Resistance Through Acting

Ambivalent Practices of the No Border Musical

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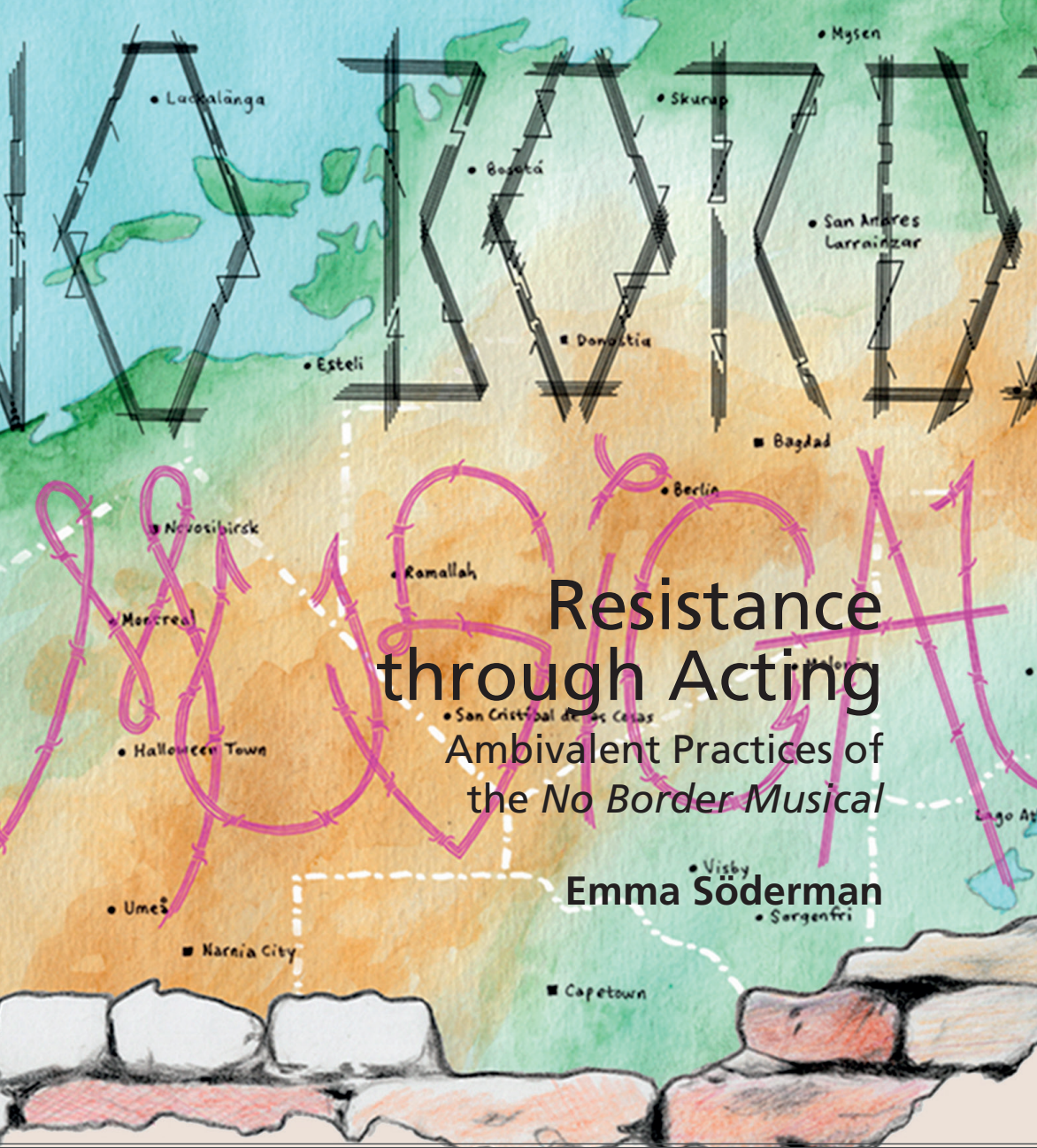

Resistance through Acting

Ambivalent Practices of the *No Border Musical*

Emma Söderman

LUND DISSERTATIONS IN SOCIAL WORK

Resistance through Acting

Ambivalent Practices of the *No Border Musical*

This thesis is about a community theatre trying to act and imagine other possible worlds in the midst of deportability, bordering practices and unpredictable asylum processes. It explores a musical, the *No Border Musical*, which was initiated in the Swedish city of Malmö and staged by non-professional actors with and without residence permits.

The thesis points to the importance of a *politics of translation* when organising across different legal statuses. It highlights the ambivalences of creating and performing the musical, conceptualised as processes of *commoning*. Setting out from a participatory ethnographic fieldwork of the two-year working process of creating and performing the *No Border Musical*, the analysis explores a conditioned sanctuary – a sanctuary permeated by *border struggle*s in a dual sense: 'internal' and 'external'. Activism through community theatre cannot be a solution to deep inequalities, but it can provide a space for challenging these.

The author's participation as an actor, activist as well as researcher in the musical makes this thesis methodologically innovative in a context marked by deportability and borders. The analysis of the *No Border Musical* sharply exposes the inherent ambivalences and incompleteness of acting in an unjust world, whilst also hoping to inspire further engagement and resistance.

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Resistance Through Acting

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Abstract

In a context of deportability and bordering practices, this thesis asks questions regarding possibilities and limitations of resistance through community theatre. It sets out from a participatory ethnographic exploration of the working process and performance of the *No Border Musical*.

The *No Border Musical* was created in 2011–2013 in the city of Malmö in southern Sweden. It was initiated by people linked to the local migrant rights movement in the city. About half the participants had applied for asylum in Sweden as unaccompanied minors. When faced with an expulsion order, they had come into contact with the local migrant rights movement and, at a later stage, the musical initiative. A majority of the rest of the ensemble was politically involved in changing the overall system of migration control and in giving support to undocumented individuals. The approximately two-year period of working and performing together was permeated by consequences and experiences of borders, deportability, asylum processes, while also aiming to practice and stage visions of a world where a passport would not determine one's status in the world.

Through a participatory ethnographic study, the contingency and ambivalence of resistance through community theatre in a context marked by bordering practices and deportability is analysed. Some of the actors performed publicly on stage, despite residing as undocumented and an everyday life permeated by fear of being detected by the police and subsequently deported from Sweden. Simultaneously, although aiming to contest borders, the border also cut through the musical group, not least in relation to differences in regard to risks inherent in participating in and performing with the musical. Precarious living conditions due to deportability had consequences in terms of the conditions for participating in the musical.

The tension between wanting to dismantle categorisations put into force by the state and international institutions such as the EU, but also experiencing a need to adjust to the consequences of these (for example, practices to avoid police controls) was present in both the working process and visible in the performance of the musical. Categorisations, such as citizen/non-citizen, white/non-white, adult/youngster and documented/undocumented were simultaneously reproduced and contested.

The musical performance staged consequences and experiences of migration control, while also performing possibilities of a world without borders. The staging of migration control had a realist strand to it and could be understood as feeding into narratives of deservingness as well as reproducing a victimisation of refugeeness. At the same time, privileges of mobility were made visible and criticised in the performance, and undocumented characters displayed rebellious resistance towards the system of migration control.

By combining an in-depth ethnographic exploration of the working process with an analysis of the performance as well as the experiences of performing together, this thesis argues that these processes (of performing and working together) may be understood as *ambivalent commoning*. It is ambivalent since the very processes of what is referred to as commoning were simultaneously intersected by bordering practices as well as by a distribution of roles and power stemming from different positions in terms of deportability. The thesis points to the importance of relationship-building and continuity in this context and conceptualises these as *politics of translation*. This not only encapsulates translating between different languages but also between different experiences and positions in regard to the subjects addressed, in this case deportability, asylum processes and borders. The analysis of the *No Border Musical* sharply exposes the inherent ambivalences and incompleteness of acting in an unjust world, whilst also hoping to inspire further engagement and resistance.

Key words: Deportability, commoning, community theatre, activism, irregular migration

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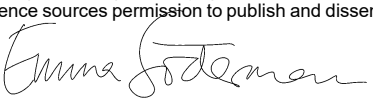
Signature  Date: August 14, 2019

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Cover photo by *No Border Musical*, poster from performances in Malmö. Illustrated by Markus Pålsson and Sofia Lindholm.

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Content

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1. Introduction: Ambivalent resistance to borders

> What did we do wrong? Why can't we stay in our homeland? And why are we not accepted anywhere else either? (Line from the scene 'Lost things' *No Border Musical)*.

> Once they had left their homeland they remained homeless, once they had left their state they became stateless; once they had been deprived of their human rights they were rightless, the scum of the earth (Arendt 1968: 267).

Ending the scene called 'Lost things', where stories of flight were performed on stage, the actor Najib[1] turned towards the audience and said the lines in the first quote posing questions of accountability in regard to the situation for refugees. As part of the performance called the *No Border Musical*, Najib had written this line himself, based on his own experiences of leaving his homeland. The second quote, from *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, was written by political philosopher Hannah Arendt, herself expelled from her state of origin at the time. Although the quotes are separated in time by some 60 years, they resonate in a similar tone of voice.

The meaning of being expelled from a community was a quandary preoccupying Arendt. In her work, she demonstrated and explored the ways in which a human being not considered a member of a community is left without any protection, stripped of all rights. According to Arendt, human rights, perceived as inalienable, did not matter once a person was denationalized; that is, expelled from a community (Arendt 1968, Chapter 9).

Starting off from the approximately two-year working process of creating and performing together in the *No Border Musical*, this thesis concerns discussions around refugeeness, borders, activism, resistance and theatre.

[1] All names have been anonymised.

The initiative to write and perform the *No Border Musical* came from people associated to the local refugee rights group Asylgruppen i Malmö[2] (Asylum Group) and the local theatre group Teater Interakt[3] (Theatre Interact) in the city of Malmö, located in Southern Sweden, in 2011. The musical was staged in Malmö, Norrköping and Stockholm, Sweden, in 2012 and 2013. Najib, who wrote the line quoted above, was part of an ensemble consisting of approximately 30 non-professional actors. The musical group included participants who were active in or were linked to the Asylum Group in Malmö and/or had experiences of residing as undocumented. All musical participants with experiences of residing as undocumented, with the exception of one woman[4] from Palestine, were male youngsters from Somalia and Afghanistan who had been categorised as unaccompanied refugee children upon arrival in Sweden. I participated in the musical as a non-professional actor with a background in migrant rights activism, as well as a researcher conducting an ethnographic study.

One important motivation for the *No Border Musical* was to illustrate the consequences of restrictive asylum policies and controlling migration by violent means. Immersed in the context of the local migrant rights movement, while critically addressing inequalities, the creation of the musical performance share some characteristics with theatre practices commonly described as community theatre (Van Erven 2001).

The musical performance included stories of experiences of migration and seeking asylum in Europe. Furthermore, the performance addressed questions of who enjoys the privilege of travelling without constraints and also illustrated the dream and possibility of a different world than the one we have now, a world without borders where people themselves would be able to choose which locations to call home. The themes addressed in the performance, such as borders, experiences of flight, migration control, the asylum process, resistance and dreams of another world where citizenship and passport no longer determine one's path in life were also closely associated with the actual working process of the musical. The working process focused on being

[2] Asylgruppen is a voluntary organisation founded in 1991. Since then, the group has worked together with and in support of asylum seekers and undocumented individuals. They view this work as part of the global struggle for freedom, equality and justice (www.asylgruppenimalmo.se).

[3] Teater Interakt is a Malmö-based independent theatre group since 2005 creating performances centred around questions of justice, equality and the equal worth of every human being (www.teaterinterakt.se).

[4] She participated in the musical at its later stages, rehearsing and performing in the autumn of 2013.

supportive of each other and doing something together independent of legal status, rather than explicitly focusing on the aesthetic outcome. The ambition was to transgress, imagine and act beyond borders and migration control. In the following, before presenting aim and research questions, I present key notions to provide a framework for the thesis.

Deportability

The explicit ambition of the musical in terms of contesting borders, forming a theatre group with participants with different legal status and including undocumented participants as actors on stage illustrates that the terms of exclusion are not definite, but that the boundaries of exclusion and inclusion are blurred (see Agamben 1998, 2005). At the same time, these practices based on an ambition of questioning national borders were themselves permeated by conditions of *deportability* (De Genova 2002). That is, the overhanging threat of participants being detected as undocumented and deported, as well as the precarious living conditions brought on by deportability.

In relation to actual removals of people from the territory of the state, deportation enforcement may be viewed as 'failed' or 'ineffective'. However, the 'effectiveness' of *the deportation regime* (De Genova and Peutz 2010) is related to the disciplining mechanisms of deporting just a few but leaving the much larger number of deportable people with an ever-present fear of deportation. Furthermore, as border controls are increasingly militarised, externalised from the territory of the state and internalised through, for example, internal controls of foreigners, experiences of deportability are interlinked with practices of bordering. Key for the discussions in this thesis is how these processes conditioned, permeated, were contested by and were performed on stage by the musical group.

Commoning

The process of creating the *No Border Musical* was filled with challenges, difficulties, inequalities, friendship, laughter and pride in relation to everyone's efforts to come together and complete the musical performance. The musical tried to contest and create alternatives to the precarious conditions caused by deportability. I use the notion of *commoning* for capturing these

processes in a context of deportability. The verb commoning stems from the noun commons, often associated with land, waters and other renewable resources. Commoning in this context concerns establishing common rules and regulations that neither follow the logic of the market nor are part of the state's governing of common goods (see Ostrom 2015). In my use of the concept, I include the subjective and intersubjective dimension of commons (see Bollier and Helfrich 2015); that is, the social relations between people who try to create and protect commons outside the logic of the state and/or market. I also stress the doing of commons; in other words, common*ing*.

When analysing the practices and performance of the musical, this thesis is based on an understanding that although exclusionary mechanisms of the state and deportability have severe consequences for the possibilities to act, this exclusion is not absolute but is contested by processes of commoning (which, at the same time, are conditioned and permeated by deportability). From this perspective, the *No Border Musical* is fruitful to explore in order to develop our understanding of how activism and formations of alternative spaces emerge in a context of deportability, as well as how these issues may be represented on stage. A contribution of this thesis is that it through an in-depth empirical exploration develops an analysis of the contingency of activism through community theatre in a context of deportability.

Exploring ambivalences

The title of this thesis says *ambivalent* practices of the *No Border Musical*. In terms of how the analysis and context of the thesis might be captured, as well as how some of my methodological dilemmas might be understood, ambivalences put these different processes within one (wide) framework. The notion of ambivalences captures coexistent contradictory feelings and, as I have used the term, also coexistent contradictory processes. One could think of other terms as well for describing parts of these processes, such as tensions, paradoxes or conflicts. However, I found ambivalences to be a fruitful framework to set out from, and I here introduce the different ambivalences of the processes I seek to analyse.

The *No Border Musical* was initiated by people connected to the migrant rights movement with an ambition of creating a performance and a working process that could to some extent break free from the ideas and conditions of the current regime of migration control. Working with a group where the participants had such different positions and experiences in relation to the

subjects addressed (bordering, deportability) may be considered an ambition to practice ideals of inclusion, justice and equality. Yet, despite such an ambition, the space created by the musical was clearly conditioned by deportability, which formed ambivalent and unequal relationships between the participants. Hence, the musical appears as a space situated within the ambivalent characteristics of an activism aiming for justice and equality in a context characterised by injustice and inequality.

Furthermore, when it comes to activism in support of migrants, the relationship to the state may also be described as characterised by ambivalences. On the one hand, there is an awareness that the state is not and cannot be the long-term solution to the predicament of migrants and refugees in vulnerable situations (relating to the discussion on exclusion/inclusion as well as discussions on ideas of deservingness). On the other hand, the state is the actor often capable of 'solving' the situation for the individual in search of refuge by granting a residence permit. Activism in this context is marked by an ambivalent pragmatism; what needs to be done here and now for the individuals in search for a safe haven, which is sometimes (but not always) in tension with working towards a more visionary ambition of profoundly transforming society (Nordling, Sager and Söderman 2017). Within the musical, the ideals of equality, transformation, justice and inequalities due to deportability were brought to a head. An analysis of the musical thus provides a deeper understanding of how the conditions of deportability may be experienced, endured and resisted (see Chapter 5 and 6).

Taking place outside the institutional theatre scene, using non-professional actors, the musical combined aesthetic expression with an ambition to transform the present society. This type of theatre is sometimes contrasted with 'pure' theatre presumed to exclusively focus on the excellence of art (White 2015). Following this line of thought, the musical could be described as having an ambivalent relationship with the practice of the art of theatre. The musical aimed to use theatre as a way to show visions of another possible world while at the same time putting forward critique towards the present. However, the line between different practices of theatre is said to be a misconception, as practitioners of different types of participatory theatre also strive to create 'pure' theatre. Indeed, engaging with participants and settings outside institutional theatre may be viewed as places with a great potential for creating powerful art (see White 2015).

At its heart, theatre is ambivalent, often discussed as a form of art accompanied by a sense of boundlessness (Wittrock 2011). As such, it is a space of transformation, where the actors are at least temporarily transformed

by acting in character and where there is potential for the audience to be transformed by the performance. The artists on stage acting in character are not themselves, at the same time as they are not *not* themselves (Schechner 1985). In other words, the audience will read the actor through notions of what the looks and actions of the actor signal to them, in combination with the character performed by the actor (Wittrock 2011). In the musical, this ambivalence was amplified as it was a performance addressing experiences of migration control and asylum processes, where some of the actors could also be read by the audience as carriers of these experiences. Furthermore, as mentioned, in a context characterised by deportability, the musical performance pointed to yet another form of ambivalence; some of its actors needed to stay 'invisible' or risk detection and deportation, at the same time as performing on a stage meant making oneself visible in public.

Following the above discussions, the musical appears to be a space where the ambivalences of theatre, deportability and activism in support of migrants intersect. The term of ambivalence is a combination of the word *ambi*, which means both, and *valent*, which comes from the Latin word valentia, meaning power. The combination of ambi and valent suggests the pull of two different, and coexisting, emotions and was established in the field of psychology in the early 1900s to describe this condition of concurrent oppositional feelings.[5] Since then, the term has been used in both literature and social science – and the frequency of its usage has increased.[6] Bauman (1990) wrote that a central part of modernity is the strive to eliminate (assimilate) ambivalences. The nation-state is central to modernity and, according to Bauman, is concerned with upholding the dichotomy of order and chaos. Order and chaos are both modern ideas; it is not a struggle of one order against another possible order, but of separating order from chaos. It is 'a fight of determination against ambiguity, of semantic precision against ambivalence, of transparency against obscurity, clarity against fuzziness' (Bauman 1990: 164). The modern project, according to Bauman, seeks to 'exterminate ambivalence' and chaos, at the same time as it needs chaos, ambivalence, ambiguity to go on creating order (Bauman 1990). Thus, my understanding of ambivalence, inspired by Bauman, puts ambivalence in contrast to (and contesting) practices of the nation-state, while at the same time intertwined with them. Additionally, by also mentioning

[5] It was coined by German psychologist Eugene Bleuler in the 1910.

[6] The notion of ambivalence is used for describing a variety of situations; the ambivalent existence of gender, sexuality and women's studies within the university environment (Talburt 2018), psychological ambivalence in relation to agency (Coates 2017), ambivalences in regard to social work in relation to the reception of refugees and migrants (Gustafsson and Johansson 2018) and ambivalence and modernity (Bauman 1990).

the origin of the term as a description of a psychological condition, I seek to use the concept of ambivalence on different levels, relational and societal; that is, as a broad framework for capturing messy, interlinked, contested as well as pragmatic practices within the musical but also the musical's relationships with the surrounding world.

In terms of methodology, this thesis could also be described as having an ambivalent relationship to the subjects explored. I was a participating researcher in the musical and combined with my involvement in the migrant rights movement, I would describe myself as an 'insider'. On the other hand, I had no direct experiences of the issues addressed in the musical and which some of its participants themselves had experienced: migration control, borders, seeking asylum. These are ambivalences present both during the fieldwork and during the analytical and writing process. The ambivalences of conducting fieldwork was related to different aspects of activism and of doing research in that context (see Chapter 4), but it has also been part of the writing process, where I have found myself frustrated. The section on a *terminology of lack* deals with some of these aspects of the writing process.

To sum up, the different ambivalences I have addressed above – of power relationships within activism, of theatre as a space of transformation and boundlessness, of in/visibility in regard to the undocumented position and of my position in the field – are discussed throughout this thesis.

Purpose and research questions

In a context of bordering practices and an intensified control of migration in Sweden and Europe, I ask questions regarding resistance and activism through community theatre. More specifically, my point of departure is a participatory ethnographic exploration of the dynamics and practices of the working process and performance of the *No Border Musical*. I start off in the musical, which in the midst of bordering practices and threats of deportation experienced by some of the participants aimed to create an alternative space and a performance, to explore ambivalent processes of activism and community theatre aiming to contest borders. The following research questions are addressed in my thesis:

1. How does deportability condition everyday life and activism?

2. How are experiences of deportability, control of migration and activism represented in the *No Border Musical*, and what are the implications of such representations?

3. What are the possibilities and limitations for *commoning* through community theatre in a context of deportability?

Points of departure

The thesis is based on an approximately two-year ethnographic study of the musical in which I participated as a non-professional actor as well as a researcher. I was part of the musical from the beginning of getting an ensemble group together until the final performance, and I have also participated in activities such as follow-up meetings and gatherings to watch screenings of the performance. Moreover, prior to participating in the musical, since 2005 I have to varying degrees been active in the local migrant rights network in Malmö, mainly through involvement in the Asylum Group. Consequently, besides taking part in the processes I study, I am also part of the larger context of migrant rights activism within which the musical took place. Against this background, this thesis is situated in the borderland between academia and activism and as such is a product of a process where my research has been driven by analytical curiosity, while also grounded in the evermore urgent need to contest and resist the current system of violent migration control.

A theoretical and intellectual challenge in this thesis is to not take for granted, and thereby contribute to, a mainstream naturalisation of nation-states and their borders, while at the same time acknowledging the far-reaching consequences of control mechanisms of the nation-state for many people categorised as migrants. My ambition is to set out from a theoretical standpoint allowing for a critical study of the positions and struggles of undocumented individuals and their allies, not as given but as a result of a legal and institutional production (De Genova 2002).

Following this above introductory section, this chapter continues with a discussion on terminology, followed by a section setting out from the title of this thesis: *Resistance Through Acting*. The following sections situate my work in relation to previous research. Finally, an outline of the thesis is presented.

A terminology of lack

There are many different pathways to irregularity, and people lacking formal permission to reside in a country make up a heterogeneous group that includes many different life situations: individuals who have had their asylum application rejected, who have overstayed their student/work/visitor visa or who have never had any contact with the state in regard to applying for a permit (Nyers 2010). Social anthropologist Nicholas De Genova talks about 'illegality' to highlight that undocumented migrants are not a homogenous group or something that can be studied as a clearly defined community but are just joined together by the legal production of 'illegality' (2002). As such, this thesis explores the phenomenon of 'illegality' or the term I use, deportability, in a context of activism through community theatre, rather than undocumented individuals as a group. However, experiences of individuals residing as undocumented obviously provide important insights regarding the phenomenon of deportability.

Individuals without formal permission to reside in a country are often described in relation to an absence or lack of something, for example *un*-documented, *ir*-regular, *un*-authorised or lack of legal status, to name a few examples. In order to better capture that people also move in and out of different statuses, and that people frequently find themselves in grey areas in relation to the legality of their status, scholars talk in terms of 'uncertain status', 'precarious status', 'gradations of status' and 'semi-legality' (Kubal 2013; Nyers 2010: 131).

In the media and political debate, as well as in research (see, for example, Baghir-Zada 2009), crossing a border irregularly and/or residing in a country without a residence permit is sometimes termed 'illegal'. I agree with Khosravi (2010a) and De Genova (2002) and reject this term for several reasons.[7] First, the term 'illegal' is a concept used in the legislations of nation-states, and to follow their terminology is to increase their discursive power. Second, it reproduces the criminalisation of migration. Third, in Sweden undocumented migrants are closely linked to the asylum process and the term 'illegal' would have implications with regard to the credibility of asylum seekers at large. Fourth, similar to Khosravi's informants, the participants of the musical also reject the term 'illegal' (Khosravi 2010a: 96). In Social Rapport (2010) by the National Board of Health and Welfare, it is put forward that referring to

[7] This is not controversial, as international agencies and national institutions also use the term illegal restrictively. However, it is noteworthy that simultaneously to more people questioning the term 'illegal', the processes of illegalisation are intensified.

undocumented individuals as 'illegal immigrants' risks leading to 'false associations between migration and criminality' (Socialstyrelsen 2010: 269 *my translation*). Thus, as Swedish authorities also seem to agree on this matter, it might be redundant but to be clear: an act may be termed illegal by the law, but a person, just by existing, cannot *be* illegal. Khosravi and De Genova use terms such as 'illegalization', everyday 'illegality' and 'deportability' to emphasise that it is a status produced by state legislation and policy (De Genova 2002; Khosravi 2010a). In this thesis, I use the term 'deportability', which I think captures the constant overhanging threat of deportation (at the same time as many with a deportation order actually do not get deported).

'Undocumented' or 'irregular migrants' are terms used, sometimes interchangeably, by scholars and in popular debate by people who reject the term 'illegal' (see, for instance, Jordan and Düvell 2002; Nielsen 2016; Sager 2011; Sigvardsdotter 2012). The word undocumented originates from the French self-organised and self-named movement of 'sans-papier'. In Swedish, the term is translated into 'papperslösa' and for the past ten, fifteen years or so, this term has been more commonly used than 'hidden refugees' (gömda flyktingar), which was previously commonly used in the Swedish context. The term undocumented is now used both by voluntary organisations and authorities in Sweden (see, for example, Swedish Red Cross, www.redcross.se and SOU 2011:48).

I use the term undocumented mainly because the participants in the musical with experiences of residing without residence permits referred to themselves undocumented. However, this is a rather misleading concept, as the participants I refer to were very 'well' documented. They had all had their fingerprints taken in a number of European countries before arriving in Sweden. These fingerprints were registered in the common European data base EURODAC. Some had also had their asylum case assessed and rejected in another European country before coming to Sweden. Sans-papier in the French context refers to lacking a specific paper – a residence permit. In the English and Swedish translation, this specific meaning is lost. Symptomatic of how undocumented migrants are treated today, and as stated above, there is no good name beyond those referring to a lack of something, all with a reference to the documented, regular and authorised making this the 'normal' condition. Categorising and naming also overshadows the fact that many people move around the world without ever being classified as a 'migrant'. Anderson, Sharma and Wright make an important point stating, 'Who counts as a migrant depends on who is doing the counting, and on the purpose of the counting. It is shifting and contradictory' (Anderson, Sharma and Wright 2012: 75). As the

notion of migrant comes with certain images and perceptions, I use the term migrant rather restrictively. Although undocumented is a rather misleading concept, I still use it to some extent, as it was, and still is, the most commonly used word in the Swedish everyday context.

When analysing the musical and describing the participants, finding the right words has been difficult for me. As a way to de-normalise the condition of being categorised as a Swedish citizen, I generally refer to participants with a Swedish citizenship by using different versions of 'participants without experiences of residing as undocumented'. Participants without Swedish citizenship are generally described as 'participants with experiences of residing as undocumented'. These formulations represent a combined attempt to de-naturalise citizenship and avoid the essentialising effect that may emerge from a static label. It further highlights that experiences of residing as undocumented in Sweden provide important knowledge on, for example, the consequences of migration control and bordering practices. Writing 'experiences of' is also more accurate, since the legal status of participants shifted during the working process as some of them re-entered the asylum process and received a residence permit. However, these formulations risk contribute to images of two (homogenous) groups within the musical: one with and one without citizenship. In this thesis, I use what I have found to be the least bad descriptions of participants, and I hope that the analysis will show the ambivalences and nuances, even if terminology sometimes risks overshadowing these. The dilemma I describe in relation to lacking words is related to structures beyond what may be solved through different practices of language or naming.[8]

[8] I am not alone in being frustrated with words and what they describe. Pouran Djampour (2018) has the title 'We need new names' for a discussion on the difficulties of finding words to capture the position(s) of her 'participants' (which she in the end calls them) in her research process (Djampour writes that other words could have been 'colleagues', 'comrades' or 'teachers'; also see Chapter 4 in this thesis on knowledge production as a collective endeavour). Poet and playwright Athena Farrokzhad began her summer talk in 2014 on the Swedish radio by quoting poet and playwright Berholt Brecht, who in the 1930s criticised the silence of intellectuals concerning the political developments in Europe: 'What kind of times are they, when a talk about trees is almost a crime, because it implies silence about so many horrors?'. Farrokzhad went on to say that she would have wanted to speak of trees, but that she instead must speak of the growing fascism (referring to a number of violent attacks carried out by Nazis in Sweden in the last years). Although Farrokhzad and Djampour make somewhat different points from mine, I think that they capture some of the dilemmas I faced with writing this thesis. It is the paradox that although I wish to move out from the framework (and language) of the nation-state, the permeation of the categories of the state in everyday lives, and in possibilities of resistance through community theatre, is so extensive. Hence, the state moves into the centre of the experiences and practices I seek to analyse.

Limitations to resistance through acting

In the title of this thesis, *Resistance through Acting*, I use the word acting in a dual sense: it relates both to acting on stage and to acting in the wider sense; that is, acting through activism in the form of, for example, organising, planning and participating in the working process of the musical.

The title of the thesis signals that I see acting in the context of the musical as resistance. The reader might then wonder what I mean by resistance, and resistance against what? In research, resistance is used to describe a wide variety of practices and situations, carried out on different levels (individual, institutional, collective), which has led researchers to argue for a need to clarify the notion (Hollander and Einwohner 2004). Hollander and Einwohner (2004) set out from an extensive literature review (mainly within sociological research) and identify that research on resistance in general seems to diverge in relation to perceptions of the recognition and intent of acts of resistance. In other words, does an act have to be intended as resistance to be characterised as such? And in that case, how can one assess whether the intention was there from the start or whether it is a part of how the actors want to describe their acts after the act? Or can resistance be unintentional? Furthermore, do the targets of resistance need to recognise the act as resistance as such? Although valued for their ambitious attempt to create an analytical framework for studying resistance, Hollander and Einwohner have also been criticised for their presentation of a clear-cut typology of resistance, which is limited to defining acts of resistance in relation to whether they are intended and/or recognised as resistance, which 'contradicts their simultaneous emphasis of resistance as a complex and ongoing process of social construction' (Johansson and Vinthagen 2016: 418). According to Johansson and Vinthagen, it is more fruitful to stick to Hollander and Einwohner's basic statement that acts are understood as resistance within '*ongoing processes of negotiation* between different agents of resistance (the resisters), between the agents of resistance and the agents of power (the targets), and between the two former parties and different observers' (Johansson and Vinthagen 2016: 418, *italics in original*).

The resistance I try to capture is not resistance in terms of a large political movement, acts of mass protest or people standing on the barricades. Nor does it refer to actions taken to achieve a clearly intended transformation, such as a

list of demands directed to relevant politicians/institutions.[9] Rather, it concerns acts performed in everyday life, sometimes with the purpose of remaining unrecognised (as with tactics used for not being detected as undocumented by the police), thus linked to the notion of everyday resistance (Scott 1985). However, acting on stage in public exceeds what may be captured by the notion of everyday resistance.

The title *Resistance Through Acting* is related to the notion of ambivalences already discussed above. It refers to acts sustaining and creating the space of the musical, as a space characterised by ambivalences in regard to the relationships between the participants, to the theatre, to its context of activism and migration control in Sweden. Some might say that instead of resistance, the acts I refer to may be related to strategies of survival and/or as charity. Given the ambivalences of the space of the musical I seek to analyse in this thesis, I understand these associations. However, I hold on to the word resistance in the title of this thesis as it refers to *resistant practices* performed at a certain time and in a certain context.[10] Practices that, however ambivalent, are oppositional[11] (for example, in case of the musical, in relation to the power of the nation-state to control who resides within its territory and on which terms). Resistance in the title of this thesis moreover acknowledges the time, effort and struggles/pain/difficulties the participants went through and invested in whilst creating the musical.

These acts took place at a time when the possibilities for resistance in the context of the migrant rights movement were very circumscribed (they still are). In contrast to overall societal developments, other ideals were imagined and practiced in the musical group, although the ambivalences and limitations were numerous. I have already touched upon some of these limitations when talking about the ambivalences emerging in this thesis. I now turn to the larger developments that further add to the difficulties of resistance through acting.

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[9] In Hollander and Einwohner's typology, this would be 'overt resistance' or 'covert resistance' depending on whether it is recognised by the target (Hollander and Einwohner 2004: 544)

[10] Although focusing on everyday resistance (Scott 1985), the theoretical points of departure of Johansson and Vinthagen, where they set out from an ambition to construct an analytical framework for everyday resistance, to some extent resonate with my use of the concept of resistance. For example, they see everyday resistance as a practice and not a particular consciousness, intent or outcome. They also see everyday resistance as heterogeneous and contingent on changing contexts and situations. In this thesis, I aim to capture a set of ambivalent practices, taking place within contexts of activism and migration control, but which I have nevertheless chosen to describe using the word resistance.

[11] In their literature review, Hollander and Einwohner show that scholarly work on resistance generally included a 'sense of *action*' and commonly also involved a 'sense of *opposition*' (Hollander and Einwohner 2004: 538, *italics in original*).

Constructing migrants as subjects of control and the implications of this

Throughout history, legislative measures to control migration and migrants have been motivated by different arguments: to protect the Swedish labour market, to address 'national security' (in the case of political refugees) and by means of racist and nationalist arguments for protecting the 'Swedish race' (Hammar 1964). The arguments have gone from emphasising the needs for keeping a 'racial purity of the nation' to arguments based on the needs for preserving a high level of welfare provisions (based on beliefs that the new arrivals present a cost to the welfare system) (Nielsen 2016: 75). As Sweden needed labour after the Second World War, regulations on labour migration to Sweden were quite open until the late 1960s/early 1970s (Johansson 2005). However, since the mid-1980s, migration has increasingly been framed as a threat and a security risk, which only escalated with the events in New York in 2001 (Hydén and Lundberg 2004). Migration has increasingly been linked to the threat of terrorism and linked to security politics and militarised methods (Sager et al. 2016; Abiri 2000a). Although Sweden has often been considered a 'generous' country with regards to refugee immigration, the reception from the late 1960s and onwards has been related to notions on how many refugees the welfare state can 'manage' (Johansson 2005). Principles of equality, solidarity and distribution, central to the welfare system, do not necessarily extend to those perceived as not belonging in the Swedish state. Rather, it has been argued that a well-functioning control of migration is a prerequisite for a general welfare system for the national population. The Swedish welfare state is a national project and it will first and foremost see to the social security of its members (Barker 2018). Thus, paradoxically, principles of inclusive welfare come with principles of strict controls of the borders around this welfare; that is, based on which conditions one may become a member of the nation-state (Nielsen 2016; Öberg 1994). In a context of deportability, this means that living in the Swedish welfare state without a residence permit has resulted in a condition of severely restricted access to welfare rights.[12]

[12] Sweden has historically been one of the countries in the EU granting undocumented individuals the least welfare rights, such as access to health care (see Björngren Cuadra 2012). However, in recent years, the national legislation has changed, and undocumented children are given access to education and health care. In practice, however, access to services such as health care is still conditioned and limited (see Lundberg and Söderman 2015).

Furthermore, since 1995, when Sweden joined the EU, Swedish migration policies have gradually been geared towards European harmonisation. The EU regulations of controlling migration make up a repressive environment for people categorised as, or who act in support of, migrants. For example, participants in the musical residing as undocumented did so due to being subject to the Dublin Regulation, which was signed by the EU member states in 1990.[13] In Sweden, adaptation and amendment of the developing area of migration policies within the EU join the path taken by the EU towards restrictiveness as regards migration control (Hydén and Lundberg 2004).

People traveling irregularly to reach the EU are confronted with an increasing risk of not surviving their journeys. Many do not make it across when trying to cross the Mediterranean border. Between 1993 and September 2018, United Against Racism has documented that 35,597 individuals have drowned (United Against Racism 2018). The Mediterranean border is estimated to be the deadliest border in the world (IOM 2018).[14]

These different measures risk supersede the fact that while migrants (regular as well as irregular) are made into scapegoats for a diversity of social and political problems that the EU seems incapable of solving, they have become vital for the flexible labour market and a resource used for filling up the demographic deficit (Hansen 2008). Who is categorised as a migrant, and thus made into a scapegoat, is anything but a neutral question. Businessmen, backpackers, aid workers all travel the world but are not referred to as

[13] The Dublin Regulation is a binding measure of European Community law, which stipulates that the first EU country to which the asylum seeker arrives is responsible for processing the application. If the asylum seeker seeks asylum in another EU country, he/she will in most cases (there are exceptions to this rule; however, they are applied restrictively in Sweden) be deported back to the first country of arrival. As of 1997, Sweden has been part of the Dublin Regulation. In 1997, Sweden also signed the Schengen Agreement, which stipulates carrier responsibility (transportöransvar) and common visa requirements. Carrier responsibility turned flight and boat companies into actors in the control of migration as they would receive a fine if a passenger without the correct visa travelled with them. To compensate for the limited control of the Swedish external borders, being part of the Schengen area also meant an increased internal control of foreigners (Hydén and Lundberg 2004; Johansson 2005).

[14] Furthermore, the different regulations in the area of migration control on the EU level reflect '*infrastructural or economical continuity* between the late colonialism and an emerging neo-colonial globalisation' (Hansen and Jonsson 2015: 199, *italics in original*). For example, the Spanish North African enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla are crucial for the EU's militarised strive to control migration from African countries, and the EU has border controls and FRONTEX offices in a number of African countries (Hansen and Jonsson 2015; Andersson 2014).

migrants. The figure of the migrant is 'generally negatively gendered, racialised and classed' (Anderson, Sharma and Wright 2012: 75).[15]

The trends of increasingly repressive migration control in the context of the EU are part of what has been described as a securitisation of migration. Although it comes in different regional and national forms, it captures trends of more restrictive legal regulations of migration, 'undesirable' migrants being subject to criminalisation, the expansion of global businesses that make a profit out of immigrant prisons and the normalisation of detention and deportation practices as modes of governance (Tyler and Marciniak 2013).

Some of these developments (e.g., the privatisation and outsourcing of different forms of controlling migration) relate to an overall neoliberal development. Wendy Brown argues that neoliberalism 'wages war on public goods and the very idea of a public' (Brown 2015: 39). According to Brown, neoliberalism limits the potential for even desiring a public space as a space for political actions.[16] Brown furthermore states that neoliberalism not only constitutes a new economic order[17] but also severely limits the human potential of imagining (and struggling for) a world beyond the neoliberal world. The permeation of a neoliberal way of structuring, imagining and acting in our time thus presents severe challenges for practices of resistance. In this context, the musical tried to re-open or created a new (limited) public space through acting (in the dual sense of the word). Deportability in the neoliberal context sketched above may be seen as 'in tune' with a neoliberal agenda as it, for example, produces a position of the flexible, temporary, on-demand, easily exploited worker. The musical can be seen as an effort to open up other (however ambivalent and on a small scale) constitutive possibilities of being human beyond the neoliberal homo oeconomicus.

This repressive environment based on a neoliberal paradigm, a restrictive and violent control of migration, may also be seen in relation to how the

[15] For example, men fleeing from war are often either considered cowards (not staying and fighting for their country) or potential members of an undesirable military fraction, whilst women are considered passive victims. For a discussion on how these images played out during the so-called 'refugee crisis' in Europe in 2015, see Helms (2015).

[16] Inspired by (but also departing from) Foucault, Brown argues that neoliberalism creates specific conditions for being human: a human seeking to increase her human capital in order to increase her ability to compete (in contrast to exchange) in the 'market' (not limited to the economic sphere but all spheres of human life). Brown argues that the permeation of this mode of being in the human being creates a specific human figure: homo oeconomicus (Brown 2015).

[17] For example, the deregulation of industries and capital, reduction of welfare provisions, privatisation of public goods, increased dominance of financial capital over productive capital, effect the increasing level of inequalities.

phenomenon of migration, or more correctly, how (some people's) mobility is represented and understood. Neoliberal economisation of how phenomena and areas in society are treated and made understandable is also expressed through the language through which migration as a phenomenon is made understandable. A language of numbers and counting is often present in public debates. The Swedish Migration Agency produces virtually running meters of statistics and this may also be seen in reports from actors seeking to improve conditions for migrants (see, for example, UNHCR 2017; IOM 2018). In regard to irregular migration, countries tend to focus on the highest estimation, even though these are no more robust than the lowest estimates (Koser 2010).

Besides being part of an economisation of how we speak of and relate to the phenomenon of migration, numbers in themselves are tricky business. Especially within such a politicised field as migration, where they are used in order to push for different measures and policies (Vollmer 2011). Generally, an extensive use of numbers, and referring to numbers of asylum applicants, risks feeding into a racist perceived threat of 'floods', 'streams' and 'waves' of people on the move. A general problem is that the numbers produced mainly serve the interests of other actors and not the ones migrating who are actually the subjects of the counting.[18]

Previous research – migration, mobility, borders and community theatre

In the following section, I situate my study within the research field of critical migration and critical border studies[19] and bring this research into a discussion with research on community theatres.

