the possibility of reaching happiness by living in the city, his critique of urban planning delved into how the people's interest is obscured by the interest of the capital: "This does not mean that demography will become dominant, but that it will have a voice, rather than the right or power to determine the future. In other situations, economics will dominate, helped by planners" (p. 141). This line of thought is carried over in *The Production of Space*, where Lefebvre, among the other topics, dug deeper in the analysis of public spaces, which he described as "dominated" (p. 166) and how they are meant "to be an opening outwards" (p. 147). The philosopher, however, recognized that this idea was far to be true since public spaces were increasingly shaped after private enterprise and private property.

Lefebvre's influence is apparent when looking at Low & Smith description of public space: "Public space is traditionally differentiated from private space in terms of rules of access, the source and nature of control over entry to a space, individual and collective behavior sanctioned in specific spaces, and rules of use. Whereas private space is demarcated and protected by state-regulated rules of private property use, public space, while far from free of regulation, is generally conceived as open to greater or lesser public participation" (2013. pp 4-5). The book *The Politics of Public Space* is a call to mind by the authors to many of Lefebvre's ideas. How the increasing commodification of public space headed into the extreme by presenting the topic of gated communities, for example, is an accurate representation of the capital taking over the people's need. Moreover, in chapter 6, while engaging in a discussion around terror talk and consequences on children ("privatization of children's play", p. 105), Cindi Katz displayed a strong tie between private sector and public space, as a consequence of the continuous cuts operated by governments on public spendings. In this way the private sector was able to influence the policy making process and the decisions regarding who can and who cannot enjoy the space, favoring only specific categories of people (see also Kohn, 2004). In Katz's words, "privatization reinforces uneven relations of power and privilege" (p. 118).

3.4.1 Gendered Urban Space: The Feminist Critique

The increasing commodification and privatization of public spaces is also one of the targets of the feminist critique, but as early as the 1960's and before the spread of the phenomenon, Jane Jacobs in her book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961) was already criticizing the way of conceiving urban planning. Jacobs' work was groundbreaking and went through several distinctive themes, among which the design of pavements and parks, but also the dynamics of city life, how cities are naturally hubs for diversity and the importance of interactions and contacts in public spaces. The magnitude of her work was significant and many of her ideas later became crucial in the development and proposal of solutions in many feminist theories on different topics, like the perception of safety/fear in public spaces by women.

Since then, extensive research has been conducted in order to shed light on the issue. During 1987-1988, Gill Valentine conducted interviews and group discussions with women living in Reading, England. The article "Women's fear and the design of public space" (1990) was born from those conversations. The message conveyed is pretty clear and highlighted how space is substantially male controlled, but also showcased a sizeable number of nuanced problems and advocated for the inclusion of women's perspective in urban planning. The results displayed the fact that women living in Reading "anticipate themselves to be at risk in several distinct types of place" (p. 289) and this is due to different existing conditions, for example certain types of narrow spaces with limited exits, the design of parks and the substantial lack of lighting. Moreover, the group of women came up with some possible solutions in order to improve the sense of safety, among which changing the lighting from yellow to bright white, using white paint in places like multi-storey car parks in order to enhance visibility and building footbridges instead of underground passages.

With time the feminist critique also moved towards an analysis of privatized public space. Following Day (1999), "by disregarding gender we overlook or misinterpret some of the more problematic and the more liberating aspects of privatized spaces" (p. 173). Building on Shaw's categorization (1994), Day also contended that public space "is often constrained for women", "can be constraining for women" or "may

support resistance for women" (p. 159) and despite agreeing on the fact that privatized spaces reiterate the reproduction of race and class dynamics, put an emphasis on moving towards a different approach, one that takes into account how "privatized spaces may reinforce gender norms and stereotypes." (p. 174)

Both Valentine and Day in their respective articles made mentions about different ethnic groups, but while Valentine exposed how white women perceived safety of certain public spaces was based on prejudices or preconceived images of the people living in that specific space, Day opened up a path to explore the perception and the experiences of different groups and, considering Massey (1994), space is not static but dynamic, just as like "social relations are never still" (p. 2). Based on those ideas it is safe to say that migrants, like every other component of public space, are a fundamental element of it and their gender influences the way they live it. Subsequent research have come to a point of contact with Shaw's categorization of public space as a support for migrants women's resistance, but also and especially for young migrant women as a space of negotiation (Yeoh & Huang, 1998; Dwyer, 2000 and Ehrkamp, 2013). Despite the efforts of the mentioned scholars and many others, gender often remains neglected during the process of shaping cities (Beebeejaun, 2017) and for certain part of the population, namely minorities, the right to everyday life (Lefebvre, 1991) is still something that needs to be achieved.

3.5 Sexual and Gender-Based Violence: The Migrants' Situation

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is a well-recognized global issue. The UNHCR gives a definition of SGBV: "Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is violence committed against a person because of his or her sex or gender. It is forcing another person to do something against his or her will through violence, coercion, threats, deception, cultural expectations, or economic means. Although the majority of victims and survivors of SGBV are girls and women, boys and men can also be

harmed by SGBV".[3] Starting from the definition itself, it is possible to understand how women are mainly targeted and the literature (Russo & and Pirlott, 2006, Sanjel, 2013; Heidari and Moreno, 2016. Some research suggested a more gender-balanced situation, when talking about the victims. See Keygnaert et al., 2014) mostly confirms this, still recognizing that men can be subjected to it too. Nonetheless, SGBV is predominantly carried out by men and the reality seems to get worse when talking about violence against migrant women, which are too often subjected to it (e.g., what is defined as "transactional sex" which happens during different stages of the journey. See Freedman, 2016).

Freedman et al. in "Thinking about Gender and Violence in Migration: An introduction" (2022), pointed out how the increasing securitization of borders is leading to a parallel growth of migrants' uncertainties (mainly related to safety and money) during the process of crossing. Moreover, they focused their attention on how institutions like the European Union have been unwilling to seriously consider the violence that migrant women are subjected to as a sufficient motivation to guarantee protection to them. The authors also recognized that oftentimes the lack of gendered approach creates or reinforce stereotypes and representations that do not match with the women's experiences and needs, so the policymakers, lacking proper context, are not equipped to handle the situation in a proper way.

When in a new country, migrant women are subjected to several types of violence and from different groups of people, sometimes even from strangers (Freedman & Jamal, 2008). Also considering Phillimore et al., violence "extends beyond the refugee journey and into resettlement, as women and children are subjected to SGBV in receiving countries" (2022, p. 718). This is both true for migration and forced migration and the experiences of violence shape the migrant's process of integration, as in many cases the trauma could be never overcome. Moreover, the authors report that a stronger support during the path of integration may help them in slowly get through the violence, but the failure of the proposed policies could actually worsen their already critical situation. Especially (but not exclusively) for forced migrants,

[3] https://help.unhcr.org/turkiye/social-economic-and-civil-matters/sexual-and-gender-based-violence/

questions regarding housing and work or education increase the overall stress experienced because their life is constantly covered by a layer of uncertainty, with overwhelming consequences on their physical and mental health.

Vulnerability is enhanced when factors like gender, class, race and age and their intersections are considered (Crenshaw, 1991), but Reilly et al. (2022), in the context of migration, raised some question around the use of the word or expressions like "vulnerable group" during analysis processes. In fact, the "approach has been criticised for being linked to the stigmatisation, essentialisation, paternalistic targeting and increased control and repression of those identified as vulnerable" (p. 31). This does not mean neglecting the recognition of people in need, but instead of blindly categorize specific groups and put everyone under the same lens, the authors advocated for a different kind of approach, one that considers the specificity of the context. The authors made also clear how the key to achieve a better understanding of vulnerability lies in "situated intersectionality", specifying "the centrality of gender to our understanding of the operation of borders, geographic, political, economic, social or cultural, in migration research" (p. 50).

4. Political Landscape and Migration Issues

This chapter tries to address the current political situation, mainly within the European Union and the consequences related to some of the changes that happened recently. The first part will tackle the general direction that politics have taken in the last decade; the second and third part will continue this discourse by displaying how different countries around the world acts under the influence of governments that have been influenced by populistic narratives; lastly in the fourth part the focal point will be about the general condition in the Nordics, with some examples from Denmark which in a way was a precursor on restrictive policies concerning migrants and migration, Finland which had debates around the access to welfare system by migrants and Sweden, which in the last decade has been changing its attitude in regard to migration issues.

4.1 Recent Political Shift

The European Union has been going through some political changes lately. Early in September 2022, *Sverigedemokraterna* (The Sweden Democrats or SD) gained the second greatest number of votes in the Swedish election, putting them in power for the first time ever in their history, together with other right-wing parties in a government coalition[4]. Shortly after, still in September 2022 and after some years of technocratic government, Italians elected Giorgia Meloni as their Prime Minister, putting the far-right party *Fratelli d'Italia* (Brothers of Italy) in charge within a coalition with other right and centre-right parties[5], re-enacting a situation similar to what had just happened in Sweden. In April 2023, Finland also joined this trend in electing a coalition of centre-right and far-right parties as their representative, with *Kansallinen Kokoomus* (National Coalition Party or NCP), a centre-right party,

[4] https://www.val.se/valresultat/riksdag-region-och-kommun/2022/valresultat.html

[5] https://elezioni.repubblica.it/2022/elezioni-politiche/

gaining the most votes[6]. Lastly, in June 2023, Greece followed in the footsteps of Sweden, Italy and Finland. Three far-right parties entered the Greek parliament: *Niky* (Victory), *Elliniki Lisi* (The Greek Solution) and *Spartiates* (Spartans) gained a total of 13% of the votes.[7] The presence of Spartans specifically raised questions and concerns, given that members of it in the past exhibited connections with neo-Nazi ideologies and were convicted to prison for being affiliated with criminal organizations.

Sweden, Italy, Finland and Greece joined a numerous group of countries that currently have either a centre-right-wing party (e.g., Germany, France, The Netherlands) or a far-right-wing one (e.g., Poland, Hungary) in a government coalition. Their rise to power was mainly possible due to two factors, namely a fabricated de-extremization and small concessions by larger parties that helped extreme ideas to became popular among electors. All those parties have one thing in common: they have slogans that easily capture people's attention and base their political agenda on populism. As briefly mentioned in the introduction and then explained in the theoretical framework, one of the cornerstones of right-wing populism is the aversion towards migrants, which is manifested through the tendency of pointing at them as scapegoats for many societal problems, some of which will be tackled in the next sections of this chapter. As a consequence, member countries of the European Union (but also other countries around the world) are doing everything in their capabilities to strengthen their borders, especially in trying to prevent the ones that are described as "irregular migrants" from coming in[8].