[18] To the reader new to the subject of migration, I provide a couple of figures with the purpose of putting the image of Europe being 'invaded' by migrants in perspective. In 2017, UNHCR estimated that 68.5 million individuals had been forcibly displaced as a result of persecution, conflict, generalised violence or human rights violations. Of the 25.4 million officially recognised as refugees, 85% were given refuge by so-called developing countries (UNHCR 2017). Furthermore, the number of refugees and the total number of international migrants (214 million) do not constitute large proportions of the 7 billion people populating the world (Castles, Haas and Miller 2014).

[19] Critical migration studies and critical border studies could be argued to represent two separate research fields. However, as they overlap, I here treat them together.

Mobility and migration

Directing our focus towards mobility and movement allows us to see that the bounded, homogenous, well-defined community is the exception, if it ever existed (Anderson, Sharma and Wright 2012). Mobility has always been unevenly distributed in the world and there has been an ambition to control the movement of the unwanted poor (Anderson 2013; Montesino 2015). A broader focus on mobility and a critical examination of who is counted and considered a migrant allows us to see that the construction of the migrant is nation-state-centric and serves certain interests.

De Genova (2002) argues that 'illegality' is legally produced in the sense that the intense controls of migration and the presence of undocumented individuals are not 'natural' or for that matter neutral but (and this also goes for the privilege of citizenship) a constant process of legal production. In line with this perspective, Rajaram argues that it is of great importance to 'detach "asylum" from its specialised, regulated and, often, depoliticised domain' (Rajaram 2013: 683), as the questions of who is to be held accountable for claims of asylum and who should be given protection within a territory are central to the creation of a territorial unit, thus at the heart of the political. Highlighting the importance of a perspective of mobility and the legal system's production of 'illegality' does not mean neglecting that many individuals categorised as migrants struggle to receive the protection that may be entailed in citizenship (Nordling, Sager and Söderman 2017).

Although acknowledging that people being mobile is not something new, Castles, Haas and Miller (2014) argue that what is distinctive in recent years is the global scope of migration, its centrality to domestic and international policies as well as its social and economic effects. Looking at migration through a perspective of mobility, the agency of the migrant is foregrounded and the measurements of control are seen as responses to the potential agency enacted by migrants as they move. Within the literature in the field of critical migration, this is a common perspective where 'migration is a potentially creative social movement capable of confounding and destabilising the distributions and markings of social power' (Walter 2008 in Nyers and Rygiel 2012: 5).

Within this broadly defined field, many scholars set out from individuals migrating who find themselves in precarious situations and who struggle to improve their conditions. Scholars have explored a variety of collective strategies as struggles for regularisation, recognition based on status as labourers, tactics of undocumented individuals to get access to welfare services and resistance against detention and deportation practices (e.g., Beltrán 2009;

De Genova and Peutz 2010; Krause 2008; McNevin 2011; Nyers 2003, 2010; Nyers and Rygiel 2012; Rigby and Schlembach 2013; Rygiel 2011; Squire 2009, 2011; Tyler and Marciniak 2013). Others have focused more on everyday life and mundane struggles to get by (e.g., De Genova 2005; Sigona 2012). A common denominator among the above scholars is to question the nation-state as *the* entity in which politics is performed and where political belonging is framed. Furthermore, these scholars question static definitions of citizenship and instead set out to find ways of conceptualising citizenship as something that is enacted, fluid and contested, as well as altered by migrants who are not perceived as citizens (Isin and Nielsen 2008; Isin 2009). By setting out from migrant practices and experiences of (restricted) mobility, scholars claim that this produces new forms of citizenship and new ways of being political.

Research on undocumented migration has been scarce in the Swedish context. However, a number of studies have been published in recent years, including an anthology on irregular migration in the Swedish context (Sager, Holgerson and Öberg 2016). These different studies have covered everyday experiences of undocumented migrants (Holgersson 2011; Sager 2011; Sigvardsdotter 2012), passport forgery and contestations of borders (Keshavarz 2016), sanctuary practices in cities (Lundberg and Dahlquist 2018; Lundberg and Strange 2016), the history of detention practices in Sweden (Jansson 2016), the conditions and limits of getting protection from violence as an undocumented woman (Bexelius 2016) and undocumented migration in connection to Swedish authorities; for example, education (Lind and Persdotter 2017; Lundberg and Strange 2017), health care (Ascher et al. 2008; Sigvardsdotter 2012) social work (Björngren Cuadra and Staaf 2012, Nordling 2017) and in relation to the labour market (Moksnes 2016; Öberg 2016). Social anthropologist Shahram Khosravi (2006, 2010a) was the first to highlight the everyday life of 'illegality', setting out from participant observations and interviews with undocumented migrants in Sweden. His exploration into everyday 'illegality' shows how undocumented migrants lack access to fundamental rights in Sweden and are increasingly exposed to risks of 'exploitation, illness, abuse, disrupted family life and ultimately premature death' (Khosravi 2010a: 96). Based on fieldwork in the mid-2000s, Khosravi further argues that detention and deportation practices in Sweden criminalise asylum seekers and expose them to severe violence, which sometimes leads to their death (for example, in the case of suicides in detention centres) (Khosravi 2009). Setting out from his own experiences of travelling irregularly to Sweden from Iran, as well as from conversations with people who have

experienced different kinds of border crossings, Khosravi also published an auto-ethnography of borders (2007, 2010b). Khosravi discusses different aspects of some people being forced not only to cross borders 'illegally', but also to always carry the border with them, thus themselves being the border.

The next section is linked to discussions on different forms of contested mobility and irregularity through a focus on bordering practices.

Bordering practices

As discussed above, one way in which states respond to the 'age of migration' (Castles, Haas and Miller 2014) is to try to restrict the movement of certain individuals. National borders are being militarised across the globe, at the same time as borders are externalised beyond the territorial limit of the nation-state. Furthermore, borders also materialise within territories; for example, through internal control of foreigners (see Hydén and Lundberg 2004). This research field, critical border studies, has emerged in order to understand and conceptualise these developments. The text of French philosopher Etienne Balibar, 'What is a Border?' (2002), has been a great source of inspiration for scholars in this field. He pointed to the problems of defining the border, as the definition itself would actually contribute to the production of the border:

> The theorist who attempts to define what a border is is in danger of going round in circles, as the very representation of the border is the precondition for any definition (Balibar 2002: 76).

Scholars inspired by Balibar set out to find ways to conceptualise the border without contributing to simplifying images of the border as a line demarcating territory on a map (Belcher, Martin and Tazzioli 2015; Parker and Vaughan Williams 2009; Rumford 2012). The heterogeneity and changing nature of borders have led researchers in this field to think of borders as a series of practices, which directs the focus towards how borders appear, are sustained and produced (Parker and Vaughan Williams 2009). Conceptualising bordering as a set of practices focuses on how categories such as 'migrant'/'citizen', 'illegal'/'legal' are fabricated (Belcher, Martin and Tazzioli 2015). Borders are commonly argued to work as filters, 'sorting out the desirable from the undesirable, the genuine from the bogus, the legal from the illegal, and permitting only the deserving to enter the state territory'. This not only takes place along territorial lines of nation-states, but borders are to a larger extent at 'the heart of the political space' (Anderson 2013: 2). Furthermore, arguments are made for moving away from seeing the border

from the state's perspective to looking at the role of ordinary people (citizens, non-citizens) in 'constructing, shifting, or even erasing borders' (Rumford 2012: 897).

Balibar finishes his influential text about the border by arguing that borders permeate certain lives to the extent that these lives become the border in themselves. This perspective of the border, of actually being and inhabiting the border, was formulated already in 1987 by the Chicana feminist scholar Gloria Anzaldúa. Writing from her personal experience of being at the crossroads of the border between Mexico and the United States, of being denied to fully enter her 'new' home of the United States as well as being denied to live a lesbian life in her 'old' home, she argues for a *mestiza culture*, which is claimed in the borderland. This mestiza culture is also present through her transgressive writing style. Her book, *Borderlands: The new mestiza = la frontera*, mixes personal and collective experiences, poetic and academic writing. She argues for conceptualising the borderlands as spaces of oppression (for example, 'be stopped by *la migra* at the border check points' (2012: 216)) but also as a space of resisting, formulating new ways of living. She ends the poem 'To live in the Borderlands means you' with:

> To survive the Borderlands
>
> you must live *sin fronteras*
>
> be a crossroads (Anzaldúa 2012 [1987]: 217, *italics in original*).

When studying migration and bordering practices in the present world, we always confront the political as such; that is, questions of how and upon which basis regulations, political communities are formed. Migration and mobility encounter the arbitrariness of borders, change them, as well as produce efforts by different actors to once again enforce borders by implementing measures to control migration. Inspired by critical migration research and critical border studies, this thesis rests on the claim of agency inherent in the decision to migrate and the potential of new forms of the political and of community being shaped by migration. This thesis adds to this body of research by combining its insights with perspectives stemming from research on participatory theatre. The next section shifts the focus from migration and bordering practices to theatre, specifically collaborative and outspoken political forms of theatre.

Community theatre

Community theatre, as a form of collaborative performance and working process of theatre production, can be traced back to various forms of counter-cultural, radical, anti- and post-colonial, educational and liberational theatres of the 1960s and 1970s (Van Erven 2001). Today, the combination of artistic and political practices in theatre production has many names: community theatre, community-based theatre, grassroots theatre, theatre for social change, social theatre, applied theatre, etc. According to Thompson and Schechner, the terminology used depends on the context: 'applied theatre (UK and Australia), community-based theatre (USA), theatre for development (certain Asian and African countries), or popular theatre (Canada)' (Thompson and Schechner 2004: 11). These different terms are frequently used interchangeably, and scholars often argue for not putting much effort in a sharp definition of the terms (Nicholson 2014; Thompson 2011; White 2015). Community theatre is linked to political and popular theatre in the sense of trying to create platforms for addressing political issues. However, community theatre also aims for a collaborative working process including people living in communities affected by issues addressed in the performance (Salverson 2011). This field (broadly speaking and including both practitioners and scholars) is characterised by a sense of 'let all flourish'.

Historically, 'community' in community theatre has also meant different things (Kuftinec 2003). For example, in the American context during the 1930s, the Workers Theatre Movement set out from constructions of community based on class. Later on, in the 1960s, community theatres such as El Teatro Campesino and Free Southern Theatre saw theatre as a way to resist assimilation as well as to create a stronger sense of community within their own group (Kuftinec 2003). Furthermore, already at the turn of the twentieth century, community theatre played an important role in regards of self-representation as well as providing a time for beauty and leisure for the poor communities in Chicago (Addams 1912 [1910]).

Thompson and Schechner (2004) use the concept of social theatre, stemming from an Italian context, *teatro sociale*, to discuss participatory theatre work in prisons, schools, hospitals, refugee camps, etc., where participants share experiences of marginalisation (Thompson and Schechner 2004). Social theatre combines theatre with theories and knowledge of the specific field where the theatre work is carried out. For example, theatre in schools and education use educational theories, theatre for development use development theories (Thompson and Schechner 2004), an approach that corresponds to the work of the *No Border Musical* and this thesis, where

theatre is practiced in a context of the migrant rights movement and where the analysis is informed by critical migration theories.

In the 1990s, applied theatre and its sister-terms applied drama and applied performance emerged as terms in the milieu of the universities. It gained increasing recognition as students, academics, theatre practitioners and policy-makers used the term when referring to forms of dramatic activity intended to benefit individuals, communities and societies at large. Although theatre practitioners had worked with these types of theatre before, the introduction of the term applied theatre signalled a professionalisation of the field, among other things investigating the common theoretical and political concerns following from different practices in the field (Nicholson 2014). This professionalisation and academisation of applied theatre has been criticised for changing the perspective to theatre as something applied *to* a community rather than theatre as created *together* (Adebayo 2015). White (2015) suggests that refocusing on the artistry of applied theatre may contribute to returning to the political origin of the practices embraced under the umbrella term. Furthermore, Neelands (2007) argues for thinking of the processes of creating a performance as being engaged in an ongoing struggle. From this perspective, working to ensure the right to participate in struggles that challenge cultural and economic norms when these are considered unjust is of political significance.

The Brazilian writer and theatre director Augusto Boal has been very influential in the field of community theatre with his work on the theatre of the oppressed (Van Erven 2001). Boal (1979 [1974]) is commonly associated with *forum theatre*, which is a form of theatre aiming to erase the division between the spectator and the actor by inviting the spectators to step in and act to transform the scenario on stage. According to Boal, who had worked with marginalised populations in Peru, Ecuador and Brazil, theatre was not the revolution in itself, but a rehearsal of the revolution. Boal's thoughts on the practices of theatre have been a source of inspiration for community and applied theatre working with theatre as a tool for social transformation.

There is a growing field of research on participatory theatre produced in collaboration with refugees, people seeking asylum and irregularised migrants (Cox and Wake 2018; Dennis 2007, 2008; Djampour and Söderman 2016; Gilbert and Nield 2008; Jeffers 2006, 2008, 2012; Wake 2013; Thompson 2011). In the British context, theatre scholar Alison Jeffers notes an increasing use of refugees' stories in plays aiming to be verbatim. Jeffers highlights problems in relation to the notion of authenticity, which she argues has been 'developed to the level of fetish in contemporary practice' (Jeffers 2006: 2). In

the same vein, using examples from her own and others' theatrical work in Canada with testimonies of flight and violence, Julie Salverson (2001) claims that much of theatre practice involves an unreflective use of personal stories of violence, loss and separation. Jeffers (2012) argues that a focus on experiences of trauma in participatory theatre working with refugees risks neglecting that that 'refugees' stories are of survival' (Jeffers 2012: 139). Only repeating the suffering and trauma of 'the other' reproduces victimisation (Salverson 2001).

In the Swedish context, there is limited research in the field of community theatre. The ambition of using theatre as a way to express politics gained currency in Sweden during the 1960 and1970s, a period that stands out in terms of a radicalisation of cultural expressions (Backius 2011). Theatre was created in relation to the social and political struggles of that time and aimed to reach new audiences. For example, in 1977, what has been called the first 'workers' play' (arbetarspel) premiered, *Spelet om Norbergstrejken 1891–92*. In this play, workers were actors performing working-class experiences, performing in front of workers who also shared these experiences (Testad 2012). The play inspired several subsequent performances addressing working-class issues and were played by both professional and non-professional actors (Backius 2011). In later years, different forms of participatory theatre have also been analysed in relation to the integration of migrants. In this context, practitioners as well as funders and politicians argue that the practices of theatre are to promote 'meetings' between people from different backgrounds and thus work as a tool, a key, to integration (Wittrock 2011).

Some examples of contemporary community theatres in Sweden include Communityteater & Dans in Stockholm that, for example, have staged *Rött kort – om att spela vanlig och vara gömd*,[20] which tells a story of young undocumented boy who loves football, and *Svenska hijabis* setting out from experiences of Swedish women in relation to wearing hijab; Södra Community teatern in Malmö that staged *Välkommen till Malmö…*, a performance addressing the reception of refugees in Malmö in the autumn of 2015; and Tornedalsteatern that has staged performances addressing questions of Tornedalian identity and language.[21]

[20] See https://www.gp.se/america-vera-zavala-det-enda-vi-kan-kalla-dem-är-barn-1.609603 for a description of how the performance was created (in Swedish).

[21] Read more about these theatres at:
Communityteater & Dans: http://www.communityteater.org
Södra Community Teatern: https://www.sodracommunity.se
Tornedalsteatern: https://www.yourvismawebsite.com/tornedalsteatern/startalku

Although upcoming, both as an art form as well as in the academic field of theatre studies, community theatre still remains in the periphery (Van Erven 2001). Eugène Van Erven states that few have gone through the trouble of properly documenting the works of community theatres, meaning that few scholars have documented the creative process from beginning to end, as well as spend a considerable amount of time with artists and community participants in order to fully grasp the process of creating a community theatre performance (Van Erven 2001). Although Van Erven wrote this at the beginning of the 2000s, his statement still seems valid, especially in the Swedish context (for an exception see, for example, Wittrock (2011), who explores different types of participatory theatre). Combining insights from critical migration studies with research on community theatre, this thesis aims to contribute to both of these fields.

Contentious protests

The last decades have seen a rise of migrants protesting. Migrants who together with allies contest restrictive legislations, detention and deportation practices and the militarisation of borders (see, for example, Nyers and Rygiel 2012; McNevin 2006; Rigby and Schlembach 2013; Stierl 2016; Swerts 2018; Squire 2009, 2011). Although these different mobilisations are often described within a framework pointing to the transformative potential of these protests – for example, in terminologies of acts of citizenship (Isin 2009) or 'active subjects of trans-border politics' (Strange, Squire and Lundberg 2017: 244) or as acts of contestation (McNevin 2011) – scholars also acknowledge the contingencies of the different struggles and the precarious positions of migrants within these. Nonetheless, some scholars argue that the research focus on new subjectivities and/or resistance risks neglecting mundane radical practices (Papadopoulus 2012), as well as tactics aiming to stay out of visibility, of not aiming to be represented (Papadopoulus and Tsianos 2013). However, many mobilisations of migrants and their allies continue to simultaneously address questions of representation whilst also seeking to improve everyday conditions (Tyler and Marciniak 2014).

One platform for formulating protests against harsh migration controls is through different forms of artistic expressions, such as participatory theatre. The platform of participatory theatre clearly relates to struggles for representation and visibility, but also to demands of transforming an everyday life made precarious due to regulations of migration. Sometimes, as with

migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong, the streets are where these performances take place, making the situation and demands for change visible through dancing, singing and theatrical strategies (Lai 2010). One of the main symbols of the nation, the national anthem, is sometimes transformed into an instrument for protests against exclusion from the nation, as when 'illegalised' migrants sang the American national anthem in Spanish (Butler and Spivak 2010). On other occasions, refugees perform personal stories of seeking asylum on the theatre stage, sometimes with the ambition of claiming the credibility denied them by the authorities during the asylum process (Jeffers 2008). Participatory theatre also stages narratives of migration aiming to move beyond present language for understanding migration. For example, performing in Bamako, Mali, a theatre group of deportees staged their (failed) mobility not as migration but as travelling, putting forward an interpretation that readjusts the 'migratory experience to adventure', thus taking a step out of the tragic ways of talking about African migration and mobility (Canut and Sow 2014).

Participatory theatre is argued to 'tread a precarious line between producing validation, on the one hand, and victimhood, on the other' (Jeffers 2008: 2017). A documentary setting might produce feelings of empathy and pity and risks turn 'towards a fixation and exploitation of personal fate' (Oberkrome 2018: 267). Writing in the wake of a world after the fall of the Soviet Union, theatre and performance scholar Baz Kershaw (1999) identifies radical live performance as a platform where tensions and conflicts in society are brought to a head.[22] This, as performances and/or theatres that take place outside of theatres, engaging in and trying to change contemporary societies, are immersed in and constituted by the tensions and conflicts they try to transform (Kershaw 1999). Hence, an exploration of the *No Border Musical* as a theatre located within a context of activism, with the purpose of both engaging in and changing society, may contribute to research seeking to understand tensions and conflicts in relation to control of migration, as well as the ambivalences and difficulties associated with contesting the present order of migration control.

[22] Kershaw (1999) writes that the notion of 'performance' encompasses all elements of theatre. I will not go into defining performance as a notion but use it here to describe the performance (föreställning) of the musical unless no other meaning is indicated. Nicholson (2010) writes that 'Live performance, however the term "performance" is understood, depends on an uncertain mix of the known and the unpredictable, created in the encounters between participants, actors and audiences in the immediacy of the performative moment' (Nicholson 2010: 147).

Outline of the thesis

Following this introductory chapter, in Chapter 2 I situate the *No Border Musical* in the context of the migrant rights movement and the leftist extra-parliamentary scene in the city of Malmö. The following two chapters, Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, concern the theoretical framework and the methodology of the thesis. The first part of Chapter 3 serves to explore the condition of refugeeness and deportability, followed by discussions on borders and contestations. Chapter 4, the methodology chapter, outlines my situated position in the borderland between academia and activism and the consequences of this position for my thesis. It is inspired by black feminist and standpoint feminist epistemologies and I claim to produce in-depth situated knowledge held accountable not only by the scientific community but also by the communities whose struggles I claim to be allied with. The first empirical chapter analyses activism in a context of deportability. It highlights how fear permeates the everyday life of the deportable participants in the musical and how this is conditioned as well as handled in the context of the musical. The next chapter analyses the practises of the musical as processes of commoning and also points to the conflicts, contradictions and ambivalences of these processes. The last empirical chapter analyses the performance of the musical. It explores which kinds of visibilities were enabled in the performance, while also discussing silences in relation to the process of casting different actors in different roles. It ends with a discussion on utopian performances and the aesthetic experience. Lastly, conclusions are presented in a final chapter, followed by an epilogue.

2. Situating the *No Border Musical*

In this chapter, I situate the musical within the migrant rights movement in the city of Malmö. Some of the themes touched upon in this chapter are developed further in later chapters.

This chapter starts with a story of when a participant in the musical was detected by the police, detained and deported. I include this incident in the chapter for two reasons: *First*, the deportation was disastrous for the deported participant and as such an important story to tell in order to shed light on the violence of the Swedish migration control as well as on activism for the freedom of movement. *Second*, it had an immense impact on the participants in the musical group as well as the working process, while also becoming an important part of the performance. Writing about the deportation is a way of providing the reader with an overall understanding of what kind of project the musical was and under which circumstances it was created. Thereafter, I describe the context in which the musical was formed, followed by a section about the city of Malmö. There is a particular focus on the neighbourhood of Möllevången, where several participants in the musical lived and spent considerable time.

The deportation[23]

At the end of the summer of 2012, I got a call from Abdullah, a participant in the musical residing as undocumented. Plainclothes police officers had detected him and another participant, Ghasem, outside their home and asked them to show their identification. As they had none, they were held by the police in the apartment. They were allowed to make phone calls and called me and other participants from the musical to get help. A couple of us arrived and

[23] This story of the deportation is based on a section of a chapter written together with Pouran Djampour in *Irreguljär migration i Sverige: Rättigheter, vardagserfarenheter, motstånd och statliga kategoriseringar* (2016) (in Swedish).

tried to negotiate with the police. They, in turn, called for more police officers to the scene, handcuffed one person who was trying to obstruct the arrest and blocked others who protested against the arrest. In the end, they took both participants (at that time 17 and 18 years old) into custody in Malmö where they were placed in separate cells. Ghasem was under the age of 18 and could thus not be held in custody or detention during the time needed by the border police in order to make the arrangements for his deportation. According to Swedish regulations, children without parents or other closely related adults can be put in detention[24] in exceptional cases and only in direct connection to the deportation[25] of the child. Due to pressure from his psychologist[26] and due to his age, Ghasem was released the same night. He was told to report to the police the next day. He did not report but managed to avoid being detected again by the police. Similar to the rest of the participants residing as undocumented, Ghasem was to be deported to another EU member state in accordance with the Dublin Regulation. However, in the past and at the time of writing, if an individual was to remain undocumented in Sweden for 18 months, the Dublin Regulation would no longer apply. For Ghasem, only a couple weeks remained of these 18 months before he could once again apply for asylum.

Abdullah, who had recently turned 18, was after one night in custody put in detention while waiting to be deported to Italy, the country having been determined responsible for his asylum application according to the Dublin Regulation. The incident affected the participants of the musical, and those residing as undocumented were even more afraid than before that the police would detect them too. At the same time, the arrest also showed that the group had formed strong bonds between one another. An intense mobilisation to stop the deportation began, involving participants in the musical as well as activists from the local migrant rights movement.

During the three weeks that Abdullah was detained, participants in the musical group contacted a lawyer and planned a visiting schedule to make sure that Abdullah received visits every day. The undocumented participants, who

[24] The Migration Agency runs the detention centres in Sweden.

[25] Children can be put in detention together with a legal guardian for 72 hours. If there are extraordinary circumstances, the time in detention can be prolonged for 72 hours, but no longer than six days (https://www.migrationsverket.se/Privatpersoner/Forvar-och-uppsikt.html Accessed: 15.01.2019). Between 2003 and 2007, 493 children aged 17 or younger were detained in Sweden, 18 of whom were seeking asylum without a parent or caregiver (Khosravi 2009: 43).

[26] Both Abdullah and Ghasem were receiving treatment at the Team for Traumatised Refugees at the Child and Youth Psychiatric Services in Malmö.

could not visit the detention centre, wrote letters to Abdullah. Media was also contacted and protest letters were written to the airline. When I visited Abdullah together with another participant and friend, he was worried but tried not to let us see that. Abdullah had asked us to bring the musical manuscript and his schoolbooks to the detention centre and we talked as we always did, making a lot of jokes. We even sang some of the songs from the musical and told him about the manifestations against his deportation that we were going to after the visit. During his three weeks in detention, two protest manifestations in support of Abdullah's case and against the planned deportation were organised. At one of these demonstrations, a friend of Abdullah in the musical gave a speech inspired by lines from a scene called 'Lost things':

> I too resided as undocumented during a year and a half. Those were years of an ever-present fear to be sent back. The new time and the new days cannot replace those that were not allowed to exist. […] I wish for a world without borders. It is enough now!

In the musical group, we did all we could think of in order to stop the deportation. An attempt to deport Abdullah with a regular flight was cancelled. However, despite all these efforts, Abdullah was deported only three days before he would have been able to apply for asylum in Sweden.[27] He was deported on a chartered plane together with six policemen and another asylum seeker.

The arrest and the deportation demonstrated the ever-present risk of being torn apart from one's context and revealed the fragile existence of the musical in relation to the regulations put into force by the state. Several discussions were held in the musical group regarding if and how to proceed with the project. One issue brought forward was that many individuals lacking residence permits gathering at the same place was judged too risky. Nevertheless, a final decision was taken by the musical group to continue with the project as participants said that it felt even more important after the deportation of Abdullah. The musical group also worked together to create a scene telling the story of the deportation, where the lines were based on the participants' experiences of the incident, quotes from newspapers, employees at the custody, the airline involved, etc. In a panel discussion with the audience

[27] Of Abdullah's 18 months long waiting period for the Dublin decision to be revoked, three days were missing before he had the right to have his asylum application assessed in Sweden.

after one of the performances of the musical, Lena, a participant in the musical, talked about this scene as a way to process the deportation.

> We wanted it to be part of the musical, as it was something that affected us all a great deal and we also wanted Abdullah to be included even if he was not able to be on stage. It was so hard. Some people could not face being part of the musical for a while but eventually started to come back. I felt that the whole experience had made us super-strong since we had managed to get through it together. We talked about it, cried and laughed a lot (Lena, group interview 28.09.2015).

Abdullah also participated in the scene through a recording made online where he says:

> I am in Rome. I don't know what will happen to me now.

We kept in contact with Abdullah through Facebook, and participants able to do so went to visit him in Rome.[28] Groups working with refugee issues were contacted in Rome in order to provide support for Abdullah. Abdullah also saw the premiere of the musical through Skype and the musical group spoke to him at some rehearsals. When I asked Erfan to mention one performance with the musical that had a special meaning to him, he mentioned the time when Abdullah saw the musical online:

> Erfan: But then he was deported to Italy. He had so many goals and dreams about what he was going to do in Sweden, but it all disappeared and he was never allowed to fulfil [them]. He lives in Italy now and he doesn't know anyone there. He must start again, to [get to] know people and it's difficult. You can't move all the time and [get to] know people, [get to] know new people.
> Emma: Uhmmm.
> Erfan: And that's why I get so sad. It was different for me and I thought about it, if I had been Abdullah instead, what I would have thought, how I would have felt. (Erfan, interview 05.02.2014)

[28] I went to visit Abdullah together with two other participants in the musical. We stayed together with him for one weekend. He stayed in an occupied old building outside the centre of Rome. Although the other people residing in this building were kind and had opened up their home to Abdullah, it was a tough environment with an overhanging threat of being evicted. As Abdullah could not speak all that much English and no Italian, and as they spoke no Dari or Swedish, he seemed rather isolated in his daily life.

Although violently separated from the musical he had been a part in creating, Abdullah continued to be a part of the musical in different ways; he was present both in the performance and as audience through Skype. However, Abdullah's presence was not free from conflicting feelings and pain, as Erfan also talked about above. Playing the scene of the deportation, many of the actors cried on stage or afterwards. Of course, the experience of the deportation was the most painful for Abdullah, his daily life was difficult in Rome and he also broke off contact with the musical group for some periods of time. The deportation affects his situation still to this day, making his situation a lot different from that of the participants who later re-entered the asylum process.

Ambivalent activism

Before I go on to talk about the specific context of the musical, I provide a background to the milieu of activism where the idea of creating a musical originated.

As mentioned above, the musical was situated in the context of the local migrant rights movement. I use the word movement, even though that might be misleading as the practices were and still are more characterised by loosely connected individuals, who sometimes are also part of more formalised groups, such as the Asylum Group in Malmö. When I use the word migrant rights movement, I refer to individuals acting in support of migrants' rights in several ways; for example, providing accommodation and/or financial help to undocumented individuals, facilitating support in the asylum process such as contacting lawyers, translating documents, facilitating contacts to welfare services such as education and health care, providing information about the asylum system, writing appeals, helping find documentation needed for proving the asylum claim and actions intended to change the policies regulating migration, such as organising demonstrations, campaigns, writing debate articles, protesting against deportations and contacting journalists. Some individuals mainly act in relation to one or several undocumented individuals, supporting them in what they need, whereas others are both active in providing individual support as well as mobilising for changing the policies regulating migration and others are mainly active in political mobilisation. People active in the migrant rights movement mainly meet undocumented individuals through their work (e.g., as teachers, social workers, nurses or doctors) or through involvement in the Asylum Group or other volunteer-based organisations and/or the wider milieu of leftist extra-parliamentary activism.

The Swedish migrant rights movement was founded in the 1980s, in a context marked by restrictive migration reforms, racist and antiracist mobilisations (Jämte 2013).[29] According to a governmental study from 1999, the migrant rights movement (termed 'flyktinggömmarna' [refugee hiders] in the study) was part of a new generation of movements in Sweden, linked to the broader antiracist movement. The migrant rights movement has generally involved individuals born in Sweden, who due to religious beliefs or political conviction and/or due to encounters with rejected asylum seekers have chosen to act (SOU 1999:101; Rosengren 2009).[30] The study put forward that the movement was influenced by an anarchist way of organising in terms of aiming for a flat and non-hierarchal organisation, not trusting the parliamentary system to find solutions to the situation, as well as emphasising an individual responsibility to act (SOU 1999:101). The relationship to the state for the asylum and migrant rights movement has been rather ambivalent since its creation. On the one hand, increasing restrictiveness in terms of migration control makes it clear that the state cannot provide a solution to the predicaments of migrants. On the other hand, gaining legal status and a residence permit is frequently the most pressing issue in the lives of migrants (Nordling, Sager and Söderman 2017).

The migrant rights movement in terms of a more loosely connected network in Malmö contains several of these elements present in the context of the Swedish migrant rights movement. At the time of the musical group being formed, the Asylum Group was connected to a network of individuals and groups sympathetic to or active in the local leftist extra-parliamentary scene. In this milieu in Malmö, generally young people (in their 20s and 30s) with a Swedish background were involved. Furthermore, a majority had moved to Malmö from other cities (large and small) in Sweden (see Hansen 2019, forthcoming). Although not all participants in the musical had a background of involvement in the Asylum Group, a majority took part in activities and/or were in different ways engaged in the milieu of extra-parliamentary activism. There are many different ways of being part of this particular activist scene in Malmö (see Hansen 2019, forthcoming), but for the participants in the musical with a background in this scene, it frequently involved certain ways of arranging everyday life. For example, it was common to study or work part-

[29] Solidarity with specific groups of rejected refugees had occurred in organised forms in the 1970s (Rosengren 2009) and there had been small groups organising support for refugees fleeing the Second World War (Åmark 2016).

[30] There is naturally support to undocumented migrants carried out outside of the migrant rights movement as well; for example, through informal networks based on country of origin and/or language.

time, to share apartments, to eat vegan or vegetarian food and to participate in the activities and/or mobilisation of different activist groups, as well as to have a quite large part of one's social life based in this milieu.

In the context of the leftist extra-parliamentary milieu in Malmö, the Asylum Group stands out in that they to a larger extent engage people with a migrant background (although a majority still had a Swedish background at the time when the musical was initiated) and that the majority of the activists are female (also see Hansen 2019, forthcoming). Contemporary to the period when the musical was active, there were ongoing discussions on who was perceived as an 'activist' and what this label entailed, discussions problematising the experienced homogeneity of the Asylum Group. Although not completely new, the discussion on representation within the migrant rights movement grew during this period, partly due to mobilisations initiated by young people in Malmö, who themselves had experiences of coming to Sweden and seeking asylum. One example is an Asylum Relay (Asylstafetten), which besides aiming to highlight and change the situation for asylum seekers and undocumented individuals in Sweden also had a clear goal of having the decision-making power of planning and organising shared between participants who had direct experiences of deportability and seeking asylum in Sweden (Djampour and Söderman 2016).[31]

Moreover, the musical came about during a specific period of activism within the Asylum Group, focused on the situation for unaccompanied minors subject to the Dublin Regulation. In 2009–2010, the Asylum Group had come into contact with unaccompanied minors who had absconded their sheltered homes due to the threat of being deported to another EU country. The Asylum Group had been in contact with undocumented minors before, but then mostly in the context of a family. To the participants active in the Asylum Group at the time, supporting unaccompanied minors residing as undocumented represented a new experience. Besides different support activities such as struggling to get access to school,[32] finding places to stay, financial help, etc., a campaign targeting this specific group of undocumented youth was initiated by the Asylum Group. It was called *Barnets Bästa Främst* (In the Best Interest of the Child) and mobilised to push for a change in the application of the

[31] The first relay during the summer of 2013 organised a one-month protest march from Malmö to Stockholm. Around 20 people walked the whole distance but approximately 1,000 people walked parts of the way, and several more were engaged in welcoming the relay to the different small towns where it stopped along the way (see Djampour and Söderman 2016).

[32] It was before Malmö municipality had decided on guidelines stipulating the right to education for undocumented minors.

Dublin Regulation that would exempt minors (in general, not just unaccompanied minors). This campaign could be seen as partly successful, as unaccompanied minors were in the end exempted from the Dublin Regulation.[33] However, for the activists involved in this, the result came late (about three years after the campaign) and did not include all minors who had been the target group for the campaign. Furthermore, the goal of only focusing on exempting minors from the Dublin Regulation had been a compromise already from the start in relation to what was perceived as politically viable.

The musical was situated in this general context of migrant support activism within the extra-parliamentary activism context, where at the time the Asylum Group was specifically working with support and campaigning in regard to undocumented unaccompanied minors. The musical grew out of several frustrations: with the compromises inherent in campaign work, experienced exhaustion in relation to ongoing everyday work with supporting undocumented people, experiences of not enough focus on finding new ways of carrying out advocacy work and discussions on the problematic division between 'activists' and 'undocumented'. The idea of a musical combined a desire to find ways of doing activism that would include advocacy work whilst working together and having fun at the same time.

Some of the young people who had experienced seeking asylum in Sweden as unaccompanied minors initiated campaigns and organisations to address their specific situation and also to put forward a general critique of the asylum process and work of the Migration Agency. For example, the association Ensamkommandes förbund (Association for Unaccompanied) was initiated in 2012 and continues to be operated by and provide support and activities for unaccompanied young people. Two participants in the musical were also part of a film project about their journey to Sweden, in cooperation with the organisation Save the Children. As mentioned, an asylum relay (Asylstafetten 2013) was organised in the summer of 2013 by young people with experiences of seeking asylum in Sweden. Since 2013, there has been a relay every summer, generally starting from Malmö and walking in the format of a protest march to different locations in Sweden. Several participants in the musical group, both those who had arrived in Sweden to seek asylum and those with a background in the migrant rights movement, participated in the relay, and

[33] On June 6, 2013, the Court of Justice of the European Union stated that 'the Member State responsible for examining an asylum application made in more than one Member State by an unaccompanied minor is the State in which the minor is present after having lodged an application there' (Court of Justice of the European Union 2013). Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/GA/TXT/?uri=CELEX:62011CJ0648 Accessed: 21.02.2019.

some were also active in the Association for Unaccompanied. The young people active in these different initiatives formed an important part of the Swedish migrant rights movement at the time. It was a movement in transformation, where the voices and experiences of young people themselves subject to migration control were to a larger extent visible and included in the movement.

Within the migrant rights movement, relationships of dependency are often present in regard to that those with a Swedish citizenship can access resources (e.g., housing, formalised work, livelihood, education, welfare services), whereas this is not the case for those without a residence permit. In the musical group, participants who resided as undocumented or had applied for asylum and were subject to review commonly received support through people linked to the Asylum Group in Malmö. Sometimes, these individuals providing support also participated in the musical, but not always. In the language of the Asylum Group, people supporting someone residing as undocumented is called a 'contact person'. This generally meant that they have met with the undocumented person through the migrant rights movement, often through the Asylum Group. The 'contact person' assisted the person residing as undocumented with various issues, such as access to education, health care, social benefits (very limited), helping to look for housing, applying for financial aid (also very limited) from the Asylum Group,[34] etc., but also through the legal process of applying for asylum.

The idea behind the musical came from activists without any direct experiences of seeking asylum or being subject to migration control; however, the ensemble came to be constituted by both people with experiences of residing as undocumented and by people without these experiences.

There is an inherent power asymmetry in the act and ambition of 'opening up' a space of activism to include people with experiences of deportability, as those invited are invited into existing practices and frameworks for activism. The unequal relationship between the inviter and the invited was amplified in the context of the musical by the conditions of deportability, in terms of deportability leading to very precarious living conditions. Thus, while the ambition to downplay the significance of the categorisation undocumented/activist, there were inequalities in regard to relationships of dependency and precarious living conditions for the undocumented participants in the musical.

[34] The Asylum Group receives some funding through donations from private individuals and other organisations. Every month, the money on the Asylum Group's bank account is distributed to undocumented individuals having applied for support from the group.

However, the musical was still part of an ambition where different new forms of mobilisation and organisation sought to contest the reproduction of 'activists' and 'undocumented' as two separate categories (see Djampour and Söderman 2016). To understand the specific ambivalences played out in the musical as a space of activism, it is in this context important to also get an insight into the living conditions of residing as undocumented.

For the participants residing as undocumented, the fact that they were threatened by deportation permeated their everyday life. Below, I provide an overview describing some aspects of residing as a young undocumented person in Malmö. This overview is not general in nature but based on the context of the musical and its participants. However, the conditions of residing as undocumented described here resonate with previous research in the area (see, for example, Khosravi 2010a; Holgersson 2011; Sager 2011; Sigvardsdotter 2012).

Living conditions for participants residing as undocumented

Few of the undocumented participants had an income, meaning that the support from the Asylum Group through a contact person was crucial. Working in the informal labour market is the only option if a person lacks residence and working permit, and this often means being subjected to poor working conditions and low salaries (see Khosravi 2010a; De Genova 2005). However, it could still represent a sense of independence in comparison with having to ask for money from the Asylum Group (also see Sager 2011, Chapter 5 on informal work as exploitative and emancipatory at the same time). Although many participants in the musical expressed gratefulness towards the help they received through the Asylum Group network, frustrations due to a lack of power over one's own situation were also voiced.

To get accommodation as undocumented, the only possibility is informal lease contracts with little or no opportunities to bargain the conditions in terms of level of rent or quality of the housing (see, for example, Khosravi 2010a; Sager 2011). The participants in the musical residing as undocumented or seeking asylum had to move several times during the course of a few years and sometimes shared apartments with strangers. Frequently, no or little rent was paid and being subject to the kindness and charity of people brought about feelings of being in the way or not being fully 'at home'. However, the housing situation as undocumented was not always described as a bad experience. Some participants in the musical talked about their flatmates as 'personnel' (in a positive sense). This referred to some of the staff they had met at their transit

accommodation when they first arrived in Sweden. Some of those working at the different transit accommodations for newly arrived unaccompanied minors had chosen to get involved in their situation in different ways, trying to improve the situation for them as well as supporting them (see Djampour 2018; Nordling 2017). Thus, descriptions of flatmates as 'personnel' should be understood in this specific context. Furthermore, participants also said that they had made new friends by sharing apartments.

After the participants had waited as undocumented for 18 months, all but one applied for asylum a second time. A person seeking asylum in Sweden gets around SEK 1,800 each month to cover basic expenses but gets no economic means for covering rent or assistance in finding housing outside the accommodation offered by the Migration Agency. None of the participants seeking asylum lived in the Migration Agency's accommodation, and as rents in Malmö by far exceeded the money they received as asylum seekers, the issue of not being able to support oneself continued.

The musical group provided a network in which one could search for cheap or free housing, and participants lived together for longer or shorter periods. Thus, we rehearsed, performed and sometimes lived together. For me, as well as for other participants, the musical context at times constituted a large part of everyday life.

As mentioned above, the participants residing as undocumented had been categorised as unaccompanied minors upon arrival in Sweden. This did not necessarily mean that they had travelled alone but often together with other young individuals, and several of them had a large network of friends and acquaintances in Sweden and other countries as well (see Djampour 2018 and Stretmo 2014 for critical discussions on the notion of 'unaccompanied'). However, especially when they just had left their sheltered home and become undocumented, feelings of loneliness and not being familiar with the city of Malmö were common. Getting to know the city of Malmö and the immediate surrounding neighbourhood was important in order to learn how to cope with residing as undocumented. In this context, the musical constituted a group for meeting other young individuals in a similar situation, where those with a longer experience of residing as undocumented could provide support in terms of navigating this new situation in Malmö.

When the musical group started to work together, the Asylum Group had contacts with and received support from the Team for Traumatised Refugees (TKT) at the Child and Youth Psychiatric Services in Malmö. Several of the participants in the musical residing as undocumented had contact with psychologists and counsellors at TKT. At TKT, they participated in different

support groups, activities and had individual sessions. Psychologists at TKT also had contact with people involved in the Asylum Group and provided training on how to support a person who is experiencing ongoing and/or has experienced traumatic events in the past.

During the two-year working process of the musical, most participants residing as undocumented went to school. Since 2010, the municipality of Malmö has had an agreement granting access to education to undocumented children. Thus, Malmö predated the national legislation (2013) stipulating access to education for all children. From the interviews and my fieldwork, it seemed clear that the school was important for meeting other young individuals, for free meals, for learning the Swedish language and other subjects. However, due to a lack of residence permit and fear that other students would learn that they resided as undocumented, several participants in the musical brought up feelings of being subordinate in relation to other students.

As described, some participants were in some ways dependent on other participants for different kinds of support due to their living conditions as undocumented. Whilst support and information to new participants in the musical who had recently turned undocumented was frequently provided by those who shared these experiences, the musical still was part of a context of activism where there was a risk of reproducing the categories of undocumented/citizen through the relationship of dependency. Nonetheless, working together in the musical, articulating and practicing resistance towards a restrictive migration regime also provided possibilities of ambivalent contestations of these categories (see Chapter 6).

Getting the musical started

It was a small group of four people linked to the Asylum Group who got the idea of a musical as a way to do something else besides campaigning and working with supporting individuals through the asylum process. The idea of a musical was inspired by other activist groups having staged musicals in relation to other political themes. For example, leftist extra-parliamentary campaign work before the 2010 Swedish election had contained musical-

inspired activism.[35] Although the election was a severe disappointment for left-leaning activism,[36] the involvement of music and dance in campaign work inspired the Malmö activists who started thinking of something similar within a migrant rights movement context. A musical was furthermore imagined as a way to reach out to a new audience not reached by political campaigns, as a fun way of carrying out activism and as an arena where one did not have to adjust to the dominant political agenda but could be more free to formulate and demonstrate other political visions.

Based on this idea, the Asylum Group together with Theatre Interact in 2011 took the initiative to begin the work. The collaboration between the Asylum Group and Theatre Interact was easily facilitated as one of the initiators, besides being involved in activism for migrant rights, was also working with Theatre Interact. Moreover, since its start in 2005, Theatre Interact has focused on working with groups in society with little visibility in both arts and in society in general. Hence cooperating with the Asylum Group in order to create a performance felt natural, not only due to one person's dual involvement in Theatre Interact and the Asylum Group.[37] The initiating group wrote applications to foundations and received SEK 85,000 to cover costs for food, facilities, travel, etc.[38] Beside this support to cover expenses, the musical was based on voluntary work.[39]

Initially, the working process during the spring of 2011 was rather slow without a clear-cut idea of where the musical project was going. Meetings and ongoing discussions took place on how the manuscript was going to be created and future workshops were planned. During this initial phase, no one with direct experiences of migration or going through an asylum process participated on a regular basis. Besides the four individuals who had initiated the musical, there was little continuity in terms of participation in general, where some people participated for a couple of meetings and/or workshops but

[35] For example, a video made by Göteborgs förenade musikalartister, Transmilitanta brigaden, Pantermilitanterna and Göteborgs Queerinstitut see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nk0UkQsanmQ

[36] In 2010, the nationalist party, the Sweden Democrats, for the first time gained enough votes (5.7%) to gain seats in the parliament, while the right-wing conservative coalition received enough votes to stay in government for four more years.

[37] However, similar to the rest of the participants, the person working with Theatre Interact received no salary for working with the musical.

[38] A large part of the support came from Olof Palme's Memorial Foundation. The musical also received support from the Workers Educational Association (ABF), which administrated the bank account and where the musical could print the material needed (manuscript, posters, flyers, etc.). Via study circles at ABF, the musical was also able to access facilities for rehearsals.

[39] The musical also gave revenues from ticket sales of the performances to the Asylum Group.

then dropped off. During the autumn of 2011, writing a manuscript as well as dancing and music workshops were carried out, and texts were also collected through the network of the Asylum Group. This collection included texts from flyers and speeches used by the Asylum Group for raising funds and awareness, a fictional dialogue between two young undocumented characters and a text about an activist's experience of getting to know an undocumented family. In the autumn of 2011, I was in a scout cabin during a weekend of writing manuscript and music organised by the initiators of the musical. We were around twenty individuals, a majority of whom were women aged around 25–35 coming from the leftist extra-parliamentary milieu. The ensemble of the musical had not yet started to form, and several of those who attended this workshop did not continue working with the musical.

This weekend, the manuscript was in the form of different piles of A4 sheets of paper with bits and pieces of texts on them. However, during this weekend, the different A4 sheets of paper where collectively put in order on the floor – and there was the framework for the manuscript. In general, it was just texts, without any instructions on how these would be performed on stage. These texts were mostly written by activists linked to the migrant rights movement in Malmö. Some contributions to the manuscript came from people who had experienced seeking asylum in Sweden.

At the beginning of 2012, several workshop weekends were organised in order to get an ensemble group together. Flyers were distributed to spread the word and the weekends were attended by 15–20 people doing theatre exercises and dance and singing workshops. At the time, the manuscript was still a patchwork of texts and scenes as developed during the workshop weekend referred to above. Being anything but a linear process, the musical performance grew organically out of this framework.

Flyers distributed regarding the launch of the musical.

The group ending up forming the ensemble of the musical evolved during the spring of 2012. After the first workshop weekends, we were about 15 actors, six of whom had experiences of residing as undocumented. As the word spread during the spring, mostly through the Asylum Group and through contact persons, more people wanted to participate. When the summer of 2012 arrived, we were almost 30 actors in the ensemble. The ensemble group, formed in the context of the activist milieu described above, mainly came to consist of young women in their 20s and 30s, without direct experiences of migration or asylum processes, and by undocumented male youngsters who had been categorised as unaccompanied minors upon arrival in Sweden.[40] The context and the composition of the ensemble affected the working process of the musical in different ways, which I return to in the analysis (see Chapter 6).

The work of the musical was organised into smaller working groups, which were transformed and developed during the working process.[41] Besides the ensemble group, obviously, in the initial phase during the spring of 2012, the most active groups were the coordinating group and the directors group. The coordinating group had the overarching responsibility for arranging practical matters, such as booking facilities for rehearsals, seeing to that there was 'fika' or food at the rehearsals, etc. This group consisted of participants with a background in the local migrant right movement with no experiences of residing as undocumented. The directors group consisted of three-four participants, mainly without personal experiences of deportability (it was rather fluid as some participants temporarily belonged to the group) who planned and led the rehearsals. Much of the musical performance was created through a dialogue between the directors and the participants 'on the floor'; for example, through different theatre improvisation exercises. The different lines and roles in the musical were distributed throughout the working process as scenes were added or deleted. This distribution took place either through a discussion with the whole group or if a participant asked the directors group to play a specific role. Sometimes the directors group also asked participants to play different roles. On one occasion, when several participants wanted to say

[40] Since that time, however, the composition of the Asylum Group has changed, where the group is more diversified in terms of gender and age as well as in terms of having direct experiences of asylum processes and migration.

[41] In the end of spring, all participants in the musical were organised into 'affinity groups' each consisting of four-five participants. The musical also had a finance group, a music group, a scenography group, and the tasks of the coordinating group were spread out to more participants during the working process. In the scenography group, as well as for tasks in relation to the performances (building the stage, managing the sound system, hosting the audience, etc.), people connected to the Asylum Group and/or the leftist extra-parliamentary milieu helped.

the same lines,[42] the different lines were distributed through lottery.[43] In the initial phase of the creation of the musical, the directors group and the coordinating group acted as important driving forces in the working process.

The performance

The performance consisted of two parts, together making the performance one hour and 40 minutes long. The overall story of the musical performance was based on a vision of the future, where borders and migration control were relics of the past. Through the different characters, the audience was then shown how things used to look, when borders sorted, differentiated and separated people. The performance also told stories of how the borders were abolished, how many small acts of resistance together overthrew the system.

First page of the programme distributed when the musical performed. Illustration Sofie Persson.

[42] It was for the scene 'Lost things', which is discussed further in Chapter 7.
[43] The casting of roles in relation to its implications to the performance is discussed further in Chapter 7.

Part one

The atmospheres of the first and the second part of the musical were somewhat different. The first part mostly focused on performing stories of the consequences of borders and migration control, while the second part was more focused on resistance against borders and on performing the utopian world of *No Borders*. The location of the performance in the future was shown through an *initial scene* where all the actors met on a square to celebrate the ten-year anniversary of the abolition of borders. This scene contained music, dancing, speeches given by actors both with and without experiences of deportability, and all actors wore glitter capes. The last speech on the square ended with a character giving a speech where he talked about experiences of residing as undocumented. The last line of the speech read:

> Let it never happen again. Never let it be like 2013 again.

Directly after, a booming sound from drums was heard, the lights were turned off and the stage was dark. The light then changed to being colder than before and the actors removed their glitter capes. This was meant to signal to the audience that the performance was now taking place in the past. The performance continued with three scenes focusing on experiences of migration control: 'Lost things', 'Border guard dance' and 'Biometry'. 'Lost things' was testimonial in style where actors with experiences of residing as undocumented walked around on the stage, taking turn to enter a spotlight to say their lines; for example, 'There are things that cannot be returned. I lost things along the way'. It was experienced as one of the main scenes in the performance (see Chapter 7). The scene referred to as 'Border guard dance' (ending with a song 'The wall shall fall' performed acapella by the ensemble) and the scene 'Biometry' portrayed a failed attempt to cross a border and assessment of asylum seekers with a specific focus on age assessments, also performed through a rap song performed by an actor who had been categorised as an unaccompanied minor upon arrival in Sweden. Except for the scene 'Lost things', these scenes were performed by actors both with and without experiences of deportability.

Thereafter, the audience was introduced to four characters, played by two actors with experiences of residing as undocumented and two actors without these experiences, whose characters worked as officers or head of the Migration Agency. Scenes played by these four characters at the Migration Agency recurred through the performance, and their story ended as one of the

migration officers, through a song, declared that she would not reject any more people seeking asylum.

After the first scene at the Migration Agency, a scene followed that started off from the events described above when a participant was detained and deported. Together, these different scenes represented a rather 'heavy' start for the performance.

The next scene provided a 'breaking' moment, where a character, performed by an actor without experiences of residing as undocumented, was accused of helping detainees escape from detention. This scene, called 'The trial', ended with a rewritten version of Dixie Chicks' 'Not ready to make nice', where all actors sang the chorus:

> We are many who have had enough, and at different places around the world resistance is growing and we'll become more and more and more. We will not wait any longer, we refuse to split our world, we are rushing forward, our freedom cannot be limited by borders and legislation (Manuscript *No Border Musical*, *my translation*).

The first part of the musical performance ended with a rewritten version of Pet Shop Boys' 'Go West', accompanied by a dance act of the ensemble group (see Chapter 7).

Part two

The second part of the performance began with a song called 'Every breath you take is a protest' performed by two singers without experiences of residing as undocumented, followed by a scene introducing two undocumented characters who talked about, and tried to find ways out of, living as undocumented. These two characters, played by one actor with and one actor without experiences of residing as undocumented, returned in the final scene. Before that, the audience once again met the officers at the Migration Agency, as well as a journalist who tried to find who was accountable for the death of a detainee. In this scene, the character of Tobias Billström, the minister in charge of migration at the time of the performance, was interviewed and ridiculed as he simply repeated answers often heard from politicians and/or officials: 'I cannot comment on individual cases'. The mocking of his character, played by an actor without direct experiences of deportability, continued as he sung a rewritten song from the musical *Kristina från Duvermåla* where he performed as someone obsessed with borders since they brought him both power and a sense of personal safety (without borders Billström felt so small in the world). The last scenes of the musical showed

how borders were abolished through mundane acts as well as more spectacular demonstrations and cultural events. In the final scene, the undocumented characters performed together with the pop icon Robyn, whose concert they had said they really wanted to go to in a previous scene.

Connections and absences

Although the name of the performance says *musical* and the performance included a 'house band' playing live on stage, the performance was more similar to a theatre with musical elements. The performance included rewritten versions of popular pop songs, a re-written song from another musical as well as lyrics and songs written by the music group for the performance. These were different in style and included punk, rap, spoken word, electro and singer-songwriter.

The music genres as well as the glitter capes may be linked to the milieu of activism from which the musical grew. For example, I recall attending protests organised by the migrant rights movement that were accompanied by re-written popular songs made into protest songs. The songs from the musical have also been sung at a number of protests after it was performed. The glitter capes I interpret as, besides an aesthetic choice, also a (maybe unintended) nod to groups working for queer rights. Several participants in the ensemble were active in an activist queer milieu, overlapping with (but also critical of) the leftist extra-parliamentary milieu.

Absent from the performance was music and songs originating from the countries (Afghanistan, Iran, Somalia and Palestine) where parts of the ensemble had grown up. This absence points to some of the ambivalences in terms of how the musical was organised discussed in depth below (mainly Chapter 5–7), here shortly illustrated by a quote from a group interview with participants in the musical without experiences of residing as undocumented.

> Elliot: But that is what it was like, it felt like compromising where people with experiences of flight or undocumented did not participate [in the music group]. Although we did discuss how to reach out to people, to get away from this, it is only those white adult activists who already know how to play music [in the music group]. But that never happened, there was never a change of this really. (Group interview 28.09.2015).

That the composition of the music group never changed was discussed in this interview as partly a result of a lack of resources and time, where 'efficiency' had come before 'inclusion' in some areas. Although I do not explicitly address the issue of music genres in the performance in the analytical chapters, in these

chapters the ambivalences of activism and theatre in a context marked by different kinds of inequalities is analysed. The next section situates the musical and these ambivalences within a larger context of the city of Malmö.

Malmö – a city of arrival in Sweden

> Malmö is my home country. I know everything here, I know my way around, I have a lot of friends. If I move, I have to start all over again. (Nima, fieldnotes 17.04.2012)

The city is important. Nima, a participant in the musical, says that Malmö is his home country. At that time, he was residing as undocumented and was thus formally not allowed to settle.

Malmö as a place of building a home, as a city of political mobilisation and cultural life, as well as a city of violence, exclusion and poverty, represented an important context for the musical. This section serves to situate the musical in Malmö, focusing on Malmö as a city of arrival, but also putting Malmö in a larger context of Swedish developments in regard to migration policies.

Similar to many cities in Sweden, during the 20th century, Malmö has transformed from a city associated with its large industry and social democratic politics aimed at reducing inequalities and increasing the standard of living for the working class to a city adjusting to a political landscape characterised by neoliberalism and aiming to brand itself as a 'knowledge city' (Mukhtar-Landgren 2012). These transformations have taken place in relation to the economic crisis in the 1990s and 2008 (Holgersen 2014; Stigendal 1996) and besides two periods when the right-wing coalition ruled the city of Malmö (1985–1988 and 1991–1994), have been implemented under social democratic rule.

Malmö, located on the southern coast of Sweden, is often characterised as a city of arrival. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, the population of Malmö quadruplicated as part of an overall urbanisation (Stigendal 1996). In the aftermath of the Second World War, Malmö was described as 'Malmö – hoppets hamn', meaning 'Malmö – the shore of hope' referring to the arrival of refugees in 1945, and the Malmö city museum was remade into a refugee camp (Widenheim and Rosdahl 2015).[44] After the war, Sweden and Malmö experienced a resurgence. Malmö, like the rest of Sweden, needed labour to

[44] At that time, Malmö was also home to sections of the two larger Nazi parties in Sweden, active in Malmö before and during the Second World War (Gardell 2015).

meet the demands from a growing industry. During the 1960s, Malmö received about 30,000 new inhabitants, who were often employed by the industries in Malmö (Stigendal 1996).

When the oil crises started to affect Swedish industry in the 1970s, Malmö was very vulnerable due to its almost single-handed priority on low technology industry. In the 1970s, 30,000 individuals left Malmö (Stigendal 1996). During this period, people persecuted for political reasons started to come to Malmö; for example, Chileans arrived after the military coup in Chile in 1973. The people who arrived in Malmö in the 1970s to a large degree came from the middle class, had extensive experiences of political engagement and were often sympathetic towards leftist political views. However, the labour market was not as favourable as during the 1960s, and people arriving had a harder time getting employed in general and getting a position matching their level of education in particular (Stigendal 1996). Furthermore, the late 1960s and early 1970s is also a period when Swedish migration regulations started becoming more restrictive (Hammar 1999; Johansson 2005). However, what has been called the 'Lucia decision' in 1989 came to introduce a shift towards a strict control of migration, including restrictions concerning possibilities for asylum (Abiri 2000b; Hammar 1999; Johansson 2005; Spång 2008).

The restrictive turn of migration policies took place at a time of a neoliberal shift in Sweden, implemented in the aftermath of the economic regression of the 1990s (Scarpa and Schierup 2018; Schierup and Ålund 2011).[45] Since then, adjustments to neoliberalism have successively eroded the welfare state and the previous link between social rights and citizenship (Dahlstedt 2015). Neoliberal austerity is furthermore said to constitute a main factor for also explaining later shifts toward a restrictive migration regime in Sweden (Dahlstedt and Neergaard 2019).

Malmö, as other cities in Sweden, was severely affected by the economic crises in the 1990s, and 'words such as collapse were close at hand' (Stigendal 1996: 28, *my translation*). In the 1960s, there were 35,000 jobs in the industrial sector, while this figure was 18,000 in 1996 (Mukhtar-Landgren 2012: 105). In line with the overall political development in Sweden, Malmö faced the economic crisis with measures often linked to neoliberal politics, involving tax cuts and privatisations. During the 1990s, Malmö was considered having become the 'neoliberal exemplary city [mönsterstaden]' (Stigendal 2016: 246).

[45] The introduction of severe austerity measures by the Social Democratic Party in the mid-1990s has been described as a clear break with the Keynes-inspired policies having dominated Sweden since the 1930s (Scarpa and Schierup 2018) .

The economic crises and the neoliberal responses to these largely coincided with the arrival of an increased number of people fleeing their countries of birth due to war and political persecution in the second half of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. In 1996, every fourth resident had migrated to Malmö from another country. Those who arrived during the 1980s and 1990s faced a situation where employment opportunities were scarce (Stigendal 1996).

In the first years of the 1990s, local politicians and local newspapers stated that Malmö could not handle more immigration, thus framing the newcomers as a problem (Stigendal 2016). Moreover, in the 1980s and 1990s, Malmö had a rather active scene of different openly racist or Nazi organisations (Gardell 2015).[46]

The Asylum Group in Malmö, based on opposite ideas and ideologies, was launched in 1991. The group was founded during a period when the restrictive legislation developed during the 1980s and 1990s had led to rising numbers of refusals, which increased the number of people residing in Sweden as undocumented without residence permits (Hammar 1999). It was a period when the subject of migration was politicised and when there was recurring hate propaganda towards immigrants, vandalism, racist demonstrations, attacks on immigrants and political opponents.[47] The outspoken racist language and activities occurred parallel to, or in a sense got their propaganda confirmed by, the development of more restrictive legislation in regard to refugees (Lööw 2017).

A city of inequalities

Since the 1990s, there has been a political strive to change the image of Malmö from being a workers' city to being a knowledge city (Mukhtar-Landgren 2012). Several large infrastructural projects have been realised. Malmö has intended to build itself out of crises and misery with substantial support from the state (Holgersen 2014; Stigendal 2016). A bridge leading to Europe (Copenhagen, Denmark) with stations in the city centre was constructed. At

[46] In 1988, the first local section of the newly founded Swedish Democratic Party was formed in Malmö. The people who launched it came from different groups, such as Bevara Sverige Svenskt (Keep Sweden Swedish), Vitt Ariskt Motstånd (White Arian Resistance) and Skånepartiet (Scania Party) (Gardell 2015).

[47] One organisation receiving a great deal of attention was 'Keep Sweden Swedish', which had the goal of 'stopping immigration' because Sweden was 'being overwhelmed by suspect foreigners' (Jämte 2013: 203–204). Although this organisation was dissolved in 1986, its slogan, 'Keep Sweden Swedish', was adopted by the Sweden Democrats (Spång 2008).

the time of writing, from the station called Triangeln, located just a few blocks from the neighbourhood of Möllevången, it takes 20 minutes to get to the Danish international airport Kastrup. An international housing exhibition (Bo01) took place in 2001. Turning Torso, the 'twisting' tower, a now well-known landmark of Malmö, was completed in 2005. When Malmö University was opened in 1998, located in the neighbourhood of the 'old' industrial area, it signalled this transformation in several ways:

> The Kockums workers drove home [in their cars] and the students rode their bicycles to work. Below the crane, the new university spread out (…) (Aftonbladet, 09.02.2001, quoted in Mukhtar-Landgren 2012: 189, *my translation*)

Yet, living conditions for the residents of Malmö continue to be marked by large inequalities in terms of income, housing conditions and health status. Between different areas in Malmö, the average life expectancy differs with 4.5 and 5.5 years for men and women, respectively. Income poverty has increased and includes three out of ten Malmö residents. The employment rate is lower in comparison to Sweden at large: 62% in Malmö and 74% in Sweden as a whole. Further, the difference in employment rate between the Swedish-born and the foreign-born population in Malmö is almost 25% (Commission for a Socially Sustainable Malmö 2013: 46). In 1990, the richest decile was six times richer than the poorest decile. In 2008, this gap had widened, with the richest decile being twelve times richer than the poorest decile (Commission for a Socially Sustainable Malmö 2013: 46).

When Malmö was hit by a new economic crisis in 2008, the path taken in the 1990s continued. Once again, Malmö intended to build itself out of crises. New urban development projects were launched; for example, the construction of a Concert and Congress Centre. The launching of new high-profile buildings is partly based on a belief that this will produce more welfare to the residents of Malmö, thus a belief in a trickle-down effect (Holgersen 2014). However, as in other parts of Sweden, segregation and income gaps between groups of residents in Malmö have increased, and the different living conditions are often associated with different areas of the city. Although in terms of geography, the distance between the different areas may in general be reduced to a 10–20 minute bike ride, the level of segregation is no less severe than in other large Swedish cities (Gardell 2015).

Moreover, Malmö is one of the fastest growing cities in Europe. The city is now populated by approximately 300,000 residents from 186 different countries (Malmö stad 2019). During the period of 1990–2008, half a million

people lived in Malmö for a year or more. However, in the same period only 23% of Malmö's population lived in the city for the entire period. Malmö thus appears to be a city both of arrival and transit (Commission for a Socially Sustainable Malmö 2013: 45–46).

Whose city?

An often-told success story of Malmö describes the city as a continental, culturally rich party city, home to innovative, young, attractive people. A city often resembled to Berlin (Gardell 2015; Commission for a Socially Sustainable Malmö 2013). On the other hand, Malmö's increased share of a population with a foreign background is often talked about in relation to experiences of social problems in Malmö, often in connection to specific residential areas. Other parts of the city are linked to the desire to be(come) a knowledge city. Thus, the image of the desirable future city of Malmö does not include the 'immigrants', who are instead linked to social unrest and social problems (Mulinari 2007; Mukhtar-Landgren 2012).

In relation to its undocumented residents, Malmö stands out as for a number of years being the only municipality acknowledging the presence of undocumented migrants in relation to its social services (for an extensive analysis of the municipal guidelines concerning this, see Nordling 2017). Furthermore, in 2010 the Malmö City Council, led by the Social Democratic Party, stipulated access to education for undocumented minors and support to undocumented women subject to domestic violence. Malmö is furthermore located in the Scania Region, which in 2008 stipulated the right to health care for undocumented minors and limited health care to undocumented adults. Both the right to education and (limited) right to health care were thus formulated on the local level before being legislated on the national level in 2013.[48]

Paradoxically, during the same period during which the municipality of Malmö and the Scania Region stipulated (limited) access to welfare services, Scania was also subject to a pilot project with the purpose of making the enforcement of deportations more efficient (polisen.se). Initiated in 2009, this project was a collaboration between the Swedish Police, the Migration Agency and the Prison and Probation Service (abbreviated REVA). In the Scania Region, the number of deportations carried out increased by 25% in 2011 when

[48] However, a right to welfare services on paper is not the same as access in practice; see Lundberg and Söderman (2016) for an analysis of the right to health in relation to undocumented residents in Malmö.

the new method was tested (Funke 2014). Since 2009 (parallel to REVA), there had also been an increasing number of internal controls of foreigners.[49] The REVA project and the increased number of internal controls of foreigners coincided with the working period of the musical ensemble, and the police were very visible in the neighbourhoods where we lived and worked together. When Abdullah was arrested, it was after an internal control of foreigners carried out by plainclothes police officers.

REVA and the internal control of foreigners were heavily criticised by voluntary organisations, but also by professionals working in, for example, health care and by religious communities, and several demonstrations expressing solidarity with undocumented people and critique against REVA took place in Malmö and other cities (Stille 2011; Skånska Dagbladet 2013; Stark 2012; Decher-Fredriksson et al. 2013; Agö 2013; Nätverket Psykologer mot REVA 2013; Norlin Göthe 2013; Johansson 2012).

These developments, the increased recognition of the presence of undocumented residents of Malmö both in terms of welfare recipients and in terms of being subject to searches in order to carry out deportations, coincided with a number of high-profile murders in 2011–2012.[50] These murders received considerable attention, partly due to the short timespan during which they were committed, but also due to their connection to organised crime and their execution-like characteristics. To combat this violent development, law enforcement resources were relocated to Malmö from other parts of Sweden. Thus, the increased police presence at the time when the musical was created was also linked to these murders. Furthermore, a collaboration between the police and the City of Malmö was initiated to combat the problem of violence and organised crime. Schclarek Mulinari (2015) argues that when communicating this campaign to the residents of Malmö, the problems of violence and murders were located within the 'black' economy and linked to all of those who work or consume in the 'black' economy. Schclarek Mulinari argues that:

[49] Internal control of foreigners as such was not new but has been a central part of Swedish and European system of migration control since the Schengen Agreement was decided to become incorporated into the EU structure (see Hydén and Lundberg 2004 for an in-depth analysis of internal control of foreigners in a Swedish context).

[50] This was not the first period when Malmö had been marked by murders – in 2003–2010, a man attacked and murdered people he perceived to be 'immigrants'. However, it was not until 2010 that the police connected the different attacks with each other or to racist motives, instead working to find the explanation for the different attacks within narratives of 'organised crime' (Gardell 2015).

> (…) the representation of organised crime leads to a mobilisation against business-owners and workers, who are viewed with suspicion on the grounds of that they offer cheap alternatives to the residents of Malmö: the way of life among the resource-poor groups in society are made into a criminal policy problem that needs to be addressed. These are the same groups one might argue have found themselves in a weaker position in the labour market during the period of the transformation of Malmö towards a knowledge and entrepreneurial city (Schclarek Mulinari 2015: 336, *my translation*).

This firmly draws the boundaries around the desirable population of Malmö (those who can afford 'normal' prices and are able to get formal employment) who are put into opposition to the undesirable population. Thus, during the time when the musical was formed, Malmö was characterised by increased surveillance of people and groups not perceived as belonging in Malmö. Among these groups, undocumented residents constituted one category.

Möllevången in Malmö

Several of the participants in the musical lived and/or spent much time in the centrally located neighbourhood of Möllevången. In Malmö, Möllevången stands out. It is a neighbourhood constructed for workers in the early 1900s and the neighbourhood acknowledges its heritage; for example, through a high share (around 50–60% compared to almost 40% nationally) of votes for traditionally leftist parties in the 2018 election. Although sharing general trends of gentrification and a labour market marked by racialisation, Möllevången could be argued to be a specific neighbourhood in relation to serving as the base for activities of a variety of leftist extra-parliamentary groups, as well as being inhabited by people born in different parts of the world, expressed through a variety of small shops and restaurants (Hansen 2019, forthcoming). The different leftist groups criticise the gentrification of the neighbourhood from an outspoken class perspective, as well as arrange demonstrations, manifestations, festivals, theatre performances and carnivals in the neighbourhood.

Möllevången is today home to two community-based theatres in their works addressing questions of migration, belonging and representation.[51] Among the activist groups in Möllevången, injustices experienced locally are often connected to issues of injustice more globally; for example, concerning environmental justice or the rights of refugees. As a continuation of a locally arranged festival (Möllevångsfestivalen), a cultural and social centre,

[51] See Malmö communityteater, http://www.malmocommunityteater.se and Södra Community Teatern https://www.sodracommunity.se.

Kontrapunkt (Counterpoint),[52] was launched in 2009. The purpose was to 'work for a democratic revolution of society by using culture as a tool (…)' (Counterpoint 2014 quoted in Povrzanovic Frykman 2016), setting out from volunteer work and activism. Over the years, Counterpoint has become a centre for different groups involved in political activism, practical solidarity work, music, arts, etc. At Counterpoint, the musical got access to both storage and facilities for rehearsing.[53] One of the first performances of the *No Border Musical* took place in the People's Park (Folkets park)[54] located in the heart of the neighbourhood and historically linked to activities of the labour movement. It is in this particular neighbourhood in Malmö, Möllevången and in the company of these types of organisations, networks and groups that the *No Border Musical* came about.

Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I have described the neighbourhood of Möllevången and the city of Malmö where the musical was located, as well as the specific context of activism within which the musical was situated. The story of the deportation of Abdullah, which introduced this chapter, was a story of a locally situated consequence of national and European regulations and practices of migration control. Protests were organised to stop the deportation, and the musical made the deportation part of its performance. But the deportation disrupted an everyday life of activism, enduring and building friendship and a home in Malmö, while also increasing the fear of deportation amongst the participants in the musical residing as undocumented.

The context of the migrant rights movement from which the musical grew out was, and still is, a broad and diverse movement. The musical was initiated

[52] Mainly in facilities located outside (but close to) the neighbourhood of Möllevången.

[53] Counterpoint was involved in the reception of refugees in 2015 and has also had a night-open cafeteria to provide the homeless population of Malmö with an opportunity to stay indoors during the night. They also had a solidarity centre where clothes, hygiene items and food were redistributed. The last two years, however, Counterpoint has been in conflict with the landlord of the organisation's facilities and a lot of their activities have been put on hold during the past year. The conflict has recently been settled and Counterpoint has found a new facility and will start their activities again (kontrapunktmalmo.net).

[54] The People's Park was bought by the Social Democratic Party in 1891. The city of Malmö bought the park from the Social Democratic Association in 1991 (https://malmo.se/Kultur--fritid/Kultur--noje/Arkiv--historia/Kulturarv-Malmo/E-G/Folkets-Park.html Accessed: 12.11.2018).

at a time when there were increasing discussions questioning the division between 'activists' and 'undocumented'. Although the musical aimed to challenge these categories, the musical was permeated and conditioned by deportability. Working together across different legal statuses and inequalities in regard to living conditions following from deportability, the musical work was characterised by ambivalences.

When I moved to Malmö, I planned to stay for two years to finish a bachelor programme in human rights. I have now lived in Malmö for 13 years. Malmö is where I learned to practice political activism, theatre, where I got friendships for life and where I learned a few things about what residing without papers can mean. As discussed above, Malmö is a city marked by violence, inequalities and exclusion. The context of the local migrant rights movement and the musical provided possibilities for creating other experiences of arriving and living in Malmö. I end this chapter with a quote from an interview with a participant in the musical, Nima, who describes his experiences of moving to Malmö upon receiving his expulsion order.

> Nima: (…) First I thought that Malmö, from what I heard on the news and from friends, was kind of a dangerous city. I thought about all the incidents in Malmö, well, there's been a lot. I mean, I'm sure it's the same in other places, not just Malmö, but Malmö is kind of the strongest – no, hang on – there are more organisations in Malmö than anywhere else that work for freedom and humanity. And then I thought that Malmö is the best city of all.
> Emma: (Laughs)
> Nima: That's because, yes, I think most of those organisations or what you call them, are in Malmö. Well, I think it ought to be like that, complete freedom, and then Malmö would be the first city to be like that. (Nima, interview 15.04.2014)

3. Theoretical perspectives: Borders, commoning and community theatre

In this chapter, the point of departure is found in theories setting out from the figure of the refugee (Arendt 1943, 1968; Agamben 1995, 1998) and conditions of deportability (De Genova 2002). These theories provide an overall perspective for how I understand the structures within which the musical was located. I furthermore discuss the concept of the border (Balibar 2002) and my understanding of politics (Rancière 2001) in this context. I also place these lines of thought in a conversation with literature on aesthetics and applied theatre.

Finally, I have sought inspiration from the concept of *commoning* (Bollier and Helfrich 2015). The concept of commoning focuses on practices in everyday life that not only seek to contest exclusions but also to create alternatives. Combined with discussions about deportability and bordering practices, commoning provides a useful analytical perspective on the working process and performance of the musical.

The condition of refugeeness and deportability

> Those few refugees who insist upon telling the truth, even to the point of "indecency", get in exchange for the unpopularity one priceless advantage: history no longer is a closed book to them and politics is no longer the privilege of gentiles (Arendt 1943: 274).

> The refugee should be considered for what he is, that is, nothing less than a border concept that radically calls into question the principles of the nation-state and, at the same time, helps clear the field for a no-longer-delayable renewal of categories (Agamben 1995: 117)

The first quote is from an essay Arendt wrote in 1943, called *We refugees*. In this essay, she stated that those refugees who manage to hold on to their identities, in contrast to assimilation (e.g., hiding and forgetting their past histories and qualities) have a potential in regard to political subjectivity (Arendt 1943). At the same time, she also highlights the vulnerability that comes with this position and how the exclusion and persecution of the 'weakest member' was inherently connected to conditions for the general society (Arendt 1943: 274).

In the second quote, Giorgio Agamben paraphrases Arendt in an essay 50 years later with the same name, *We refugees*, and says that the refugee is a 'border concept' calling for a 'renewal of categories'. Thus, they seem to share a belief in that the phenomenon of refugeeness can be a starting point for thinking in new ways about how the modern world is structured and how it may be structured in other ways.

Arendt's discussions on totalitarianism are closely associated with views locating the figure of the refugee as central to modernity. Modern concepts such as rationality, instrumentality and efficiency were guiding principles when citizens were stripped of their citizenship and/or displaced during the Second World War. Refugeeness, in other words, is intertwined with the modern nation-state system, which is also clear when looking at the latest responses in Europe to the plight of people fleeing war, persecution and poverty.

Arendt wrote about the lack of rights for refugees during and in the aftermath of the world wars. According to Arendt, human rights, perceived as inalienable, did not have any force once a person was denationalized; that is, expelled from his or her community. The horrific crimes towards Jews during the Second World War were carried out after the Jews had been deprived of their citizenship and their homes. The point Arendt wishes to make is that a 'condition of complete rightlessness was created before the right to life was challenged' (Arendt 1968: 296); in other words, being deprived of political status meant being expelled from 'humanity altogether' (Arendt 1968: 297).

This leads Arendt to conclude that the catastrophe for the refugees is not the loss of any specific rights, but the loss of a community willing and able to guarantee *any* rights (Arendt 1968: 297). Deprived of political status, refugees lack access to a sphere where they are recognised as political beings.[55]

[55] Still, Arendt's extensive critique of human rights should not be interpreted as if she proposes abandoning the concept, but her critique could be understood as tools for rethinking and reinventing human rights (Gündoğdu 2011).

Building on Arendt, Agamben focuses on the figure of the *homo sacer*: a life that could be killed without punishment since it has been banned from the political-legal community (Agamben 1998). Agamben argues that the thinking of relationships between *zoe* (simple natural life) and *bios* (political life) needs to be reframed as *zoe* has entered *bios* through a politicisation of bare life. In the space between the two, zoe and bios, bare life is produced. Accordingly, bare life exists not in an absolute exclusion but in a 'zone of indistinction, between outside and inside, exclusion and inclusion' (Agamben 1998: 181).

Agamben sees Foucault's notion of *biopolitics*, 'the growing inclusion of man's natural life in the mechanisms and calculations of power' (Agamben 1998: 119), as a form of power, inherent in the relationship between sovereignty and bare life. Independent of which form of organisation the state has adopted, democratic or totalitarian, the focus of the sovereign is the power over bare life. Furthermore, as bare life becomes the focus of the sovereign, the zone of indistinction, where boundaries between inside and outside are blurred, encompasses more and more areas (Agamben 1998). Thinking in line with Agamben, the participants in the musical who resided as undocumented were included through their very exclusion from the community, upholding a relation to the state through their expulsion orders. On a more everyday level, they were also included through the production of a theatre, as well as in several other areas in their daily life, such as school and health care. This inclusion, however, was conditioned by their legal status. In the context of the Swedish welfare state, previous research has described the position of undocumented migrants in Sweden as not excluded but excepted; 'they have not been thrown out, but neither are they considered participants' (Khosravi 2010a: 111).

De Genova highlights that there are significant analogies between the situation for denationalised citizens, such as European Jews under the Nazi regime, and the 'migrant illegality' in present time. However, what is decisive for the present legal production of migrant illegality is *deportability*, meaning the aforementioned constant threat of being removed from the nation-state (De Genova 2002). According to De Genova, the main function of militarised borders and deportability, or of what he and Nathalie Peutz (2010) term the *deportation regime*, is that some are deported so that the majority remains 'un-deported'. Thus, the purpose of the production of deportability is *not* to actually deport every deportable person. Further, deportability not only works in relation to law enforcement agencies with the specific task of deporting people. The 'legal production of "illegality"' has a wider scope, specifically connected to the labour market. De Genova argues that a 'distinctly spatialized

and typically racialized social condition for undocumented migrants provides an apparatus for sustaining their vulnerability and tractability as workers' (De Genova 2002: 439). One example of this is the internal control of foreigners, as described in Chapter 2, which has been accused of racial profiling, but also of limiting undocumented individuals' access to health care, undocumented children's access to education, etc. (Stark 2012). Khosravi highlights how deportability (compare 'illegality') permeates the private (love, safety, family life) and biological (sexuality, reproduction) aspects of the lives of migrants (Khosravi 2010a). Hence, deportability produces vulnerability in relation to not only the labour market but also in other spheres of life.

De Genova's conceptualisation of deportability relates to the concept of the *border*, as bordering practices are intertwined with how deportability is experienced. In the next section, I discuss the concept of the border and show how it may be used as an analytical lens.

Borders – sites of struggles

French philosopher Étienne Balibar (2002, 2004) has elaborated upon the theme of borders and their changing nature, specifically in relation to Europe as a political unit. Balibar argues that in an increasingly mobile world, borders have become boundless in the sense that they are no longer only located at the outskirts of nation-states but cut through societies by means of, for example, gated communities and are manifested through internal controls of foreigners, increased control and surveillance of people living in racialised areas (Balibar 2002). Borders are also externalised far beyond the state's territorial area (Andersson 2014). The control of (some people's) movement 'reenacts a pattern that we see with the salaried proletariat' (Balibar 2003: 37). The supposed enjoyed freedom from dependence and authority that 'free' labour would bring is again constrained by enforcing immobility through a system of differential citizenship. In this processes of differentiation, undocumented migrants constitute one of the groups rendered most vulnerable to discrimination and exploitation (Balibar 2003).

The academic work of defining and analysing what borders are, which entities they surround or which categories they produce contributes to and is part of the bordering processes academics aim to explore (Balibar 2002; Mezzadra 2015). Besides highlighting the importance of reflexivity, this also sheds light on the impossible task of defining what a border *is*. Thus, I do not

define what a border is, but rather with the help of different scholars shed light on what borders *do* and how this may be analysed (cf. Djampour 2018).

Lessons from the history of colonialism demonstrate the continuity of certain forms of spatial innovations (e.g., the camp) and of the power of bordering, through, for example, the creation of maps. Critical migration scholars Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson (2013) discuss how the modern nation-state system was constituted in a global space, and they argue for paying attention to the continuity of bordering processes. Thus, although migration studies frequently focus on present transformations in regard to people's movements, the control of migration or the transforming nature of borders, these phenomena are not necessarily new. For example, the ways in which the borders of the European space expand into surrounding territories exhibit a sense of continuity in relation to politics carried out during colonialism (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013; Hansen and Jonson 2014).

At present, borders are being militarised and walled across the globe (Brown 2010). Balibar (2002) emphasises the *overdetermination* of borders, meaning that borders produce their meaning and power in relation to other geopolitical divisions (Balibar 2002: 79). The militarisation of the external borders of Europe to a large degree resembles the border between the United States and Mexico. Both try to shut out poor migrants fleeing violence and poverty. At the same time, the respective economies are dependent on the cheap labour these migrants represent. Furthermore, borders relate to each other by sharing, for example, technology, contractors and subcontractors, as well as protest graffiti (Brown 2010).