[6] https://vaalit.yle.fi/ev2023/tulospalvelu/en/

[7] https://www.dw.com/en/greece-far-right-makes-resurgence/a-66085348

[8] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021DC0591

4.2 New Barriers

In the early to mid-2000's, Newman (2006) denoted a resurgence in border studies and a closure of the borders themselves as a consequence of 9/11, in a world that due to the globalization process was progressively being seen as borderless. Physical borders started to be implemented again (e.g., fences with razor wire in Calais outside the Eurotunnel) or proposed: in 2018 Saudi Arabia wanted to dig a canal in order to separate itself from Qatar[9], while Donald Trump, during the campaign prior to the 2016 American elections, launched the idea of building a wall on the border between the US and Mexico as his *pièece de réesistance* ("*I would build a great wall, and nobody builds walls better than me, believe me, and I'll build them very inexpensively. I will build a great great wall on our southern border and I'll have Mexico pay for that wall*.")[10].

Despite those examples, it seems like major efforts were put not only on the creation of physical borders but also into security, which had to be maintained at all costs, and surveillance. A fitting example would be the creation of FRONTEX by the EU in 2004, in order to protect its external borders. Since its inception, the organization has been the target of many critiques. Aas & Gundhus (2015) and Rijpma & Vermeulen (2015) showed the contradictions between the organization's narrative, which it is said to focus on guaranteeing human rights and rescuing operations, and its actions, which often go the opposite way, operating in grey areas of the law and trying to relocate unwanted migrants outside EU borders. Especially the latter article, which addressed the European Border Surveillance System (EUROSUR), exposed how saving lives is nowadays only a secondary aspect for FRONTEX. Cusumano (2019) piled on it and displayed how border control operations were gradually taking over to the detriment of actual rescue ones. More recently Glouftsios (2024) delved into secrecy and lack of transparency to show how FRONTEX is involved in human rights violations, just to keep the EU a "safe" place. Those articles reinforce the idea

[9] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/01/saudi-arabia-may-dig-canal-to-turn-qatar-into-an-island

[10] https://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/promises/trumpometer/promise/1397/build-wall-and-make-mexico-pay-it/

of a progressive increase of resources in order to deal with a multifaceted situation, but the data gathered uncovers a worrisome change of direction that ultimately harms the migrants instead of helping them.

The discourse around surveillance is complicated and needs an in-depth analysis. Those practices, in fact, can be executed not only on borders but also within a country territory. McDowell & Wonders (2009) illustrated the case of irregular migrants living in Arizona, USA, their impossibility to access public spaces and their fear of being detected, which led to a drastic change of their habits. Thanks to different focus groups with people living in different areas of the state, specifically in the city of Phoenix and Tucson, the authors could show how migrants' behavior was strongly influenced by state actors, which operated through a combination of "surveillance and policing tactics" (p. 67). The consequence of those actions made migrants adopt some strategies to evade the mentioned forms of control, among which "not driving, not leaving the house, not socializing in public, under-reporting crimes, and not seeking medical attention" (p. 64). The type of enforcement exercised in Arizona was based on instilling fear and clearly had a racial overtone, which aimed at occluding the migrants' freedom in order to keep them in their place, as the title of the article eloquently states.

4.3 Us vs Them

In today's society a complicate issue like migration is often simplified by politicians as "us vs them", as a way for natives to outline some sort of distance and separation from not native people. The Italian example regarding migrants and agriculture fits exactly this narrative. As explained by Iocco et al. (2020), the right-wing party Lega, previously named Lega Nord (Northern League, nowadays League), built a narrative that compared migrants with food. Italians, who are usually sensitive and proud around food discourses, got pestered for years about the defense of Made in Italy, only reachable by closing the ports to "Asian rice". In the same way, Italy itself needed to be defended by a fictional invasion of African migrants, because the people have to be sovereign of the territory. What is strikingly contradictory about

this narrative is that, for starters, despite wanting to close the ports to foreign food coming in, Italian products naturally were meant to be exported everywhere in the world, clearly setting a double standard of "we can do it, but you cannot". Secondly, the discourse purposely and conveniently overlooked the fact that there are many migrant workers in the Italian agriculture sector, which are cheap and easily exploitable for seasonal jobs, making them some sort of backbone of the system.

A parallel can be drawn with a case coming from Spain, but with a gendered perspective. Mannon et al. (2012), in fact, analyzed the case of migrant women workers in Spain's strawberry industry, highlighting some engaging implications. Focusing on the city of Huelva and its province in the region of Andalusia, the authors uncovered how the male temporary workers slowly got replaced by women because deemed as less problematic of migrant men and more malleable, on top of being "cheaper". With preferences dictated by classic gender stereotypes, the Spanish government and employers actively sought for specific categories, which led to critical living conditions. As a matter of fact, spatial segregation was one of the most worrisome outcome, with the migrant women staying at the margin of Spanish society. Furthermore, in 2021 stories surrounding the employers committing acts of sexual abuse started to be uncovered[11], revealing an even harsher context in which the migrant women were forced to work in for years.

Migrants' vulnerability is enhanced when countries go through difficult times, especially (but not only) when the economy is not shining. As underlined by Barbero (2015) in the context of the Spanish case, migrants started to be seen as related to criminal acts, opponents when searching for job opportunities and source of loss of identity for native people. Drawing on De Genova (2002) and De Lucas (2003), Barbero showed how migrants are dehumanized, making them expendables after having fulfilled their duties and making them perfect scapegoats for all sorts of societal problems. Similar but different from the Italian case previously discussed, since the Spanish right-wing parties did not succeed yet in reaching a power position in the parliament, their rise in popularity was still a necessary condition to get to the

[11] https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/7/10/in-spains-strawberry-fields-migrant-women-face-sexual-abuse

point where populism seems ingrained in the actions of both the Spanish government and population.

Another case from Italy reinforces this idea of clash between cultures, while spotlighting the influence of media. Trillò (2019) tackled the happenings surrounding the events of November 2015, when Marco Parma, the president of a public school in the hinterland of Milan, was accused of "cancelling Christmas". The reality of the facts were that the Christmas fest was still regularly taking place, while the Christmas concert was postponed to January for unforeseen events, as explained by the president of the school himself. There was even and investigation on the case, which found that Parma had an impeccable conduct. But it was already too late, as the responses of politicians fueled the debate. The leader of the populist party Lega (League) Matteo Salvini was the first to take the chance, defining Parma as a mad-man and that he should be fired. Furthermore, he displayed Christian images and objects (e.g., a portable nativity scene) in defense of what he considers as Italian values. Other politicians kept the narrative going, continuing to "defend" the right of celebrating Christmas, with even the at the time Prime Minister Matteo Renzi condemning the actions of Parma. In this case, however, it was on the media side that the situation got out of hands. Sensationalistic headlines spread plenty of misinformation, for example claiming that this supposed cancellation was implemented to not hurt the sensitivity of Muslim students after the attacks on the 13th of November in Paris. Some writers went even further, exacerbating the differences between Christians and Muslims with thoughtless words: notably, Marco Garzonio wrote that "A Muslim family would never dream of renouncing to celebrate Ramadan because they fear to hurt the sensitivity of the Milanese people hosting them" (p. 90). With those actions and words, the strengthening of the "us" category aimed once again to increase the distance with "them".

This narrative on the division between native people and migrants carried out by political parties and governments is not the only factor that needs to be considered when discussing this issue. As showed in the second Italian case presented, the influence of newspapers can be very powerful. Thanks to an analysis of media in the European Union and the US, Arcimaviciene & Hamza Baglama (2018) displayed

how the wording used by news outlets strengthened the specific type of storytelling that revolved around opposing “us” and “them” during the refugee “crisis” of 2015 and 2016. The broad usage of metaphors, particularly the catastrophic “natural phenomena”, “crime” and “terrorism” ones, created a connection between migrants and negative collective images. Those metaphors led to the inception, as the authors described, of myths of dehumanization and moral authority. The former pertained to the fact that the media, in their articles and stories, often used verbs that typically refers to objects (e.g., redistribute, pack), while the latter had to do with the natives’ sense of being in the right when presented with crime metaphors about migrants, thus legitimizing their moral stance. In this way, the crack between people got amplified even more.

4.4 The Nordics

While the previous examples from Italy and Spain refer to fairly recent years, Denmark went through similar discourses already in the early to mid-2000’s. Koefoed & Simonsen (2007), drawing on the idea of banal nationalism (Billig, 1995) and thanks to an analysis of media debates and interviews of Danish people, displayed how a fracture was created and how people believed that “Danishness” was being threatened. On one side, the institutions pushed the already mentioned depiction of “us” vs “them” and how the Danish values were better compared to the migrants’ ones (specifically pointing fingers at Islam). On the other side people believed that too many resources were used to help “them” instead of helping “us”, with multiple references at the deteriorating Danish welfare system. Due to these major narratives, Denmark started to experience what Koefoed & Simonsen call “everyday racism” (p. 317), different from the actions of violent far-right-wing nationalists but still very dangerous, as it slowly became the norm and embedded in the Danish society.

Many issues regarding migrants in Finland are closely connected to the welfare system. Migration and integration became hot topics in the early 1990’s, when Ingrian Finns (Russian descendants of Finnish migrants during the 17th century)

started to be considered as returning migrants and the first big refugee group (Somalis) suddenly started moving into the country (Koikkalainen, 2021). The European refugee "crisis" of 2015 and 2016 was one of the turning points in the implementation of stricter measures but, as underlined by Keskinen (2016), a previous shift in 2008 occurred when the right-wing party True Finns (nowadays known as *Perussuomalaiset*, or Finns Party) started getting considerable support, eventually becoming the third party in Finland in 2011. Keskinen explained how some elements that constitute the ideas of Welfare nationalism, chauvinism and exclusionism adopted by mostly right-wing parties (with some exceptions) influenced migration policies, making them stricter and stricter with time. In addition, Finnish people were reported, in comparison to the other Nordic Countries, to be less "willing to provide welfare benefits to migrants unconditionally" (ibid, p. 353). With the end goal of making the welfare system harder to access to migrants, as they struggled with integration and were deemed as economic burdens, residence permits gradually became harder to get.