The practices and manifestations of border controls have furthermore come to involve a variety of measures. For example, in the Mediterranean context: physical containment of migrants' boats, rescue operations followed by police interrogations in order to inform deterrence of future migrants, intelligence activities, deterrence and detention. The variety of practices and the involvement of the military have resulted in researchers talking in terms of a military-humanitarian nexus governing and producing forms of mobility (Garelli and Tazzioli 2018). Border control is not limited to these visible and more spectacular military-humanitarian operations but also take place through the technological development of sophisticated means of surveillance, tracing the movement of people and creating 'data doubles' of populations on the move. This data surveillance creates individuals who are 'data-banned', prevented from travelling from the outset, trapped in their local environment Bigo 2014: 219). This kind of border monitoring is invisible to those also subjected to surveillance, but never banned. The data border control is not

visible in the same way as the dead bodies on the shores of Europe, but still causes a lot of suffering and harm (Bigo 2014).

Hence, the same borders do not have the same meaning for everyone in practical terms, which Balibar addresses as the *polysemic nature* of borders. Today's borders differentiate people in terms of social class and skin colour. For rich people from rich countries, the passports they carry do not simply have the meaning of national belonging but also come with a surplus of rights. A rich person from a rich country has the right to move freely in the world, and the borders have been changed into a mere formality, a symbolic confirmation of social status. For a poor person from a poor country, the border means something entirely different. The borders for the latter are constantly present; for example, in terms of fear of being detected and deported, when actually being deported or when waiting for a reply to a family reunification application. Balibar argues that the permeation of borders in these people's lives in the end makes the border the place where the person resides (i.e., something they always relate to). Balibar describes this so-called 'home' as 'an extraordinary viscous spatio-temporal zone, almost a home – a home in which to live a life which is a waiting-to-live, a non-life' (Balibar 2002: 83).

According to Balibar, the process of challenging who is allowed to exist beyond the border, inside a community, is political in the strongest sense of the word (Balibar 2004). Thus, borders should be treated as 'sites of struggles' in order to politicise the way we think about them: not only as merely socially constructed but as the outcome of violent encounters (Vaughan-Williams 2009: 70). Mezzadra approaches these sites of struggle analytically through the concepts of subjection and subjectivation, which, according to Mezzadra, are helpful when exploring 'the tensions and the clashes between the compulsion of a myriad structural forces and the moment of agency in migration' (Mezzadra 2015: 2–3). In line with Balibar, Mezzadra argues that the border is not a geopolitical line between territories but a social relation of power where new subjectivities and relations are created through struggles.

Together with Brett Neilson, Mezzadra argues that the border is at the heart of the political and introduces the concept of 'border struggles' to capture the 'tensions constitutive of any border and the production of subjectivity' (Mezzadra, 2015: 9). The notion of border struggles not only refers to movements that 'openly contests borders and their discriminatory effects' (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013: 13) but also to the daily struggles migrants engage in to facilitate an everyday life on the move, or an everyday life permeated by deportability. In line with their thinking of the proliferation and heterogenisation of borders, border struggles are also multiple. That is, border

struggles are fought not only at the border, but can manifest themselves at the centre of formally unified political spaces. Mezzadra and Neilson argue that the concept of border struggles can 'open a new continent of political possibilities, a space within which new kinds of political subjects, which abide neither the logics of citizenship nor established methods of radical political organization and action' can be created (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013: 13–14).

Theatre, politics and border struggles

French philosopher Jacques Rancière's thinking of politics in terms of subjectivisation (Rancière 2004) seems close to what Mezzadra and Neilson seek to capture with the concept of border struggles. They share a theoretical focus on new political subjectivities beyond established categories, such as the citizen.

Turning to Rancière to locate possibilities of politics means exploring how individuals may constitute themselves as political subjects through *acts*. In this discussion, Rancière's notions of *police* and *politics* are central. These distinctions and the focus on people's acts represent an interesting entry point for me, since I try to understand the possibilities for activism through community theatre, given the condition of deportability and bordering practices. A perspective that does not presuppose a stable order, but a society in motion, may capture the dynamics and practices I try to make sense of.

In Rancière's thinking, the *police* is the order claiming that all parts of the order have been accounted for and that everyone or every group has been assigned their correct positions within this order. The order is represented as a system for distribution and legitimisation. It is what is commonly thought of as politics: the distribution of power, roles and positions – that is, processes where a consensus between groups is reached. However, for Rancière, this is not politics but the opposite: the police. The police order defines which experiences may be rendered visible and which claims may be heard; it operates through establishing limits for possible experiences (Arsenjuk 2007). The police order makes sure that questioning the order is not heard or seen. The task of the police is not only to provide 'stability' but primarily to make claims made by the 'unaccounted for' invisible. The police states that there is nothing here to see, the police order encourages you to 'move along', as Rancière says. It is the police who decides who is perceptible as a political being and what may be counted as a political issue:

> If there is someone you do not wish to recognize as a political being, you begin by not seeing them as bearers of politicalness, by not understanding what they say, by not hearing that it is an utterance coming out of their mouths (Rancière 2001: 11, thesis 8).

Politics, then, is always a conflictual process in Rancière's thinking, a process contesting the police's distribution of power, roles and positions. It is about the reconfiguration of spaces and challenging the order that depoliticises certain issues and certain people. Consequently, this means renaming spaces, what there is to be seen or heard and to make claims of politicalness, even though you are neither recognised as a political being, nor is the issue considered political (Rancière 2001). Politics is not about questioning the distribution of, for example, power between subjects according to a hierarchy; instead, politics is a rupture in the very idea of power being distributed between subjects according to certain qualities they possess (Rancière 2001).

When those who are not counted as political subjects by the police act *as if* they were political subjects, politics is enacted. One example of this is when people act as rights claimants on the basis of universal human rights declarations, but where states, for different reasons, have denied them the rights in these documents (Rancière, 2004). In these processes, a rupture in the police's order takes place. In contrast to the police order of consensus, Rancière calls this rupture *dissensus*, which is the essence of politics. Dissensus should not be seen as an argument where we think differently or where we have conflicting interests; instead, dissensus concerns what is defined as an interest and who is allowed to speak at all (Rancière, 2001).

Mezzadra and Neilson highlight how Rancière has been an influential source of inspiration for scholars and activists engaged in issues concerning migration; for example, in analyses of the *sans-papier* movement in France in 1996. However, Mezzadra and Neilson believe that Rancière's focus on dissensus, on the rupture, only seems to reproduce the present order of things, as the rupture, per definition, is temporary. What is left after the rupture is over? And what led to the creation of this rupture?[56] Mezzadra and Neilson put forward the need to 'further investigate the materiality of the practices and struggles that produce the conditions for the emergence of the political subject and for its constituent action' (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013: 254–255).

I agree with this critique of Rancière, and I would also like to add that the terms dissensus and rupture create associations to a type of spectacular

[56] Mezzadra and Neilson (2013) are also critical of the fact that 'the partial subject of politics seems to be deduced in a negative way from the concept of police' in Rancière's conception of politics (254).

moments and events. However, the potential of dissensus, of politics, is not necessarily linked merely to a 'revolutionary moment' but (also) to continuous efforts seeking to create something beyond what is offered (Darling 2014: 74). I find Rancière's thinking interesting because it directs attention to when people's actions or imaginations are out of place, which, according to Rancière, is constitutive of dissensus, of a rupture in the order. He has furthermore written on this rupture in relation to aesthetics, which is helpful in order to analyse the performance of the musical.

When reading Rancière's reflections on the politics of aesthetics, he not only refers to spectacular examples. For example, Rancière refers to a French revolutionary newspaper, issued during the French Revolution of 1848. Rancière cites a joiner who works as a floor-layer, and who writes in third person in a rather apolitical tone about his experience:

> Believing himself at home, he loves the arrangement of a room, so long as he has not finished laying the floor. If the window opens out onto a garden or commands a view of picturesque horizon, he stops his arms and glides in imagination toward the spacious view to enjoy it better than the possessors of the neighbouring residences (Gabriel Gauny, quoted in Rancière 2008: 10).

Rancière sees a potential in this text, as the worker steps out of his condition of being a worker, instead appropriating 'the place of work and exploitation as the place of a free gaze', which produces an 'aesthetic rupture' (Rancière 2008: 10). In this quote, I see a parallel to how undocumented individuals in the police order are often counted as exploitable workers, but not as artists or actors on a stage, as in the case of the *No Border Musical*.

Rancière is highly critical of the view of art as a producer of certain feelings, or awareness, which are then presumed to lead to action. In his view, the politics of the aesthetic experience suspends 'any straight cause-effect relationship' between the creation of art and how it is received (Rancière 2008: 11). His view of the politics of aesthetics is about the un-intended. As with his writings on dissensus, politics of aesthetics concern a rupture with how the police order has distributed power and 'proper' images, representations and categorisations of people. He writes that:

> [Aesthetic experience] is a multiplicity of folds and gaps in the fabric of common experience that change the cartography of the perceptible, the thinkable and the feasible. As such, it allows for new modes of political construction of common objects and new possibilities of collective enunciation (Rancière 2008: 11).

This formulation of the aesthetic experience corresponds to thinking of theatre as a space where there can be a contestation of the order of things, involving a sense of unpredictability (Schechner 1988 [1977]). This thesis concerns not just any theatre, but the specific form of community theatre aiming to transform present conditions of borders and deportability. So, in a way, this specific space of theatre has a purpose connected to certain visions and ambitions. Yet, my analysis of the musical highlights a number of ambivalences and the processes of creating and performing with the musical as far from predictable (see chapters 1, 2 and 6). To situate the discussion on this specific theatre practice beyond discussions on 'effects' but still within a political theatre practice, I turn to applied theatre scholar and practitioner James Thompson. Inspired by anarchist activist Emma Goldman (1869–1940), Thomson argues for the importance of the 'beautiful radiant things' within political struggles. Goldman highlights the right to 'self-expression' within political struggles, and Thompson interprets this as an argument for the role of art and enjoying the beauty in the present. Not in the sense that people become immune to suffering but that they 'have the energy to continue to resist' (Thompson 2011: 2). Now, the argumentation for enjoying the beauty of the present can easily slip into, on the one hand, a kind of romanticising or, on the other hand, ignorance of the difficult conditions people find themselves in. Nonetheless, as discussed below, Thompson's perspective on applied theatre is useful for my analysis of the musical.

Potentials of participatory theatre

Situated as I am within the extra-parliamentary leftist milieu, I am familiar with the Goldman-inspired slogan 'If I can't dance to it, it is not my revolution', and I early on saw joy, laughter and play as important parts of the musical's working process. Thompson's perspective, firmly grounded in the practical work with applied theatre in places of war and post-conflict, of aiming to look beyond mere 'effects' to the experiences of affect in performances is helpful in relation to an analysis seeking to blur the boundaries between the working process of the musical and its performances. Thompson aims to 'articulate a place where the actual work of social change is bound up in how we create, who creates and when we create art' (Thompson 2011: 11). According to Thompson, practice and research of participatory theatre must not be limited to focusing on the content of the stories or words, but must be attentive to the 'sustenance of sensation' (Thompson 2011: 125), as this has the potential of opening up other ways of being in the world than the ones

visible at first sight. The encounters occurring within the processes of creating a performance, including when rehearsing, activities connected to rehearsals and the actual performances, are seen as important by Thompson when considering the radical potential of participatory theatre. Building on Rancière (2004), Thompson sees all these spheres of participatory theatre as representing a potential of a redistribution of the sensible; that is, of who and what can be seen and heard. Furthermore, inspired by Rancière, he locates the potential of redistribution of the sensible through participatory theatre and/or art more generally, in-between the notions of 'effect' and 'affect':

> (…) Suitable political art would ensure, at one and the same time, the production of a double effect: the readability of a political signification and a sensible or perceptual shock caused, conversely, by the uncanny, by that which resists signification (…) (Rancière 2004, quoted in Thompson 2011: 175).

The politics of art practices such as participatory theatre, following Thompson's interpretation of Rancière (2004), is not limited to the stories or practices of a theatre, but also moves to affective dimensions of emotional experiences difficult to grasp in writing. This corresponds to Schechner's (1988) view of theatre as unpredictable and Rancière's focus on the unintended – and to the politics of participatory theatre as a practice concerned with contesting borders:

> Doing art means displacing art's borders, just as doing politics means displacing the borders of what is acknowledged as *the* political (Rancière 2010: 149).

For Rancière, works of art that engage with their own limits, particularly in connection to matters of space, territories and borders, may serve to frame a 'new landscape of the visible, the sayable and the doable' (Rancière 2010: 149), while Thompson (2011) makes an important point by highlighting the affective dimensions of these practices.

The level of abstraction in Rancière's thinking might be provoking – like the example with the worker; although being able to imagine something else, the worker still remains located in an everyday existence characterised by poor, exploitative working conditions. In this regard, the term border struggles seems more useful in order to analyse the processes taking place in the everyday struggles of creating the *No Border Musical*. Border struggles as a notion is developed in close dialogue with the situations and struggles migrants find themselves in, and as such it is very powerful. I would add that Rancière's

thinking of the aesthetic experience and politics as a rupture redistributing who and what can be seen and heard can open up the analysis of the musical to not only include the materiality of border struggles but also help shed light on the affective dimensions of creating and performing the *No Border Musical* (cf. Thompson 2011). To further explore how resistance may be conceptualised beyond the Rancièrian 'event', I turn to scholars setting out from everyday experiences of migrants.

Commoning in a context of border struggles

Setting out from the experiences of people on the move, Papadopoulos and Tsianos (2013) wish to create a new ontology of migration, one starting off with the movement of people, not in the technology/machinery/regimes trying to control this movement. Although they acknowledge that people on the move experience harsh measures of control, they emphasise that the movement of people comes first, followed by measures of control to limit the movement of the 'unwanted'. Setting out from the everyday life of people on the move, Papadopoulos and Tsianos coin the term 'mobile commons':

> People on the move create a world of knowledge, of information, of tricks for survival, of mutual care, of social relations, of services exchange, of solidarity and sociability that can be shared, used and where people contribute to sustain and expand it (Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013: 190).

I take these lines of thoughts as further inspiration in this chapter as I try to think of struggles against violent migration control beyond the categories of citizens/non-citizens and if and how these struggles may be formulated as *processes of commoning*.

Theories of the commons usually acknowledge the work of Elinor Ostrom who received the Nobel Prize in Economics in 2009 for her work of creating a theory of the commons beyond the 'tragedy of the commons' (Hardin 1968 in Ostrom 2015). In her book, *Governing the Commons* (2015 [1990]), Ostrom sets out from a great variety of empirical examples of how people through cooperation and establishing common sets of rules have managed to develop a sustainable use of different kinds of renewable resources, such as inshore fisheries, groundwater basins and communal forests. These practices of governing the commons cannot be encapsulated by the logics of the market or the state (Ostrom 2015). Departing slightly from this body of research focusing

on finding a 'best model' for governing the commons, Bollier and Helfrich (2015) seek to introduce subjectivity and intersubjectivity as central elements of *commoning*. They focus on the doings and creations of the commons; that is, on the verb of *commoning* rather than the noun. Similar to Papadopoulos and Tsianos (2013), they see commons as sustained and created by 'commoners' and argue that commons must be seen through 'the experiences, feelings, histories and cultures of every participant' (Bollier and Helfrich 2015: 9). Further, combining the material and immaterial nature of the commons does not position humanity as separate from nature, but 'focuses on the practices of interaction, care, and cohabitation in a common world' (Hardt and Negri 2009: viii, also see Amin and Howell 2016).

Instead of distinct definitions of the commons and commoning, scholars aim to look for what a '*politics* of possibility entails' (Amin and Howell 2016: 13, *italics in original*), arguing that the way we imagine the commons is just as important as explorations of how the commons can be governed. Looking at commoning from the perspective of a politics of possibilities also points to the provisional and instable nature of commoning as practices and tactics differ. For example, Amin and Howell (2016) state that commoning involves both protecting the 'commons that are' (ibid.: 12); for example, legislation and rules preventing offshoring and privatisations, as well as 'prospecting a commons-that-might-be' (ibid.: 12), thus pointing to the potential of imagination and hope.

Scholars also emphasise that commoning is faced with severe challenges. Not least considering the fact that we live in a time of *expulsions* (Sassen 2014), which includes expelling lands and waters from common and future use (e.g., through hydraulic fracturing or selling land to foreign investors for exploitation), expelling people from employment and welfare benefits, incarcerations of minoritised poor populations, expulsion, detention and encampment of migrants and refugees (Sassen 2014).

Together with Vanna Nordling and Maja Sager, I have elsewhere engaged in discussions on commons, setting out from a critical citizenship perspective combined with the autonomous migration perspective (Nordling, Sager and Söderman 2017). We were inspired by Papadopoulos and Tsianos (2013) and their concept of mobile commons, which they developed when thinking of commons in a context of transit migration.

The empirical material from which mobile commons are conceptualised (see Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013; Trimikliniotis, Parsanoglou and Tsianos 2015) mainly originates from countries in southern Europe. These are countries primarily seen as transit countries, where people on the move might

wish to stay mobile to a larger extent than in, for example, northern European countries. Thus, the experiences of migrants in northern countries, more commonly destination countries, might differ a bit. Furthermore, a focus on (mainly male) migrants in transit risks overshadowing a need for stillness in order to rebuild communities, families and everyday life (Tyler and Marciniak 2013; Gill 2009). However, an increasingly restrictive migration regime puts more and more people outside the possibility of obtaining citizenship or residency. Hence, trying to see through 'the chink in the wall' (Papadopoulus and Tsianos 2013) is relevant also in the context of Sweden as (generally) a destination country.

In our article (Nordling, Sager and Söderman 2017), we argue that different types of local practices carried out in a space in-between may partly be read as acts of citizenship and partly as local mobile commons, which we refer to as (im)mobile commons (Nordling, Sager and Söderman 2017). We highlight the importance of acknowledging that the tactics used by migrants and their allies for getting as decent an everyday life as possible and for resisting migration control depend on the context. Sometimes it involves struggles for recognition, for citizenship or social rights, other times it involves tactics for staying under the radar or struggles for creating an everyday life without being recognised as a resident. These different tactics are often performed by the same individuals simultaneously. Thus, there are no sharp lines between strategies and struggles for getting residency/citizenship and the creation of mobile commons (Nordling, Sager and Söderman 2017). Furthermore, commoning does not take place separate from or outside of relations of production, reproduction and exploitation, and relations of oppression exist within migrant communities as well (Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013; Trimikliniotis, Parsanoglou and Tsianos 2015).

In line with Bollier and Helfrich (2015), I emphasise the social relationships and practices of commoning. Furthermore, I consider the processes of commoning as interlinked with border struggles. Not only may border struggles manifest themselves in ambitions to enclose the commons (i.e., bordering common goods or lands), but the production of the commons 'involves the negotiation of multiple borders' (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013: 298). Mezzadra and Neilson argue that the reproduction of borders within the commons (e.g., in regard to gender, race or class) cannot be avoided but needs to be actively fought. In their words: 'Borders will continue to cross the common. And the common will continue to contest borders' (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013: 279). My analysis approaches commoning through the concept of border struggles, which is fruitful in order to highlight the ambivalences of

commoning. Furthermore, commoning as a verb also carries a dimension of temporality, as the practices of commoning may change or disappear over time, or they may be discovered by the authorities (see Trimikliniotis, Parsanoglou and Tsianos 2015).

In summary

In this chapter, inspired by scholars from different disciplines, I have put forward perspectives on deportability, borders, theatre and commoning.

The first part of the chapter situated the figure of the refugee as central to modernity. Although refugees and undocumented migrants are excluded from the political community in the traditional sense and thus from acting as political subjects (e.g., citizens), these positions are inherently political as their presence draws attention to the arbitrariness and injustices of nation-state borders. Furthermore, the concept of deportability sheds light on how orders of expulsion condition the undocumented migrant's position in every aspect of life, whilst not actually serving to deport every deportable migrant.

I have also discussed the concept of the border and the proliferation of borders around the world, as well as the different meaning of borders for people placed in different social categories. I discussed the concept of border struggles in order to emphasise the agency in acts of crossing or contesting borders, simultaneously as borders also represent places of oppression.

In order to analyse the practices carried out within the musical in this context, I turned to theories of politics, applied theatre and commoning. I discuss politics as a rupture in the present order of what can be seen and heard, while highlighting the temporariness of political subjectivity. Practices of theatre in this context are practices displacing borders, that is, what can be seen as and thought of as theatre. Putting these thoughts in conversation with thoughts on applied theatre adds focus on the affective dimensions, not only of performing but also of rehearsing and engaging in social activities together.

Finally, the concept of commoning seeks to move beyond the categories of citizen/non-citizen. It is a concept focusing on practices in everyday life but which also sees a potential of transformation and imagining other possible futures within these practices. As such, it links the everyday practices of creating and performing the *No Border Musical* with a transformative potential, although conditioned by deportability and borders.

4. Methodological considerations

This chapter serves to give the reader insight into how, and on which epistemological grounds, this research was conducted. I address the position of simultaneously being a participant, a non-professional actor and a researcher of the musical and put this into a context of activist research. First, I situate the musical as a space where knowledge is created. Thereafter, I situate myself in this context and discuss which kind of knowledge I seek to develop from this space. The next section deals with the messiness of fieldwork and discusses the ethnographic method, after which I reflect upon my fieldwork experiences by describing it in two phases. The first focused on the musical as a way to explore experiences and ways to handle deportability. In the second phase, my research interest was refocused and I placed the musical at the centre of my research. For the sake of clarity, a short section subsequently lists the material that my analysis is based upon. The next section, on ethics and engagement, highlights and discusses some of the difficulties I have faced in my work. Finally, I give an account of how I have carried out the analysis.

A space for creating knowledge

According to Chesters (2012), researchers need to recognise the capacity of social movements to 'develop alternative political imaginaries – a politics of possibilities – and theories of knowledge about how to actualise these imagined possibilities' (Chesters 2012: 147). The musical is especially fruitful in this regard, as it was produced in a context where participants worked in the boundaries of fiction and non-fiction, where possibilities to imagine alternatives were part of the concrete work with the performance. Setting out from experiences of deportability and bordering practices, the musical also produced in-depth contextualised knowledge of these phenomena.

Inspired by the black feminist bell hooks (2004), I think of the musical as a space where knowledge is produced and ask questions regarding which kind of space this is. Writing in an American context of oppression against black

people, bell hooks put forward that the specific marginalisation of black people in history and presently creates a 'double seeing' that expands the capability to understand, analyse and resist oppressive conditions. She terms this location 'the margin':

> To be at the margin is to be part of the whole but outside the main body. As black Americans living in a small Kentucky town, the railroad tracks were a daily a reminder of our marginality. Across those tracks were paved streets, stores we could not enter, restaurants we could not eat in, and people we could not look directly in the face. Across those tracks was a world we could work in as maids, as janitors, as prostitutes, as long as it was in a service capacity. We could enter the world but we could not live there. We had always to return to the margin, to cross the tracks to shacks and abandoned houses on the edge of town (…) we developed a particular way of seeing reality. We looked both from the outside in and from the inside out. We focused our attention on the center as well as on the margin. We understood both (hooks 2004: 156).

According to bell hooks, the margins are places of repression; to be part of the whole but outside the main body is to be subordinated. At the same time, she says that the margins are also places where alternatives and resistance to repression may the theorised (hooks 2004).

Although written in a different context and for different purposes, the position hooks identifies as the margin, to 'be part of the whole but outside the main body' (hooks 2004: 156), resonates somewhat with the undocumented position as included by its exclusion. In the case of the undocumented position, no one can tell whether someone lacks a residence permit just by passing them on the street. In that sense, undocumented individuals can inhabit the city just like anyone else (although deportability produces vulnerable living conditions and intersect with racialised understandings of who is the desired inhabitant of the city, see Chapter 2). This is in contrast with the situation for black Americans described by hooks. However, there is always a risk that the expulsion order might be activated. This may manifest itself through the fact that undocumented individuals frequently cannot come forward in the public sphere as rights-holders and access rights (e.g., welfare services) without also risking triggering the state's migration control and consequently be subjected to deportation (Noll 2010). As mentioned, this condition is captured by the notion of deportability. The position produced by deportability, of being included and excluded at the same time, can be viewed as a position similar to the 'double-seeing' hooks talks about 'at the margin'. I do not claim that theories originating from the history of slavery and the American context of oppression against black people can be directly translated to the contemporary

context of deportability. Nonetheless, I think that the 'doubleness' so well captured by hooks, of looking 'from the outside in and from the inside out', may be illustrative for the condition of deportability in our time as well.

The *No Border Musical* was a collective effort setting out to highlight and give an account of experiences of deportability, as well as putting forward an alternative through a vision of *No Borders*, with the overall ambition of resisting the excluding practices of the current migration regime. Thinking of the musical as a space where knowledge was created does not imply that we all inhabited the same positions within the musical, or that there were no conflicts within it. What it does mean is recognising that the musical's working process and performances formed a 'possibility of radical perspective from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds' (hooks 2004: 157). Hence, I am not suggesting that all participants shared the same experiences, but I do locate the musical in a context formed by collective struggles against violent migration control. I have been part of this space and consequently also part of the knowledge produced there. However, the knowledge produced through writing this thesis is something other than the knowledge produced in the context of the musical. The next section goes on to explore my situated position within the musical as a space for creating knowledge.

My situated position

The analytical distinction between the knowledge created within the musical and the knowledge I create regarding the musical is important, as only I am held accountable for this thesis. Nevertheless, with the risk of pointing out the obvious, there is no sharp boundary between the knowledge I create and the knowledge created within the musical. Many of the issues I discuss here concerning bordering practices, deportability and migration control were issues being discussed and analysed within the framework of the musical as well. I am indebted to the musical participants for many inspiring analyses and discussions. Thus, I view the process of creating knowledge as a collective endeavour.

In order to provide transparency and practice reflexivity in this process, it is important to make my own situated position visible. I strive to create 'situated knowledges' (Haraway 1988), which requires a researcher who is embodied and visible and who acknowledges the social forces shaping the production of knowledge. Hence, besides focusing on the social relationships subject to my

study, I need to critically reflect upon my own subjective position, on how I was viewed in the context of the field. Furthermore, there also needs to be a focus on critically analysing the researchers and the larger context in which the researchers belong (Harding 2004).

All knowledge is situated, but according to Donna Haraway (1988), partial perspectives coming from 'below' have the potential of creating more valid situated knowledge, as these positions will not render invisible the structures of power in our society, structures also present in the production of knowledge (also see Harding 2004: 128). Importantly, these positions at the margin, creating partial perspectives from below, are not static and universal. Oppression is produced through social relations and played out differently in regard to time and context (Mohanty 1988). Thus, positions at the margins offer a partial perspective, which needs to be critically examined (Haraway 1988) as well as contextualised. The positions of movements with which researchers claim to stand in solidarity including the positions of researchers need to be subject to a thorough reflexive engagement (Harding 2004).

During the research process, I have reflected on my position in the musical context, in terms of privilege, power asymmetries, etc., specifically in relation to being both researcher and participant in the musical. When presenting my work at seminars and workshops, both within and outside academia, one of the first questions frequently concerns the power relations in the group and how I have participated both as a researcher and as a participant in the musical group. There are certainly problems (which I return to), but from my point of view, carrying out research concerning individuals/groups in vulnerable situations without having an ambition to contribute to changing the situation would be problematic in other ways (see Pittaway, Bartolomei and Hugman 2010 for a similar view).

I claim that being involved in the struggles and the communities I also research provides in-depth knowledge. A form of knowledge held accountable for its validity, not only by the scientific community, but also by those whose struggles I stand in solidarity with. Thus, being involved in the struggles I also research is a political, ethical and epistemological choice. Although this may sound straightforward, this choice does not come with any easy answers. For example, I have doubted whether I can perform a 'just' analysis of the musical. As a researcher, activist and as a white middle class woman in my 30s, I had a specific position within the musical group. Whose story am I telling as I write this thesis where I try to describe, put into words, make visible, analyse the world that the musical created, how it was created and how the world outside also permeated this world, creating different roles, distributions of

responsibilities, reproductions of relations of power. I have no clear-cut solution to the fear of telling a one-sided, incomplete story of the musical. What I aim to practice is transparency in regard to my readings of the empirical material as well as in regard to my practices during the fieldwork, and since I was part of the processes I study, I also (when relevant) include myself in the analysis.

My situated position in the context of the musical was very much related to my involvement in the Asylum Group in Malmö. Through this involvement, issues linked to asylum, residence permits and individuals residing as undocumented have been present in various ways in my life for many years.

For example, I was involved in a campaign *Barnets bästa främst*[57] while at the same time writing my master's thesis on the consequences of the Dublin Regulation for unaccompanied refugee children. My thesis involved fieldwork in both Sweden (with undocumented unaccompanied minors, who had left their sheltered homes due to the threat of deportation to another EU member state) and in refugee camps in Malta (with unaccompanied minors who had already been deported due to the Dublin Regulation) (see Lundberg and Söderman 2010; Söderman 2010). Hence, I have worked for many years with refugee rights issues in general and in the latest years more specifically with unaccompanied refugee children subject to the Dublin Regulation. In the context of the musical, this meant that the majority of participants knew me as active in the Asylum Group before we together formed the musical ensemble. The form and intensity of my activity in the Asylum Group have varied over the years, but I have generally been engaged in support to individuals without residence permits as well as in politically campaigning for migrants' rights. Consequently, I conducted my fieldwork in a context where I had a lot of contacts as well as legitimacy in the eyes of the other participants due to my activism.

When I began my fieldwork, the aim was to get an understanding of what it was like residing as undocumented and unaccompanied in Malmö. Underlying was an ambition to give a voice to young people residing as undocumented and to challenge the single story of vulnerability and suffering by highlighting different strategies for managing and resisting the living conditions created by deportability. One way of doing so was to engage in the musical, as it offered

[57] Barnets bästa främst (In the Best interest of the Child) was initiated by the Asylum Group and aimed to create a critical public opinion regarding the consequences of the Dublin Regulation with regard to children. The goal was to change the application of the regulation in order to exempt all children. See www.barnetsbastaframst.se for more information.

a platform for challenging the image of undocumented and/or refugees as 'speechless' (Rajaram 2002) incapable of acting politically. Moreover, I wanted to give something back to research participants and contribute to the struggles they were involved in. My work to document and analyse the musical could in light of this reasoning be seen as contributing to stories being made visible and thereby hopefully contributing to transformation. This was indeed my entry point to the academy, as I felt that there were stories and issues that needed to be highlighted and that I was the right person for the job since I was grounded in the field. At the beginning of my doctoral studies, when my activist position in the field was questioned (or at least I interpreted it that way), I brushed this off as invalid critique coming from 'old-school' academia and that they simply 'did not get' what I was doing. After getting familiar with theoretical critiques of 'giving of voice' as ignorant of, for example, the power asymmetries inherent in the word 'giving', my answer to critique of my position in the field has developed somewhat. I situate myself within a critical feminist research tradition challenging the foundation traditionally seen as the basis of academia: the notion of 'true' and 'objective' research (see, for example, Haraway 1988). Nevertheless, my position in the field is not unproblematic in relation to power asymmetries and pre-understandings. These need to be critically reflected upon (which is also a valid statement in relation to those with a more distanced relationship to the field). In the section on *ethics and involvement*, I reflect upon dilemmas I faced during my fieldwork.

An ethnographic approach

The material for this thesis largely comes from ethnographic fieldwork and interviews. The way I understand the validity of this methodology is related to the above discussion on epistemology. The knowledge I create is simultaneously constructions of and constructing reality *and* committed to providing 'faithful accounts of a "real" world' (Haraway 1988: 579). For my ethnographic approach, this means that I aim to situate and make visible the contexts of the phenomenon I analyse, at the same time as I hold on to the claim that the experiences I refer to in this thesis – of creating a musical, of activism, of deportability and bordering practices – tell us important things about injustices in the world and of how incomplete, ambivalent and messy resistance towards these can take shape. This way of thinking of *experiences* as a notion leans on a feminist conceptualisation looking upon experiences 'as

real historical products and social practices, always in process and always contested' (Mulinari and Sandell 1999: 296). It is an understanding of experiences that challenges the idea that political commitment provides one-dimensional, dogmatic texts and analysis. Rather, experiences are seen as forming fundamental parts of mobilising and struggling for a transformation of the present, as such related to social movements, *and* to produce relevant and grounded analyses (Mulinari and Sandell 1999).

This discussion relates to *critical ethnography*, a branch of ethnography seeking to make visible 'voices and experiences of subjects whose stories are otherwise restrained and out of reach' (Madison 2012: 6), whilst also stressing the importance of the positionality of the researcher and the power of representation involved in writing (Madison 2012). Methodological questions are always both epistemological *and* political in the sense that they not only involve 'premises about truth and how it may be known and understood' but also, as argued by De Genova, '*how* one goes about acquiring that knowledge' (De Genova 2005: 21, *italics in original*).

Frequently grounded in feminist epistemologies, the combination of academic work and political involvement has sometimes been called *activist research* (Hale 2008).[58] It may be related to the praxis of ethnography as it often involves creating knowledge setting out from some kind of *participation* in the communities and issues being studied. It could, for example, concern being involved in organisations documenting and working against police brutality and violence (Costa Vargas 2008), involvement in community organising and informal social work (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1993), engaging in campaigns against eviction and demolition of housing (Maxey 1999) or collecting evidence to make a case for access to land rights (Speed 2008). To me, being involved in activist research is to a great extent linked to what I do and who I am outside of work (cf. Pulido 2008). The boundaries between academia and activism have never been rigid to me, as my studies and my involvement have frequently been interlinked. Although I present a specific period for my fieldwork, which is correct in the sense of writing fieldnotes and

[58] This kind of research has many names, participatory activist research (lisahunter, Emerald and Martin 2013), advocacy research (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1993), engaged research or collaborative research (Hale 2008). According to Hale (2008), activist scholars collaborate and build alliances and dialogues with people who are struggling to improve their lives, and, I would add, frequently the lives of others as well. Instead of providing a set of tools or 'how to do' manuals, Hale argues for a broadly defined field of activist research making political involvement explicit, while at the same time making visible the contradictions and tensions that may be present in activist research (Hale 2008).

being focused on my research, my earlier and present involvement in the issues I write about also informs my analysis (see Maxey 1999 for a similar approach).

Being present over time in the lives of people, the ethnographic methodology has an 'exemplary status' (Clifford 1983 in De Genova 2005: 18) in relation to constructing knowledge of the everyday lives, labours and struggles of people. However, at the same time, ethnographic methodology is linked to a history of anthropology rooted in colonial notions of 'discovering' faraway cultures. Ethnographic methodology brings with it a sense of violence, a sense of intrusion, in relation to making people and their experience into an 'object of study' (De Genova 2005: 13). Ethnographic encounters should not be about describing essentialised 'others' and their 'culture' but should aim to engage, together with interlocutors in the field, 'to name the world and transform it' (De Genova 2005: 25). Inspired by the work of the radical educator Paulo Freire (1968), De Genova (2005) seeks to negotiate his privileged positionality in his ethnographic encounters with undocumented migrants in Chicago, by conceptualising ethnographic encounters as dialogical. This dialogue is not simple and straightforward but inherently problematic and contested, thus always political (De Genova 2005).

Inspired by De Genova's approach to ethnography, I situate myself as a co-worker and participant in the dialogues constructed in the working process of the musical. This approach has not been straightforward but often left me with a feeling of being insufficient. Participating as a researcher, an activist and actor in the musical, with what this brought in terms of spending time rehearsing, learning lines and creating the performance, while also engaging in issues connected asylum processes, migration control and trying to prevent deportations, at the same time as I aimed to document and reflect upon these different processes, was challenging. For example, during the time when Abdullah was detained and deported (see Chapter 2), I was fully caught up in trying to stop the deportation and did not have the time nor energy to engage in writing almost any fieldnotes. I felt insufficient on all fronts; first and foremost, we did not stop the deportation and although not as important, I also felt that I did not do my job as one can imagine a 'proper' researcher should do it – document and reflect. Nonetheless, the experience of the violence inherent in detention and deportation practices, and how the arrest and deportation were dealt with by the musical group, gave me a valuable insight into the phenomena of deportability and the contingency of activism in this context.

The musical was a forum for dialogues and struggles around some of the pressing issues of our time, such as asylum, migration, belonging, recognition, injustice, redistribution, borders, etc., played out in specific ways at the time and location of the musical. As already mentioned, I had a specific position in these dialogues. For example, there were conversations, jargons, jokes taking place in the musical I could not access due to language barriers. The issue of language was also present in relation to interviews with participants with experiences of residing as undocumented. When a translator was engaged, it was hard to know what was lost in that translation. When the interviews were in Swedish, I was worried whether those who had recently learned Swedish felt that they could express themselves fully.

I return to the *politics of translation* (Chapter 6) but for now, it is sufficient to acknowledge that my positionality in terms lacking knowledge of two of the languages spoken in the musical (Dari and Somali) limits the ways in which I can understand and analyse the musical. This relates to the question of authority of voice and the problem of the ethnographer as *the* storyteller. One way of addressing this issue has been to make the ethnographer visible in the ethnographic dialogues where the importance of highlighting the role of the researcher in producing ethnographic research has been stressed (Bengtsson 2014). However, the trend to provide a full disclosure of oneself has also been highlighted as problematic. It seems to 'demand not just self-knowledge, but confession as well' (Kulick 2015: 17). Skeggs (2011) furthermore argues that the practice of (writing about) self-reflexivity risks overshadowing actual reflexive practices with research participants. Consequently, Skeggs argues that there is a 'difference between claiming reflexivity as a resource for authorizing oneself (*being*) and *doing reflexivity* in practice' (Skeggs 2011: 350, *italics in original*). Hence, in this thesis I try to perform a balancing act of talking about myself when relevant, while at the same time avoiding a form of writing appropriating the experience of 'the other' to establish myself as a 'good' researcher (see Skeggs 2011).

During the approximately two years of working with the musical, it was a large part of my everyday life. I shared an apartment with participants in the musical, met participants when we rehearsed, had meetings in the streets, over a cup of coffee, etc. As mentioned above, some participants in the musical were already friends of mine whom I had worked together with in the Asylum Group prior to joining the ensemble, and other participants became my friends and interlocutors during the process of creating the performance. The overall context to which I and the musical belong/ed can be described as a network of friends, activists and acquaintances, who in one way or another are involved

in or sympathise with political organising seeking to transform injustices in society, including injustices facing people subject to violent migration control.

Being part of this context created in-depth embodied knowledge, hard to grasp in writing. Although setting out from a different research context doing an ethnography of young offenders in secure care, Bengtsson (2014) helped me put words on the knowledge that these experiences constitute: 'silent data'.

> "Silent data" constitute both the little details that may never make it to the written page and the larger structural patterns that manifest not in single observations or interviews but in the entire experience. Such data are silent because they do not appear in the form of words on pages; indeed, they may begin as a felt experience (Bengtsson 2014: 739).

My fieldwork is based on long-term engagement, taking place in my everyday life, in the network of friends, interlocutors and activists. Being part of the musical remains within me as an important and invaluable experience.

Describing the fieldwork and the empirical material

Although risking reducing the messiness of fieldwork, this section has the purpose of in the clearest way possible fleshing out the research process and the empirical material upon which I base my analysis. The research process is described in two phases, and although they were interlinked to a large extent, I describe them separately for the sake of clarity.

When the first phase of my fieldwork started at the beginning of 2012, I was not yet appointed a PhD student but worked together with Anna Lundberg (one of my present supervisors) in a project concerning experiences of deportability among young people.[59] Due to the focus of this research project, my intention of joining the musical was twofold: it appeared to be a good way to build relationships with young individuals residing as undocumented and whom I wanted to ask to participate in the study, while I also wanted to explore the musical as one of many ways to 'cope' with the conditions of residing as undocumented.

[59] The first six months of fieldwork were carried out within the framework of a research project called *Irregular = Rightless? An Investigation of Unaccompanied Undocumented Refugee Children's Entitlement and Access to Health in Malmö* together with Anna Lundberg, professor of Welfare Law.

Initially, I asked the people who launched the musical if they thought that including the musical in the research project was a good idea and, in such a case, whether Anna and I could present the research project during a rehearsal. They agreed and thought it was a good idea. Hence, with the help of a translator, Anna and I on two occasions orally informed the whole musical group about our project. They were asked if they agreed to having me (and Anna to a limited extent) in the musical as researchers and they were also encouraged to make comments and ask questions. Furthermore, during these information events, written information about the project in several languages was handed out. When the musical had been active for about five months, we carried out nine interviews with participants who had personal experiences of residing as undocumented. In a couple of cases when we asked for interviews, the individuals asked seemed reluctant. In these cases, we did not ask again but waited to see if they would bring it up again, which none of them did. In two cases, participants residing as undocumented were in particularly vulnerable situations and were thus not asked for an interview.

We conducted all the interviews together except for two that I carried out alone. In two of the interviews, an interpreter[60] facilitated, one was carried out in English and the rest of the interviews were conducted in Swedish. The interviews lasted between one to two hours and took place in our homes. We always had a meal or sandwiches together in connection to the interview. The interviews were structured around themes connected to everyday life in Malmö, such as what a 'normal' day looked like, if they had access to school, housing and health care, and how they experienced this. We also asked questions about how they got into contact with the musical and why they participated in it. However, these interviews mainly focused on their experiences of residing as undocumented in Malmö. We did not ask specifically why they had left their country of origin, although it frequently came up. Sometimes, sensitive issues surfaced during the interviews and we made sure to have plenty of time for each interview and to spend some time together before as well as afterwards, in order give support if the person interviewed so desired.

When we carried out these first interviews with participants of the musical, they resided as undocumented. This led to us, for security reasons, not recording the first nine interviews. Conducting interviews together, one of us focused on taking notes, trying to capture as accurately as possible what was

[60] In one case, a friend of the interviewee translated, and in the other, a friend of ours translated.

said during the interviews. In the two interviews I made myself, I took brief notes, which I directly after the interview complemented into fuller notes.

Moreover, Anna and I initiated two reference groups with people working with undocumented youth. These were connected to the first phase of the research, with the aim of facilitating continuous reflection. The first group consisted of professionals (a head of a school for unaccompanied refugee children, a psychologist at the Child and Youth Psychiatric Services, one paediatrician and the political secretary of the local MP responsible for questions concerning unaccompanied refugee children in Malmö). The second group consisted of members of the Asylum Group and/or the musical. In the reference groups, we discussed and reflected upon experiences and challenges in relation to deportability, as well as challenges in relation to our study. Besides a forum for reflection, the reference groups were also a way to gain acceptance for the project among those who worked voluntarily or professionally with the issue of young undocumented individuals in Malmö. We wanted to create channels for mutual learning and open up the academy for alternative forms of the production and dissemination of knowledge. The musical also performed at a one-day seminar organised by Anna and me on the subject of access to rights for undocumented young individuals in Malmö. This was attended by around 100 individuals, both academics and practitioners. This seminar further provided a way to show the musical participants how academic knowledge could be used and disseminated.

I seldom took notes during the rehearsals or when we had gatherings with the musical. However, I made 'mental' notes on discussions or things that happened, in order to write them down directly when I came home. During the most intense working period, this meant staying up late at night after a whole day of work. I tried to write rich notes and when I was too tired, I wrote short bullets I then complemented the following morning. Further, as already mentioned above, during some periods I took fewer notes, as when Abdullah was detained and deported. In one case, I recorded and thereafter transcribed a panel conversation with participants of the musical after a performance in Stockholm. In the fieldnotes and interviews, names and places were changed directly. Also, a 'code key' of names and places has been kept at another location than the rest of the material, and I have frequently reflected upon how to decrease or at least not increase the risk of the participants getting detected by the police (cf. Düvell, Triandafyllidou and Vollmer 2010).

I got an employment as a PhD in September 2012, and during the autumn I continued my fieldwork with the musical. The premiere was planned for December and the autumn consisted of intense work. The musical group met

twice a week in the evenings to rehearse, organised practical matters in-between rehearsals as well as went away for 'rehearsal weekends'. The subjects I was interested in – deportability, resistance, borders, migration control, etc. – were constantly discussed as well as present in the practical organising of the musical. Some of the musical participants also expressed that they wanted to write about the musical and the subjects it addressed.[61] After the premiere in December 2012, the musical was scheduled for more performances, and my second phase of field work started. At this time, my research interest adopted a slightly different focus on the working process and performance of the musical as a whole, not just from the point of addressing deportability. In this second phase of the fieldwork, I conducted five follow-up interviews with participants who had participated throughout the working process and resided as undocumented. These follow-up interviews were in Swedish and were recorded and later transcribed. The interviewees had now received permanent residency and security was thus not an issue in the same way as before. The interviews focused on experiences of taking part in the working process and performance of the musical. Furthermore, I conducted a group interview with seven musical participants who initiated as well as participated throughout the process of creating and performing musical. I was interested in their experiences, since they had participated from the initial stages, before I joined the group. In this group interview, only participants without a personal experience of undocumented migration participated. This interview, which was also recorded and transcribed, set out from questions of how the idea of doing a musical had come about, while their experiences of the working process were also discussed. The interviews in this second phase lasted between 45 minutes and one hour and 45 minutes.

When I was invited to talk about my research in different contexts, I used to ask the musical group if anyone was interested in joining. On several occasions, me and four or five of the participants in the musical with experiences of deportability together gave lectures at research seminars, at university education for social workers, upper secondary schools and volunteer organisations. Our presentations addressed issues of rights, migration control, the situation for undocumented individuals and the experience of performing together in the musical. The ones participating in these kinds of talks and conversations expressed that it was fun and that spreading knowledge about the situation for undocumented individuals and about the musical felt

[61] Me and two participants with experiences of deportability wrote an article for *Artikel 14* (a refugee rights magazine published by a national refugee rights organisation).

meaningful. Furthermore, it provided a possibility of showing glimpses of the university context where I was located as a PhD student.

My fieldwork with the musical group ended at the beginning of 2014. This, however, was not the end of the relationships formed within the context of the musical. Some of us continue to meet and engage in each other's lives as well as working together in struggles for migrants' rights.

The empirical material

Besides what was referred to above as 'silent data', this thesis is based on a range of different empirical materials I make explicit use of. Although this might seem as reducing the complexity of my research process, below I present the material I analyse in this thesis in bullet points.

- Fieldnotes taken during almost two years (January 2012–November 2013, approximately 310 pages).[62]
- Nine un-recorded interviews with musical participants.
- Five recorded and transcribed follow-up interviews with musical participants.
- One recorded and transcribed group interview with seven musical participants.
- Recordings of the performance on two different occasions (one from January 2013, when the musical performed at Bastionen in Malmö, and the other one from November 2013, when the musical performed at the Young Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm)
- One recording (40 minutes) from a panel conversation with the audience after the performance at the Young Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm (09.11.2013).
- The written musical manuscript.
- Notes from meetings with the musical group.

[62] Mostly written in Cambria 12 points.

Ethics and engagement

To start the research project concerning experiences of deportability, Anna Lundberg and I applied to the Ethical Vetting Board to get the study approved in accordance with *The Act (SFS 2003:460) Concerning the Ethical Review of Research Involving Humans*. The study was approved; however, prior to the decision, a number of discussions were held with the board. These discussions focused on the participants being undocumented as well as below the age of 18 and on how informed consent could be assured given the security aspect – signing a form with one's name could be sensitive for the participants in regard to a fear of being detected as undocumented. Additionally, signing forms could be associated with contacts with migration authorities. Consequently, we never handed out forms of informed consent to be signed. Instead, we continuously tried to inform about and discuss modes of participation in the study (see Liamputtong 2007).

Inspired by 'ethics as a process' (Liamputtong 2007: 42–43), Anna and I also invited participants to give feedback on preliminary results and analyses. In October 2012, we arranged a workshop with the musical group, where we discussed the preliminary result of our study. This workshop had two related purposes: on the one hand, to check whether our preliminary results were reflected by the different experiences within the ensemble and, on the other hand, as an input to the group to reflect upon the working process of the musical. In December 2018, when I had written drafts of the empirically based chapters for my final seminar, I also invited the musical group to my home to discuss my writing and analysis. Over a 'Christmas fika' with participants both without and with personal experiences of deportability, I talked about the overall structure and content of the thesis and also read extracts from chapters. For example, I read fieldnotes and interview quotes, followed by how I had analysed them. Several of the participants have also received drafts of the thesis to read. From these readings and the fika, no comments were made suggesting major changes in the analysis. Several participants said that it was nice to hear what I had done and to think and talk about the musical again (again reminding me of the slow academic writing-process, freezing people in time and space when they, obviously, move on).

As I mentioned, I use pseudonyms for names and locations. Since the musical group was performing in public, a study about it cannot provide total anonymity. However, I have used different tactics in order for the participants not to be recognisable to each other and to others familiar with the musical

group. For example, I have left out personal details and sometimes also made smaller changes in details (that I thought did not matter for the analysis).

During my fieldwork, I found academic inspiration from scholars who have worked in sensitive and precarious settings (e.g., refugee camps or refugee communities). They emphasise the importance of recognising challenges of asymmetric power relations, representation, trust and suspicion, risks, agency, human rights, etc. (Mackenzie, McDowell and Pittaway 2007). What I found the most important in this body of research was that the precarious situation for people and/or communities in their research led these researchers to conclude that we must formulate research projects that bring something back to the communities and individuals. To accomplish the task of giving something back, research projects needed to be formulated together with participants (Pittaway, Bartolomei and Hugman 2010; Huisman 2008; Mackenzie, McDowell and Pittaway 2007; Düvell, Triandafyllidou and Vollmer 2010). As a consequence, they often argue for action research methods (e.g., Participatory Action Research, see Huisman 2008)).

I have participated in the field, but my research field was an already existing project, not dependent on my participation as a researcher. Furthermore, the starting point for the idea of a musical was not formulated by the entire group. Nevertheless, I found guidance in the argument that in the context of research concerning groups in vulnerable situations, researchers must reflect upon how we can give something back to individuals and/or communities participating in our research.

When working with people in precarious living situations, emergencies repeatedly occur. During my field study, situations arose related to, for example, a lack of money to buy necessities, homelessness, bad health and issues related to the asylum processes. When I was able to, I assisted in these situations. I am aware that assisting people you involve in your research can be problematic, since this can create relationships of dependency or the participant feeling impelled to take part in the study due to the researcher helping him/her. Importantly, I did not act in these situations alone, but in the context of the musical group. When there was an emergency situation, several participants in the musical assisted, and those needing help were not dependent on me as an individual. Nevertheless, the situations contained a distribution of roles where the one getting help was dependent in relation to those (including me) providing this help. Many times, these power asymmetries were played out along the lines of citizen/non-citizen, white/non-white, woman/man, but not always. Frequently, those with experiences of residing as undocumented provided valuable support to new participants who just had become

undocumented, in regard to sharing their experiences and informing about conditions for residing as undocumented in Malmö. In this sense, musical participants created a network encompassing different resources.

Not raising false hopes or expectations has been important. For example, perhaps unnecessary to mention, I have had no possibility to influence the decision of the Migration Board concerning residence permits. When working in the musical, my perception is that the participants had a rather good understanding of the limits of my power in regard to affecting the outcome of an asylum application. Explaining what I did as a PhD student was more difficult, since the university context was unfamiliar to several of the participants. My impression is that I got legitimacy from the participants in the musical for my work as a PhD student due to my present and earlier engagement as an activist.

My privileged position as a Swedish citizen and a researcher is perhaps brought to a head in the kind of emergency situations described above, but these power asymmetries were obviously present at all times, and they manifested themselves in different ways. My own feelings of guilt due to my privileged position will not be dwelled upon here, but they did affect me. The fieldnote below is one example of how my privileged position was brought up in a discussion with participants of the musical.

> Once on the train from Malmö to Gothenburg, they ask me how much I earn from my work at the university. A relevant but tough question, I feel, which I choose to answer truthfully. They think that it is a lot of money, which, of course, it is. A lot of money indeed. They quickly calculate how much money I have left after tax and draw the conclusion that if I am that rich, then it is only fair that I pay for their coffees. Absolutely, I agree wholeheartedly and pay for their coffee. Their question is tough because I feel ashamed and guilty over the fact that I lead such a good life. I would gladly give them the money I have, though, to be honest, I do not think they would accept it. I tell them that I give money to the Asylum Group. I would have paid for their coffees anyway, though, normally, they would have thanked me for it. Now, no one utters a 'thank you' and that is not such a bad thing. After all, I am the rich one who can afford to pay for the coffee. At home, with my parents, it becomes even more clear to them that I am rich. My parents belong to the upper middle class. I feel ashamed again. Ashamed of the beautiful and tidy apartment, ashamed of all my loving sisters and for being so lucky – because life is unfair. (Fieldnotes 21.11.2012)

Many things happened in this situation. I felt uncomfortable in relation to my salary and my background coming from a middle class family. Inviting

participants of the musical to my parents also made my position visible, and it could in that sense be criticised. It is obvious that I felt a need to justify my salary by saying that I give money to the Asylum Group. Reading this spontaneous reaction of trying, in some way, to justify my salary with some sort of charity act of giving money makes me truly embarrassed. I suggest that this quote may be understood as an example of how claiming to be an ally in the struggles of those who are marginalised and oppressed may not surpass unequal power relations.

The process of analysing

When I started my PhD programme, I was already carrying out fieldwork, which I continued to do more or less intensely for the first year and a half of my programme. Thus, I have had an ongoing dialogue with my material for a long time, and I have also analysed bits and pieces of it for course papers, articles and book chapters. I have spent a lot of time 'hanging out' (Rennstam and Wästerfors 2015) with my material in different ways. This simultaneously as reading, writing and participating in seminar discussions on various theoretical perspectives. The overall themes (i.e., to explore resistance through theatre in a context of borders and deportability) have developed during a long time.

During the years of 'hanging out' with my material, I have worked with it in different ways. I have used colours for indicating different themes, I have printed parts of the material and cut bits and pieces of texts and sorted and re-sorted it physically in different piles. I also made a scrapbook poster (through cutting and pasting images from magazines) to illustrate the different themes I saw in the material and how they related to each other. Although it did not feel like it during the process, when I look back, I see that I hung out with my material in a variety of creative ways (cf. Rennstam and Wästerfors 2015).

Nevertheless, in the beginning when I was to start to write the analytical parts of the thesis, I went through different types of 'crises'. I felt that I could not make sense of the material. I even found it a bit boring to read at times, especially my fieldnotes, which I felt did not tell me much. During other readings, the material made too much sense. I found so many different themes, angles, categories that in the end, I just felt overwhelmed and was back at not being able to make any sense of it.

To grapple with the feeling of being overwhelmed, I started to read and categorise a smaller part of the material. I started with the six interviews carried

out most recently, which were five interviews with musical participants with experiences of residing as undocumented and one group interview with seven participants without these experiences. I then read and categorised the nine interviews I carried out in the spring/summer/autumn of 2012 with participants with experiences of residing as undocumented. I then had eleven themes from reading the most recent interviews and seven themes from the interviews carried out in 2012 (some of them were overlapping). The themes were generally very empirical, such as 'fear', 'language', 'health', 'asylum process', but they also contained more theory-inspired themes such as 'recognition', 'representation' and 'precariousness'. With these themes in mind, I then returned to my fieldnotes and categorised them.

Then I started to write. I started to think and analyse through writing, finding a quote I thought illustrated an important theme and then wrote and described why and how and what was going on in that interview quote or fieldnote and how I understood it (see Rennstam and Wästerfors 2015). Simultaneously, I re-read my draft of the theory chapter and I read literature about specific themes that surfaced as I wrote (thus I have worked abductively). When I got stuck, I returned to my material or read someone else's thesis and literature outside/inside my field. At times, this was a hard process. I have felt insufficient in regard to providing a 'complete' analysis of the musical and being able to put forward all the complexities and ambivalences. For example, although I noticed rather early on that the categories of non-citizen/citizen, non-white/white coincided with how the jargon of youngster/adult was used in the musical, it took me a long time before I could actually put into words and think about what the talk of youngster/adult had meant for the musical. I think that this has to do with me being part of the process and also part of this jargon. My participation and complicity in these processes made them hard to write about, as well as to flesh out what they were actually expressions of. However, I think that the results, in terms of a complex and in-depth analysis of these processes, is also a result of my very participation. I have been a part of the ambivalences and difficulties I write about, together with the participants (although from different positionalities), which would I argue enriches the analysis.

In summary

In this chapter on methodological considerations, I put forward my perspective on the production of knowledge, which I view as a collective process related to knowledge developed within social movements. I also look upon knowledge as partial and situated. The musical was situated in a context formed by collective struggles against violent migration control, and I argue that the musical was a space of knowledge production, where alternatives to the present situation could be imagined as well as practised. Furthermore, I discuss my situated position in the context of the musical and make it visible in relation to my involvement in the local migrant rights movement. My methodology is further inspired by a critical ethnographic approach linked to an activist tradition and I discuss both strengths and pitfalls of researching processes I also participated in. I describe the messiness of fieldwork, to a large extent located in my everyday life. In order to clarify, I provide a list of the material that the analysis is explicitly based upon, although still emphasising the importance of 'silent data'. I discuss ethical issues (e.g., in relation to power asymmetries in the musical and dilemmas I have faced in my research) in the writing process as well as when working with the musical. Finally, I discuss how I have worked with and analysed the material.

5. Deportability, activism and theatre

We start with a vocal warm-up lead by Elliot and then sit down with our respective affinity group to chat about how we feel about going to Stockholm. My affinity group consists of Sofi, Ramin, Siamak and Nima. We sit in a circle and I suggest that we go around the circle to one by one describe how we feel, just like we did the day before. Sofi starts. She looks forward to going to Stockholm. Ramin, who usually keeps fairly quiet, starts to talk a lot. Nima steps in to interpret. Ramin feels nervous and stressed about going to Stockholm, both when it comes to the performance and the police. Ramin talks a lot about this, explaining that he feels very nervous about what is going to happen in Stockholm. Ramin goes on to say that his contact person [not a participant in the musical] is always asking him, 'Where are you going to stay?', but Ramin does not know. Ramin says, 'I hope it's all going to work out OK'. Siamak says that he has not thought much about Stockholm. 'I'm soon going to apply for asylum again, so I think a lot about that and not that much about Stockholm.' But Siamak continues to say that he feels nervous, especially when it comes to the police. Nima also talks about the police and says, 'I have not been anywhere else in Sweden apart from Malmö and once in Gothenburg together with Elin and Helena. This will be my second time away... Stockholm is a long way away.' Nima talks about being nervous about the police and adds, 'I used to be very nervous to get up on the stage but now, when we've performed twice in front of people, I don't feel so nervous anymore. I hope everyone will do OK.' I finish by telling everyone that I am not nervous about our performance but think more about everyone feeling good, getting on and showing each other respect. Plus, I am also a bit nervous of the police. We start chatting. I suggest that Stockholm might feel a little scary because they have never been there before. They know Malmö very well but not Stockholm. Nima agrees, 'yes, we all know Malmö really well. We know we must stay away from Folkets Park where they sell hashish, but we also know where it is safe to chill, which we don't know in Stockholm.' '…where we have no idea', adds Siamak. Siamak says that he would like us all to stick together, 'perhaps not in one big group but in smaller groups so that we don't draw attention to ourselves and get checked out...' I explain that Stockholm is a very big city with lots of tourists and that we will blend in very well. We talk about where we are going

> to stay, that the accommodation is provided by a church and very secure [the accommodation was arranged at the last minute and the whole group was informed at this meeting]. We promise to look after one another and that we must tell the others in the group if something feels wrong or we do not feel very well. We chat a little more about bringing props for the stage, sleeping bags and floor mats, etc. We also decide when to meet on Friday. Siamak thinks everyone should aim to meet 15 minutes before departure time as some people are always late. I ask if he can explain that to the rest of the group, which he does. We take a break and then start rehearsing the first half of the performance. (Fieldnotes 13.06.2012)

I chose this fieldnote to introduce this chapter for two reasons. *First*, because it illustrates the themes of deportability in a context of activism that I address in the chapter. *Second*, because the trip to Stockholm we were preparing for became important to the musical as a group and to several of its participants. I return to this joint trip in the analysis.

The week before we were going to travel to Stockholm was intense. We were going to have our first longer performance and that required a lot of work. Furthermore, it was special because we were all going to travel together, almost 30 participants of the *No Border Musical*, to Stockholm, the capital of Sweden. As Nima said, Stockholm was unknown to him, whereas he knew where he could go in Malmö and which places to avoid due to the risk of police controls. In Stockholm, he as well as many of us had less or no knowledge of which areas to avoid due to the risk of ID controls. During the spring of 2012, we had worked and rehearsed a lot together, and over the past months, the musical group had kept growing from involving around 15 participants to almost 30, where almost half of the group at the time resided as undocumented. As the performance required intense rehearsing and the trip required practical organising, it was a stressful week.

In this chapter, I do not focus on the musical performance as such but on the conditions for organising and creating the musical. In previous research, being positioned as undocumented is often conceptualised as not being able to appear in public without also risking triggering the deportation order. Deportability is analysed as a condition permeating everyday life: when negotiating positions in the labour and housing market, accessing welfare services and planning and having a family life (Holgersson 2011; Khosravi 2010a; Lundberg and Söderman 2016; Noll 2010; Sager 2011; Sigvardsdotter 2012). Thus, an ambition with this chapter is to analyse how deportability and waiting for asylum permeated and conditioned the working process of the musical.

The above fieldnote illustrates three themes further analysed in this chapter: *fear in everyday life*, *embodied deportability* and *the meaning of witnessing and telling.*

The first theme is illustrated by how Ramin, Siamak and Nima talked about the fear of being detected as undocumented. The ensemble was going to Stockholm to perform publicly on a stage outdoors as the finale of a demonstration part of the 2012 *No Border Camp*.[63] In the fieldnote, I said that Stockholm is a big city with tourists and that we would probably 'blend' in. In light of increased racial profiling (Hydén and Lundberg 2004; Schclarek Mulinari 2017), this can certainly be debated – and above all, we were not going there as tourists. We were going to perform on stage telling stories of experiences of flight and deportability. Thus, the aim was not to blend in but to claim a public space on a stage, to make voices and experiences heard. Furthermore, as the discussion reflects above, Stockholm was out of the musical's comfort zone. A few days before our trip, we still did not have a place to stay, and for many this trip was the first trip outside of Malmö, or Scania, since they arrived in Sweden. Through a friend of mine, we finally managed to stay in a church in central Stockholm. Still, Stockholm was considered unknown. In Malmö, the participants of the musical residing as undocumented knew which places to avoid due to perceived higher risks of 'routine' ID controls by the police and knew where one could 'chilla'; that is, where one could in a sense make oneself 'invisible'. In order to shed light on what was at stake when performing on stage and in public, I explore how fear conditioned the everyday life and the creation of new relationships, a crucial part of the working process of the musical.

Siamak's comment above, about him thinking only of the asylum process and not of the trip or the performance, points to the second theme analysed in this chapter. Siamak said in our discussion that he had not thought about the trip to Stockholm at all, but that his mind was focused on his upcoming asylum application. He participated in a performance about stories about flight, deportability and asylum processes, issues highly present in his own life. The insecurity of residing as undocumented or waiting for a reply to an asylum application had a tremendous impact on the mental and physical health of the participants of the musical. The health status of the participants also

[63]No Border Camps are organised annually to highlight consequences of borders in different regions. The focus of this camp was to stress and put pressure on different authorities in some way contributing to the execution of deportations, but also to highlight the EU's agenda concerning security in connection to controlling migration.

conditioned and was brought to a head in the working process in different ways. This is explored in the second theme of *embodied deportability*.

The last theme addressed is that of *the meaning of witnessing and telling*. A key ambition of the musical was to voice critique of the migration regime. In the fieldnote, this is not explicitly addressed but is present as a backdrop to the efforts of working and travelling together with the purpose of performing. Practices of different forms of engaged theatre often include an element of witnessing and testimony, which is problematised in relation to revealing traumatic experiences on stage (Jeffers 2008; Salverson 1996, 2001; Wake 2013). In the section on witnessing and telling, I delve deeper into what it meant to bear witness and have a voice on stage in the context of deportability. (I also return to the question of how experiences were represented on stage in Chapter 7).

Finally, all themes may be placed within an overarching tension present throughout the work of the musical, namely between wanting to dismantle the categorisation of citizen/non-citizen enforced by the state while, at the same time, the need to adjust to the consequences of this categorisation (e.g., in regard to risk of deportation or illness and anxiety because of deportability). I have also experienced this tension in the research process and I experience it as I write. Deportability and long periods of waiting for an unpredictable outcome of the asylum application deeply impacted the participants and thus their ways of working in the musical. At the same time, there was much more – laughter, rehearsals, theatre exercises, dancing – that cannot be encapsulated by or only understood through the dividing categories of the state. Then again, theatre and dancing do not provide residence permits, housing or food on the table. I am constantly reminded that my way of telling a story of the work and performance of the musical is not neutral but part of how categories and individuals are represented and thus part of constructing our realities and histories.

Fear in everyday life

> Erfan tells me that he was walking down the street in the evening, he was going to a friend to sleep there. Then a police car came, driving really fast, but when the police saw him, they slowed down and drove slowly. 'I got really nervous, my heart beats fast', said Erfan. But Erfan tells me that instead of showing that, he had straightened his back, taken off his hood and started to hum a song [småsjunga]. The police car slowly passed him but continued without stopping.

> Erfan tells me that when he is walking in the city, he always tries to look confident, like he has a right to stay here, to be here (Field notes 06.10.2012)

Erfan's experiences of his heart racing as the police car slowed down points to the ever-present risk of being detected as undocumented, which was experienced and talked about by several participants in the musical. The incident of the police car slowing down alongside Erfan can also be linked to non-white bodies increasingly subjected to police controls, as discussed in Chapter 2.

The fieldnote is an extract from a conversation with Erfan during a rehearsal weekend spent at a scout cabin close to the sea in the south of Scania. Autumn winds made the sea look dramatic with huge waves and white foam everywhere. It was starting to get cold. When we were outside the cabin, having breaks from rehearsing, we organised running competitions to keep warm. This particular weekend included a group discussion about the fact that a number of arrests of young individuals residing as undocumented had recently taken place in Malmö. A suspicion was raised that maybe someone was tipping off the police, and we talked about how to handle this. It was after this conversation that Erfan told me how he had avoided the police the other day. How he took off his hood, straightened his back and started to hum a song. Every move consciously made to make him pass, to make his movement in the public space look like the movement of someone who belongs. Someone who had the right to be there. Someone who could not be expelled.

Erfan could be stopped today, tomorrow or not at all, depending on circumstances he had very little or no control over. The fear experienced by several of the participants in the musical was based on a real risk of deportation. People were and still are deported by force from the Swedish territory.[64] At the same time, as discussed in the theory chapter, the function of the deportation regime is not to deport everyone, but to make certain people deportable, which is intended to serve disciplining purposes (De Genova 2002). However, deportability is not passively accepted but actively handled. For example, in the quote above, Erfan described how he adjusted his body language and clothing in order not to be detected. In this section, tactics and ways of managing fear are explored further.

According to De Genova, the productivity of the law should be studied as something that is under constant struggle. Individuals being made deportable

[64] In 2017, the number of deportations was 20,893, including people deported to another EU country in accordance with the Dublin Regulation. More than half of these deportations were carried out with the assistance of the Swedish police (Migrationsverket 2017: 65)

are staying within the territory but with the impending threat of deportation making them vulnerable to different forms of oppression and exploitation (De Genova 2002; De Genova and Peutz 2010; Sager 2011; Sager, Holgersson and Öberg 2016). Deportability works as a disciplining mechanism, where the undocumented migrants do everything to remain invisible to the authorities (Khosravi 2010a). Furthermore, in Sweden where large parts of social life, like education, labour market, health care and housing, are regulated by the state, the consequences of deportability become severe (Khosravi 2010a). Sweden is said to be 'an unusually harsh place to live off the grid', also in relation to the widespread use of civic registration number (personnummer) by both private and public institutions (Sigvardsdotter 2012: 16).

Moreover, the potential risk of every person in the street being able to expose or arrest an undocumented person produces a 'constant feeling of being under surveillance' (Khosravi 2010a: 99). This feeling of being monitored leads to people doing everything to avoid doing something 'wrong', such as something that can put you in the spotlight of state surveillance. Paradoxically, being made deportable produces the 'impeccable citizen' (Khosravi 2010a: 99). In a conversation with the audience after a performance, upon questions about security in relation to standing on stage as undocumented, this impeccability in the undocumented condition was addressed by a participant in the musical:

> It is very difficult with the police, but I do what everyone else does and keep my head down. I don't pick fights and have the proper lights on my bicycle. I don't take the bus but when I saw the police, I got frightened and nearly started running. It was really difficult to live like that, hidden, undocumented. It was really hard. I'm so glad that I don't live like that anymore. It was very difficult to be undocumented. (Amin, panel discussion 09.11.2013)

What Amin describes here, that the fear of being detected as undocumented permeated his every move in everyday life, was a common theme during my field work as well as in the interviews. Amin told me that even after he had received permanent residency, his heart still started to beat faster when he saw a police car. Hence, the experience of being made deportable, of living with the possibility of being exposed to violent expulsion, leaves traces in the body remaining even after one is no longer subject to the threat of deportation.

Those who resided as undocumented employed a range of different tactics in order to stay under the radar of state surveillance. They talked about being afraid of leaving their home, spending a lot of time indoors and when outdoors

constantly evaluating people and the surroundings in relation to the risk of ID controls.

> Alireza says, 'I'm 17 years old. I have been in Europe around 2 years but I'm not free. If anyone speaks to me on the street, I can't reply. I'm scared.' Ahmed continues, 'Yes, today, when a car honked its horn and the driver looked strangely at me, I thought, perhaps it's a police officer without clothes [uniform].' 'Like the civilian police?', I ask. 'Yes', replies Alireza. Alireza says something in Dari. They speak very fast. I ask, 'What are you saying?' Alireza explains, 'He always thinks that everyone is a policeman.' 'Yes', I reply, 'not everyone is a police officer but plainclothes police officers do exist.' 'Yes', agrees Alireza, 'but not everyone...' 'No, that's true', I reply. (Fieldnotes 17.04.2012)

In the above conversation, Alireza and Ahmed not only address the anxiety of being detected by the police, but also the lack of protection from violence and abusive behaviour in general. As Alireza said, he cannot do anything if he is approached on the street in fear of ending up in trouble that might expose his undocumented status. In the above conversation, this anxiety is negotiated between Alireza and Ahmed, the former implying that the latter has a bit too much fear by stating that Ahmed always believes all people to be police officers.

The fear and experiences of being stopped by the police are not limited to people residing as undocumented, but as discussed in Chapter 2, internal controls of foreigners, racial profiling and criminalisation have consequences for larger groups as well as for society in general (Schclarek Mulinari 2017). In the report *Slumpvis utvald* (Randomly Chosen) informants talk about the anxiety and experience of being stopped by the police in similar ways as Erfan, Amin, Ahmed and Alireza. There are important differences in regard to the consequences of being stopped by the police as a citizen, but it seems that the constant worry and calculations of risk, of adjusting one's clothing, ways of moving in the city and of doubting one's judgement, are shared by a much larger number of people than those subject to deportability (Schclarek Mulinari 2017).

What does it mean to live with fear? To be afraid at all times: when at the store, when in the streets, when having a cup of coffee with a friend. 'Fear, like pain, is overwhelmingly present to the person experiencing it, but it may be barely perceptible to anyone else and almost defies objectification' (Green 1994: 230, quoted in Nyers 2006: 51). For a person residing as undocumented, fear is often a constant companion in everyday life. There is no way of telling if and when there will be a police officer in plain cloths suddenly asking to see your ID. Sometimes, as in Ahmed's case, you are afraid of everyone. Other times, as in Alireza's case, the fear is (at times at least) negotiable. Green

writes that chronic fear in everyday life 'undermines one's confidence in interpreting the world' (Green 1994: 230). As I return to further in this chapter, fear and deportability did not only undermine self-reliance in one's ability to interpret the world (is that plainclothes police or not?) but also had general consequences for a sense of being in the world. This, as I discussed in the methodology chapter, simultaneously to deportability providing a 'double seeing' that expands possibilities to analyse and understand the world (hooks 2004).

The word fear is etymologically rooted in the experience of being in transit. It relates to the word fare, which used to mean to travel (Nyers 2006). Fear is also what refugees need to prove to be 'well-founded' when faced with the migration officers at the Migration Agency. Fear as movement, as being in transit, may thus be conceptualised as the opposite of being protected as a citizen resident within the territory of a state (Nyers 2006).

In his book *Rethinking Refugees* (2006), Nyers explores meanings of 'refugeeness', and his analysis of the definition of a refugee in the Geneva Convention places the emotion of fear at the centre. In order to be recognised as a refugee, persons applying for asylum must validate and prove their 'well-founded fear' of persecution. Locating the etymologies of fear in the experience of being in transit, Nyers puts the condition of fear in contrast to that of being sedentary, of being 'safe' within a territory. This resonates with Arendt's (1968) statement that the exposed situation of refugees stems from the fact that 'they no longer belong to any community whatsoever' able to guarantee their rights (Arendt 1968: 295). Nyers furthermore links this presumption of being safe within a territory to political theories of the sovereign. Through its monopoly of violence, the sovereign grants security to its inhabitants, the citizens, and promise to protect them from the dangers stemming from outside the state (Nyers 2006, Chapter 3).

Alireza and Ahmed, similar to other people living with the overhanging threat of deportation, to a large degree lack protection. Not only in regard to risks of expulsion, but also as they have nowhere to turn should they themselves be subject to abuse. In their position as undocumented, they are also in a sense in transit, although not moving, not allowed to settle. Traditionally, political subjectivity is understood as deeply intertwined with citizenship, and from this perspective Ahmed and Alireza are positioned outside the political sphere. Or, as Agamben understands the matter, they are not outside the law and the sovereign. Rather, they remain in connection to the law, but only through their exclusion. To speak in Agambian terms, Alireza and Ahmed are included through their exclusion (Agamben 1998, 2005). Thus,

they *are* political as their presence brings the question of the borders of the community to the fore, the question of who is allowed to become a member and on which terms. The same law that is supposed to give me protection as a citizen[65] is the law used for persecuting Alireza and Ahmed. Thus, my protection as a citizen is intertwined with the regimes that put Alireza, Ahmed, Erfan, Amin and many others in a situation where there is no protection but only persecution. Moreover, travelling is not connected to fear for everyone. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the uneven distribution of mobility, where those called migrants are negatively classed, gendered and racialised, at the same time makes the mobility of other people desirable (Anderson, Sharma and Wright 2012). Nyers points to being transit, not being allowed to settle, in a world where the dominant norm is sedentarism (Malkki 1995; Righard and Boccagni 2015) as linked with fear and lack of protection.

In 2011/12, during the same period that the musical started to form an ensemble and presented its first performances, Malmö was marked by an increased police presence, specifically in the area of Möllevången where many of the participants in the musical lived and/or spent much time. The so-called 'internal control of foreigners' had been a key part of the European border regime since the signing of the Schengen Agreement in 1997 (Hydén and Lundberg 2004). Furthermore, since late the 2000s, the Swedish police has received repeated instructions to increase the number of deportations and to make them more efficient (Regleringsbrev Rikspolisstyrelsen 2009–2012, Leander 2014). The increased interest of the police in finding undocumented individuals was partly related to a pilot project initiated in 2009 in the Scania region (where Malmö is the largest city) known as REVA (Rättssäkert och effektivt verkställighetsarbete) (also see Chapter 2).[66] There were occasions where participants in the musical had been controlled for ID but managed not to be detected by means of different tactics. For example, one time I got a call from Ramin, residing as undocumented at the time. He was on the train and had been checked for ID by the police, who told him they were performing 'random routine controls' on buses and trains in Scania. He had called me so that I would act as his legal guardian and convince the police that he was seeking asylum, thus having official permission to reside in Sweden. I did not

[65] However, the state's protection is not distributed equally for its citizens. One example of this are the experiences of the informants in the report *Randomly Chosen* of being criminalised instead of treated as a victim of crime or as someone in need of health care due to a car accident (Schclarek Mulinari 2017).

[66] According to the head of the Border Police in Skåne, Kristina Hallander Spångberg, the department increased the number of deportations by 25% compared to 2010 before REVA was implemented (Stark 2012).

manage to say anything helping him in this situation and the officer wondered why Ramin had called me in the first place. However, the situation was solved due to Ramin's friends questioning the actions of the police. Siamak, another participant in the musical seeking asylum at the time who was there with Ramin, told me how they had managed to get away from the police:

> I was a bit angry, Emma. I asked them why are you controlling only us on the whole train, there was a lot of people. We are in a hurry, we don't have time to wait! (Fieldnotes 29.10.2012)

Siamak told me that in this way, by resisting being singled out for an ID control, he and the others had managed to leave the train station where they were held by the police. This also illustrates how deportability and police controls were not passively handled, but actively resisted; in this case, by implying to the police that the controls represented examples of racial profiling.

Negotiating fear in the musical

The fear of being detected had consequences for how the context of the musical was experienced. Below is a quote from an interview with Erfan. It addresses how fear permeated everyday life, not only in relation to feelings of being monitored when moving in the city, but also how this fear conditioned one's whole existence as well as potential friendships. One space where this played out was the musical.

> Erfan: At the beginning, I didn't know you, didn't know who you were and couldn't trust you. You know, when we rehearsed, I was very frightened.
> Emma: You were?
> Erfan: Yes, I was so scared and thought that if the police come, I'm prepared to run or something.
> Emma: You were on guard?
> Erfan: Yes, you know, all the time, I was very frightened and I have told Nima.
> Emma: When you were at the musical?
> Erfan: At the musical, I was so scared because I didn't know you and couldn't trust you.
> Emma: Really?
> Erfan: And I was so scared there, like if anything happened, just run or something. I think if the police come, I will say that I have a passport or something or just run. Because I was very scared, not to be sent to Belgium, so I was very scared. When I went there, I was scared. At the musical, I was

scared. Someone might show this place and the police come and get everyone.
Emma: Uhmmm, I understand.
Erfan: And when I became an asylum seeker, I felt very calm. I felt I could walk anywhere. That's how I felt – oh, I can finally breath. Now I can be like normal people and just walk (Erfan, interview 05.02.2014).

Besides talking about the fear that he experienced and highlighting the lack of trust in relation to meeting new people, Erfan also pinpoints one of the risks inherent in the musical – the risk of mobilising. This due to the fact that mobilising could be seen as the opposite of blending in, in the sense that to mobilise was to create and claim a place and demand to be seen and listened to. Even though we were cautious, gatherings of people that could be perceived as asylum seekers and/or undocumented were inherently risky, just as Erfan said above. As Malmö is the third largest city in Sweden, it does provide a level of anonymity, but it is also comparatively small, especially considering that the participants of the musical lived or/and spent much time in the specific neighbourhood of Möllevången (see Chapter 2).

Erfan also pinpoints the importance of building relationships in relation to activism. In the musical, relationships developed and deepened over time, through continuously meeting, rehearsing and eventually performing together. When I interviewed Erfan, I was curious about his experiences of fear in relation to being part of the musical. I asked if he experienced more trust in relation to other participants in the same situation as him (i.e., residing as undocumented). He explained that he knew two participants already residing as undocumented in whom he had a bit more trust. However, the general feeling of fear and mistrust permeated every aspect of his life:

Erfan: You know when you live in that situation, you are frightened of this, what is it called? (points)
Emma: Your shadow?
Erfan: Yes, frightened of your own shadow. If you do like this (waves his hand) – oh, what was that? (jumps) Do you know what I mean?
Emma: Yes.
Erfan: If you live in that situation, you are scared all the time … (…)
Emma: But did it get better over time, when we got to know each other more? Can you remember?
Erfan: Yes.
Emma: Do you remember if you could trust…?
Erfan: After a few months of playing [performing], when we rehearsed and travelled to Stockholm, after that I could trust a lot. (Erfan, interview 05.02.2014)

Erfan tries to explain what this fear means by using the metaphor of being afraid of even one's own shadow. As elaborated upon more below, deportability was experienced in and through the body. By using the metaphor of being afraid of his shadow, Erfan both emphasises the consequences of deportability in his body (he jumps at his own shadow) *and* the paranoia produced by the condition of deportability (the shadow cannot hurt him, but he still jumps). Furthermore, the metaphor can be linked to the discussion above, that living in constant fear makes you doubt your own judgement; the shadow is not dangerous, but that knowledge is not enough to control or prevent the body from jumping.

In the second quote, Erfan said that his fear diminished as he had once again applied for asylum. In relation to trust, he refers to the trip the musical made to Stockholm, the trip introducing this chapter. This trip to Stockholm was a kind of 'breaking' moment – both in terms of performing on stage, even though one was really afraid, and in terms of us getting together and getting to know each other as a group. In relation to fear, the fact that the performance was carried out without controls by the police created a sense of victory, and when I interviewed Amin, he stated that he was relieved after the performance and that he felt that he trusted the group to protect him, to not let anything happen to him.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, undocumented participants constantly calculated presumed risks of ID controls by the police. At the same time, this trust Amin said he experienced could also be interpreted as putting some responsibility on other participants to calculate the risks. Amongst the participants without an impending threat of deportation, anxiety was expressed in relation to feelings of responsibility for calculating risks and developing preventative measures in order to avoid detection. I return to other aspects of this experienced responsibility of some participants in relation to other participants (see Chapter 6), but for now I focus on the aspect of security of undocumented participants being detected by the police. In the group interview, for example, the performance in Stockholm is brought up in relation to several of the participants having doubts whether to go through with the performance as it was perceived as too risky. As described earlier, this particular performance, besides being one of the first, was also outdoors and in the context of a demonstration connected to a No Border Camp. This meant that the police were present when the demonstration arrived at the site where the musical would later perform. The participants in the demonstration later on constituted a large part of the audience. Although the police had left when the

musical was to go on stage, this caused a lot of anxiety among the musical participants.

Looking upon the musical as a collective endeavour to organise against the control of migration, the fear of being detected by the police was always present. This fear affected our work, even though participants were positioned differently in regard to the risk of being exposed. We talked about both tactics on the individual level, on how to avoid being detected and about how we as a group should act to avoid controls. We frequently adjusted activities to the perceived risk of being detected by the police; for example, through the use of clothing and makeup on stage in order not to be recognised, frequently shifting places for rehearsals and different tactics for getting to and going from rehearsals and performances. In retrospect, I think that these tactics were also about creating a feeling of having some level of control in regard to the uncontrollable risk of deportation, about trying to increase feelings of safety within the group. The feeling of fear was also negotiated by the accomplishments of performances and by getting to know each other in the group, as stated by Amin and Erfan.