Sweden has had debates about migrants, specifically refugees, since the late 1980's but only recently has started to implement more and more restrictive policies. In 2015 "all the political parties in parliament but SD and the Left Party agreed that actions were needed to halt the influx of refugees, while still maintaining official commitment to international refugee law" (Salmonsson & Hedlund, 2018 p. 526). The two mentioned parties disagreed for diametrically different reasons: while the left party believed that the measures were extreme, the SD (Swedish Democrats) were firmly stating that stricter policies were needed. This was a decisive step that led Sweden to slowly move away from the humanitarian superpower role it had in the past. More recently, on the 14th of October 2022, the government put forward the proposal of *Tidöavtalet*[12] (Tidö agreement), which between its points aims to reduce the rights of asylum seekers and undocumented migrants. The proposal, in fact, is quite harsh: among the others, the presented measures constrained more and more the municipalities; people started to be subjected to sanctions if they happened to help and not report to authorities those people in vulnerable condition; border control

[12] https://www.liberalerna.se/wp-content/uploads/tidoavtalet-overenskommelse-for-sverige-slutlig.pdf

and surveillance continued to increase and residence permits were harder to obtain. Despite the criticism coming from many associations[13] and also scholars[14] concerning the violations of basic human rights, the agreement is still in place.

[13] https://crd.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Analysis-of-the-Tido-Agreement_Civil-Rights-Defenders_221024.pdf

[14] https://theloop.ecpr.eu/the-tido-agreement-drags-swedens-social-welfare-sector-into-ethical-crisis/

5. Previous Research

While the previous chapter dived into the political climate, the growing importance of borders and the general condition of migrants in some countries within the European Union and generally in the global north, this section will go through a literature review of the research on violence against women and migrant women. When talking about those subjects there is a big quantity of articles referring to and displaying cases from global south countries, but for the purpose of this thesis the focus will be put on the literature regarding and discussing examples in the global north. This decision is necessary in order to shed light on this global issue and to take on a topic that is often considered impactful only in those places labeled as second or third world countries.

5.1 The Global North Taboo

The relation between public spaces and women has been tackled before. When addressing this relation, the concept of safety is of fundamental importance, as it alters how a public space is used and creates questions around accessibility. In order to uncover an issue with so many sides to explore, interdisciplinarity seems a fitting way to proceed (Ceccato & Nalla, 2020). The topic has been widely discussed and it is possible to find literature in regard to it in general terms (e.g., Beebeejaun, 2017), but also specifically about global north (e.g., Jackowska & Ferradás, 2023) and global south countries (e.g., van Geel, 2016; Slymovics, 2016; Sadeghi & Jangjoo, 2022). When talking about violence, though, just with a quick research, it is possible to see how it is quite easy to find an extensive field on studies regarding the global south compared to the global north. For example, when addressing the risk of being subjected to violence while using public or private toilets, Beebeejaun noted that, “in the Western context there has been limited engagement with these themes” (2017, p. 332).

There are of course exceptions to this trend. Tran (2015), from a legal standpoint, tackled two issues like catcalling and creepshots and, in an analysis of American laws, denounced the flaws of the American system regarding street harassment and the privacy of women in public spaces. Moreover, Tran acknowledged that critiques coming from opposers of solutions that involve new stricter laws and regulation tremendously downplayed the harm perpetrated to women, like previously happened for domestic violence cases. Young et al. (2022), instead, offered an insight on women's perception of fear in public spaces within business districts in Seoul, South Korea, analyzing two POPS (privately owned public spaces). The results showed that factors like obscure spots, absence of security facilities and absence of people are the main causes of different fears (precisely violence, theft, sex crime and robbery) among women, highlighting how the production and construction of those spaces can influence their sense of safety. Again, from another perspective, Moreno et al. (2022) conducted an extensive survey about women's apprehension of being harassed in public spaces within the EU, uncovering an overall sense of fear and uncertainty: as a standout statistic, among the others, the research showed that almost four out of ten women (38,4%) that responded to the survey tend to "avoid public spaces where there are no people around" (p. 4172), which is the same motivation that the previously mentioned South Korean researchers attained as well.

An ulterior interesting case comes from Japan. Shibata (2020) investigated the longstanding problem of groping on trains, with women being the main recipients of this form of violence. Despite being the most diffused form of harassment in the country, the law treats it as "a "minor" offence compared with other forms of sexual assault, such as rape" (p. 162), adding to the list of examples where acts of savagery get diminished and downplayed. The research, conducted on the line Tokyo-Kanagawa, displayed some pronounced gender differences in the results, with 125 women (out of 195 total) reporting to have experienced at least one form of harassment, compared to 28 men (out of 195 total). Consequently, women felt less safe using the line, both during daytime and nighttime. Regardless of the measures previously introduced to try to fix the issue and improve travelers' safety perception (especially women), like heavier use of CCTVs and women-only cars, the research showed how those acts of violence are still carried out and more effort is needed.

Sweden is not exempt from these talks. Feminism has had plenty of traction in the Scandinavian country, as gender equality is considered a priority, to the point that for Danish anthropologist Dennis Nørmark, it got out of hand (Eriksson, 2013). Nørmark believed that Swedish women took over, and now men are dominated, in what to him seemed like a shift in the power dynamics. The body of research (see Sandberg & Tollefsen, 2010; Sandberg & Rönnblom, 2013; Listerborn, 2015b), however, displayed another reality, with women's struggles being more relevant than ever and new challenges emerging in a changing society. Moreover, research by Sager & Mulinari (2018), found evidence of xenophobic right-wing parties (namely SD) trying to enact an appropriation of feminism, with their supporters supposedly caring for the "Swedish women", as "protective Swedish men", carrying out acts of othering on Muslims especially. Those scholars, thanks to an interdisciplinary approach, showed how women in Sweden are still fighting in order to make visible some of the neglected threats in public spaces that affect their perception of safety, while simultaneously raising questions about racialized issues, which will be explored in the next section.

5.2 Migrant Women in the Western World: The Veil Problem

As tackled in the previous section, the global north is not necessarily a safe place for women and consequently for migrant women. Some research on the topic is very engaging, particularly islamophobia and the veil seem to be a red thread in the literature regarding this matter.

Ticktin (2008) brought in the example of France in the early 2000's, underlining some interesting implications. In first instance, the violence against (mainly) Muslim women were not perpetrated only by other Muslim people in the Banlieues. In fact, gang rapes were happening also in many other parts of France and they were not necessarily carried out by Muslims. Secondly, apparently the press was only interested in some specific cases regarding violence happening between migrants, as a way to display a negative portrayal of them. Lastly, as if the physical violence was

not enough, discriminatory laws were put in place, enforcing a ban on wearing headscarves and veils in public spaces with the excuse of maintain secularism, but also because those items of clothing were deemed as an instigation to violence. More recently, Khemilat (2021) tackled this issue too, shedding more light on the situation. After almost 15 years from Ticktin's article, public spaces were ulteriorly reinforced as places where secularism and "neutrality" must be enforced at all costs, because considered fundamental values of the Republic, something that Khemilat defines as "Respectable segregation". What was more evident this time and highlighted the clash between cultures was that the reinforcement of "neutrality" was made possible by making visible the dominant norms who were invisible since then (p. 215). In this way, due to the intersection of race and gender, Muslim women were specifically targeted and once more, the veil was at the center of the discussion.

The French case has a fascinating connotation. Najib & Hopkins, in their article "Veiled Muslim Women's strategies in response to Islamophobia in Paris" (2019) stated that "there has been relatively little work that has explored Muslim women's responses to Islamophobia" (p. 104), so they decided to take the matter in their own hands and investigate the subject, conducting a set of interviews with victims of Islamophobia living in Paris. After having explained how Muslim women feel more comfortable in specific areas of the city (e.g., banlieues or the 18th arrondissment) because more familiar or less chic than others, the researchers found a more nuanced view on the tensions present in Paris. As a matter of fact, more than the dichotomy central Paris - suburbs, the biggest tensions lied between places where the socio-economic statuses of the inhabitants were very different from each other. Even if "veiled women who experience Islamophobic acts choose to ignore "minor" acts, such as negative glances, bad comments, sighs and whisper" (p. 106), different strategies are carried out either as signs of resistance or just to be able to live the public space. In the former case, some strategies are more visible, like being overly polite and happy or being part of local society and politics, while in the latter they are more "hidden" and span from avoiding public transportation to adapt the way they dress based on the areas they want to visit. Despite the Muslim women's effort, Najib & Hopkins exposed how the power dynamics at play, which resulted in evident

acts of Islamophobia, tend to increase spatial segregation, raising uncertainty on their right to the city.

In research conducted in Melbourne, Australia, Gholamhosseini et al. (2019), in a similar way as Ticktin, showed how the western narrative sees nonwestern people as source of danger. The authors uncovered migrant women perception of public spaces but also the spreading of Islamophobia. On this last point, some interviewees stated how they would like to wear the hijab in public but, due to racist comments and judgmental looks from people, they avoid doing so. It is important to note that the answer received were very heterogeneous: some women expressed relief because they now have the possibility of not wearing a veil, which in some instances and some places is still a sign of patriarchy and oppression. Despite this, it is pretty clear how the conditions of migrant women in Brisbane are not ideal to say the least.

Regarding the Swedish context and very much relevant to this thesis is the article from Listerborn (2015a) that displays the neglected violence in the city of Malmö against Muslim women that wear the hijab. Drawing on Žižek (2008) for the concept of violence and its different classifications, Listerborn's approach brought to the surface worrisome circumstances. As a point of connection with Gholamhosseini's research, it is argued that more Muslim women would likely wear a veil in public, but the downsides would be ulterior discrimination (e.g., it is significantly harder to get a permanent job) and racial profiling, because they most likely would be identified as a threat. The interviews, in fact, displayed a staggering number of situations where Muslim women were subjected to different kinds of violence: subjective, symbolic, systemic. This relates directly with the previous mentioned Danish case, since the research exposed how the violence and the racism are carried out constantly, embedded and connected with the foundations of society, but differs in perspective: the voices of Muslim women in Malmö, in fact, showed the other side of everyday racism, revealing a much more uncomfortable reality in which they are living in. Additionally, the data gathered emphasized an engaging outcome, one which relates to the perception of space, as parts of the city were clearly defined as "Swedish" or as "immigrant areas" (p. 110). Again, questions about the right to the city are to be investigated more.