It was a tension in the work of the musical; being aware of and managing these risks whilst at the same time not letting them paralyse the everyday work. It was impossible to predict if, where and when an expulsion order would be activated through a police control. In a sense, the musical was working through the gaze of the sovereign state. The word 'gaze' is used for describing how racism is experienced as well as addressed through different tactics (Mulinari 2015; Fanon 2008 [1952]). The gaze produced a sense of paranoia affecting the musical group in general, not only those subject to deportation. The group adjusted its working practices in relation to a gaze but could never be sure that it was the 'right' avoidance practice.

Moreover, the ways in which the musical as a group tried to handle risks were not seen as productive by everyone. One participant, Nima, who resided as undocumented at the time, expressed this after a discussion evolving around the theme of police controls: 'I think it is important not to make it too big; that is, the police, at the same time as one has to be careful' (Fieldnotes 05.05.2012). When I interviewed Nima some time after the last performance of the musical, he had received a permanent residence permit and I asked him about safety and how he had felt when he was on stage as undocumented, given the risk of being detected. First, he answered by talking about the different strategies described above, saying that this made him and the other participants residing as undocumented feel safer: 'Then we also felt safe there, and yes,

here are people who, if anything will happen, they can help us' (Nima, interview 15.04.2014).

In the musical, there was also a presumption that the police would most likely not come and arrest people during a performance (but more likely through an ID control in the streets getting to and from the rehearsals, for example). However, in my interview with Nima, it turned out that the discussion about how to avoid being detected by the police contributed to him feeling *more* nervous about being detected. In the quote below, Nima talks about how he experienced participating in a working group tasked with preparing a discussion on how to handle risks before our first performance.

> Nima: It made me worried, and okay, maybe they said, maybe, maybe this will happen. First, I did not think about it that much, but when we talked much, a lot, that if the police will come, if they will do this, then I became more worried. (Nima, interview 15.04.2014)

This reflects a tension in the working process of the musical (and the performance as well, see Chapter 7). That is, an ambition to contest and work beyond the categorisations of legal statuses placed upon us by the state, at the same time as these permeated the working process as well as the everyday life of the participants residing as undocumented. As Nima discussed, sometimes the very work of trying to create a context 'safe' from expulsion orders increased the fear of being detected. In this interview, I also wrongly indicated the categorisation undocumented as being the most important for his experiences of being on stage – asking about how he had felt on stage *as undocumented* instead of asking about his experience of performing on stage in general. He answered:

> Nima: When I was on stage, I did not even think of the police or that I'm undocumented. I just felt that I'm part of a musical and I'm on stage and I'm going to perform well (Nima, interview 15.04.2014).

Contrary to my understanding that performing would be intertwined with fear, for Nima it was a moment of, in a sense, being beyond the condition of deportability.

On the one hand, the everyday life was permeated by the condition of avoiding being controlled, of performing as the 'impeccable citizen' (Khosravi 2010a: 99), of trying to be invisible to the surveillance. On the other hand, inherent in performing was visibility in the public. Further, performing did not (at least not in all cases) contribute to increased fear, but instead provided a

moment beyond the condition of deportability, even though stories of the consequences of this condition were part of what was performed on stage. Succeeding with performances, as well as establishing friendship through working together over a longer period of time, negotiated fear, even though it was always present. How fear and anxiety were expressed through, on and in the body and how this conditioned the working process of the musical is explored in the next section.

Embodied deportability

> There are not many of us here. Wahid and Asef are not here either. Turns out that Wahid is ill. He cannot sleep, he has a headache and pains in his heart. Alireza has spoken with Wahid, asking if he should call his contact person, but Wahid did not want him to. Lisa talks to Wahid too and, after rehearsal, gets on her bike and cycles off to get some sleeping pills for Wahid. Asad is not feeling very well either. He looks almost grey in his face and does not join in when we dance. Asad goes home early, saying that he has a very bad headache. Ramin is also feeling ill. He feels sick and dizzy. Ramin says that he has been throwing up but mainly fluid. Ramin does not join in the dance but stays and watches. When we talk, Ramin says that he only slept for one hour during the night of Sunday to Monday, but that he still went to school the next morning. Last night, he did not sleep either. His stomach is really hurting and when we all meet for assembly, Ramin suddenly dashes off to the toilet. He really does not feel very well at all and keeps his scarf across his mouth, as if he is about to throw up.
>
> Sofi and Kristin ask everyone to work their hardest from now on. We must all make a real effort and come to every rehearsal. If anyone is not happy with their lines, then please come forward and Sofi and Kristin will try to rewrite and change them.
>
> When finished, Hamid gets in a rush – he must not miss the match, the very important Real Madrid match! [The Spanish football team is called Real Madrid]. He tries to get the others to hurry up, who all take it in their stride, but Hamid wants everyone, the whole group, to watch the match together. Ramin is not coming. I wonder if Ramin is going home. 'Shall we cycle together?' 'Yes please, a lot of "kakaa" (police in Dari), the others have papers (asylum seekers) but I don't…', says Ramin. He often says that he is frightened, which is very noticeable when we cycle. Ramin is constantly looking at the cars passing us by as if checking for police cars. Ramin has two bicycle lights on the front of his bike. 'Why do you have that?', I ask. 'Because there are lots of "kakaa"', he replies. The day before we met, I asked Ramin what he had been

> up to during the holiday, to which Ramin replied, 'I was at home most of the time. I don't dare go out, so many "kakaa" (police).' Ramin is very frightened.
>
> When cycling back home, I ask Ramin if he is taking sleeping pills. 'No', he replies. 'Hiroaki [Psychologist at the Centre for Victims of War and Torture] says that it [Ramin's health] is because I think too much.' 'Yes', I reply, 'that is probably right.' I try to ask Ramin if Hiroaki has given him any tips and advice on what he can do to help himself, but our conversation is hampered by the language barrier, wind and rain. Ramin is going to see Hiroaki again in two weeks' time. I suggest that perhaps he should ask about sleeping pills as the constant lack of sleep will make him ill.
>
> I feel a bit scared of the police too and am grateful for having Karolina as company when cycling back home. I also feel extremely stressed over not having enough time to do all the work with the musical (Fieldnotes 06.11.2012).

This fieldnote reflects some of the hardships the participants experienced when working with the musical, in terms of how the working process was conditioned by deportability, not only as in the previous section, as fear and tactics to avoid being detected, but also in terms of the consequences in relation to physical and mental health. It also touches upon the fact that participating in and working with the musical was hard and unpaid work.

This fieldnote is illustrative of the time before the premiere of the full-length performance later that fall, in December. It reflects that many participants were not feeling well at all due to stress caused by a lack of residence permit, and it also reflects that rehearsing was hard work.

The fieldnote is missing information: on the kind of support gathered in relation to illness, on what we rehearsed that day. It reflects my stress and tiredness at the time and in the end, I write that I am afraid of the police as we ride our bikes home and that I am also stressed about all the work.

The on-going stress of the constant threat of deportation, combined with separation from and loss of family, experiences of war and the life-threatening endeavour of fleeing to and through Europe, deeply affected the life situations of participants in the musical. Participants escaping from situations where they had been persecuted for different reasons, such as ethnicity, age (child soldiers) and nationality, once again experienced persecution by the Swedish police due to the expulsion orders. This stress had physical consequences, where the participants residing as undocumented or going through an asylum process frequently suffered from severe headaches, high fevers, pain in different parts of the body, gastritis and weight loss. In connection to rehearsals, we

frequently discussed the problems of stress, arranged meetings with health care professionals and supplied pills for headaches and stomach aches, as well as pills for sleeping and/or reducing anxiety.

The fear of deportation and previous experiences of persecution and violence, manifested as bodily suffering, may be analysed as an expression of what Agamben (1998) refers to as the inclusion of bare life in the political sphere. In being made deportable, participants in the musical had received a decision of expulsion, but this very decision of expulsion is also what upheld their relationship to the state. That is, the category of undocumented does not exist without being created by the state. Thus, bare life is included by its exclusion. According to Agamben, the sovereign is increasingly concerned with biopolitics (i.e., governing bare life), and I suggest that consequences of this governing are manifested in the bodily sufferings of the musical participants. Now, such an analysis carries a danger of reducing the complexity of the life of the participants. With research staying at a far distance, the people expelled from 'humanity all together' (Arendt 1968: 297) risk never appearing as anything else than what they are treated as – as bare life. In this thesis, I hope to show that there is a greater chance of appearing in front of each other in more complex and fuller ways if we together engage in struggles for change. However, I do think that the Agambian conceptualisation of bare life can put the expressions of bodily suffering beyond simply an individualised understanding, to an understanding looking upon this bodily suffering as an expression of the world order at large. That is, when the power of the sovereign is played out through and in the governing of bodies, these bodies suffer. The musical represented one context where tactics for managing the insecure situation of deportability could be shared and developed.

Embodied deportability at work in the musical

> Ramin and Alireza eat some food, when Ramin says, 'I don't want to think, I want…' he shows with his hand. Not write…? 'Remove?', I ask. 'Yes', replies Ramin, 'I want to remove, tomorrow, inshallah.' 'Inshallah', I reply. I tell Ramin that Hiroaki [Psychologist at the Centre for Victims of War and Torture] always says that trying NOT to think about it does not work. It just does not work. You must actively try to think about something else. I describe how I when feeling anxious about something think about the sea, as I like going to the sea when I feel sad or worried. 'Yes', says Alireza, 'if I feel sad at night, I go to the sea.' 'What? You go to the sea or think about the sea?', I ask. 'No, I go there, to the West Harbour, where I might stay from 9 until 11 in the evening. The sea makes me calm. Other people are there too. You don't see them because

> of the darkness but they are there, thinking about things too, I believe.' For Ramin, knowing that he is not alone and that we all need to find ways to stop ourselves from thinking too much seems to help. (Fieldnotes 05.05.2012)

This fieldnote originates from a rehearsal in a cabin we had rented close to a forest outside of Malmö. During this weekend, we worked with the scene 'Lost things' addressing experiences of flight. Being away over the weekend together also provided a context where some of the themes touched upon in the performance concerning flight, separation and feelings of anxiety could be discussed. One could also talk about tactics on how to cope with anxiety. As Alireza, Ramin and I discussed above, the participants with experiences of deportability tended to think too much and were unable to shut out 'bad thoughts'. This led to insomnia, where many had difficulties sleeping at night, and they experienced that their level of anxiety rose when they were alone. In this regard, the musical provided a space where one could just hang out together, discuss problems and learn different ways of addressing them. For example, those with sleeping problems several times expressed that it was easier to sleep when we were away during rehearsal weekends.

However, the stress experienced by participants residing as undocumented or in the asylum process also made it difficult to participate. As the musical was based on voluntary work, participants could sometimes not be there, as they needed to work (for salaries) and/or study. The musical demanded hard work from everyone, as Sofi and Kristin pointed out (see fieldnotes page 117). The participants were dependent on each other's presence and work for rehearsing the different scenes. When participants were absent from the rehearsals, this had a great impact on the working process. Creating a performance together demanded a sense of collective responsibility, in the sense that we were all needed on stage and when rehearsing. At the same time, we were setting out from very different situations. For example, sometimes the musical itself added stress to the already stressful situation of residing without a residence permit. During the most intense period of rehearsals, several of the participants residing as undocumented or going through an asylum process made it clear that the working procedures of the musical needed to be adapted to their living conditions. They had difficulties concentrating during long rehearsals; it was stressful being in school during the day and rehearsing and learning their lines in the evening. The overall stress of residing as undocumented or waiting for a reply to one's claim for asylum at times made it impossible to participate. As the fieldnote below illustrates, some participants were absent during longer periods of time due to worries and anxieties in relation to the asylum process.

> Wahid comes to rehearsals for the first time in a long time. He has forgotten many of his lines, but it is great to see him having the strength to participate. Ramin, on the other hand, does not turn up at rehearsals anymore. This is very sad, but he is not feeling well enough. I have spoken with him on the telephone a few times and have just called and texted him, but no reply. Every time I have called him, he has been in his room with sad music playing in the background. He has been absent from school for an entire term and instead shuts himself away in his room. There has not been much progress with his asylum application, as the Swedish Migration Agency is questioning his actual age. Ramin has told me that if he does not get permanent residency, his life will end. (Fieldnotes 26.10.2013)

Even though Ramin was seeking asylum at the time (after he had stayed undocumented), he actually appeared to be feeling worse than when he resided as undocumented. The long wait[67] for a response to the claim for asylum and the fact that the Migration Agency did not believe he was as old as he claimed was hard on Ramin. He was not alone, as several of the participants experienced that the Migration Agency treated their asylum claims, their stated country of origin (i.e., the Migration Agency did not believe they came from the country they had stated) or their age with suspicion (see Sager 2011: 179 for a discussion on the Migration Agency's 'cultures of suspicion'). Compared to what was at stake in the asylum process, the musical may be understood as being of secondary or little importance. As Ramin said to me, getting a permanent residence permit was a question of life or death. At the same time, creating a performance together in the middle of these processes, I suggest, was both a way of coping with deportability (for participants with as well as without personal experiences of deportability) and of resisting conditions produced by deportability. However, as discussed in more depth in the next chapter, this process was full of ambivalences and conflicts.

In a group interview with participants without personal experiences of deportability, they addressed the tension between adjusting the working process to the different living conditions and at the same time working towards the goal of having a premiere. Getting the performance ready for the premiere was hard work, not something that could be done by a little bit of 'processande' (processing), as one of them said.

The consequences of insecure legal statuses to some degree affected all participants, including myself. This was further intensified as one participant

[67] See Djampour (2018) for an in-depth analysis of how waiting and being stopped are intertwined with time and how time is controlled and stolen from young individuals with migrant backgrounds.

was deported (see Chapter 2). This deportation, besides being an individual catastrophe for the person being deported, also affected the rest of the participants. Some took a break from the activities of the musicals and some experienced increased anxiety and sleeping problems after the deportation. Several participants in the musical experienced a sense of responsibility in terms of trying to assist Abdullah in Italy and guilt because we had not been able to stop the deportation. The intense work of the musical combined with insecure legal statuses, the fear of further deportations, as well as the poor mental health experienced by many participants in the musical affected the musical group as a whole. Being privileged in terms of having access to professional support through my job, I went to a counsellor to deal with the stress I experienced. In the course of my involvement in the local network of migrant rights activism, I had experienced feelings of hopelessness, powerlessness and exhaustion before, as had many others in the networks working with supporting undocumented migrants. In the musical, several participants without personal experiences of deportability experienced stress and exhaustion in relation to creating the musical in a context permeated by deportability. How the mental and physical health among participants residing as undocumented was perceived by other participants, and how this affected the group as a whole, was also brought up in the group interview.

> (…) many were suffering from depression, many went through super-destructive times, like, they couldn't sleep, etc. – pretty tough conditions for getting a functioning group together. But there was also a lot of focus on how those with experience of fleeing actually felt and maybe that was a good thing, I don't know, but I think it probably influenced how we, like, saw the group, what was acceptable, what we put up with or just had to let go (Lena, group interview 28.09.15).

Lena here points to the challenges of creating a performance with a group where some experienced severe health problems due to conditions related to deportability, past experiences and/or asylum processes. She highlights how this affected the group as a whole, not only those experiencing this situation. The way she reasons, talking about how 'we' saw the group, who was taken into consideration (by whom?), etc., also implies different groups within the musical group. I return to these discussions below (see Chapter 6). For now, I want to make clear that I do not wish to downplay the differences between being made deportable and being a person recognised as a Swedish citizen involved in trying to contest deportability in different ways. I merely want to point out that the violent bordering practices that the musical sought to contest

had consequences for the group as a whole, not only for those residing as undocumented. For those directly experiencing these bordering practices, the insecure legal status affected all aspects of life: the separation from loved ones, material scarcity and the existential experience of not being allowed to fully participate in society.

> Myself, my life – why are there so many problems in my life? I miss my family, I'm constantly worried about not being able to cope on my own, I can't even fix enough food for myself... (…) I'm not very hopeful. Sometimes, I wonder what life is all about... I feel that I'm going mad without even noticing it myself… (…) When I lived in hiding, I didn't feel… (pause). It felt as if I was far away from society. (Alireza, interview 09.10.2012)

At the time of the interview, Alireza had recently applied for asylum a second time, and he worried about what the Migration Agency would say in relation to his case. He also continued to not having enough money to support himself, similarly to what he had experienced when he had resided as undocumented. In this conversation about loss and separation from loved ones, his inability to support oneself, he also addressed his feeling as undocumented of being 'far from society'. The seriousness in this experience, of being 'far from society' or being made invisible, has been emphasised by research concerned with deportability in a Swedish context (Sager 2011). Sager highlights the fear of being *unseen*, at the same time as one fears *being seen*, in the sense of being detected as undocumented (Sager 2011; Sager 2018). The informants in Sager's studies emphasise the importance of having one's situation as undocumented made visible in the public debate. Despite the increased search for undocumented individuals during the period when REVA was implemented, and the subsequent enhanced fear, Sager's informants still said that REVA had contributed to the conditions of undocumented in Sweden being debated and made visible, which they argued was a good thing (Sager 2018). This points to the utmost importance of being recognised (Butler 2009) and may be one of the reasons why the participants in the musical took the risk of standing on stage despite residing as undocumented.

I have analysed how deportability wounded and left scars, both mentally and physically, on the participants residing without a formal status. Several believed that the situation would improve as soon as they got into the asylum process. While experiencing the worrisome waiting during the asylum process, many believed that the residence permit would make them feel better. Although the residence permit was a great joy and relief, it did not transform the situation as much as they had expected. When Alireza finally got his

residence permit, he had trouble feeling really happy until all of his friends also got their residence permits. Thus, the border is ever-present in these situations. The border here becomes a great obstacle that needs to be overcome, repeatedly. Balibar argues that the border permeates certain lives to the extent that the border becomes the place where they reside, something they always relate to (Balibar 2002; also see Khosravi 2010b). And not only resides, certain people carry the border with them wherever they go, they embody the border. The border control could be activated whenever someone thought that they were somewhere where they should not be (see Khosravi 2010b; Djampour 2018). According to Balibar (2002), the process of challenging borders is filled with conflicts. Mediators who meet at the border are needed. Balibar is not particularly concrete when referring to the process of challenging but unassumingly suggests that those defending the right to asylum would play an important role as mediators. The exploration of the working process of the musical shows the complexities within such alliances (which I discuss further in Chapter 6).

The meaning of witnessing and telling

> It's about all undocumented people, especially Afghans. People don't know how difficult it is for us here, how difficult it was for us in our homeland or how difficult our journey here was. I want people to know but they don't. It was traumatic in our home country and also on the journey here. We have seen people die, drown, our friends... We have seen so many things and I want people to know. (Hamid, interview 02.07.2012).

This quote of Hamid illustrates the profound will to give witness brought forward by several participants in the musical. Further, even though not explicit, it also says something about the hope that other people's knowledge of the experienced injustices will lead to change, 'we have seen so many things and *I want people to know*'. This section explores the meaning of giving and bearing witness. It relates to discussions on recognition and visibility that I explore in depth in Chapter 7. In this section, the focus is on how the participants motivated their participation through their will to make deportability visible and increase knowledge regarding this and experiences of flight.

Warm up before one of the earliest shorter performances by the *No Border Musical*. Photograph Amelie Herbertsson.

The point of departure for the participants of the musical was that in the act of highlighting these experiences, a critique of the migration regime was included. This critical approach and ambition may be seen as a way of contesting the representation (in singular) of the refugee as a speechless, depoliticised, dehistoricised and universalised victim (Rajaram 2002). Accordingly, talking about experiences in a context such as the musical seeking to challenge this depoliticisation and creating a space where voices could be heard may be seen as subversive. Indeed, it was a courageous act to stand on stage, considering the risk of being detected as undocumented by the police. When I interviewed Asad, he talked about the fear he experienced in his everyday life and I asked how he had dared perform on stage. He answered that he did so because he wanted to tell the audience about his 'experiences and problems' (Asad, interview 17.06.2015).

For the participants of the musical who did not have personal experiences of migration control, the motivation was also to disseminate the stories they had listened to as activists in the migrant rights movement to a wider audience.

> We have so many experiences and stories to tell. We have seen a lot and carry that with us, but we need to tell others and keep these experiences alive. We have talked a lot about our responsibility to listen to these experiences and also to pass these experiences on to others in some way, and this was such a way. We tried to find the right way to tell others. It's tearing us apart. How the hell can we get this out… (Lena, group interview 28.09.2015)

In this quote, the experience of bearing witness is put forward. Just like Asad and Hamid wanted to share their stories of what they and others had experienced, other participants expressed that they wanted people to know the stories that people had told them. In the above quote, Lena also highlighted that they had felt a responsibility to spread the stories they had encountered – also in relation to that these stories tore them apart. The expression of 'tearing us apart' indicates that the brutalised manner in which some groups in society are treated (e.g. asylum seekers) is also having a detrimental effect on individuals not subjected to the same treatment. Bearing witness to this violence, with the hope of changing the overall conditions of the asylum process, appears as fundamentally important for Asad, Lena and Hamid. To Hamid, Asad and the other participants who shared the experiences of having survived the dangerous journey to and through Europe, the act of giving testimony could also be understood in relation to feeling guilty for having survived and a perceived responsibility to talk about what had happened in relation to those who had stayed behind or who had not made it.

Thinking of telling stories as inherently political, or as a way of coping with experiences of violence, has been questioned in general, and within applied theatre in particular. For example, Kohli (2006) discusses that the silence of unaccompanied minors seeking asylum can be understood as both 'burdensome *and* protective' (Kohli 2006: 710, *italics in original*), where not telling, or telling just certain aspects depending on the recipient of the story, may be thought of as resilience. In a context of applied theatre, Thompson (2011) problematises literature on and practices of trauma relief that emphasise storytelling. The imperative 'to tell' people about difficult experiences sets up telling and silence as a binary couple, looking upon silence as a failure or as something prolonging the harm caused by experiences of violence (Thompson 2011: Chapter 2). Thompson asserts that the discourse of telling as something inherently good does not consider how violent events are already coped with in different communities and whether telling in different contexts is actually something that may be performed as a way to 'heal' experiences of violence (Thompson 2011).

Furthermore, the asylum process is constructed around the imperative to tell: the story told by the asylum seeker serves as the main basis for decisions related to whether or not granting a residence permit. The applicant is supposed to tell the migration officer about all personal experiences of, for example, sexualised violence, political persecution or other forms of severe abuse and oppression, in detail and clearly. Furthermore, the applicant is to provide a credible story of the abuse and violence that will occur in the case s/he is deported back (see Wikström and Johansson 2013 for a critical discussion regarding assessments of credibility).

The participants in the musical had either themselves experienced having their claims of asylum ignored or had taken part of countless stories where the experiences of oppression or general violence had not been deemed sufficient for reaching the threshold of residence permits or had been judged as not credible. Thus, on the one hand, the importance of telling in the context of the musical, extracted above, may concern redressing the situation. That is, as a way to say, 'although you did not listen, you cannot silence me'. Simultaneously, to *again* repeat stories one may rather forget could be understood as prolonging a rather violent imperative to tell established by the asylum system. Without telling and making visible the unfairness of the decision of exclusion, the public cannot judge whether these individuals, groups of people, actually *deserve* asylum and residence permits. The musical can be understood as operating within this discourse of deservingness.

Thompson's (2011) critical discussion on the discourse of the inherently presumed 'good' in telling, as well as the discourse of deservingness, provides challenges to the above discussion on the importance of bearing witness and making experiences visible. However, the critiques of telling have to be nuanced in relation to how telling may be experienced. In the musical group, telling was directly linked to experiences of being listened to and of listening. I will return to the discussion on which kind of visibility was staged by the musical performance; for example, regarding deportability and experiences of flight (see Chapter 7). However, for now I would like to emphasise that the ambition to make visible experiences of restrictive asylum systems, the violence of borders, came from experiences of *not being listened to* (e.g., in relation to an asylum application). The musical constituted a space where these kinds of experiences could be talked about, recognised and dealt with at an everyday level, in the context of rehearsing and doing theatre exercises, as well as when just hanging out, having coffee or walking together to and from rehearsals. In this context, relationships also developed that allowed for sharing stories of everyday experiences, present as well as past ones; for

example, stories of love, schoolwork, work, family and friends. This in contrast to the more selective or 'thin stories' often presented in relation to obtaining residence permits (see Kohli 2006: 711).

Salverson (1996) argues that 'a climate of witnessing (…) involves not only listening to someone's story, but allowing our attitudes and behaviours to be changed by it' (Salverson 1996: 183). In the above extract, Lena mentions the importance of bearing witness to all the stories she had heard through her activism in the migrant rights movement. In a sense, through forming alliances and struggling for migrant rights, Lena and the other participants with similar experiences had allowed the stories of the consequences of migration control to become part of their lives as well. Not only by listening, but by acting setting out from what they had listened to. Hamid, on the other hand, talks about surviving where he had seen the lives of others being lost, which represents a related, but somewhat different, type of witnessing. Hamid had already been changed and had his life changed by his experiences and what he had witnessed. One important motivation for initiating and joining the working process of the musical was to bear witness publicly, although setting out from different positions in regard to the subjects (e.g. migration control) addressed by the musical.

It is hard to talk about experiences of violence, and uncovering personal experiences in front of an audience could be seen as a re-enactment of the violence one has experienced (see, for example, Salverson 1996). Although Hamid talked about the importance of spreading knowledge of what he and others in similar situations had experienced, the manuscript was not based on in-depth interviews with, or the personal life stories of, the participants (see Chapter 2 about the creation of the performance). In contrast to the participant Salverson referred to in her article (Salverson 1996), the musical participants were not performing their personal life stories. The musical did not include sessions based upon sharing experiences or asking questions about personal reasons for leaving one's country. The performance was aimed at making experiences of migration control and the violence of borders visible, but it did not claim to represent the personal experiences of seeking asylum of any of the actors (cf. Wake 2013). At the same time, the actors with experiences of seeking asylum and residing as undocumented were not *not* performing their experiences; neither in relation to how they were viewed by the audience (see Chapter 7), nor in relation to how they themselves talked about the performance.

> When I first came to the musical, I didn't know what it was all about. Then I realised that the story was about Jawad. That it was about a life very similar to my own. So, I thought, it's good to participate and perform in front of people because this is my life too (Alireza, interview 09.10.2012).

Furthermore, the choice of a musical as a format for talking about experiences was contrasted with other ways of making experiences visible by the initiators of the musical through, for example, campaigns. In comparison, the initiators said that a musical provided a sense of freedom. The possibilities of mixing realism and fiction, for example, was perceived as providing a way of not adjusting to what society in general saw as reasonable (in terms of, for example, expressing possible suggestions for adjusting some specific legislative issues through a narrower campaign). For the participants who thought that the manuscript reflected aspects of their personal experiences of flight and migration control, an important dimension was also the perceived effect of the performance on the audience and the possibility for future change.

> It's a good way to show others who don't know about this. It might not help me, but perhaps more will understand and it'll make it better for others. Perhaps politicians will listen. Perhaps they will begin to understand. Those who did not know anything before, they become sad and cry. I saw many people in the audience crying. It made me happy to see that, because our play is having an impact. I think people who cry are kind people. I think it affects them. They understand how difficult it is. They understand what it is like to be undocumented (Alireza, interview 09.10.2012).

Alireza here formulates his motivation in relation to solidarity; to 'make it better for others' and in relation to the response of the audience as important for the feeling of being listened to. This feeling of being listened to, of experiencing that what we told on stage actually affected the audience, is highlighted in several of my other interviews as well. Alireza says that he was happy when he saw the audience moved to tears. Now, there is not a direct link between being moved by a performance to then act and mobilise to stop the continuation of the injustices shown on stage (Pratt 2012). Yet, the experience of seeing that the audience was touched by the performance affected the actors. Furthermore, by staging another possible world through performing a world of *No Borders*, the musical also exceeded the imperative to talk about suffering and persecution in order to 'deserve' a residence permit. While Siamak and I were preparing to give a lecture to students of social work, Siamak talked about how the musical had worked as a platform from where we could 'do politics'

and denounce injustices and that he had gained new confidence during the process:

> Today, I feel, how do you say, as if I dare to be seen, to talk to people including those with an education, like social workers. Before, I was always nervous. I didn't even dare to say, 'Hi, I'm Siamak'. I got so nervous but now, I'm able to talk to people and share my thoughts and ideas. I could never do that before. (Siamak, fieldnotes 13.09.2013).

'Paradoxical inclusion'?

The musical may in this way be understood as a space where increased confidence could be achieved. Siamak also formulated that he now dared being visible (the tension between visibility and invisibility is discussed further in Chapter 7). It could be argued that increased confidence would be expected from being part of a working process and acting in a performance for the first time on stage. Increased confidence and other positive 'effects' have also been emphasised in other studies where engaged theatre has been used as a tool for young individuals in disadvantaged positions to speak of their experiences (Boehm and Boehm 2003; Wernick, Kulick and Woodford 2014). However, in contrast to these other studies where empowerment was used as a concept and as something that was aimed for, the goal of the musical was not to empower individuals in disadvantaged positions (although this could be thought of as a 'positive side effect') but to critique and bring about change. In her study with clandestine asylum seekers in contact with the Asylum Group in Malmö and who sometimes also participated in political campaign work, Sager (2011) states that the network and activities of the Asylum Group could sometimes provide an entry point to a sense of inclusion and belonging in the community. Thus, she argues that deportability (cf. clandestinity) could provide a 'paradoxical inclusion' in the community (Sager 2011: 200); albeit limited and simultaneously defined by exclusion.

Similar to Sager's study, it is important to place how the participants in the musical talked about increased confidence in contrast to the previous sections on experiences of being 'far from society' and living in constant fear of deportation. Increased confidence might be a too 'small' a word to actually capture the experiences of making oneself visible when living in a state of invisibility (see Chapter 7).

The relationship between being in a situation of deportability or going through an asylum process, while at the same time presenting these situations as a performance, was brought up in a panel discussion after a performance in

Stockholm, where the moderator asked how the actors had experienced this relation. Amin answered:

> Well, when I first joined the asylum musical, I forgot that I was undocumented. They showed me so much love and that I was just like them that I forgot that I was undocumented. Since I've met them all, I don't feel like I'm living like an undocumented person. I've been shown love and respect and I love and respect them just as much as my own mother. I've never thanked them and I don't know how, but I want to say thank you! Today, I have the chance of saying 'thank you' to everyone in the musical. (Amin, panel discussion 09.11.2013)

In his comment, Amin does not really address the issue of representing experiences through a performance, which is what the moderator asked for, but highlights the importance of the context of the *musical group* instead of the performance. His answer of forgetting his deportability when being with the musical could be put in contrast to the previous discussion highlighting that deportability permeated everyday life and one's sense of being in the world, and thus also the musical. Further, the quote; 'they showed that I am the same as them, so I forgot that I am undocumented' does two things: On the one hand, Amin contrasts the musical with his experiences of Swedish society by implicitly saying that in his life outside the musical, due to his status as undocumented, he is treated differently and with less value than others. This is obvious in relation to being threatened by deportation, but it also seems to refer to interpersonal relations. Outside the musical, I interpret this as if he is implicitly saying that he experienced that his relationships were permeated by his status as undocumented. On the other hand, Amin's statement points to obvious divisions and power relations within the group; '*they* showed that *I am the same as them*'. So, someone in the musical had to confirm that he is equal to them, which also illustrates that there were different categories within the musical. Thus, to Amin, the musical, in contrast to the rest of society, represented a context where legal status would not matter in terms of whether you were looked upon as equal. However, the statement itself, of someone needing to confirm Amin's equality, highlights that the musical was also divided along the categories of citizenship it sought to contest, a theme I explore in the next chapter.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to analyse how deportability and waiting during asylum processes permeated and conditioned the working process of the musical. I have pointed to the sharp contrast between, on the one hand, performing on stage and addressing the injustices of control of migration and, on the other hand, experiencing constant surveillance and fear in everyday life. In terms of how being made deportable conditioned much of the everyday life for the undocumented participants, Arendt's analysis of refugeeness as producing rightlessness certainly still holds true. Not least in relation to the fear and bodily suffering caused by anxiety. Yet, through the working process of the musical, relationships were formed, which contributed to enabling performing on stage as a political subject. Through networks of friends and activists (both participants of the musical and of the local migrant support network), deportability was also contested through struggles in relation to access to rights and decent living conditions. In some way, being part of the musical meant breaking out of the condition of performing as the 'impeccable' citizen (at least momentarily).

I have further shed light on the ever-present tension in the work of the musical, between, on the one hand, contesting and aiming to work beyond the categories placed upon us by the state whilst, on the other hand, these categories permeated the working process and the everyday life of participants residing as undocumented.

The working process and performance of the musical show that the boundaries of exclusion are in no way absolute (Agamben 1998; also see Sager 2011; Nordling, Sager and Söderman 2017). Living under the threat of deportation caused bodily suffering that may be analysed through the Agambian framework of the power of the sovereign played out through the governing of bare life. The experiences of bodily suffering of the participants shed light on that this suffering cannot be reduced to psychological explanations on the individual level but are expressions of a world order where the governing of bodies is increasingly present. Not least do we see people reduced to bare life as detained in camps outside as well as inside the borders of Europe. However, ending the analysis here would reduce the life of the participants of the musical, as it included much more than suffering. One aspect discussed in this chapter was the experience of telling stories on stage and of believing that this had a potential of contributing to change. I suggest that by taking the experiences of the actors into account, critical discussions on the imperative to tell can be nuanced. At the same time, these critical

discussions offer valuable insights, especially in a context of the asylum system where the story of the applicant and how it is told is fundamental.

The next chapter carries on the analysis of the musical as processes of commoning, departing from the daily struggles of organising the musical. Thus, the next chapter embarks on a journey in the complex terrain of incomplete resistance against power relations permeated by deportability.

6. Ambivalent commoning

> It was magnificent! Fantastic! Nerve-racking! A full house! The audience both cried and laughed. For some reason, I felt nervously irritated just before warm-up but that soon went away and it was all worth it. This was worth all the hard work, every bit of it. Nima, Erfan and Asef cried after the deportation scene. Erfan could not stop crying. He felt so angry, he said. Even if he did not know Abdullah that well, it should not have to be like this. We gave each other a hug behind the stage curtains and other people hugged him too. I gave him some water to drink. At one point, Erfan was jumping up and down with joy. Whilst hiding behind the stage curtains, he seemed overcome by feelings of happiness. When gathering after the performance, so many of the participants came forward, talking about how much they loved the musical group and how wonderful it all was. Nima asked everyone to raise one hand and he then ran around the circle, high fiving all of them. Alireza was singing and dancing and Erfan was doing the special animal dance. Words cannot describe what it was like. Abdullah was watching the musical via Skype. Lena described how he had cried a lot, but he had also been happy. She had talked to him over the telephone. Myself, I feel both happy and sad. I don't quite know what I feel. Empty and numb (Fieldnotes 20.12.2012).

This chapter starts at the peak of the story, one could say, with a fieldnote from the premiere. The premiere took place at a small independent theatre in Malmö. All the preparatory work, of building the stage, installing the sound, the lights, etc., was carried out voluntarily, and the work was intense in order to finish everything in time. The musical group received a lot of help from friends and people active in the Asylum Group including hosting the audience, making food and 'fika' for the ensemble and crafting the scenography. The musical thus mobilised activists outside the musical group as well, which is illustrative of how the musical formed a part of the local migrant rights movement.

All the seven performances that were planned on this particular stage were sold out, and the musical did two extra shows. As mentioned in the previous chapter, several of the participants stressed the importance of the audience. The audience was seen as a sign that someone, even many, cared about the situation for people seeking asylum or residing as undocumented.

After the premiere, we had a 'gathering' (as we did after every time we performed), which meant that we all met in a ring to briefly say something about the performance or sort out if anything needed to be fixed before the next performance. It could be minor changes in the manuscript, that some people had a cold and needed throat lozenges to be put backstage, what time to meet before the next performance, etc. At this particular gathering, right after the premiere, many said that they loved the musical group. Several participants made various bodily moves to show their joy and euphoria that the performance had gone so well.

In this chapter, I analyse the working process of the musical, structured in three sections: *Play, laughter and rehearsing*, *'You understand but you don't understand a thing'* and *Ambivalent relationship-building.*

I explore how the different positions, as well as the distribution of workload and responsibility within the group, had consequences for how the musical participants could understand each other and collaborate. Both the joyful moments of playing, rehearsing, performing, etc. as well as conflicts and the ambivalent relationship-building were constitutive of the musical and of what I understand as processes of commoning.

Play, laughter and rehearsing

> Nima: We met for the first time and did some kind of exercises, like you do when you do theatre. And at first it was quite embarrassing… Doing exercises and other things, like doing things in front of others.
> Emma: Do you remember when it was particularly embarrassing? Was it a specific exercise?
> Nima: …when we had to act out a character like an animal or something like that. Then there was that thing about the car when we had to get in and do something and then everyone had to follow you and do exactly the same thing. After that, I was like, 'OK, what do you want me to do now?'
> Emma: [Giggles] (Nima, interview 15.04.2014)

Nima refers to two improvisation exercises, one when we were acting as animal characters and one called 'the hitchhiker' (referred to as 'the thing about the car'). The exercise called the hitchhiker was carried out as follows: Four chairs were placed to resemble a car and three participants were seated in the car, one driver and two passengers. The rest of the participants in the exercise formed a line in order to take turns playing the role of the hitchhiker. The role play started as the hitchhiker stuck his or her thumb out and was then

picked up by the car. The thing was that the hitchhiker had a certain characteristic, something that the rest of the passengers had to pick up and imitate. It could be an itch, hearing problems, a desperate need of a toilet. Many laughed their guts out as Ramin mimicked how desperately he needed a toilet by letting the 'pie' go down his trousers and out through the 'backseat window'. Although the car was just four chairs, one could really 'see' the windows, the doors and steering wheel as the participants acted as if they were in the car.

Describing this exercise in detail may seem trivial, but I believe that exercises like the one described were important for the musical group. The exercises were something the group did together. They were embarrassing and provoked much laughter. Several of the exercises were improvisations or games where communication was based on acting with one's body, communicating through acting instead of through language. As I elaborate, language was many times experienced as a barrier, but it could temporarily be put in the backseat through exercises based on bodily movements and expressions. Besides rehearsing the actual scenes of the musical, rehearsals also included theatre games, improvisation exercises, danceoke and different role plays. We also visited other theatres and performances and were invited to dress rehearsals of plays at the Malmö City Theatre.

The rehearsals included meetings where we discussed whether everyone was satisfied with their characters, wanted more or fewer lines or one more character to play, or if someone was not feeling well or needed support in some way. Different tasks were also considered and distributed and plans and dates for rehearsals were set. Between rehearsals, several of us met to practice our lines and to translate the manuscript from Swedish and English into Dari or Somali. On these and other occasions, we also just hung out. We cooked and ate together and watched a football game or TV shows. Through these occasions of hanging out, of regularly meeting one another, working together, a common jargon and sense of humour developed. At the time, there was a popular Swedish song on the radio with the lyrics saying 'dansa, pausa' (dance, take a break), and in the musical group it was remade to reflect what several participants usually did when we had breaks from rehearsing, namely 'take a leak, smoke'. Participants gave each other different nick names (sometimes due to the fact that several in the group shared the same name) and had a lot of fun by, for example, acting as different invented characters as we were playing together. We also celebrated birthdays, residence permits and had parties together in relation to completed performances. All of these activities (meetings, rehearsals, exercises, hanging out, etc.) contributed to developing

relations of care and support, a fundamental dimension in processes of commoning (see Bollier and Helfrich 2015; Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013), which I suggest were constitutive of the musical.

Cake baked for festive event with the musical group.

Relationships of care may be illustrated by this carefully homemade cake. Decorated with roses, it brings associations of a celebration, of love and friendship (manifested in arranging a party and in taking the time to bake and decorate a cake). This stands in sharp contrast to the message written on top: FUCK BORDERS. Fuck borders as an expression incorporates a sense of violence – it may be understood as a violent response to the violence inherent in borders. As put forward in earlier research, borders need to be treated as sites of struggles, not only as merely socially constructed but as the outcome of violent encounters (Vaughan-Williams 2009). The participant who was celebrated this particular day had experienced the violence of borders but had also fought back. The celebration was for the successful completion of one step in his asylum process, but he had yet to receive permanent residency. As

such, there was a sense of ambivalence in the celebration, as he had just completed one of several obstacles on the insecure and unpredictable way to hopefully finding a safe haven.

On other occasions, the musical group got the opportunity to celebrate that someone actually had received permanent residence. This was celebrated as a victory for the individual and also for the group as a whole. The musical group had together fought to resist the orders of deportation facing participants, so when someone finally received a residence permit, the worrisome waiting was over[68] and it was expressed as a moment of shared joy in the musical:

> Suddenly, Lena gets a phone call. I can hear her say, whilst almost crying with happiness, 'you are joking, you are joking – is it true?!!' I ask, 'what, WHAT has happened?' 'Nima has been granted a residence permit', says Lena, with tears rolling down her cheeks. I speak with Nima. He is so happy but sounds a bit shocked by the news and cannot stay on the phone for long. We decide to meet at our place and for Ramin to come too. The rest of them are at Hamid's. Nima is going to pop into Hamid's too, before coming to us. Ramin does not dare cycling to Hamid's place on his own so decides to come with us and wait for Nima there. Ramin takes the opportunity and shouts loud enough for Nima to hear [over the phone], 'I'm SUPER HAPPY for you!!' (…) (Fieldnotes 28.02.2013).

Even on these occasions, when someone actually got a residence permit, the ambivalence still remained as everyone had not received their decision from the Migration Agency. A residence permit could also be a reminder of people who had been rejected, deported or who had been lost along the way. Balibar (2002) argues that borders permeate certain people's lives so extensively that the border in the end becomes the place where that person resides, a 'home'. Balibar describes this home as a temporary place, a space of waiting, a 'non-life' (Balibar 2002: 83). However, it is not clear that this always constitutes a 'non-life'. People live, care, love, fight, struggle, resist also at the border (see Djampour 2018). At the border, one can eat a cake that says FUCK BORDERS.

During periods of intense rehearsing, the group met several times a week and sometimes went away together during weekends. When I read through my notes and revisit the space of the musical, the trips and the weekends spent together appear as important to the musical's work. During these events, there

[68] However, although getting a residence permit was a crucial step, several experienced further difficulties in relation to starting and building a life in Malmö, Sweden. For example, in relation to the impossibility of family reunification or difficulties finding a job and an apartment.

was more time for discussions, more time to hang out, to talk and to play, and (most of the time) no one was late, no one was going someplace else. On these weekends, depending on season and location, there were opportunities for swimming in the ocean, for snowball games, for outdoor bonfires, telling each other funny stories, playing cards, watching movies, etc.

Drawing of a picture taken on a rehearsal weekend. Illustration Maria Nykvist.

In the interviews, the rehearsing weekends were repeatedly described as important for feeling good about participating in the musical.

> Emma: So, why was it so good?
> Amin: Because everyone worked, laughed and had fun together. I have never been together with 35 people without anyone being sad. Everyone was happy and everyone showed each other respect.
> Emma: Yes.
> Amin: Yes, that's why that weekend was so great, and I wrote that in my diary too. (Amin, interview 25.02.2014)

Just like the rehearsal weekends, the trip we made to Stockholm was also emphasised in the interviews as a key event. Asad talked about the importance of being together in the musical, referring to this trip where we had performed

the whole first part of the musical for the first time. In the interview, he talked about how the games we had played together in Stockholm had made him think back to what it was like when he was a child. When I read the fieldnote from that evening, I still remember the magic I experienced.

> We walk past the [Royal] Palace, looking at the Royal Guards. We tell everyone about the guards not being allowed to say a word and that they must stand absolutely still outside their huts, dressed in their silly helmets and uniforms. I laugh until it hurts when Asad jokes about one of the guards, 'What do you think he will do if I (Asad tickles his own stomach) tickletickletickle…?' We are getting tired and start walking back. Ramin continues to joke and there is a lot of laughter. It is idyllic. Almost there, I suggest playing Guerrilla 1 2 3 4 5. The game involves one person taking the lead with the other participants lining up behind. The lead person calls out 'Guerrilla 1 2 3 4 5' during which time everyone else has to run away and hide before the lead person turns around. Lena says, 'OK, but let's not play in the street' but suddenly, everyone is playing and Lena and I find ourselves hiding behind a parked car (so much for not playing in the street!). We laugh and laugh, especially when Ramin, who cannot run away quickly enough, decides to adopt a different approach along the lines of 'if I can't see you, you can't see me' by lying flat on the ground with his hood pulled over his head. Malin sits on a bicycle, desperately trying to blend in with the urban environment so as not to be found. Oh, how we laugh! Whenever Asad manages not to be found, he jumps out from his hiding place roaring with happiness. We continue to play all the way back. (Fieldnotes 17.06.2012).

The first longer performance of the musical took place earlier that day. Many of us had been very nervous before performing, and after, when we were off stage and had managed to complete the performance, there was a kind of euphoric outburst. We sang and danced together and that feeling of euphoria stayed with several of us during that evening. I recall that it felt like being on vacation. At that time, there was a great deal of visible police presence in Malmö and especially in the area of Möllevången, where several of us lived and spent our time. In the centre of Stockholm, besides the police presence in connection to the No Border demonstration, I had seen none.

That night, joking with the guards outside the castle and playing guerrilla together, in connection to our foregoing public performance, there was an experience of not seeing 'through the chink in the wall' (Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013: 179), but rather an instance of action beyond this perspective. It was not a celebration that someone had made it over the wall, crossed a border, but may be seen as a way of being past the wall produced by surveillance, citizenship, borders, etc. It could be understood as a moment of a world in

some sense beyond surveillance and control. It was such a relief that the performance had gone well, that the police had not made any controls, and it felt like a kind of victory. The musical group was out in the public, not only performing, but laughing, playing, and thus together resisting the fear produced by constant surveillance and the threat of deportation. Simultaneously, the risks participants exposed themselves to by carrying out these activities were very different. The ambivalent 'togetherness' in terms of different conditions for participating in the working process of the musical was discussed in the group interview with participants without personal experiences of deportability.

> Yvonne: (…) Despite being such a large group, because there were quite a few of us, there was always this feeling of doing it together. It didn't feel like that all the time but in the end, that's what it was all about. We did it together, we stood there, did it and owned that moment. I thought it was fantastic, really. (Group interview 28.09.2014)

The next section takes a closer look at the ambivalences within the musical group implicitly addressed by Yvonne in the quote when saying that it did not always feel like the musical work was something that the participants carried out together.

You understand but you don't understand a thing

> 'You understand but you don't understand a thing', he replies when I say that I understand. 'All us guys in the asylum musical – Nima, Siamak and others – we tell our stories but no one understands. We look happy but no one knows what's going on inside our heads, what we have experienced and seen. (…) I think about it a lot, when I see other families and siblings who have both a mother and father. I think "why, why not me". My heart... [he clenches his fist]. Why can we not live in our homeland and why aren't we accepted anywhere else either? [quotes a line from the musical]. This is my life, it is bullshit'. (Erfan, interview 17.07.2012)

Erfan talked about his separation from his family, the pain he experienced due to this. He was very sad telling me about his situation and when I answered 'I understand', he became angry and frustrated by my reply. He answered that I understood, but at the same time I didn't understand a thing, pointing sharply to the fact that I did not share his experience or position and thus could not fully understand. He also specifically raised the context of the musical, 'we tell

our stories but no one understands' and 'we look happy but no one knows what's going on inside our heads'. These statements may be understood as a challenge to an analysis of the work of the musical as processes of commoning. Can acts and relationships between individuals with such different living conditions, experiences and positions be analysed as processes of commoning? Or does such an analysis downplay inequalities within the musical group? Neelands (2007) emphasises that community theatre might not reach the, frequently high, ambition of altering relations of inequality. However, Neelands concludes, the actions taken to create an ensemble and a performance can provide a common space for carrying out a struggle.

Although Erfan said that neither I nor anyone else who did not share his experiences of separation and flight could understand, he still told parts of his story to me in the interview, to participants in the musical and on stage. On other occasions, Erfan also said that he wanted the musical to contribute to changing the practices of the Migration Agency, for example. This could be interpreted as he was hopeful and believed that even though others without his experiences could not fully understand him, the level of understanding could still be sufficient for contributing to change. A different aspect of telling parts of one's story of flight could be put in relation to overall constructions of refugeeness; that is, of the demand to tell a story of suffering and fear in order to be perceived as deserving protection (Fassin and d'Halluin 2005; Lundberg 2016; see Chapter 5). Further, as mentioned in the previous chapter, in a context where the Migration Agency had denied the participants protection, telling could be viewed as a way to get redress. At the end of our interview, Erfan said that it had been good to talk as it was a long time since he had talked properly with someone. Hence, on an interpersonal level, implying that the sharing of pain could be a comforting experience.

In the quote, Erfan also asked the question of *why not me* in relation to seeing families living together in peace in Sweden. Even though inequalities based on citizenship was a condition that the musical group sought to contest, the musical could not escape the fact that some of its participants, racialised as white with a Swedish citizenship, had a much more privileged situation than others, which in some way made them (us) complicit in the situation the undocumented participants were in. Theoretically, this has been conceptualised as for citizenship to exist, there needs to be a constituent outside, a non-citizenship. I interpret Erfan's question as an existential enquiry; that is, his question is simply: why is he not treated as a human being of equal value? Why do I live with privileges and he does not? One possible answer is because he had been expelled from the political community (Arendt

1968). The rights formulated to protect a human being turned out to be useless when a human lacked membership in a community. Simultaneously, as a participant in the musical, although being outside the community of states, Erfan still participated in processes of commoning, creating relationships of care and possibilities for sharing resources.

Still, the relations in the musical group were affected by the inability to answer, or more correctly, the inability to change the overall conditions of this question, *why not me*. It was addressed in different ways and it provided a political perspective on migration that was outspoken in the musical. There was a political answer to the question of *why not me*: the *No Border* perspective. On a sort of 'poster political' level, this perspective was highly present in the performance. For example, the final song went:

> Once we're borderless
> We will have one mission less
> Just come and enter this new world
> You gotta crash the nation state
> Initiating fight mode
> All passports in the sea
> There's a new time ahead of us
> Where we'll all be free

A No Border perspective was also present in the everyday organising of the musical. For example, by creating a group where legal status was not a prerequisite for participation or by putting experiences of migration control at the centre of the work of the musical. That is, a recognition that those who can teach us about the borders today, and about how they can be contested, are people with experiences of bordering practices.

Hence, there were attempts to learn, by saying that the experiences matter, they are sources of knowledge. Trying to understand, to learn from these experiences, was highlighted as something desirable and may be understood as an important part of the processes of commoning in this context. However, these processes were also marked by the differentiations they sought to contest.

> Erfan: Other people have no idea, including you who live in Sweden. What did you know before you met us?
> Emma: Perhaps, when in secondary school, that the world was an unfair place.
> Erfan: I was five when I crossed the border between Afghanistan and Iran. I knew then what a border was.
> Sofi: We learn a lot from listening to you. (Fieldnotes 09.02.2012)

This quote demonstrates our very different backgrounds in the musical and sheds light on the power relations inherent in processes of commoning in a context of borders. Erfan's answer, that he became politically conscious of borders when he as a five-year-old crossed the border, very clearly highlights his knowledge but also my ignorance and privileges. Participants with a Swedish citizenship in the musical were constantly reminded of their privileges and got themselves involved in order to change the system creating these inequalities. Differences in terms of privileges, however, were also handled in another way than just critique of the system. Below is an extract from the group interview where Lena talks about participation in the musical being a learning process.

> Lena: But isn't it a bit like learning someone's language or a couple of phrases in another language? You approach it in the same way – you describe or try to understand someone else's experiences, both from an emotional and concrete perspective. Experiences that you yourself could never have, but you show that you care and that you are trying to understand. (Group interview 28.09.2015).

What Lena is saying here, the will to actually 'understand' someone, to learn phrases from someone's language and to work together for change, may be understood as crucial for processes of commoning. However, I also interpret it as a way of making the system and a privileged position within it a bit more bearable. I suggest that the acts in the musical might also serve to remedy the feelings of guilt in relation to these privileges.

As the participants of the musical were well-aware of, the ways in which borders violently structure the world cannot be overcome by learning phrases in someone's language or by listening to someone's experiences. At the same time, there was a strong desire to believe that these acts meant something. And as I hope to show in this dissertation – different elements in these acts do mean something, different things, but still something. At the same time, the question of *why not me* remains unresolved. To manage to organise and stay engaged, I

suggest that statements in line with Lena's can help provide a sense of meaning to one's actions.

My reflections around privilege and guilt (also see Chapter 7) come with the danger of constructing a 'good' activist or academic (for a similar discussion on the practice of reflexivity, see Skeggs 2002). Statements of listening, learning, feelings of guilt can do the job of constructing a position in a sense outside power relations due to, for example, citizenship and race. Similar to the practice of confession, these statements and payment in terms of time and involvement may provide a sense of recovery and of constructing a reflexive self beyond inequalities (Skeggs 2002). This was one aspect of the work of the musical, not only in terms of providing a sense of meaning to one's actions, but also as a way to endure in a world of injustices. As illustrated in the analysis of the unresolved question of *why not me* and of the statements about wanting to learn about other people's experiences and stories, participation in the musical can be understood as simultaneously making use of privileges, performing resistance and enduring in an unjust world.

Politics of translation

Reconnecting to Erfan's statement about not understanding and to Lena's statement that she did try to understand by learning phrases in a new language or listening to someone's experiences, the issue of a common language surfaces. The musical participants did not have a common language. Much of the communication, especially in the early phases of the process, was enabled through translators. Many times, participants helped with translation and they claimed that in relation to the alternative of bringing in an 'outsider' for translation, they often preferred to translate themselves, altering between the two, three participants who spoke the best Swedish. They also claimed that this was beneficial in relation to their ambition to learn Swedish, as they learned many new words and expressions when translating. However, translating was tiresome and several participants highlighted that this was one reason for why they wanted the rehearsals to be shorter and include more breaks.

To facilitate communication, the musical group also worked with Lexin and Google Translate and we met several times to go through the manuscript. It took quite some time until everyone understood the whole story and not just their own lines. Sometimes, difficulties of translation made it hard to understand the purpose of certain theatre exercises and rehearsals. This was in contrast to, as described above, theatre exercises as a way of communicating

without words. Siamak highlights the crucial difference between sharing and not sharing the same language.

> Siamak: Yes, it's difficult. If you speak the same language, I mean, Swedish. If all us actors could speak perfect Swedish, then it would be more fun and easier for everyone to say what they think and we could joke around with each other. When I meet up with my friends, for example, then we chat for hours and joke about different things but when I meet a Swedish friend, for example you... Then I'm constantly trying to find the right words. It's quite difficult.
> Emma: And maybe you get tired too… Or frustrated...
> Siamak: Yes, a little. Plus, it's probably boring for you to speak with someone who doesn't know your language very well and you have to constantly help and correct me. And you must use Swedish words and speak Swedish that is easy to understand.
> Emma: Yes, but I feel like I'm learning a lot. I think that I've learned so, so much from meeting people like yourself. Not only when it comes to language but lots of other things too.
> Siamak: Of course. No two people are alike and we all have different experiences and knowledge. We learn from each other all the time (…)
> Emma: But you can also find a way in which to communicate and talk.
> Siamak: That...
> Emma: A way in which to joke, where it's possible even if... even when we had less of a common language, even though you knew English all the time, but other people who just knew a little bit of Swedish…you find ways to laugh together anyways.
> Siamak: Yes. (Siamak, interview 13.05.2014)

When I read this quote from Siamak, I once again think of Erfan's *you don't understand* because I see that my answer reflects a reluctance to actually hear and understand the implications of what Siamak was saying. My answer, 'you find ways to laugh together anyways' – I don't think Siamak tried to tell me that we could not laugh together. When I read our conversation, I think he tried to tell me that he thought that not sharing a language was a barrier to our friendship and to the context of the musical. He said that it must be a bit 'boring' to me, that it was harder to make ourselves understood compared to friends speaking the same language, Dari or Swedish. In retrospect, I also think of the ignorance I exhibit by not hearing what he was really saying and for not asking what it was like for him in relation to that he had to express himself in Swedish. What is lost in translation may not be known, but what Siamak emphasised here is that the fact that we did not have a common language had consequences for the extent to which we could understand each other.

Mezzadra and Neilson (2013), inspired by Gramsci, write about the political labour of translation. From their point of view, translation is not limited to language but is at the heart of political organising. Throughout history and also presently, according to Mezzadra and Neilson, those in power have tried to make it hard to communicate for people they oppress. For example, those transporting slaves were consciously placing people who spoke different languages together on the ships in order to make it more difficult for them to organise and resist. In Saudi Arabia where the kafala system is common, which ties migrant workers to a specific job or legal sponsor, domestic workers are recruited from different countries in order not to be able to speak with each other. Thus, translation is needed to confront powers wishing to separate and differentiate. Translation in the context of political organisation 'demands an awareness of the interplay between economic, cultural, and political forces underlying the production of meaning in any given society and not just in the moment of contact between two languages' (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013: 271).

Even though the musical group did not provide an answer to the question of *why not me* and could not fully understand each other, it was still a context where these issues could be discussed. Things were lost in translation, but we still communicated and organised together. I agree with Mezzadra and Neilson that translation is crucial when organising politically, and translation in the case of the musical concerned both the issue of language and addressing the question of *why not me*, as well as discussing to which degree we really were able to understand each other. Translation in organising and in discussions was about trying to handle the fact that the musical participants had different experiences and very different living conditions. Mezzadra and Neilson write about translation in the context of *border struggles* or 'those struggles that take shape around the ever more unstable line between the "inside" and "outside", between inclusion and exclusion' (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013: 13). With the concept of border struggles, they aim to capture both the movements that openly contest borders and the everyday struggles of migrants on the move (or migrants making claims of staying in a place). The musical both openly contested borders in the performance and contested borders at an everyday level. Through this everyday struggle, it was shown that borders cut through the musical, as well as through the processes of commoning.

Translation is one way of conceptualising the border struggles that took place in the everyday organising of the musical. In a sense, there was a construction of a collective political subject – we who aimed to contest borders, fighting for the freedom of movement – but this collective political

subject was simultaneously a subject inherently divided by the border. Thus, the politics of translation (in the broader sense, not just between languages) is one way of exploring this border struggle.

The politics of translation was not only difficult or limiting, but sometimes also a source of laughter.

> We continue to joke and talk about linguistic misunderstandings. Siamak describes how he has been using the wrong word for a long time. When asking someone if he could borrow their cigarette lighter, he kept saying 'Shut up, can I borrow your lighter?' No one ever corrected him, says Siamak. They all just gave him their lighter. We laugh a lot about this. Siamak continues to explain that it took a long time for him to realise that he had mixed up the words 'excuse me' with 'shut up'. However, if you say the words in Swedish really quickly (i.e., 'ursäkta' and 'håll käften'), then you can understand the confusion as they do sound almost the same (Fieldnotes 01.02.2013–02.02.2013)

Siamak described how considerable time went by before anyone corrected him, maybe also an expression of insufficient possibilities for a politics of translation in everyday life. Another aspect of the politics of translation is that one needs to participate in practices where politics of translation may become actualised. Below, Erfan formulates his wish to participate in the musical as a way to meet 'Swedish' people.

> Emma: So, that's the reason why you wanted to join the musical?
> Erfan: Yes, and something else too.
> Emma: Ok, what was that then?
> Erfan: Yes, but don't write about everything I say.
> Emma: OK.
> Erfan: It was great because I didn't have any friends in Malmö before. I didn't know anyone here. I had some friends, but I also wanted to get in contact with and speak with Swedish people. I thought that the musical would be a good way to get to know and make contact with people. I have lived in Sweden for a long time but I never had much contact with Swedish people, so when I heard that there were many Swedes in the group, I decided to join.
> Emma: To get to know…
> Erfan: Yes.
> Emma: But I think that's a really important reason and one that I would like to write about because that's also the reason why I joined the group, to meet and get to know people. So, that's nothing unusual, Erfan, don't you think?
> Erfan: OK, yes, go ahead, write about it. (Erfan, interview 05.02.2014)

In our conversation, it was brought forward that it was not just any friends, but 'Swedish' friends Erfan liked to meet. He said that it was due to the fact that

he did not have any friends before, and he wanted 'contact' with Swedish people and to talk with Swedish people. In relation to what it can mean to reside as undocumented in general and in Sweden in particular, I have already discussed how this permeates one's being in the world. Erfan experienced his position as outside general society and the musical as a way to meet people from the majority society. He was looking for places where there would be a possibility for a politics of translation.

Erfan's motivation for joining the musical can also be understood in relation to the Swedish reception system for unaccompanied minors where special accommodations, sometimes located in rural areas, as well as special introduction programmes in the schools do not provide many opportunities to meet Swedish people, especially not young Swedes. These previous experiences of being accommodated as an unaccompanied minor sometimes added to experiences of being positioned outside of society as deportable. Furthermore, although this is not always talked about in terms of experiences of racism, youngsters living in accommodations for unaccompanied minors and attending special classes are affected by overall racialised discourses regarding 'immigrants' (Wernesjö 2015: 460). When we travelled in minibuses with the musical, drivers in other cars would sometimes honk and make a fuck you sign directed at the musical group, which was seen as motivated by racism.

The motivation to participate in the musical as a way to get to know people and to be part of a group was expressed by several of the participants. However, only those participants with experiences of deportability expressed participation in the musical as a way to meet 'Swedish' people, as Erfan says, or as a way to learn Swedish.

Furthermore, Erfan seems to be ashamed of his wish to meet Swedish people. At first, he does not want me to write about it, but he later allows me to do so as I say that meeting people was also a reason for me to join. However, there is the difference between wanting to meet people (as I say) and wanting to meet 'Swedish' people, people from the majority society, and I interpret that this is the source of Erfan's 'shame'. His reluctance to talk about that he wanted to meet specifically 'Swedish' people may be analysed as an expression of the power relations present in the commoning processes of the musical. The politics of translation was not an endeavour carried out on equal terms, but existed within a broader social context where those who are categorised as 'migrants' are supposed to 'integrate' (formulated here as meeting Swedish people) but where there are no similar demands on the majority society to transform or adjust in relation to newcomers. This was

something the musical sought to contest; for example, by highlighting the equal worth of each participant's work and contribution and by explicitly stating that those without experiences of migrating have a lot to learn from those with these experiences. However, the overall societal context in terms of integration and the specific situation of residing as undocumented in Sweden still affected the context of the musical, and I here find the concept of a politics of translation as a dimension of border struggles to be illuminative.

Ambivalent relationship-building

> Another funny incident was when Alireza called me. 'Hi, aziz [roughly translated 'hello dear' in Dari], how are you?' 'I'm good thanks', I replied, 'and you?' 'Good thanks', Alireza replied and continued, 'I just wanted to remind you about our get-together at 11 a.m. tomorrow morning – so you don't forget.' 'Yeeees', I answered hesitantly, 'I know.' Alireza was quiet at first and then began laughing, 'I'm only joking, aziz!' He then went on to reveal his real reason for calling me – he wanted me to send him the link to the radio programme having featured our musical. Such a cheeky thing to do but one that says something about our relationship, that we 'adults' are the ones who keep an eye on things and always have to remind the youngsters about what needs to be done and when. (Fieldnotes 20.01.2013)

Alireza knew that I knew what time we were going to meet the next day, but he still told me. By telling me, my reaction (the reluctant answer, 'I know') and then his silence while he just let me stay in confusion, he effectively exposed our different roles and positions in the musical group. He not only exposed them, he also made fun of them. As I write in the fieldnote, the joke said a lot about our relationships within the group where there was a lot of talk of 'adults' and 'youngsters'. In the fieldnote, I also clearly positioned myself as an 'adult' by writing 'us' when referring to 'adults'.

In the musical, those referred to as 'adults' and 'youngsters' also coincided with the categories of citizen (adult) and non-citizen (youngster), white (adult) and non-white (youngster) and were also generally divided along the lines of gender (as discussed in Chapter 2). In this section, I start off with the talk of 'adults' and 'youngsters' to explore what the categories meant and represented to the musical group and how they contributed to a reproduction of the power relations that the musical aimed to contest.

Some months after the musical had staged its final performance, I met Nima for an interview. I had interviewed Nima during the working process as well

and that interview centred a lot around Nima's experiences of residing as undocumented. This time the interview was more focused on Nima's experiences of being part of the musical, both in terms of how he had perceived performing on stage and in terms of what he thought about the working process as a whole. When asked about whether he ever felt uneasy about performing, he answered that 'tjafs' (i.e., bickering or fuss) had occurred between 'adults' and 'youngsters'. Nima went on to say that this bickering was about unimportant things, such as the food we ate in connection to performances or rehearsals or whether we should sit or stand in the beginning of the opening scene. To Nima, this bickering, at least in retrospect, was simply nothing but unimportant bickering. Furthermore, he talked about how the 'youngsters' had problems in terms of taking responsibility.

> Nima: Because youngsters are a little, well you know, they find it difficult to take responsibility, which makes adults having to take more responsibility and for them too. Taking responsibility for, for example, being on time or at the right place or having to do the tasks one has taken on, at the same time as being responsible for reminding or having to call the young ones and saying that this and that must be done. So, even if everyone was taking responsibility, it was shared between young people and adults a little bit unfairly. Some youngsters were a little, uhm..., not taking things seriously and sometimes they would be late or not able to turn up at all and such things… (Nima, interview 15.04.2014)

Nima was not the only one to address the categorisation of 'adults' and 'youngsters' during the interviews, and although not everyone talked in terms of these categories, many talked about an unequal distribution of responsibilities in the group. What Nima talked about in terms of 'adults' and 'youngsters' indicates that it was a categorisation based upon age. He described what may be thought of as images of typical youngster behaviours: not being on time, not taking enough responsibility, not being 'serious' enough. Moreover, the individuals referred to as 'youngsters' in the musical group had earlier, upon arrival in Sweden, been categorised as unaccompanied minors. Thus, it seems like age, or constructions of the meanings of age, had some bearing on how to understand this talk of 'adults' and 'youngsters' within the musical group. Age was also explicitly addressed in the musical performance, as one actor performed a rap where the practices of the age assessment processes of the Migration Agency were questioned through lines stating that 'I am as old as I say I am'.

I am as old as I say I am
The X-ray image of my skeleton rattles in your decision
But you do not listen to a word I say
I heard from a friend that my X-ray result is not the end
As without listening to me, you can't just decide regardless
My memories make me grow old faster – I act as an adult, you say
My memories terrorise me – I can manage, you say
My memories exist, just like you – there is no proof, you say (Song)

The participants of the musical who had been categorised as unaccompanied minors upon arrival in Sweden had all been denied access to an asylum procedure in Sweden due to having their fingerprints taken in another EU country. Thus, in accordance with the Dublin Regulation, it was decided that they be deported to the first country of arrival and have their application processed there. In the so-called first country of asylum, several of the participants in the musical had been registered as adults, which meant that upon finding their fingerprints registered, the Migration Agency often applied the age that had been registered in the first country of asylum. 'I am as old as I say I am' was performed in this context of having one's stated age questioned by the Migration Agency. Furthermore, the performance addressed the age assessment procedures that had been and continue to be the subject of extensive criticism (see, for example, Efendić 2018; Nyström 2018).[69] The performance addressed just how humiliating and violent the acts of x-raying bones and teeth and measuring genitals are for the people exposed.

Live Stretmo (2014) argues that as the requirements on the reasons for claiming asylum are supposed to be a bit lighter when it comes to children, it has become crucial for the Migration Agency to determine whether or not one is a child. Furthermore, young people applying for asylum without their parents are constructed as vulnerable due to the view of a child belonging to their parents. Paradoxically then, young people are viewed with suspicion and are subjected to offensive treatment in order to determine if they are 'vulnerable' children entitled to special treatment. If considered children in Sweden, they are also entitled to a legal guardian and put in special housing with other unaccompanied minors. As for the participants of the musical, until they received their expulsion order, they had been treated as minors, thus

[69] The issue of medical age assessments has been discussed widely, touching upon a variety of themes, such as ethics, scentificity, racism, criminalisation of migrants and migration, and may be historically linked to the Swedish population policies after the Second World War (Lundberg 2017). Although an important discussion, it is a bit outside the scope of this chapter.

accommodated in special housing with other youth applying for asylum. Their first experiences of Sweden were thus highly permeated by the question of whether or not they were considered to be under the age of 18.

In the group interview, where participants without personal experiences of deportability in retrospect reflected upon the process of creating the musical, it was suggested that the talk about 'youngsters' and 'adults' served a function of making the division of labour and responsibilities less complicated. Age was highlighted as a factor creating this division, but at the same time it was argued that there was no great age difference between the oldest 'youngster' and the youngest 'adult'. It was also discussed that one purpose of the musical had been to create a safe place for the individuals residing as undocumented. The 'protective' dimension came from a presumption that the young people residing as undocumented had 'a need of going somewhere where one did not need to take adult responsibility' (Sofi, group interview 28.09.2015). The need to 'protect' was motivated due to the young people residing as undocumented early in their lives had faced harsh and violent conditions in their countries of origin, as well as during their dangerous journey to and through Europe. The ambition to protect also existed in relation to the ever-present threat of a participant being detected by the police as undocumented.

Some of my fieldnotes are linked to this ambition to protect. One describes an event that took place when we were rehearsing in a place rented by another association. When the rehearsal had just started, Lena called me. She was late to the rehearsal and when she arrived, she saw a police car standing just outside the facility. She was panicking, and so was I. We decided not to tell anyone that the police were standing outside. We did not want to worry the rest of the group. Instead, we engaged in different activities of risk-minimising. We called friends and people active in the migrant rights movement and asked them to circulate in the area and keep track of the police, we searched for alternative exits and then we went in and continued rehearsing. When we had a break, we learned that the police had moved from the yard outside where we were and was now circulating the street further away. When we were finished rehearsing, we told the rest of the group about the police (who had left by then) and encouraged people to be careful on their way home.

Lena and I withheld information concerning the safety of participants and decided on their behalf. We did it to protect them. We did it not to worry the participants. The intention was sincere, and the outcome was good in the end, since no one was detected. However, our actions were also deeply problematic as we took away people's ability to decide for themselves how they wanted to handle the situation. Maybe, they had taken the same actions as we did and

decided to remain in the facility, but this is not the point. The point is that the ambition to create a safe space also, as in this case, sometimes took away people's ability to make decisions for themselves and risked reproduce or cement the categories of 'adult'/citizen and 'youngster'/undocumented.

In the group interview with participants without personal experiences of deportability, the ambition of creating a 'safe' space was highlighted as problematic, as it created a distribution of roles reproducing the categories of citizen/undocumented/asylum-seeker. Sofi argued that they had adopted a kind of 'parenting role'. This role intersected with gender as those participants in the musical residing as undocumented were men and as those who adopted a kind of 'parenting role' were generally women. The work carried out within the local migrant rights movement was and still is work that is traditionally femininely coded. It concerns building relationships, accompanying people in their efforts to access welfare services, struggles to find housing, etc. It is not political work on the barricades, on the streets, but often invisible work; yet, as I claim here, still highly political (see Mezzadra and Neilson 2013; Anderson, Sharma and Wright 2012). However, the invisible character of the work and that it frequently concerns complicated emotional involvement can be part of the explanation of why in Malmö, at least until recent years, activists in the migrant rights movement have generally been women, which, in turn, explains the majority of women in the musical as well. This gender composition of the musical group intersected with the distribution of roles, responsibilities and power relations played out along the lines of citizen/non-citizen, white/non-white and adult/youngster.

Different meanings of 'tjafs' or bickering

As already mentioned, the groupings of 'adults' and 'youngsters' were unclear but at the same time played a great role for how the working process was structured. In the interview with Nima, he talked of bickering between 'youngsters' and 'adults'. When I asked how he would categorise himself, he answered that he was 'in-between' (Nima, interview 15.04.2014). His answer is illuminating in regard to the importance of seeing the blurriness of these categories.

Although not intentionally, the 'protected' space that some of the participants had sought to create contributed to a distribution of responsibilities with consequences for the experience of having influence over the decision-making process. The bickering referred to by Nima, about the food we ate, about people coming late or about doing what one had said one would do,

signified something more for some of the participants. It was not just bickering. Below is a quote from an interview conducted with Erfan after the last performance of the musical. I asked Erfan about his thoughts regarding how the workload had been distributed and if he thought that he had been able to decide as much as he wanted to.

> Erfan: Thinking of when we were going to eat, it was not good. Many times, we said that we want meat, but no one listens.
> Emma: No.
> Erfan: Or cares... We have all said, hundreds of times, that we want to eat meat too. But when we went to the restaurant, then we ate meat [when eating out with everyone in the musical]. But with the musical, we did not eat. It does not mean that we like meat a lot. It means that sometimes, we like to eat meat or how do you say... sometimes meat is good and, you know, we eat a lot of vegetarian food. (Erfan, interview 05.02.2014)

Erfan was really frustrated that he and the other participants who wanted to do so were not able to cook meat within the context of the musical. The way Erfan speaks in the quote, referring to a 'we' that is not the musical group, but a different 'we', is also illustrative of what I try to capture by analysing the talk of 'adults' and 'youngsters'. A majority of the participants in the musical were vegans or vegetarians and the food during rehearsals and performances was generally vegetarian/vegan. This veganism or vegetarianism was also a reflection of the musical being created in a context of migrant support activism, which, in turn, was part of the larger extra-parliamentary left, where, at least to the participants with a background in this context, the norm was eating vegan or vegetarian food. In the interview with Erfan, it is clear that for him, the issue of food came to be loaded with meaning, which he linked to the already mentioned feeling of not being listened to.

Further, in relation to being told to keep quiet during rehearsals, Erfan explicitly linked his feeling of not being respected to being seen as a minor, combined with not being a native Swedish-speaker.

> Erfan: No one listened, because we couldn't speak Swedish that well. You know, we are treated as children, as we're like nine, ten years old, they don't care. But we are not young, not a child that you tell to keep quiet.
> Emma: Yes.
> Erfan: When we were in Stockholm [autumn 2013], when we spoke, others went 'schuh schuh'. But when the others spoke, nothing happened, which is why I was really angry. What the hell is this? But anyway, I have a lot of respect for the others, so I don't say anything. They say 'Erfan, keep quiet'. I

> say ‘absolutely, I will keep quiet and sit down’, but we are young, not children. (….) (Erfan, interview 05.02.2014)

Erfan experienced that he, but not ‘others’, was told to be quiet, which I interpret as referring to other ‘adults’, as he by being told to be quiet felt like he was treated like a small child (and because this issue had been discussed at previous meetings as well). He underlined that although he was young, he was not a child. Erfan made a connection between not to be listened to and not speaking sufficiently good Swedish (also see the above discussion on translation), which may be understood as another example of the border struggles taking place within the musical. Erfan experienced his subjectivity being reduced by the categories placed upon him, as young and as non-Swedish. In the musical, these categorisations and practices were made visible and resisted. For example, the practice of hushing was one of the subjects addressed at a meeting with the musical. Several stated that they, just like Erfan, felt disrespected upon being told to be quiet and expressed that they were told to be quiet more frequently than others. In the group interview with participants in the musical without personal experiences of deportability, this meeting is referred to as one of the first times that the power relations between ‘adults’ and ‘youngsters’ were explicitly highlighted and critiqued.

> Lena: Yes, I agree. It was the first time that anyone actually mentioned anything about the power inequality. I mean, [they said] you talk to the adults whilst hushing us non-adults and that is not OK. I remember it, it just came out and I went ‘gulp’... I was totally aware of it, but it was the first time that I was faced by it and I just thought, ‘oh, OK’ and then ‘actually, no, it’s not OK’.
> Jonna: And it feels like it was one of the first times that we… or that I could say, ‘but you’re talking!’ A feeling of ... I’m not afraid of confrontation or anything but now, it was now OK to say that you must be quiet because people are talking, it’s a problem, because people are talking. Well, a bit like that... that it was possible to say a bit more... (Group interview 28.09.2015)

Jonna and Lena describe a somewhat different reaction. On the one hand, Lena describes how this was a kind of wakeup call for her, that she for the first time really saw the power relations being revealed and questioned. On the other hand, Jonna seemed to want to stick to the story of the ‘youngsters’ actually disturbing with their talk more than others, thus in a way justifying the practice of hushing. The meeting where the practice of telling someone to keep quite was discussed took place in April 2013, more than a year after the musical had started to form what would later become the ensemble. It thus took a

considerable time before the talk of 'youngsters' and 'adults' was scrutinised. This also points to the importance of continuity for processes of commoning. I suggest that for the conflicts to become formulated into words for the whole group and lay the groundwork for a discussion, relationship-building and working together over a longer period of time was important.

This particular meeting was held due to the fact that we had been away over a weekend, performing in another city, and the fact that there had been a number of conflicts during this weekend. Consequently, the meeting constituted an answer to a specific 'event'. Below is part of my fieldnotes from the weekend in question.

> Then we all met up for a group meeting. Everyone sat waiting in the foyer. When I arrived, the atmosphere in the room was so toxic that you could almost feel it. It soon became obvious that everyone was discussing when and who should go early the next morning so that those who wanted would be home until 2 p.m. for the celebration of a leading figure of the Hazara. It was difficult to sort out who should drive the rental cars as only a few were insured. Everyone was completely shattered and we found it impossible to find a simple solution. Siamak got very frustrated and angry, 'we've been sitting here for an hour now and you still haven't made a decision. We can take the train, we don't have to go by car!' to which Elsa angrily replied, 'we're trying to sort this out for you, no one else!' We then decided that I would travel together with Malin, Sofi and Henrik, who would drive. Siamak, Alireza, Hamid, Nima, Erfan and Mostafa left as soon as this had been decided – without helping to carry any of the musical props or food (that had been bought because they had told us they were hungry). Further complaints about the food were made over the weekend. They were cross because they did not like the food but were hungry. I think that those who have helped organise it all felt a bit disappointed as all their efforts and hard work went completely unnoticed. The weekend turned out to be very stressful for many participants, both adults and young people. Worth noting was that it did not concern all the younger people. Siamak, Alireza, Hamid, Mostafa and Erfan were the ones who got frustrated and angry, who arrived late (including Nima) or left without saying goodbye. The rest of the group (i.e., the other four) seemed just fine. Important to note too! It was also important to see that we adults were too tired to cope and resolve the situation in a good way. Not putting the blame on anyone, but this clearly shows that nothing is completely black and white. The young ones behaved appallingly but had we been more alert and clearer in our heads, we would probably have been able to see why and find a solution (Fieldnotes 07.03.2013).

When I read this note, I see that the musical participants tried hard, but it was not enough. I also see in my way of writing, of trying to create nuances, that this 'youngster' did not behave like that and this 'youngster' behaved like this,

etc. only reinforces the categorisation of them together as a group, albeit evidently not behaving or sharing the same experiences during this weekend. Furthermore, I tend to write in a way that puts the problem on the 'youngster' and assigns the 'adults' the role of (failed) problem-solvers. This particular weekend, as I wrote, was full of conflicts, tiredness and incapacity to communicate within the group.

The theme of power relations in regard to being able to influence the working process was a central theme during the group interview with participants without personal experiences of deportability. During this interview, it was highlighted that although the musical group during the process had discussed and sought to change a certain distribution of roles along the lines of 'adults'/'youngsters', some working groups were only made up of 'white adult activists' and there had been a lack of transparency in regard to what the different groups did and were responsible for. One example brought up was the group responsible for the economy, consisting of two individuals, 'adults', who took care of the accounting (Group interview 28.09.2015). Just as with the practice of hushing, how money was handled was also discussed rather late in the working process of the musical. This led to a meeting with about ten of the participants where the economic situation was discussed and made more transparent. In the group interview, participants critically reflected upon the reproduction of power relations that the talk of and practices in relation to the categories 'adults' and 'youngsters' had contributed to.

> Lena continues: The music group was doing its own thing as was the scenography, although they were not as many, on top of which we had to do the practical planning for the weekends, fixing it all and this was also very divided. It was like 'the adults and the young ones' that we talked about, but it was also about the white and non-white (Group interview 28.09.2015).

The frustration and anger expressed by Erfan above in regard to the food we ate during rehearsals and the practices of hushing may be understood in light of what Lena expresses here. That is, Erfan's feelings of anger may be related to that he sensed that the categories of 'adults' and 'youngsters' were used in a way to conceal divisions in the group along lines of skin colour and legal status.

A conditioned sanctuary

The consequences of the talk of 'adults' and 'youngsters' and the ambition of creating a safe space were problematised to a large extent in the group

interview and several participants were very self-critical. The different positions and relationships within the group were also discussed at the beginning of the working process.

> I met Elin today, who had thought about participating in the musical on equal terms. Elin has the role of an informal legal guardian for a number of young people and feels that it is thus difficult to participate in the musical on equal terms. It would have been easier had the young ones not been previously known to her but as she has relationships with them since before, this is impossible to remove from the musical. Elin says that it is OK though and that she will continue to have the role of a parent, telling the young ones off when they do not show each other respect, etc. Elin does not want to let go of her function as an informal legal guardian despite being part of the musical. Lena, who also has the role of an informal guardian/parent, feels a little bit the same way. Lena describes how she often keeps the young ones informed of the rehearsal dates and times, usually via texts. She often feels that she is telling them to come to the rehearsals rather than inviting them – this is because she knows that participating will do them good (Fieldnotes 27.02.2012).

Considering that Lena had an informal role similar to that of a legal guardian, with influence in regard to supporting access to resources such as health care, contacts with school, economic aid, it could be understood as if the 'youngsters' she told to come would find it difficult to say no. Lena stated that she did not really ask the 'youngsters' to come but more *told* them to come, which also points to the difficulties in regard to participating in the musical on 'equal terms', as also stated by Elin above. Whether anyone really participated against their will is impossible to know for certain, but it should be mentioned that some participants did leave the musical (hence, it was not taboo to leave).

As described in Chapter 2, the musical was initiated in a context of the local migrant support network, the Asylum Group, which had started to get into contact with young people who had been categorised as unaccompanied minors upon arrival. When they absconded their accommodation, they left an environment where they had a legal guardian as well as staff around them 24 hours a day. In a way, Elin and Lena were describing how they had tried to provide a substitution for the withdrawal of the support that the undocumented participants had received as unaccompanied minors. The state had denied them protection and disregarded their claim of residency in Sweden. Elin and Lena, among others in the migrant rights movement and the musical, challenged the state's decision to reject their claim of asylum. Thus, the claim of a right to stay in Sweden, a claim ignored and disregarded by the state, was answered by

other individuals, citizens of the Swedish state who felt an obligation towards that claim (cf. *acts of solidarity* Squire 2009).