6. Findings: Analysis and Discussion

To better comprehend the feelings and the experiences of migrant women living in Lund, this section of the thesis will display and analyze the data gathered during the interviews in order to build something concrete from the theoretical abstractions previously discussed. The stories told to me by the participants will have the priority and eventual connections with the theories mentioned in earlier chapters will be highlighted, where possible. The final subsections, instead, will address new paths that could be followed in future research on the topic, as a way to spark interest and further increase the knowledge on the subject.

6.1 The Looks

As mentioned at the start of the thesis, Lund is a very lively city. Being the destination of many international students makes it quite diverse, with many different cultures interacting with each other and the people living in the city have experienced this heterogeneity for many years. Despite the apparent openness, many of the interviewees illustrated to me how, many times, they felt a sense of uneasiness while, for example, walking down the streets or sitting on a bench in a park (e.g., Stadsparken, in the case that will be described shortly). As stated by Abigail, a Muslim woman that has been living in Lund for a few years, “I don’t know if it’s just me but.. I don’t know if it’s because of this” (pointing at her hijab) “but sometimes people just look at me.. but I don’t think I’m doing something wrong, I’m just sitting”. Abigail is indeed not doing anything wrong. Circling back for a second to the concept of public spaces, openness has been defined as one of the fundamental features that they should have, so spending time in a public park should be everyone’s right. However, this space is constrained for Abigail. Moreover, it is very interesting how she used “I don’t think” to express that specific thought, almost as a way to convince herself once more, despite the doubts. Continuing with the conversation, it turned out that as long as she remembers, it is mostly “adults” (most

likely meaning older people) performing this kind of act. She got used to this type of treatment so much that she told me that she tries to not give much importance to it (Najib & Hopkins, 2019), but oftentimes the thought of somehow being out of line lays somewhere in the back of her mind. The veil, which as shown by previous research is most likely one of the reasons why she is recipient of indiscreet looks, is not the only cause of this behavior. Some of the other interviewees with different backgrounds, in fact, expressed similar feelings and mentioned almost identical experiences in different public spaces (e.g., Lund Centralstation), with the attitude of some people being over the top and culminating in uncomfortable long stares. It seems that the participants have a hard time putting their finger on it, but they clearly feel that something is off and wonder if it is because of their appearance. On the other side, other participants seemed to not have noticed anything odd on this matter. One interviewee from East Asia which has previously had bad experiences in Europe, who also started worrying before coming to Sweden after having read of instances of racism on public transportation, stated that regarding the issue of staring, she has not experienced any racist behavior in Lund. She does not recall any specific instance in which she felt "observed" and, even if she sometimes suspects that some forms of racism could be hidden or not as explicit, she told me that she felt comfortable right away and still feels that way.

The described situations are different from the previously mentioned article written by Listerborn (2015a), who talked about different violent encounters in the city of Malmö. While in her case an old man was kicking his shopping cart towards a migrant (p. 105), or people were saying bad words (p. 106), the stories presented in this part of the research do not exhibit an evident interaction or sign of hate. On the other hand, the unwanted attention and the repetition of the same situations points at instances of symbolic violence and everyday racism, or rather a subtle version of it, as this sort of behavior is carried out continuously and as if it is embedded in the perpetrators' culture. Despite this and building on the commentary given by the interviewee from East Asia that came as a bit of a contrast with the rest of the experiences, what seems to emerge from the conversations is that different backgrounds are linked to different perceptions and may also be linked to receiving

different treatments from the dominant group of citizens, a concept that will be a red thread throughout the analysis of the interviews.

6.2 The Words and the Actions

Not all the people from dominant groups restrain themselves from interacting with migrant women. R. is from East Asia; she is a student and has been living in Lund for almost a year now. While her limited stay does not allow her to make comparisons about changes throughout the years, she still can feel some effects of the violence on her own skin. As a matter of fact, she already had an unpleasant experience when, while walking around the streets of Lund and minding her own business, a drunk man outside a bar approached her and decided to start a conversation. Because of her looks, the mentioned man randomly felt the need to share the fact that he has an Asian girlfriend and how much he loves Asian food. The interaction did not last long, but the participant was understandably pretty baffled after the event and felt very uncomfortable. This experience is representative of a "culture of male entitlement" (Maitra et al. 2023, p. 60), that is a kind of behavior for which men think it is adequate to interact with women in any way they want, not caring about the implications. In this instance, R. was subject to street-based harassment. In addition, this can be seen as a case of symbolic violence. First of all, the conversation that was initiated was based on very basic racist generalizations, both for mentioning an "Asian" partner and the category of "Asian" food, putting everything and everyone in the same group. Secondly, the perpetrator seemed to completely ignore the power dynamics at play (or very likely the internalization of those dynamics made him think that behaving in certain ways is acceptable) and by giving R. unwanted attention, he showed dominance over her and his entitlement. Lastly, but not least importantly, it is worth remembering that being drunk is not an excuse.

Nevertheless, with different backgrounds come different experiences. B. comes from a country in the Middle East and clearly recalls the events of 2 years ago. The fact is still fixed in her mind as, despite living in Sweden for many years, it was the very

first time she was on the receiving end of that kind of act. During a sunny afternoon B. was queuing with a friend outside a shop, waiting for her turn to get an ice cream. Suddenly, a man just came by and overtook their place in the line in a very decisive way and without saying a word. After having realized what happened, B. tried to make him notice that there were other people waiting, but the man just looked at her and said *håll flabben* (which to my understanding is a very rude way to say "shut up!", typical of the Skåne region) and did not speak anymore, basically ignoring her and her friend. B., continuing with her story, stated that "maybe he was just a rude man, like, with everyone", as a way to say that there is a chance that it was just an unfortunate coincidence. At the same time the fact upset her and she could not help but think that the man skipped the line and placed in front of her and her friend because, on top of being women, their background is different, so he thought he was allowed to act in a very disrespectful way without fearing any retaliation.

The fact of skipping the line has striking similarities with some populist narratives employed by many far-right parties in Europe. This event, as a matter of fact, reminded me of Italy, my home country, and the rhetoric used by the previously mentioned leader of the League party, Matteo Salvini. A few years back, thanks to a strong base of voters and the boost coming from his popularity in the social media sphere, Salvini launched the slogan "prima gli italiani" (Italians first), as a way to highlight the difference between the natives and the migrants, utilizing what Billig defined as banal nationalism and embodying neo-fascist principles, with multiple references to Benito Mussolini's words. Furthermore, the party actually went from "prima il nord" (the north first) to "prima gli italiani", a change which also reiterates Wodak's concepts of oppositional habitus and governmental habitus. Connecting Salvini's populist and nativist rhetoric to the event recounted to me by B. made me think, in a way, that the man skipping the line is the personification of that slogan, of the natives having priority above the "others" no matter what.

6.3 The City Gets Smaller

As explored in the previous sections, the influence of media can be problematic and the close connection between them and political propaganda could be a deadly combination, with heavy repercussions on migrants. In the Swedish case, Petersson & Kainz (2017) analyzing the metaphors used by media, found linkages between representation of migration as natural events and disasters, migration as wars, clashes and crises, migration as burden and pressure. On the other hand, refugees were usually simply described as commodities.

This is one of the most concerning aspects for Samira, a Middle Eastern woman that has been living in Sweden for many years. Her experience living in the country has been quite positive overall and she does not recall having major issues during her stay, but she worries about certain narratives that have been reiterated over and over again, especially in very recent times, inasmuch they can get ingrained by the force of repetition. She is very aware of how the government coalition that took power after the elections in 2022 frames migrants and migration and by listening to her words, one can tell that she definitely (and not surprisingly) does not like the government's agenda on the subject. As a consequence, a sense of discouragement kicks in, as she finds herself thinking about possible changes that would affect her daily life. Sometimes she feels like maybe it would be better to not spend too much time outside, sometimes she feels like she is overly pessimistic, but either way the influence of those thoughts seems to be making a dent in her confidence. As I followed up in trying to understand more in detail why she would worry about being outside, even without mentioning specific areas, I had the feeling that she was checking a mental map (see Koskela, 1997) and it was understandable from her explanation that some places were more familiar than others (Listerborn, 2015a; Najib & Hopkins, 2019) and probably, in a way, more comfortable and safer.

During our conversation, Samira also mentioned another aspect about the influence of the media. Despite defining herself as "not very active" on social media, she sometimes spends time looking for information or ways to get more knowledge on certain topics by watching YouTube. That is how she discovered a fair number of videos depicting migrants in Sweden as dangerous, harmful and source of many

societal problems and started wondering how broad can be the influence on the people who consume this type of content. Hit by her words, after the conversation I went home and decided to check the website by typing in the search bar “Migration in Sweden” to better understand what Samira told me. Already from the first research, videos with titles like “How Sweden is Destroyed by the Immigration Crisis”, “Has Immigration Ruined Sweden” and “How multiculturalism destroyed SWEDEN” immediately popped up on the result page. They are, to different degrees, quite superficial and very populist in the way they present what they think are facts, admittedly often targeting the men’s supposed bad behavior, showing images of young boys with foreign background and putting once again gang violence on top of the list as the most pressing problem. But Samira’s words clicked with me when I started reading some of the comments, that displayed mainly negative remarks, advocated for much stricter policies and went as far as mentioning deportation as a viable solution. The users in the comment sections seemed to personify every trait of the theories I have been reading about in regard to the notions of othering and populism. Namely, the highlighting of differences between cultures and the dissatisfaction with the conduct of previous governments reinforced the idea of the “other” category, restricting the borders even in an online public space. Reflecting on the images and comments on the videos, it is no surprise that Samira started getting increasingly worried about going outside.

6.4 Pay to Stay

R., Despite having lived in Sweden for a relatively short time, has formed a clear opinion on the public spaces in Lund which revolves around the idea of commodification. The commodification of public spaces has been happening all around the world as a consequence of neoliberal policies. From the US to England (Fenton et al., 2013), from Poland (Galkowski, 2019) to Thailand (Musigakama, 2019), it seems like it is impossible to escape this phenomenon and some parts of Sweden went through the same process. One fitting example comes from Madureira (2011), which presented the case of Malmö and two of its neighborhoods, Bo01 and Norra Sorgenfri. Madureira, in her analysis, highlighted how the use of urban design

was implemented to change the image in a way to make some components of those two areas, from housing to public spaces, marketable in the future. As a matter of fact, Bo01 was planned with the idea of appearing more sustainable as possible and the combination with the strategic position has successfully convinced many investors in financing the project. In Norra Sorgenfri, on the other hand, the change of image banked on being a tolerant and creative neighborhood while maintaining some of the old buildings and streets, as a way to remember how the industry was prevalent in the zone. As noted by the author, however, this change was just a move to find a market by exploiting its industrial past.

R. comes from a place where commodification has taken over. The green spaces, for example, are often small and despite being publicly accessible, are privately owned. Cafés are the most popular place for people to meet, but they are often too noisy and it is hard to have a peaceful conversation. Moreover, it is considered rude to stay for a long time after having consumed a drink or food, hence the time available is limited if one does not want to spend too much money. For this reason she is happy that commodification in Lund is not as extreme and there are more accessible parks, green areas but also places like libraries, where one can relax or meet their friends and not be constantly worried about forgetting the wallet. Furthermore, she generally perceives those places as safe and calm, which, as she told me, is of fundamental importance because she can be alone most of the times and not worry. On the other hand, being a student that comes from outside the European Union means that she has to pay a considerable amount of money if she wants to be in Sweden and has to show that she can provide for herself during her stay, thing that does not apply for European students. In fact, lack of money or inadequate documentation equals to not getting a residence permit and the impossibility to continue the studies. As a consequence she often asks herself if the only reason why she has felt safe and welcomed is because she is paying for it and wonders how her experience would be if she was in the job market instead, with even more limited time available. As a matter of facts, in addition to the general gender gaps between men and women on the job market, previous studies carried out in Sweden showed how migrant women were invisible for years on economic markets (Knocke, 1999) and their difficulties in trying to find a job (Bevelander, 2005). With those research in mind, R. concerns are

very much justified as non-students migrant women that go through various types of stress and pressure might have a completely different perception when talking about public spaces.

The participant recognizes that the fees she pays in order to study guarantee some type of privilege, like having less trouble in obtaining a residence permit in comparison to other people with foreign background that move to Sweden for other reasons and cannot help but ask herself how is the situation for the migrants that are not studying. At the same time, however, she realizes that she is still at disadvantage when drawing parallels between herself and European students and citizens. This issue has been investigated by Westin & Nilsson (2023), which in their analysis of the debate surrounding the introduction of fees for students from outside the European Union, found out that their come into effect created new challenges in maintaining equality among students. The Swedish government, when decided to implement this policy, created a big division among students and the consequences are being paid, literally and figuratively, by people like R. If welcoming migrants solely depends on the money they spend to be in the country, then for people like R. it may be easier to pay for a drink in a café and avoid all the troubles.

6.5 A Changing City

In the city of Lund, at the end of 2023, were living 130.288 people (scb.se) and according to Lund University, there are about 47.000 people studying in the various programs, of which 25% are considered as international[15]. With a quick calculation, then, but with a margin of error because some of the students find accommodation outside the city, it is possible to see how they account for roughly 36% of the total population. Considering that the duration of the students' stay usually varies from 5-6 months to, most likely, 2-3 years depending on the program, the change in the composition of the population could be pretty fast.

[15] https://www.lunduniversity.lu.se/about-university/university-glance/facts-and-figures

Hawa is a Muslim woman, has been living in Lund for many years and has had the opportunity to observe the transformation of the city and the people living in it. According to her, the students always bring a sense of freshness, originality and form a pleasant melting-pot, one that made her say that she "feel(s) comfortable" in being outside. Hawa is also very interested in politics and, like Samira, has noticed how some of the narratives surrounding migrants have shifted in the last decade. During our conversation, she was open enough to share different aspects of her experience and she wanted to tell me a story in particular. The event happened about one year ago in *Stortorget*, where one can find many benches to sit down, relax and maybe enjoy some coffee in the sun. It was there that she heard, by her definition, some "young men" sitting next to her, speaking Swedish, discussing about the migrant situation in the city, complaining about supposed threats of a Muslim invasion and the general increase of foreigners. Continuing in her story, she recalled how the men followed up by talking about the differences between Swedish women and the condition of migrant women, who are supposedly forced to act in certain ways because of their husband, with subtle (but not so much) reference to Muslims once again. Hawa told me that she was very surprised of those words because she had never heard Swedish people publicly talk about certain topics before, but at the same time she was worried and felt singled out. She has felt very welcomed throughout the years, but in that specific instance, she saw herself as an outsider. As a closing remark to her story, she thought that the men expected her to not know the Swedish language, as she looks "different". That is why, according to her, they were confident in speaking about such a sensitive subject with her sitting close.

This brief conversation reported by the participant is overloaded by notions and ideas analyzed in previous chapters of this thesis. The dialogue is undoubtedly a mix of xenophobia and fake feminism. From the mention of the "other" category (Muslims in this instance) to the neglection of migrant women's agency, it is so close to populist rhetoric that those words could have been said by any far-right-wing party politician. Again, symbolic violence, this time solely in the form of words, seems to be recurring in the city, when considering some of the other migrant women's experiences described earlier. The racism can be so subtle, at times, that there might be an ulterior layer to Hawa's story. Making an exception and moving for a moment

the perspective, from the participant to the author, I also found surprising that someone would express such strong opinions publicly, as life in Lund and Sweden got me accustomed to people's discretion. Without flowing into any conspiracy theory, the conversation that she overheard had some overtones that still do not sit quite right with me and I started to think that maybe the men's intent was to make sure that she understood the meaning of their words. After all, since many politicians and media are getting increasingly careless with their statements, the possibility of citizens following that pattern might not be as remote. Moreover, the fact that they were so confident in talking freely just next to her reinforces some of the power dynamics at play, not only between man – woman and native – migrant, but also their intersection, as they put themselves as native men with the "better" values in a higher position of a migrant woman that is supposedly oppressed, incapable of exercising her agency and at the mercy of the events.

6.6 Strenuous Process

One of the things that emerged from almost all the conversations is the feeling of uncertainty when talking about *Migrationsverket* (the Swedish Migration Agency). A big turning point in Sweden happened in 2016, especially for refugees, when the government decided to modify the legislation regarding asylum cases. To put it briefly, the rule (supposedly temporary) guaranteed a 3-year temporary permit instead of a permanent one and, when the previously mentioned Tidö agreement was approved in 2022, Sweden completed its restrictive shift by implementing even more constrained rules, becoming one of the harshest system in Europe (Lind et al., 2023). Even if some of the participants were not living in Sweden during the refugee "crisis", the experiences with the agency have mostly been stressful and the described changes enforced by the government have affected everyone.

Sarah, a woman from Asia, perfectly remembers the struggles she went through in order for the documentation to be correctly arranged. She came to Sweden in a period which she defined of relative calmness, probably alluding to the hectic times of the refugee "crisis", but the stress of the process was still hard to endure. During

the conversation, she went through the steps she had to take, but I could tell how she wanted to put an emphasis on the phase of gathering and submitting the necessary documentation. Although she felt that the instructions were fairly clear, negative thoughts kept surfacing throughout the weeks, mainly because of the number of certificates she had to get. At times she even resigned herself to think she would never be able to make it, as her efforts seemed to be leading nowhere and felt like the Swedish government was doing everything in its rights to not let her in. Before even reaching the country, she already felt unwanted. Moreover, after having lived for some time in Sweden, she recalls being targeted for a "random" check multiple times during trips on the train, and, as she slowly got used to it, every time wondered if eventually those checks will start happening around the city as well.

As a woman with a foreign background, the idea of that happening is very disturbing to her and that eventual situation would be, as she said, "very different". With the use of a gendered approach it is possible to find deeper significance in Sarah's words and dig deeper in order to understand her sense of discomfort. That disturbing feeling, in fact, most likely comes from the awareness of the power imbalance between her and the authorities and it is enhanced by the fact that she is a woman. To put it in a concrete way, while the checks on the train rides usually happen with a large amount of people around, a similar circumstance in a different setting, like a part of a park where few or no people are around, may lead to more worrisome outcomes. It is in a case like this that it is possible to see how the institutions are creating borders inside their own territory and limiting the migrants' personal freedom.

Circling back to the documentation issue, the same feelings were shared by another participant, who felt anxious multiply times during her stay. With reference to a 2-years master program that she is attending, she really did not understand why she had to re-apply for her residence permit after the first year. As a matter of fact and without ambiguity, she vehemently complained about the whole process. After all, when she moved to Sweden, the government knew that she would have stayed in the country for 2 years, because of her studies. So, "why should we apply twice?".

Those stories reflect the constant sense of apprehension that migrants have to endure not only before leaving their home country, but also during their stay in Sweden.

Especially in the second case, as a student myself, but from the European Union, the differences between the treatments is huge, as by simply bringing with me my ID I knew I was set and perfectly fine for at least 2 years of studies and even more. This highlights a big imbalance and opens questions surrounding the role of the institutions in managing migration issues. As Bursell (2021) showed, discrimination against minorities is perpetrated by some Swedish institutions, with differences that vary based on ethnicity and gender and some of the stories conveyed by the participants seem to confirm this treatment disparity. While the implementation of the Tidö agreement has worsened the situation and ulteriorly increased migrants' uncertainties, it seems that the direction that the Swedish institutions took was already pretty much decided for some time.

6.7 Future Research

During the conversations held with migrant women, there were many different prompts that could be further explored. Some paths can indeed be created by investigating very specific situations and new knowledge can be gained from the consideration of those context-based conditions.

6.7.1 Investigating East

Really et al. (2022) advocated for a context-specific approach when talking about migrant women's vulnerability, in order to face the many variables that diverse situations may present. While Islamophobia and the condition of Muslim women has been investigated in different places around Europe, I have had a hard time in finding literature regarding experiences of Asian women in public spaces. According to Statistic Sweden, at the end of 2023 close to 6000 Asian women were living in Lund, which accounted for around 4.5% of the total population. The statistic does not differentiate between the areas of origin, for example East Asia or South-East Asia, nonetheless there would be space for further research, as their experiences could differ from the ones of other minorities.

Thanks to the conversation held with R. and my stay in the city for the past two years, I could notice some patterns that may require further enquiry. Considering just for this specific instance East Asian women and South-East Asian ones as one category, it is possible to see them in specific places in Lund, namely students in university buildings, workers in nail salons or owners of shops and restaurant. Concerning public spaces, however, their presence seems very limited. Also, as expressed by R. during the interview and referring to the numerous green spaces in the city, most of the time "parks look white", a sentence that does not require ulterior clarification. As a future research, it may be interesting to look into this aspect of the relation between East and South-East Asian migrant women and public spaces, for the purpose of understanding if spatial segregation is happening and if one of the reasons for it is restrictive policies, or if their perception of safety in regard to the use of public spaces is influenced by other factors that need to be uncovered.

6.7.2 Lund is Safe(r)

During the conversations with the participants there were multiple references regarding the city of Malmö. As a matter of fact, while talking about their perception of safety, it was often brought up as a comparison. Although conveyed in different ways, with different expressions and without explicitly saying the word "safer", some of the interviewees felt that Lund was not as dangerous as Malmö. Among the reasons of this sentiment it is possible to find different explanations, from fright of being in a bigger city to secondhand experiences of friends who told them how they felt living there and again, because of what they heard on the news or read online.

For this reason I started wondering if they actually perceive Lund as a safe place for them to live in or if the proximity of a bigger and more talked about city like Malmö, which is constantly under the spotlight, is a big effect on their thoughts on the matter. Studies regarding the influence of a city with a supposedly "bad" reputation would have to be carried out, in order to understand if the influence of such a place is a critical factor in their perception of safety. Admittedly, I did not follow up or investigated further during the conversations held with the participants, as that was

not the scope of this project, but I am convinced that such avenue could be pursued in future studies.

6.7.3 Social Media

The influence of media and the way they frame migration issues, as described in chapter 4 of this thesis, can create dangerous narratives. While the media aspect on the issue has been explored for quite some time now, the social media one seems to be flourishing still. As mentioned during the analysis part, one of the interviewee pointed out the existence of several YouTube videos whose sole purpose is to reiterate narratives about failed integration in Sweden, but also to put migrants in the worst light possible by making them seem like they are the only cause of most societal problems. In addition, the opinions that can be found in the comment sections are almost always very racist and extreme.

The use of social media as an important means for migrants to choose their destination has been tackled before (Dekker et al., 2018; Obi et al., 2021). Other studies, instead, focused on analyzing the major narratives that both media and social media convey to the users (Rheindorf et al., 2023; Bourebka et al., 2023; Maneri et al., 2023). When talking about the migrants' perspectives, however, it seems like not much is known about their influence on those who already migrated and currently live in a new country. Even if the mentioned videos are very vague and do not specifically target migrant women but all migrant as a whole homogeneous group (or very often Muslims), this avenue could be followed as a way to get a more profound understanding of this phenomenon and see how it affects the sense of safety in public settings of migrant women living abroad.

7. Conclusion

In order to try to tackle the two research questions formulated in the first chapter, H*ow do evolving border policies and political propaganda influence migrant women's perception of safety and experiences in public spaces in Lund, Sweden*? and *What are the multifaceted forms of violence experienced by migrant women in public spaces within the city of Lund?*, this thesis has investigated the current situation of migrant women living in the city. Their stories are trying to find a collocation in a changing world, Europe and Sweden, which are speeding towards a closure. The recent shift to the right in European politics led to a growing trend of implementing new restrictive measures and, as a matter of fact, is aiming to make both migration processes and life as a migrant in a new country as hard as possible. Through the lenses of a critical realist approach and employing the method of interviews, the research tried to uncover the feelings of the participants that have been living and experiencing the city of Lund in different ways and for a different number of years.

Some of the interviewees have expressed a sense of uneasiness when discussing political topics. Some of them were very aware and worried about relatively new policies, like the Tidö agreement and voiced their concerns on the issue. But what seemed to raise their sense of anxiety even more were the conversations surrounding institutions and the Swedish Migration Agency. Whether it was before going to Sweden or during their stay, the negative feelings were amplified, the processes were long and draining and the sense of being constrained was felt by the participants. Politics and the Swedish Migration Agency are of course connected, with the former being the brain and the latter the brawn, acting accordingly to the new instructions received from above and their influence appeared to be very broad during the conversations and the subsequent analysis. In the mentioned instance in which one of the participants described how she was subjected to "random" checks on the train rides, the effects on her perception of safety was very impactful, as she started thinking that sooner or later those checks could happen around the city. From the limited standpoint of this research, it appears that the environment in which migrant

women are living is slowly getting more oppressive, violent and suffocating, with repercussions on their daily lives and how they experience public spaces in the city.

Many of the stories recounted revolved indeed around the idea of violence. During the conversations, the participants focused on instances of violence suffered during their stay in Sweden, some of which can be connected to previous research on the topic. Through the lens of Žižek's concept of symbolic violence utilized by Listerborn in her research about Islamophobia in the city of Malmö, it is possible to find some similarities, especially regarding the language sphere. As a matter of fact, the displayed stories were frequently characterized by the employment of power dynamics through the use of (often) harsh words and expressions, or very insensitive generalizations due to physical features of some of the participants. But Lund stands as a case on its own and the common impression from the women interviewed seems to point to a more nuanced and hidden aspect of the violence, one that enhance the sense of being out of place. Almost all the interviewees have expressed in a way or another the similar sentiment of being observed, as if people were just waiting for them to do something "wrong", or something that would break the uniformity of the natives' behavior. But as conveyed throughout the thesis, it is also important to remember that with different backgrounds come different experiences.

With this last point in mind, the research proposed three new avenues that could be followed in the future, with two of the suggestion being very specific to the city of Lund. In first instance, I think it would be interesting to focus on the perception and the experiences of East and South-East Asian women, since they may be subjected to different treatments in comparison, for example, to Middle Eastern women. On a second note, with Malmö being mentioned so many times during the conversations and the closeness with Lund, questions surrounding the influence of the bigger city have arisen from the research and further studies are required in order to understand its magnitude. Lastly, as a broader future enquiry, tackling the weight of negative videos, comments and post on social media and their impact on the migrant's general sense of safety while living in a specific place would provide even more knowledge on an incredibly multifaceted phenomenon that still needs to be studied.

Reference List

Bibliography

Aas, K. F., & Gundhus, H. O. I. (2015). Policing Humanitarian Borderlands: Frontex, Human Rights and the Precariousness of Life. *British Journal of Criminology*, *55*(1), 1–18.

Arcimaviciene, L. & Hamza Baglama, S. (2018). Migration, Metaphor and Myth in Media Representations: The Ideological Dichotomy of "Them" and "Us." *SAGE Open*, *8*. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244018768657

Barbero, I. (2015). Scapegoat citizens in times of austerity: the impact of the crisis on the immigrant population in Spain. *Social Identities*, *21*(3), 244–256. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630.2015.1058706

Beebeejaun, Y. (2017). Gender, urban space, and the right to everyday life. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, *39*(3), 323–334. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1080/07352166.2016.1255526

Bell, S. E. (2008). Photovoice as a Strategy for Community Organizing in the Central Appalachian Coalfields. *Journal of Appalachian Studies*, *14*(1/2), 34–48.

Bevelander, P. (2005). The employment status of immigrant women: The case of Sweden 1. *International migration review*, *39*(1), 173-202.

Blakely, K. (2007). Reflections on the Role of Emotion in Feminist Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *6*(2), 59–68. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1177/160940690700600206

Borevi, K. (2013). The political dynamics of multiculturalism in Sweden. *Challenging multiculturalism: European models of diversity*, (7), 138-160.

Bourekba, M., Garcés-Mascareñas, B., Güell, B., & Marín, M. (2023). Migration narratives in media and social media.

Bursell, M. (2021). Perceptions of discrimination against Muslims. A study of formal complaints against public institutions in Sweden. *Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies*, *47*(5), 1162–1179. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1561250

Ceccato, V., & Nalla, M. (Eds.). (2020). *Crime and fear in public places. towards safe, inclusive and sustainable cities*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Choi, G.-Y., & Byoun, S.-J. (2014). Domestic Violence against Migrant Women in South Korea: Addressing the Needs of a Uniquely Situated Victim Population in Domestic Violence Policy. *International Social Work*, *57*(6), 645–660.

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color. *Stanford Law Review*, *43*(6), 1241–1299. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.2307/1229039

Crowe, S., Cresswell, K., Robertson, A. *et al.* The case study approach. *BMC Med Res Methodol* **11**, 100 (2011). https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2288-11-100

Cusumano, E. (2019). Migrant rescue as organized hypocrisy: EU maritime missions offshore Libya between humanitarianism and border control. *Cooperation and Conflict*, *54*(1), 3–24.

Danermark, B., Ekstrom, M. and Jakobsen, L. (2002), Explaining Society: An Introduction to Critical Realism in the Social Sciences, Routledge.

Day, K. (1999). Introducing Gender to the Critique of Privatized Public Space. *Journal of Urban Design*, *4*(2), 155. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1080/13574809908724444

De Backer, M. (2020). Street harassment and social control of young Muslim women in brussels: Destabilising the public/private binary. *Journal of Gender-Based Violence*, *4*(3), 343-358–358. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1332/239868020X15986402157121

De Genova, N. P. (2002). Migrant “illegality” and deportability in everyday life. Annual Review of Anthropology, 31, 419–447.

Dekker, R., Engbersen, G., Klaver, J., & Vonk, H. (2018). Smart refugees: How Syrian asylum migrants use social media information in migration decision-making. *Social Media+ Society*, *4*(1), 2056305118764439.

De Lucas, J. (2003). Blade Runner. El Derecho, guardián de la diferencia [Blade Runner. The law guardian of the difference]. Valencia: Tirant Lo Blanch.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2018). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. sage.

Dwyer, C. (2000). Negotiating Diasporic identities: young British South Asian Muslim women. *Women's Studies International Forum*, *23*(4), 475–486.

Edwards, R. (2013). *What is qualitative interviewing?* (J. Holland (Ed.)). Bloomsbury.

Ehrkamp, P. (2013). 'I've had it with them!' Younger migrant women's spatial practices of conformity and resistance. *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*, *20*(1), 19–36. https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2011.649356

Eriksson, M. (2013). "Wronged White Men": The Performativity of Hate in Feminist Narratives about Anti-Feminism in Sweden. *Nora: Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, *21*(4), 249–263. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1080/08038740.2013.857718

Fenton, A., Lupton, R., Arrundale, R., & Tunstall, R. (2013). Public housing, commodification, and rights to the city: The US and England compared. *Cities*, *35*, 373-378.

Finlay, L. (2005). "Reflexive embodied empathy": A phenomenology of participant-researcher intersubjectivity. *The Humanistic Psychologist*, *33*(4), 271–292. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1207/s15473333thp3304_4

Fletcher, A. J. (2017). Applying Critical Realism in Qualitative Research: Methodology Meets Method. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *20*(2), 181–194. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1080/13645579.2016.1144401

Flyvbjerg, B. (2013). *Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research*. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1177/1077800405284363

Freedman, J., Jamal, B., & Network, E. M. H. R. (2008). Violence against migrant and refugee women in the Euromed region. *Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network: Copenhagen*.

Freedman, J. (2016). Sexual and gender-based violence against refugee women: a hidden aspect of the refugee "crisis." *Reproductive Health Matters*, *24*(47), 18–26.

Freedman, J., Sahraoui, N., & Tastsoglou, E. (2022). *Thinking about Gender and Violence in Migration: An Introduction*. Springer International Publishing. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1007/978-3-031-07929-0_1

Galkowski, M. (2019, February). The Effect of Privatization and Commodification into the Functions of Pedestrian Public Space: Case Study of the Central Plaza at 'Manufaktura'Shopping Centre in Lodz (Poland). In *IOP Conference Series: Materials Science and Engineering* (Vol. 471, No. 7, p. 072039). IOP Publishing.

Geel, A. van. (2016). Separate or together? Women-only public spaces and participation of Saudi women in the public domain in Saudi Arabia. *Contemporary Islam*, *10*(3), 357–378. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1007/s11562-015-0350-2

Gerring, J. (2004). What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good for? *The American Political Science Review*, *98*(2), 341–354.

Gholamhosseini, R., Pojani, D., Johnson, L., Minnery, J., & Mateo Babiano, I. (2019). The place of public space in the lives of Middle Eastern women migrants in Australia. *Journal of Urban Design*, *24*(2), 269–289. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1080/13574809.2018.1498293

Glouftsios, G. (2024). Performing secrecy: hiding and obfuscation in Frontex's pushbacks scandal. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *50*(4), 727-747–747. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1080/1369183X.2023.2226825

Gorski, P. S. (2013). "What is Critical Realism? And Why Should You Care?" *Contemporary Sociology*, *42*(5), 658–670.

Gutierrez-Cueli, I., Gil, J., Martinez, M. A., & Garcia-Bernardos, A. (2023). The Housing Struggle of Working-Class Migrant Women in Spain Through a Double Horizon of Political Temporality. *HOUSING THEORY & SOCIETY*. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1080/14036096.2023.2288229

Haraway, D. (1988). Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. *Feminist Studies*, *14*(3), 575–599. https://doi.org/10.2307/3178066

Heidari, S., & Moreno, C. G. (2016). Gender-based violence: a barrier to sexual and reproductive health and rights. *Reproductive Health Matters*, *24*(47), 1–4.

Holtmann, C. (2022). *Vulnerability and Resiliency: Immigrant Women, Social Networks and Family Violence*. Springer International Publishing. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1007/978-3-031-07929-0_7

Iocco, G., Lo Cascio, M., & Perrotta, D. C. (2020). "Close the Ports to African Migrants and Asian Rice!": The Politics of Agriculture and Migration and the Rise of a "New" Right-Wing Populism in Italy. *Sociologia Ruralis*, *60*(4), 732–753. https://doi.org/10.1111/soru.12304

Jackowska, O., & Novas Ferradás, M. (2023). Who owns public spaces? The trailblazer exhibition on women's everyday life in the City of Vienna (1991). *Planning Perspectives: PP*, *38*(2), 253–279.

Jacobs, J. (1961). The Death and Life of Great American Cities. Vintage Books.

Jimenez-Lasserrotte, M. del M., Lopez-Domene, E., Hernandez-Padilla, J. M., Fernandez-Sola, C., Fernandez-Medina, I. M., El Faqyr, K. E. M., Dobarrio-Sanz, I., & Granero-Molina, J. (2020). Understanding Violence against Women Irregular Migrants Who Arrive in Spain in Small Boats. *HEALTHCARE*, *8*(3), 299. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.3390/healthcare8030299

Keskinen, S. (2016). From Welfare Nationalism to Welfare Chauvinism: Economic Rhetoric, the Welfare State and Changing Asylum Policies in Finland. *Critical Social Policy*, *36*(3), 352–370.

Keygnaert, I., Vettenburg, N., & Temmerman, M. (2012). Hidden violence is silent rape: sexual and gender-based violence in refugees, asylum seekers and undocumented migrants in Belgium and the Netherlands. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, *14*(5/6), 505–520. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1080/13691058.2012.671961

Keygnaert, I., Dias, S. F., Degomme, O., Devillé, W., Kennedy, P., Kováts, A., De Meyer, S., Vettenburg, N., Roelens, K., & Temmerman, M. (2015). Sexual and gender-based violence in the European asylum and reception sector: a perpetuum mobile? *European Journal of Public Health*, *25*(1), 90–96. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1093/eurpub/cku066

Khemilat, F. (2021). Excluding veiled women from French public space: the emergence of a 'respectable' segregation? *Journal of Gender Studies*, *30*(2), 214-226–226. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1080/09589236.2020.1863198

Knocke, W. (1999). The Labour Market for Immigrant Women in Sweden: Marginalised Women in Low-valued Jobs. In: Wrench, J., Rea, A., Ouali, N. (eds) Migrants, Ethnic Minorities and the Labour Market. Migration, Minorities and Citizenship. Palgrave Macmillan, London. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-27615-8_7

Koefoed, L., & Simonsen, K. (2007). The price of goodness: Everyday nationalist narratives in Denmark. *Antipode*, *39*(2), 310-330–330. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2007.00523.x

Kohn, M. (2004). *Brave new neighborhoods: The privatization of public space*. Routledge.

Koikkalainen, S. (2021). *Finland's Immigration Policy: State Objectives, Local Solutions*. Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-50979-8_4

Koskela, H. (1997). `Bold walk and breakings': Women's spatial confidence versus fear of violence. *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*, *4*(3), 301. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1080/09663699725369

Larsson, A., Dr, & Chapman, D. 1972. (2020). Perceived impact of meteorological conditions on the use of public space in winter settlements. *International Journal of Biometeorology*, *64*(4), 631–642. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1007/s00484-019-01852-5

Latz, A. O. (2017). *Photovoice research in education and beyond. a practical guide from theory to exhibition*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Lawani, A. (2021). Critical Realism: What You Should Know and How to Apply It. *Qualitative Research Journal*, *21*(3), 320–333. https://doi.org/10.1108/QRJ-08-2020-0101

Lazaridis, G., Campani, G., & Benveniste, A. (Eds.). (2016). *The rise of the far right in europe. populist shifts and "othering."* Palgrave Macmillan.

Lecturer, L. S. S., & researcher, D. H. postdoctoral. (2018). Where Do We Go From Here? Challenges and Strategies Following Additional Asylum Policy Restrictions in Sweden. *Journal of Human Rights Practice*, *10*(3), 524–535. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1093/jhuman/huy029

Lefebvre, H. (1991). The production of space. Blackwell.

Lefebvre, H., Kofman, E., & Lebas, E. (1996). *Writings on cities* (Vol. 63). Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Lefebvre, H. (2003). *The urban revolution*. University of Minnesota Press.

Lind, J., Hansen, C., & Khoury, N. (2023). The Impact of Temporary Residence Permits on Young Refugees' Abilities to Build a Life in Sweden. *Social Sciences*, *12*(3), 143.

Listerborn, C. (2015). Geographies of the veil: violent encounters in urban public spaces in Malmö, Sweden. *Social & Cultural Geography*, *16*(1), 95–115. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1080/14649365.2014.950690

Listerborn, C. (2015). Feminist struggle over urban safety and the politics of space. *The European Journal of Women's Studies*, *23*(3), 251–264. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1177/1350506815616409

Low, S. & Smith, N. (2006). *The politics of public space*. Routledge.

Lutz, H. (2010). Gender in the Migratory Process. *Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies*, *36*(10), 1647–1663. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1080/1369183X.2010.489373

Madureira, A. M. (2011). *Urban Design in Neighbourhood Commodification* (No. 2011/10). Lund University, CIRCLE-Centre for Innovation Research.

Maitra, D., Allen, K., Hermolle, M., & Adisa, O. (2023). Sexual Harassment in Public Spaces: Communicating Harms and Challenging Perpetration.

Maneri, M., Pogliano, A., Piccoli, F., & Anselmi, G. (2023). Migration narratives in media and social media.

Mannon, S. E., Petrzelka, P., Glass, C. M., & Radel, C. (2012). Keeping Them in Their Place: Migrant Women Workers in Spain's Strawberry Industry. *International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture & Food*, *19*(1), 83–101.

Massey, D. B. (1994). *Space, place, and gender*. University of Minnesota Press.

McDowell, M. G., & Wonders, N. A. (2009). Keeping Migrants in Their Place: Technologies of Control and Racialized Public Space in Arizona. *Social Justice*, *36*(2 (116)), 54–72.

Memela, S., & Maharaj, B. (2018). Refugees, Violence and Gender: the Case of Women in the Albert Park Area in Durban, South Africa. *Urban Forum*, *29*(4), 429-443–443. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1007/s12132-018-9356-1

Moreno, M. J. G., Prados, J. S. F., & Cuenca-Piqueras, C. (2022). Fear for All Women: European women's fear of harassment and aggression in public spaces. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *37*(7–8), NP4160-NP4186-NP4186. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1177/0886260520958390

Mudde, C. (2007). *Populist radical right parties in Europe*. Cambridge University Press.

Musigakama, P. (2019). The Commodification of Public Spaces on Khao San Road. *Nakhara: Journal of Environmental Design and Planning*, *17*, 81-96.

Najib, K., & Hopkins, P. (2019). Veiled Muslim women's strategies in response to Islamophobia in Paris. *Political Geography*, *73*, 103–111. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2019.05.005

New, C. (2020). *Sex and gender: A critical realist approach*. Taylor and Francis. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.4324/9781315112138-3

Newman, D., & Paasi, A. (1998). Fences and neighbours in the postmodern world: boundary narratives in political geography. *Progress in Human Geography*, *22*(2), 186–207. https://doi.org/10.1191/030913298666039113

Newman, D. (2006). Borders and bordering: Towards an interdisciplinary dialogue. *European Journal of Social Theory*, *9*(2), 171-186–186. https://doi.org/10.1177/1368431006063331

Obi, C., Bartolini, F., & D'Haese, M. (2021). Digitalization and migration: The role of social media and migrant networks in migration decisions. An exploratory study in Nigeria. *Digital Policy, Regulation and Governance*, *23*(1), 5-20.

Ousey, G. C., & Kubrin, C. E. (2018). *Immigration and Crime: Assessing a Contentious Issue* (Vol. 1). https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-criminol-032317-092026

Paasi, A. (2021). Problematizing 'Bordering, Ordering, and Othering' as Manifestations of Socio-Spatial Fetishism. *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie*, *112*(1), 18-25–25. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1111/tesg.12422

Paré, C. (2022). Selective solidarity? Racialized othering in European migration politics. *Amsterdam Review of European Affairs*, *1*(1), 42-61.

Petersson, B., & Kainz, L. (2017). Migration in the Media: Metaphors in Swedish and German News Coverage. *NORDEUROPAforum*, *19*(2017), 38–65. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.18452/18469

Phillimore, J., Pertek, S., Akyuz, S., Darkal, H., Hourani, J., McKnight, P., Ozcurumez, S., & Taal, S. (2021). "We are Forgotten": Forced Migration, Sexual

and Gender-Based Violence, and Coronavirus Disease-2019. *VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN*, *28*(9), 2204–2230. https://doi.org/10.1177/10778012211030943

Phillimore, J., Block, K., Bradby, H. 1966, Ozcurumez, S., & Papoutsi, A. (2022). Forced Migration, Sexual and Gender-based Violence and Integration: Effects, Risks and Protective Factors. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, *24*(2), 715–745. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1007/s12134-022-00970-1

Postill, J. (2018). Populism and social media: a global perspective. *Media, Culture & Society*, *40*(5), 754–765. https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443718772186

Reilly, N., Bjørnholt, M., & Tastsoglou, E. (2022). *Vulnerability, Precarity and Intersectionality: A Critical Review of Three Key Concepts for Understanding Gender-Based Violence in Migration Contexts*. Springer International Publishing. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1007/978-3-031-07929-0_2

Rheindorf, M., & Vollmer, B. (2023). Migration narratives in media and social media. *Catholic University of Applied Sciences Mainz. [Working paper 12 of the OPPORTUNITIES project 101004564–H2020.]*.

Rijpma, J., & Vermeulen, M. (2015). EUROSUR: saving lives or building borders? *European Security*, *24*(3), 454-472–472. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1080/09662839.2015.1028190

Rodríguez-Menés, J., & Safranoff, A. (2021). Status Inconsistencies and Power in Intimate Relations: Domestic Exploitation and Violence Against Women in Homogenous and Mixed Couples Formed by Native and Migrant Partners. *Violence Against Women*, *27*(12–13), 2231-2254–2254. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1177/1077801220963877

Russo, N. F., & Pirlott, A. (2006). Gender-based violence: concepts, methods, and findings. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, *1087*, 178–205. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1196/annals.1385.024

Sadeghi, A. R., & Jangjoo, S. (2022). Women's preferences and urban space: Relationship between built environment and women's presence in urban public spaces in Iran. *Cities*, *126*. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1016/j.cities.2022.103694

Sager, M., & Mulinari, D. (2018). Safety for whom? Exploring femonationalism and care-racism in Sweden. *Women's Studies International Forum*, *68*, 149–156. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1016/j.wsif.2017.12.002

Sahlin, I. (2020). Moving Targets: On reducing public responsibilities through re-categorising homeless people and refugees. European Journal of Homelessness, 14(1), 27–54.

Sandberg, L., & Tollefsen, A. (2010). Talking about fear of violence in public space: female and male narratives about threatening situations in Umeå, Sweden. *Social & Cultural Geography*, *11*(1), 1–15. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1080/14649360903420178

Sandberg, L. 1978, & Rönnblom, M. (2013). Afraid and restricted vs bold and equal: women's fear of violence and gender equality discourses in Sweden. *The European Journal of Women's Studies*, *20*(2), 189–203. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1177/1350506812463911

Sanjel, S. (2013). Gender-based violence: A crucial challenge for public health. *Kathmandu University Medical Journal*, *11*(42), 179-184–184. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.3126/kumj.v11i2.12499

Seidman. (2006). *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences, Third Edition: Vol. 3rd ed*. Teachers College Press.

Shibata, S. (2020). Transit safety among college students in Tokyo-Kanagawa, Japan: Victimization, safety perceptions and preventive measures. In *Crime and fear in public places* (pp. 160-175). Routledge.

Simmons, B. A., & Kenwick, M. R. (2022). Border Orientation in a Globalizing World. *American Journal of Political Science*, *66*(4), 853–870.

Simons, G., & Manoilo, A. (2019). Sweden's self-perceived global role: Promises and contradictions. *Research in Globalization*, *1*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resglo.2019.100008

Slyomovics, S. (2016). "Hassiba Ben Bouali, If You Could See Our Algeria": Women and Public Space in Algeria. *Hawwa*, *14*(2), 226–236. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1163/15692086-12341296

Snegovaya, M. (2024). *When Left Moves Right: The Decline of the Left and the Rise of the Populist Right in Postcommunist Europe*. Oxford University Press. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1093/oso/9780197699027.001.0001

Sonnis-Bell, M., Bell, D. E., & Ryan, M. K. (Eds.). (2018). *Strangers, aliens, foreigners. the politics of othering from migrants to corporations*. Brill.

Spivak, G. C. (1985). The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives. *History and Theory*, *24*(3), 247–272. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.2307/2505169

Spivak, G. C. (1988). Can the Subaltern Speak? In C. Nelson, & L. Grossberg (Eds.), Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture. Urbana/Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Sage.

Sultana, F. (2007). Reflexivity, positionality and participatory ethics: Negotiating fieldwork dilemmas in international research. *ACME*, *6*(3), 374-385–385.

Ticktin, M. (2008). Sexual Violence as the Language of Border Control: Where French Feminist and Anti-immigrant Rhetoric Meet. *Signs*, *33*(4), 863–889. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1086/528851

Tran, M. (2015). Combatting Gender Privilege and Recognizing a Woman's Right to Privacy in Public Spaces: Arguments to Criminalize Catcalling and Creepshots. *Hastings Women's Law Journal*, *26*(2), 185–206.

Trillò, T. (2019). *"Christmas is Cancelled": Controversy in Italian Schools (and Press)* (Vol. 106). Brill Academic Publishers. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1163/9789004383128_009

Valentine, G. (1990). Women's Fear and the Design of Public Space. *Built Environment (1978-)*, *16*(4), 288–303.

Van Houtum, H., & Van Naerssen, T. (2002). Bordering, ordering and othering. *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie*, *93*(2), 125-136–136. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1111/1467-9663.00189

Vasil, S. (2023). Understanding the Nature of Family Violence Against Women With Insecure Migration Status in Australia. *Violence Against Women*, *29*(15/16), 3158–3181. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1177/10778012231199107

Weisman, L. K. (1992). *Discrimination by design: a feminist critique of the man-made environment*. Univ. of Illinois Press.

Westin, L. P. 1953, & Nilsson, P. A. 1957. (2023). The Swedish debate on tuition fees for international students in higher education. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Education*, *12*(2), 281–303.

Wodak, R., KhosraviNik, M., & Mral, B. (Eds.). (2013). *Right-wing populism in Europe. politics and discourse*. Bloomsbury.

Wodak, R. (2015). *The politics of fear: what right-wing populist discourses mean*. SAGE.

Yeoh, B. S. A., & Huang, S. (1998). Negotiating Public Space: Strategies and Styles of Migrant Female Domestic Workers in Singapore. *Urban Studies*, *35*(3), 583–602.

Young H. M., Gidong B. & Mikyoung H. (2022). Young women's site-specific fear of crime within urban public spaces in Seoul. *Journal of Asian Architecture and Building Engineering*, *21*(3), 1149–1160. https://doi-org.ludwig.lub.lu.se/10.1080/13467581.2021.1941993

Yuval-Davis, N., Wemyss, G., & Cassidy, K. (2019). *Bordering*. Polity.

Žižek, S. (2008). *Violence. six sideways reflections* (1st Picador ed.). Picador.

Documents

Civil Rights Defenders (2022, October 24) *The Tidö Agreement Review. A Rights-Based Review of the Tidö Agreement* https://crd.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Analysis-of-the-Tido-Agreement_Civil-Rights-Defenders_221024.pdf

European Commission (2021). A renewed EU action plan against migrant smuggling (2021-2025) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52021DC0591

Tidöavtalet: Överenskommelse för Sverige https://www.liberalerna.se/wp-content/uploads/tidoavtalet-overenskommelse-for-sverige-slutlig.pdf

Sitography

Finnish elections results (2023). *Results service* https://vaalit.yle.fi/ev2023/tulospalvelu/en/

Greek Elections results. Ministry of Interior (June 2023) *National elections* http://ekloges-prev.singularlogic.eu/2023/june/v/home/en/

Guzel, M. (2023). *Turkish Muslims protest Quran-burning in Sweden* https://apnews.com/article/politics-protests-and-demonstrations-sweden-turkey-istanbul-9ff6f1d4a2cc361ed265a786e31d4ee1

Houmann Mortensen, J. & Prandi, S. (2021, July 10). https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/7/10/in-spains-strawberry-fields-migrant-women-face-sexual-abuse

Italian elections results. La Repubblica (2022). *Elezioni politiche 2022* https://elezioni.repubblica.it/2022/elezioni-politiche/

Lund University (2024, May 8). *Facts and figures. Lund University in Numbers* https://www.lunduniversity.lu.se/about-university/university-glance/facts-and-figures

Population Statistics https://www.scb.se/en/finding-statistics/statistics-by-subject-area/population/population-composition/population-statistics/

Qamar, A. H. (n.d.) *The Tidö Agreement drags Sweden's social welfare sector into ethical crisis* https://theloop.ecpr.eu/the-tido-agreement-drags-swedens-social-welfare-sector-into-ethical-crisis/

Swedish elections results. Valmyndigheten (2022). *Valresultat 2022* https://www.val.se/valresultat/riksdag-region-och-kommun/2022/valresultat.html

The Guardian (2018, September 1). *Saudi Arabia may dig canal to turn Qatar into an island* https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/sep/01/saudi-arabia-may-dig-canal-to-turn-qatar-into-an-island

UNHCR – Sexual and gender-based violence https://help.unhcr.org/turkiye/social-economic-and-civil-matters/sexual-and-gender-based-violence/

Valverde, M. (2020, July 15). *Donald Trump promised to build a border wall and make Mexico pay for it. That didn't happen* https://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/promises/trumpometer/promise/1397/build-wall-and-make-mexico-pay-it/

YouTube videos

Has Immigration Ruined Sweden?
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vtDGiDBw6H4

How multiculturalism destroyed SWEDEN
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aAbtCmG2R34

How Sweden is Destroyed by the Immigration Crisis
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rUw4cs2MHwc