The song below, performed by the musical, was written by a participant without personal experiences of deportability. The subject speaking in the song is constructed as both a 'we' and a 'you' in terms of experiences of flight and deportability. I suggest that the song may be illustrative of ambitions to represent possibilities of resistance against borders on stage. This resistance is permeated by violence and ambivalences in regard to power relations, however still aiming to illustrate possibilities of worlds beyond borders. The song is called 'Sanctuary'.

> We cannot stay on
> We cannot even fly our kite over town.
> The road we travel is an open sea
>
> We must buy our freedom and hope it will take us all the way
> To the edge of a boundless land where walls have turned to sand
> Yes, of course it happens sometimes
>
> You have crossed the bridge this evening
> You have stood between deep car tracks on a gravel road
> You carry something they can never take away
>
> When the flags are no longer there
> And what is waving in the wind is higher than a state
> Then their power apparatus is destroyed
>
> Dew-filled mornings over broken fencing raise clouds they do not see
> Fires spread along the horizon until our freedom becomes a reality
> And until everybody knows
>
> That you have crossed the bridge this evening
> You have stood between deep car tracks on a gravel road
> You carry something they can never take away
>
> You cannot stay on
> They say that you have left your prints, that you must turn back
> But they have no idea about our sanctuary

To, as a citizen, act in solidary with people who are threatened by deportation may be understood as making use of the privilege inherent in having a Swedish citizenship. Further, to not comply with the migration authorities' decisions of

expulsion and instead abscond from the authorities, or to assist to make the conditions of deportability a bit more bearable, as well as performing stories of another world on stage, could be understood as resistance. Simultaneously, these acts were often performed along the dividing lines of citizenship/non-citizenship, white/non-white and woman/man and thus risked reproducing these binaries. Hence, in some sense, acts by citizens performed in solidarity with undocumented individuals may also be understood as an example of a border struggle taking place in the midst of what I understand as processes of commoning.

As mentioned above, on the one hand, talk about 'youngsters' and 'adults' can be seen as reflecting common constructions of 'youngsters' as not being responsible and doing a lot of 'tjafs', unimportant things, and 'adults' as organised and responsible people. On the other hand, the talk of 'youngsters' and 'adults', as described above, was played out in a specific context of the asylum process and reception system in Sweden, as well as in the context of the migrant rights movement. Moreover, the category of 'youngster' was also mobilised in order to claim access to rights and to contest the disbelief many faced in relation to the asylum process (e.g., in regard to age assessments). Thus, it seems like the talk about 'adults' and 'youngsters' had to do with institutionalised meanings attributed to age (the reception system in Sweden), which then spilled over into how undocumented young individuals were treated within the migrant support network *and* used as metaphors for something else besides age. Further, this talk also intersected with the distribution of workloads and responsibilities during the working process.

Methods of 'inclusion'?

In the group interview with participants without personal experiences of deportability, it was further highlighted that a lot of things were taken for granted by the 'adults', such as how to organise and behave during a meeting, who has the courage to speak one's mind, etc. It was discussed that some sort of method for 'inclusion' would have been helpful for facilitating the distribution of labour and responsibilities within the group. Still, many such methods were practiced already from the beginning of the working process. The musical had small group discussions to facilitate participation in larger meetings, rounds where everyone got to share their point of view without being interrupted, organised affinity groups for information sharing and a number of theatre exercises facilitating communication without a common language.

However, none of these methods could do away with the fact that the conditions for participation were different.

That the categories of 'adults' and 'youngsters' and their consequences were made visible and critiqued was important for the processes of commoning. It may be understood as practicing the politics of translation, discussed above. An exploration of the practices of the musical brings the ambivalences and difficulties of these processes into light.

In the group interview, it was highlighted that the musical was a context of learning and a way of organising that developed over time.

> It [the musical work] gave me a lot of new insights, valuable ideas and knowledge and something that I really wanted and thought was great to be part of. It felt like we were creating another way in which to get involved... something I think has stuck with me ever since. It has changed us, I think, both in terms of how we're thinking and in a more concrete way (Lena, group interview 28.09.2015).

Furthermore, although the talk of 'youngster' and 'adult' did serve as a legitimisation of existing power relations, the distribution of responsibilities and decision-making was not expressed as problematic by all participants. In a way, it provided a chance for the 'adults' to see their practices as linked to adulthood, instead of being linked to the distribution of power and responsibilities due to categorisations of whiteness, gender or citizenship. For a participant categorised as a 'youngster', he described the distribution of responsibilities as follows:

> Amin: That's because we can't all act as one, everyone can't decide and… Take a football team, for example. It has one coach, one captain and a team of players. You never see the entire team talking to the referee, just the captain. All teams have a captain who fixes everything and the rest (we) just turn up.
> Emma: A good comparison... I understand what you mean… So, when it comes to the musical, you think some people have decided more than others?
> Amin: Mmm, yes
> Emma: So, what do you think about it? Do you feel that you've been able to get your opinion across or have you sometimes felt that most decisions have been made by others…?
> Amin: No, I think it's been really good, but if we all have a say then nothing gets decided or done.
> Emma: No.
> Amin: Some people lead it all and always check that you understand or tell you what's going on, and I like that, that's great! But if they [were] to decide instead of telling you what's going on, it would have been a little more

> difficult. They work hard, so when they tell me about things and ask what I think, if it's good, I always say, 'yes, it's good' because they have a lot to do, they call us all about the theatre, times, etc., so why should I question why they're deciding? I only turn up to act [perform] while they fix everything else (Amin, interview 25.02.2014).

What Amin says here is that he was pleased with how the distribution of work and responsibilities was carried out. Stating that he also experienced that 'the leaders' always checked with him if the decisions were good may be interpreted as he looked upon the decisions as being, to some extent, generally accepted. However, Amin also explained that 'the leaders' did so much work that he just wanted to say yes to their suggestions, as I interpret out of respect for their work. This could obviously be read as another dimension of the power relations, those in power to decide had so much power that questioning them was unthinkable. Simultaneously, it could also be understood, as Amin also said, that not everyone could decide everything all the time, and that it was nice that someone else had taken the responsibility to plan.

I continued the interview by asking Amin who the 'leaders' were and how they had been chosen to be the 'leaders'. He answered that about half of the group were 'leaders' but that he, as he had joined the group when it was already started, did not know how the 'leaders' had been chosen. This is an important point made by Amin: The musical was initiated and sprung out of a context of migrant rights activism, at the time mainly consisting of people without personal experiences of migration. The framework of the project as such was in some ways already there when people residing as undocumented started joining. Yet, the initiators also put forward that even though they had an idea, the musical developed beyond what they had imagined.

> Elsa: I feel that in the beginning, we had this idea to plan and develop, which then began taking form.
> Yvonne: Yes.
> Elsa: And the idea developed and grew and started to become something much bigger than we expected and we suddenly had to, like, keep up with it and try to manage it… That's what it feels like now, when I look back at it, that the entire experience took over (Group interview 28.09.2015).

Not all 'adults' were on time, not all 'youngsters' were late, and although 'youngsters' were talked about as a category of people who took less or little responsibility in regard to the working process, there are many examples of the opposite: preparing and cooking food during rehearsal weekends was frequently carried out by 'youngsters', translating and making sure that

everyone understood was also a fundamental task mostly carried out by 'youngsters' and the struggle and time spent on learning lines and the manuscript in a new language could also be seen as taking a large responsibility for the musical. Furthermore, to actually engage in trying to transform the relationships within the group by pointing to what one experienced to be unfair may be understood as taking a large responsibility for the well-being of the group as a whole. On one of these occasions, several participants residing as undocumented or going through an asylum process expressed that the rehearsals were a bit too long and that they needed more breaks, but also that they had difficulties in terms of managing the rehearsals in relation to their everyday lives. With regard to this discussion, Siamak reflected upon the fact that he afterwards had felt nervous in regard to how the rest of the group would react to the 'criticism' of how the work was organised.

> Siamak: For me, it got better and better, from the start up until the last performance. But sometimes, when it became a bit too stressful for the actors and those with more responsibility, there were misunderstandings and a few minor conflicts. I was afraid that it would affect our friendship. I'm glad it didn't affect it. We are all still the best of friends.
> Emma: Uhum.
> Siamak: Yes, it's good (Siamak, interview 13.05.2014).

The conflicts in the musical group were difficult for the participants in general, but for the participants residing as undocumented or going through an asylum process, they may have been in a more vulnerable position in regard to risks of the conflicts splitting up the musical group. This was due to the fact that they inhabited a far more insecure position in society at large, where participating in the musical could in some ways be seen as 'improving' that position (simultaneously as it was inherently risky to mobilise in regard to deportability). Or, at least that could be one interpretation of the nervousness expressed by Siamak above in relation to the conflicts.

Moreover, not all tensions or conflicts within the group were played out in the language of 'youngsters' and 'adults'. In the April meeting referred to above, for example, one participant expressed that he was sad because he experienced that those who had been acting as his friends in the beginning of the work with the musical no longer talked to him or called him. Right before the premiere, there was also a conflict where a participant claimed that he had received threats from other participants. Another time, a participant accused another participant of stealing his bike. These conflicts started or took place outside of the musical, and I have no insight into their substance. I am sure that

there were several other occasions of conflicts of which I was unaware. The point is that an exploration into the talk of 'adults' and 'youngsters' revealed how the construction of these categories created a distribution of power, which also reinforced the categorisation of citizen/non-citizen, white/non-white and man/woman. However, I also hope that I have shown that these categories where not stable and were challenged during the working process. Working together over a long period of time thus provided the participants with the opportunity of both getting to know each other better and challenging the roles from which the relationships had set out from in the beginning of the process.

> Sofi: It was a really cool thing to get involved in, to work with something worthwhile for such a long time, it makes a difference for the group as a whole. It's not possible to truly get to know people unless you work in that way (Group interview 28.09.2015).

I hope to have contributed to an analysis showing how the processes of commoning are full of conflicts, which are not easily overcome or even possible to solve. However, as emphasised by Papadopoulos and Tsianos (2013), in the midst of sovereign control, and in this case the reproduction of the relations of power that the musical aimed to contest with all the contradictions I have described, these relations also simultaneously 'install relations of justice on the ground' (Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013: 192). The quote below is from when Siamak described the context of the musical for me as we were preparing a lecture for students of social work we were to present together.

> When Obama came to Sweden, I heard about the respect all the politicians showed him. If Obama had participated in our musical, there would have been no difference between him and an undocumented person. This is just an example to show that there's no difference between people in our musical. There are people who teach at the university and others who have just attended school for four years but they're all treated the same. We would like the world look like our musical, for the whole world to be like that. (…) (Siamak, fieldnotes 13.09.2013).

To reconnect to where this chapter started, despite all the ambivalences and tensions, the musical was a space where the conditions of exclusion could be made visible and contested.

Conclusion

Using theatre and performance as a way of organising resistance against the deportation regime (De Genova and Peutz 2010) provided possibilities for creating a sense of togetherness through regular meetings, doing exercises, rehearsing, playing games, as well as performing on stage. These practices also created emotions and affective bonds between participants. Emotions as driving forces for joining or as generated by involvement in protests or social movements have been said to be crucial for mobilising protests (Jasper 1998). Building relationship and emotional bonds, as well as the different practices described above, were key for the formation of the musical group. Furthermore, feelings of hope in relation to the desire to make a change was an important motivation for participating. I analyse the work carried out by the musical, both the practical and the emotional, as processes of commoning. These processes of commoning included affective support, relations of care, mutual cooperation, carried out during a long period of time (also see Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013). As discussed in Chapter 5, although deportability permeated the working process, there were moments where the world of control and surveillance could in a sense be partly and temporarily forgotten, or at least not adjusted to.

The exploration into talk of 'adults' and 'youngsters' sheds light on the particular distribution of roles within the group. That is, of receivers and givers of support and how this distribution of roles many times reproduced divisions along race, gender and citizenship, simultaneously as it also constituted a contestation of the orders of expulsion. An analysis of the musical shows that borders cut through the processes of commoning and make them ambiguous, thus not existing beyond injustice, but still constituting a contestation of the state trying to expel certain individuals and populations.

This chapter has also shown how the overarching framework of the migration control and the reception system in Sweden had consequences for how relationships developed within the musical. By talking in terms of the politics of translation and border struggles, resistance to deportability is made visible. At the same time, the tensions in the work of the musical are also brought into light. Although the musical could not overcome power relations produced by deportability, it still constituted a context where questions of justice, the politics of translation and border struggles could be discussed as well as practiced and handled.

In summary, struggles attempting to make the world a more just place will confront injustices. Injustices that are not outside of the struggles, but part of

them and of the daily lives of those involved. The musical shows that the politics of translation will involve conflicts and difficulties, which are not always possible to solve.

7. Performing resistance: Visibility and recognition

> What words should we use? What arguments, what actions, what stories would lead to change? (…) They say that we should tell (…) [But] if we have already told and yet everyone keeps living as if we had been silent? (*No Border Musical*, opening scene).

The above quote comes from the first scene in the musical performance where the text is read out load through speakers, while the stage is still covered in darkness. It poses an interesting reflection: how can we tell and represent in an ethically sound way that makes people listen and contribute to change? In this chapter, I explore the content of the performance and relate it to the working process of the musical. I develop this analysis in dialogue with Rancière's thoughts on art and politics (2001, 2008, 2010) and with literature from the field of engaged theatre and critical migration studies (Dolan 2006; Wake 2013; Sager 2016, 2018).

According to Rancière (2008), the politics of art lies in the unintended and unexpected. Hence, Rancière's thoughts on art could be placed in opposition to an instrumental view on art; for example, theatre produced to serve predefined political goals. However, these positions might not be as oppositional as may be implied in this type of reasoning. On the one hand, the musical could be interpreted as using theatre as an instrument for change. That is, making the consequences of migration control visible and performing visions of a world without borders, with the outspoken ambition of transforming the present regime of migration control. On the other hand, the working process of the musical was unpredictable; for example, in relation to how relationships were formed between the participants and in relation to the impossibility of foreseeing whether the work would actually result in a full-length performance (and the exact content of that performance). Additionally, as discussed above (see Chapter 5), the musical participants had little control in regard to avoiding deportation orders being carried out.

The quote introducing this chapter points to the difficulties and insecurity in regard to the ambition of creating a performance aiming for transformation. In this chapter, Rancière provides me with an analytical gaze and a language for capturing the politics of art, beyond instrumental views on art as a tool for politics. Furthermore, I deepen the analysis of the performance by relating it to the working process of the musical. The chapter is organised in three analytical themes: *visibility and recognition*, *working with representing experiences* and *contestations of migration control – gestures towards utopia.*

Visibility and recognition

> When I started to participate in the *No Border Musical*, I was hidden [gömd], so it was a bit difficult for me to go out and be visible, but then I thought that I must be visible and show that this is unfair and, yeah, and then I thought that it is important to be in this musical and inform people [about the situation] (Nima, panel discussion 09.11.2013).

In this quote from a discussion in a panel after a performance, Nima puts forward that due to residing as undocumented, he was supposed to be invisible. As undocumented, you are deprived of political status, thus lacking access to a sphere where you are recognised as a political being, something that Arendt (1968) already in the aftermath of the Second World War pointed out as inherent in the undocumented condition. Nima had contested this invisibility by putting himself on stage, thus making himself visible in public.

To recapture what I wrote in the theory chapter, Rancière (2001) says that politics is about creating a rupture in the order having defined some issues as non-hearable, as inaudible. Consequently, politics means renaming spaces, what there is to be seen or heard, and to make claims of politicalness, even though you are neither recognised as a political being nor is the issue considered political. Politics is conflictual, it is about dissensus (Rancière 2001).

Nima had been counted as *invisible* and as *undocumented* but not as an actor in a performance. Nima also said that he needs to be visible, that he must claim a place in this world and tell people about the injustices. As such, him performing may be interpreted as a staging of dissensus (Rancière 2001). One way to further explore the musical's staging of dissensus is to investigate which kind of visibility was enabled by the musical performance.

Migrant protests often concern struggles to be visible and audible, at the same time as making oneself visible includes a risk of being subject to control of migration (Tyler and Marciniak 2013). To develop the analysis of visibility in the musical performance, I have turned to Sager (2018, 2016) who, although setting out from the situation for undocumented individuals, argues that the tension between invisibility and visibility in the Swedish context is not limited to the category of undocumented, but also concerns people subject to racialisation in general. Critical postcolonial and antiracist research has brought into light that that 'the approach of the Swedish welfare institutions towards racialised citizens and residents, as well as political debates on issues such as migration, racism, discrimination and colonialism, is characterised by an interaction between invisibility and hypervisibility' (Sager 2018: 176). The experiences of racism of groups subject to racialisation are not acknowledged and they are denied representation as part of Sweden in the labour market and in the social and cultural spheres – thus made invisible. At the same time, these groups are subject to hypervisibility,[70] where they are represented through images of criminalisation, victimisation, pathologisation and stigmatisation in general. Quoting Lacatus, Sager highlights that: 'Sociocultural visibility is a process, a continuous and dynamic negotiation for the right kind of exposure' (Lacatus 2008: 125, quoted in Sager 2016: 118).

One text in the manuscript was written by a person who had been deported from Sweden to Afghanistan. He was never part of the musical group but contributed by writing this poem, which was then remade into a song in the musical performance. His words travelled from Afghanistan to Sweden. Traces of this travel remained in the text, there was sometimes an absence of the letters å, ä and ö (it was in Swedish) and he sometimes included an explanation inside brackets. For example, after the sentence 'thunderstorms cause terror now in skies that are quite clear', he wrote '(thunderstorms in clear skies are bombs dropped in Afghanistan, last week 87 died in my hometown)'.

This poem is a story setting out from his experiences of residing as undocumented in Sweden, of being detected, put in a detention centre and then deported. His voice was clearly not supposed to be heard or made audible (Rancière 2001). By being detained and deported from the Swedish territory, he had been made into a mere commodity to be stored (detention centre, *förvar*, in Swedish translates as storage or warehouse) and transported. However, his words travelled to Sweden, Malmö, and in the end, all the way to the Young Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm, which although it did not change the

[70] See Tyler (2006) for a discussion on the 'hypervisibility' of the subject of immigration in the British context.

fact that he was deported, it did contest the act of deportation as an act of silencing and of making invisible. The poem he wrote that became a song in the musical was called ‘Sick system’:

Sick system

I travelled over half the earth
asking no more than a little peace
the pens in their hands were like knives
and they made red crosses at my name

refrain:
I got lost on streets that lay in darkness
the sun was shining but I cast no shadow
the system is sick

thunderstorms cause terror now in skies that are quite clear
(thunderstorms in clear skies are bombs dropped in Afghanistan,
last week 87 died in my home town)
straight roads are like mountains that have to be climbed
I was not cold behind doors that were closed
but felt the chill of their hearts that were cold
handcuffs and cells have made me disappear
what will they do now? for I will not stop fighting

refrain
faked smiles and bent words on paper disappoint
(the Migration Agency uses strange language in its letters,
they say one thing and mean something else)
I knew that all they wanted was to play
how can human beings be illegal
I don’t understand, can someone explain
they block the way between the doctor and the sick
can someone tell me how much lower they can sink

refrain
sometimes I just want to let go of it all
I got tired, the pressure was too great
some fine people came and taught me a lesson
my fate is for myself alone to decide
now I want to reach out my hand for the others
for that’s my only way to get revenge

These words were read on stage in a spoken-word style by four actors (two sharing the author's experiences of residing as undocumented in Sweden and two actors without these experiences), and a choir of actors sang the chorus in-between. The chorus of 'the sun was shining but I cast no shadow' may be interpreted as referring to deportability as a condition where one is denied an identity and is outside the system. Hence, this poem and song reflect what other participants addressed in the interviews and what other researchers (see, for example, Sager 2011, 2016; Sigvardsdotter 2012; Khosravi 2010a) have emphasised as the existential dimension of being made invisible in relation to the experience of residing as undocumented. However, the poem does not end with the deportation. Not with the expulsion. Instead, it ends with revenge. And this revenge is formulated as an act of solidarity: 'Some fine people came and taught me a lesson, my fate is for myself alone to decide, now I want to reach out my hand for the others for that's my only way to get revenge'.

In the song, there is resistance against the undocumented condition of being in the world and there is an uprising and an aim to revenge. Another form of visibility, breaking with the limitations of invisibility or hypervisibility, is created in this song. The poem may be viewed as a process of struggling for the right kind of visibility, where the poem addresses invisibility (no shadow) and hypervisibility (criminalised through detention and deportation) but ends with a form of visibility that is rebellious and is based on solidarity. Who is the subject of revenge? The ones throwing bombs at the village, the ones manufacturing or selling the bombs,[71] the people working at the Migration Agency or the detention centres, or the legislators? We do not know. What we do know is that the revenge will be carried out through solidarity with those suffering from the 'sick system'.

The question of visibility was further explicitly addressed by two undocumented characters in the performance, Soma and Rasmie, played by one actor with experiences of control of migration and one actor without this personal experience. The scene of 'Lost things' as well as, for example, scenes addressing the stress of being examined by an asylum officer, of having one's story mistrusted, of the traumatic experiences of flight and the unpredictable outcomes of the asylum process may be put in contrast to the dialogue performed by Soma and Rasmie. Although permeated by conditions of deportability, the dialogue of Soma and Rasmie included a sense of rebellion. Soma and Rasmie told stories about how they escaped from detention, how they managed to get work and talked about resisting the system and not

[71] Sweden is top-ranked among countries exporting the most weapons per capita (svenskafreds.se, Accessed: 11.01.2019).

accepting its exclusionary character by saying that 'I have the same right to walk on this ground as all those who happen to be born here inside a bunch of lines on a map'. Soma and Rasmie explicitly talked about that they were tired of living as undocumented and that they wished to do what other young people did. They also stated that if they got a residence permit, they were going to use it to 'be visible, to exist and to fuck/mess [with everyone/thing]' [synas och finnas och jävlas]. In a similar way to the poem/song 'Sick system', the visibility performed in this dialogue stands in sharp contrast to the images of refugees needing to express gratitude to the 'host' society where they have been granted residence (Wernesjö 2014). When one of the participants of the musical got his residence permit, another participant wrote as a comment on his Facebook page that he should use his residence permit to 'be visible, to exist and to mess/fuck' [with everyone/thing], quoting the character of Rasmie in the musical.

Scholars working with experiences of flight and separation in a theatre setting, either with community theatre or with verbatim theatre, talk about the risk involved in talking about experiences of violence through theatre (Salverson 1996) and are also sometimes critical towards the overall discourse of the 'good' in telling and performing experiences (Thompson 2011; also see Chapter 5). For instance, Salverson writes about her experience of working with an actor who was playing his own story of being subjected to torture. After the final performance, the actor stated that acting his own experiences had been a terrible experience and that it had re-traumatised him (Salverson 1996). Other scholars highlight that when refugees themselves are just part of the creation of the performance as informants telling their stories through interviews, there is a risk of once again silencing them, as they have no power over how their stories are used, or not used, in the final performance (Jeffers 2006). Thus, scholars working with theatre in some way relating to experiences of flight, violence and separation highlight that this is an ethically (and I would add, politically) difficult road to navigate.

When I interviewed Nima the second time after the musical had presented its last performance, he brought up the difficulties of telling stories of flight and asylum processes in front of an audience, as he felt uncertain of how these stories would be received. He explained that, for him, the musical and the collective format of telling provided a safer environment for him to share experiences than if he would have done it alone.

> But when more people feel the same and want to tell people about it, when you are in a group, well then it feels a bit more, uhm, safe or easy. That you're not the only one who wants to tell people about something (Nima, interview 15.04.2014).

Besides being part of the working process of sharing and listening to experiences of migration control, this collective storytelling also served as a strategy on stage. The second scene in the performance, called 'Lost things', involved the actors in the musical sharing experiences similar to those of Nima. On a dark stage, they all walked around, taking turns entering the spot light at the front of the stage, reading a line that reflected something lost: 'I lost hope, I lost the image of my family, I lost time and days that I will never get back'. The scene ended with the first sentences in this dissertation, where one of the actors on stage facing the audience demanded that someone ought to be held accountable for this situation 'What did we do wrong? Why can't we stay in our country of origin? And why are we not accepted anywhere else either?' The participant who wrote this particular line first wrote this line in I-form, that is: Why did *I* have to leave my country, etc. He wrote it specifically as his line as part of the scene 'Lost things'. Later on, he wanted to change this to 'we', explaining that this line reflected the experiences of many more than just him as an individual. This 'we-ness' emerging through the sharing of experiences of flight and being subject to migration control was also expressed by a participant who joined the musical as an actor after she had seen it performed. In a panel discussion after a performance where she had been on stage as an actor, she said that:

> (…) I remember watching the asylum musical for the first time and thinking 'I'm in that same situation' and when I saw the other people acting out my own situation and experiences, I saw myself, this happened to me, exactly like that and I cried a lot… It was really hard and I had to stop watching… it brought back a lot of memories but it also gave me a lot of strength, because I no longer felt alone, there are people who are with me in this, who know what I've been through and that is super-important to me, it gave me a lot of strength. I think that knowing that there are people like this gives us undocumented people an enormous amount of extra strength. (Salam, panel discussion 09.11.2013).

Performing experiences one assumes are shared by others in a collective setting can be strengthening. The condition of invisibility as an existential part of the experience of residing as undocumented was challenged, and Salam said that having her experiences (partly) recognised gave her 'a lot of strength'.

However, later on in the conversation, Salam emphasised that the representation on stage also had its limits.

> Perhaps people think that asylum seekers are only men, that I'm the only woman and before now, there were only them, the guys. It's great that they are here, but we need women too. When I watched the asylum musical, I first thought 'where are all undocumented women?' I mean, they are here in Sweden, I know that they exist. I'm proof of that! But where are they? Why are they not seen or heard? Why do we always hear about the men, the undocumented men, and their experiences? I mean, us women, we have our own stories and experiences to tell… I think our stories and experiences are just as important, yes, very important because they come from a completely different perspective. Our experiences are different from the men's, completely different and we see things from another perspective. So, it's different. Yes, we must start talking with the undocumented women and encourage them to be seen and heard more, to talk about their stories and experiences (Salam, panel discussion 09.11.2013).

Although Salam in some respects felt represented on stage, she highlighted that until she joined, there had been no women with experiences of migration control participating in the musical. As described in Chapter 2, there was no deliberate casting of only male young people with experiences of deportability, nor were there actions taken (or perhaps resources) to reach out to women with experiences of deportability. Salam highlights that as a *woman* with experiences of migration control, she was not represented on stage.

Ambivalent 'faceness'

The way Salam reasons, of having her experiences partly recognised, goes beyond the content of the manuscript. Salam's reasoning is one example of how the stories told on stage in the musical were understood in relation to how the actors were perceived; that is, what they signalled to the audience through their bodily appearance. They were not themselves acting in character on stage, but at the same time they were not *not* themselves (Schechner 1985) in terms of how they were viewed by the audience.

Exploring testimonial theatre using the example of the performance *Through the Wire*, about the asylum process in Australia, theatre scholar Caroline Wake uses the concept of *faceness* to capture the collapse, conflation between the actor and the character. That is, actors acting as someone else, but at the same time being cast due to their personal (in contrast to professional) biography, as well as actors acting as themselves. Wake conceptualises

faceness as follows: 'Faceness refers to the vague and generalized humanity that an audience grants asylum seekers when they see a face that looks – to them, at least – like what an asylum seeker's face might look like' (Wake 2013: 113). Even though this faceness may effectively mobilise empathy, it risks reproducing the current power relations in society (such as people seeking asylum being seen as *only* asylum seekers and as one homogenous group without specific historical and political experiences) (Wake 2013).

In a context where asylum seekers and/or undocumented are seldom part of the public debate themselves, but often talked about, having actors that could be read as having the experiences they performed on stage was often understood as a contestation of being made invisible.

> Lena: I think that it [the musical] gave a voice and face to the people who have gone through this, that it's super-important for all these stories and experiences to be given a voice and identity and not just a sad identity but one that perhaps has experienced nice things or perhaps is both angry and happy, frightened and brave and so on…' (Lena, group interview 28.09.2015)

Beyond mere contestations of invisibility, Lena emphasises telling about other experiences than just 'sad' ones, as well as various representations in the musical, of being both 'angry and happy' etc. Nonetheless, the musical's performance may still be understood as part of a trend within the broad field of community theatre of striving to 'give voice' and a 'face to the faceless' (Wake 2013: 105), which in relation to issues of migration may be seen as an ambition to remedy a prevalent image of refugees as 'speechless' (Rajaram 2002; Nyers 2006). The concept of faceness further sheds light on the significance and ambivalence of some actors being read as not only acting, but also carrying the experiences they are performing in their bodies, since their bodies – (mainly) male, non-white and speaking a newly-learned Swedish – represented something more than the content of the manuscript.

As Salam highlights, the actors on stage could not represent asylum seekers and/or undocumented individuals in general; however, as captured by the concept of faceness, this may have been how they were understood by the audience. Furthermore, an interpretation inspired by Rancière (2010) highlights that these types of representations might not provide a re-naming of subjects but instead offer a mimesis; that is, like a mirror claiming to perform representations of 'reality'. In a sense, the scene 'Lost things' fits well into a story of refugees as traumatised, uprooted and in need of protection, but it does not necessarily provide possibilities of representations outside of this 'script'. However, this analysis needs to be nuanced as it does not grasp how

performing was experienced by the actors (see Chapter 5). Nor does it consider the contestation of deportability as a condition related to invisibility.

Furthermore, returning to Wake's article (2013), she sets out from an implicit assumption of an audience lacking the experiences of migration control performed on stage. Hence, Wake discusses the concept of faceness in relation to how an audience without experiences of migration control would interpret the actor in relation to the character. However, the meanings of who is telling a story on stage will differ depending on who is in the audience.

> Yvonne: (…) it's also about who is watching the musical, who the viewer is. Maybe that person has his or her own experiences? I spoke with some people in the audience who saw their own experiences being retold and portrayed on stage for the first time. (Yvonne, group interview 28.09.2015)

If not presuming an audience without experiences of the migration control performed on stage, faceness may be extended to create a sense of recognition (and, as Salam highlighted, recognition simultaneously as a lack of recognition). Thus, collectively acting on stage, in combination with the stories told on stage, beyond mobilising empathy and beyond reproducing current power relations, may also provide a sense of having one's experiences, at least temporarily, recognised, in contrast to being made invisible.

Recognition and the audience

During the interviews, several of the participants said that they had appreciated the audience and the 'success' of the musical. Several were gladly surprised by the positive reactions in relation to the musical: 'that the Culture Centre (Kulturcentralen) calls and asks us to add two extra performances, that has not happened to any independent theatre group' (Sofi, group interview 28.09.15). Furthermore, several participants said that they had appreciated their informal chats with the audience frequently occurring after the musical's performance. There was a feeling of being recognised in terms of a successful musical performance. For example, Nima said that he was proud of himself and everyone who had made the performance possible, that it was worth the time and effort put into the musical (Nima, interview 15.04.14).

I suggested in the previous chapter that standing on stage together was part of the processes of commoning. Performing in front of an audience gave energy to the ensemble, energy to continue working despite the difficulties and the hard work. The experiences of performing together provided the ensemble with a sense of unity, although temporary, while simultaneously including a

number of differences in regard to deportability and the related risks involved in performing.

The performance was per definition limited in time and space, it was temporary. However, including the practice of performing and experiences of performing in the concept of commoning enables capturing how performing together should be understood beyond the temporary act of performing. I am not suggesting that performing together diminished borders or erased different positions in relation to borders and migration control. Nonetheless, I argue that simultaneously to borders cutting through the processes of commoning, there may be a sense of togetherness fuelling and energising further struggle. Performing also enabled being recognised as an actor, instead of 'just' someone with experiences of flight and deportability.

> Emma: But how did it feel standing in front of an audience, was there ever a special…
> Amin: Uhm...
> Emma: ...moment.
> Amin: Well, when I acted and the audience clapped their hands, it made me feel like a proper actor. As if I wanted to do it again and again and even better so that they would clap more (Amin, interview 25.02.2014).

Performing and receiving applause is here expressed by Amin as a way to get recognition as an actor. The experiences of performing hence exceed what may be captured by the discussions on problematic discourses of deservingness or victimisation (see Chapter 5). As mentioned above, a majority of the actors had no or little previous experience of performing in a theatre. In contrast to notions of 'art for art's sake', the idea of a musical was inspired by previous activism having used music, dance and song lyrics as a way to do politics. Several participants with experiences of residing as undocumented also mentioned a will to tell people about experiences of injustices (their personal experiences and those of others) through film, theatre, books or other texts. For example, in my interview with Mostafa, he emphasises that he already before the musical wanted to tell people, perhaps through a book, about his experiences of seeking asylum in Sweden, meeting the Asylum Group and what he had been through before coming to Sweden. Upon saying that he thought the musical as an idea was 'brilliant', I asked if he liked theatre:

> Oh yes, it's my dream! In Iran, I worked as a shoe polisher in one of the city squares. There was a cinema there. Sometimes, when it was very cold – we were probably around 8 years old – we used to go to the cinema to keep warm

> and watch. It was difficult in Iran, but we still had some fun and sometimes it was not too bad (Mostafa, interview 20.06.2012).

Mostafa's situation as a child working in the streets was one of vulnerability; however, he sometimes managed to sneak into the cinema and nourished a dream of theatre and film. The quote also illustrates how participating in the musical among the participants residing as undocumented cannot be captured exclusively by an understanding of them joining only in order to meet 'Swedish people', as Erfan said in the previous chapter. There were also ambitions of telling people about experiences, performing as an actor and creating a theatre.

The performance of the musical in two ways challenged the condition of deportability, of not being able to perform in public and claiming a place: by making visible not only pain and loss but also rebellious resistance and by having actors performing on stage although lacking residence permits. In a context where experiences of seeking asylum in Sweden are seldom represented by individuals themselves seeking asylum,[72] performing together on stage, even though the actors risked reproducing generalised images of asylum seekers through faceness, still has a potential to provide strength to continue to struggle. In the next section, I further develop the discussion on faceness in relation to the working process and potential risks with regard to alluding to 'realist' representations of experiences.

Working with representing experiences

According to Salverson, 'those of us who practice theater that engages with people's account of violent events must articulate the nature of that contact' (2001: 119), pointing to the importance of reflexivity on behalf of professional practitioners of theatre. Who decides which stories are to be part of a manuscript and how this is done is important in regard to enabling certain representations. For example, even though highlighting that the musical

[72] There are some powerful exceptions that took place at the same time as the musical or that have been initiated later on: the Asylum Relay already mentioned and, for example, the organisation Ung i Sverige (Young in Sweden). Young in Sweden is an organisation of young people who have arrived to seek asylum in Sweden, mostly in 2015. Among other things, they campaigned for an end of all deportations to Afghanistan through a one-month sit-in strike in the city centre of Stockholm (see unisverige.nu). Undocumented individuals have also mobilised as workers as well as put forward critique of the restrictive practices in regard to granting asylum (see Sager 2011; Moksnes 2016).

represented his experiences, when I interviewed Asad, he said that he had wanted to tell more of his story, there was more to tell, but that there had been no space for this in the musical. As mentioned, a framework for the manuscript was set when the ensemble was formed. It was possible to contribute by adding lines (and withdrawing texts, which was also done during the process). For example, one of the final scenes, the 'thank you' scene discussed in the next section, was written by a group of participants just a few weeks before the premiere. However, the general framework for the manuscript was to a large extent taken for granted in the working process of the musical and was not discussed in the larger group.

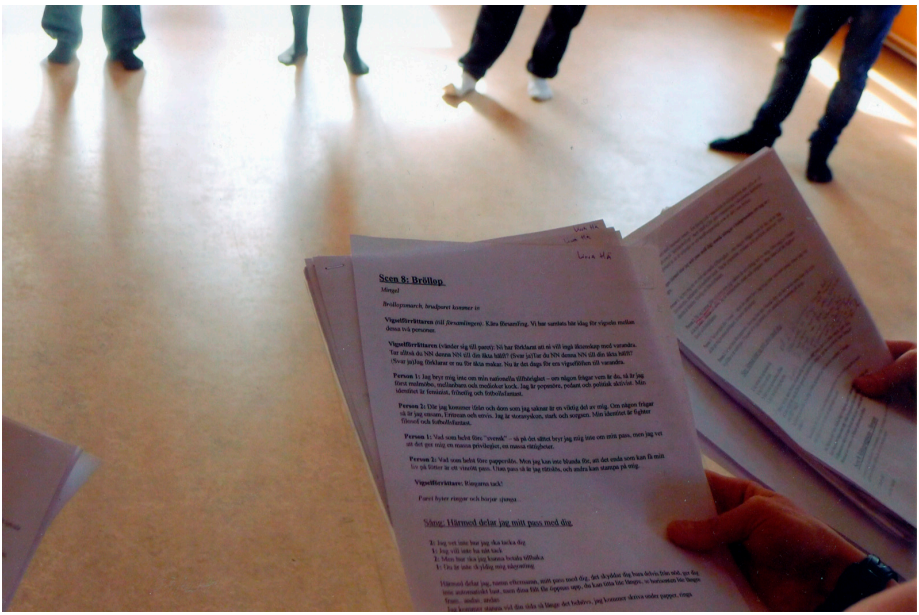

Image of manuscript from a rehearsal. This particular scene was called the 'Wedding scene' and told a story of a Swedish citizen who through marriage helped someone get a residence permit. The scene was removed as it was said that it could signal that people without a resident permit would only marry to get the right papers. Photograph Miriam Cordts.

As I have discussed throughout this thesis, the participants of the musical were positioned differently in relation to the phenomenon of borders and migration control that the musical aimed to contest. I have also discussed how it created complex divisions in the group, partly stemming from the difficult living conditions produced by deportability. In the following, I set out from an

exploration of how these divisions were treated in the performance and put this in relation to the working process of creating scenes and selecting actors for different characters.

In the scene 'Lost things', only actors with personal experiences of flight and deportability participated. The scene was performed in darkness, the actors walking around and taking turns entering the single spotlight to say their line:

> There are things that cannot be returned.
> I lost things on the way.
> I lost the only photo I had of my family by a river by the border to Greece.
> Later I noticed that I also had lost the image of the photo in my head.
> (...)
> I lost words.
> (...)
> I lost friends from a boat in the sea, I lost their faces and voices,
> I lost the hands that I used to hold when falling asleep or when I lay sleepless worrying.
> I lost my feelings.
> I lost hope.
> I lost my last tears behind a container in Calais and then I lost the ability to cry. I have never cried since.
> In the new city, I lost time, I lost days that could have been my life.
> Days of work I wasn't sure I'd get paid for, days of no work and days of nothing at all (Scene 'Lost things').

This may be understood as one of the main scenes of the musical. The scene is often mentioned in the interviews I carried out with participants residing as undocumented as being important in relation to representing (part of) one's story. Furthermore, during presentations in research conferences, schools and other organisations, when we were to say just a few lines from the musical, participants always picked lines from this scene of 'Lost things'.

The performance addressing issues of flight, control of migration, unpredictable asylum processes, deportability to some extent repeated stories of 'melancholic loss' that have been addressed as a common trap when performing refugee stories (Salverson 2001: 124). In the context of verbatim theatre based on stories of traumatic experiences, according to Salverson, only repeating the suffering of 'the other' reproduces victimisation (Salverson 2001). This could certainly be one way of understanding the scene 'Lost things' I referred to above. Furthermore, by not cross-casting, the scene may be understood as making claims to reveal experiences that the actors also carry. The selective casting could also be interpreted as increasing the presence of

'faceness'; for example, increasing the risk of ignoring difference and staging representations of asylum seekers as a homogenous group. Alluding to realism in a performance represents a risk of reproducing 'the social arrangements of the society it claims to mirror' (Diamond 1997, quoted in Wake 2013: 113).

The participants with experiences of deportability expressed the importance of having experiences of loss, of violence, of being thrown suspicion upon by the Migration Agency, as part of the performance. They had experienced not being listened to, and the musical in a sense provided an opportunity to speak up. Hence, I suggest that an analysis reducing what they told on stage to a mere reproduction of their roles as victims seems to neglect the agency inherent in the decision to be part of a performance and to tell (parts of) one's story on stage.

However, the balancing act between reproducing victimising stories and recognising experiences of violence by highlighting them on stage is delicate. Below, I quote lines from the scene 'Biometry' in order to illustrate the discussion:

> During years of travelling through Europe, my body was closely examined.
> You might think that they listened to my heart, checked my blood pressure and value and pricked my little finger.
> No.
> They checked the route I'd taken, where I'd come from, what language I spoke, how old I was and where I was planning on going.
> Although I wanted to tell them everything, they did not listen and instead held measuring instruments against my body. (Lines)

These lines can be analysed in Agambian terms of biopolitics. The body, bare life, is what is allowed to speak, not with a voice but only through the measurement and investigation of the movements of the body. There is no space for the political subject who can speak of experiences, who can claim rights, claim freedom: 'Although I wanted to tell them everything, they did not listen and instead held measuring instruments against my body'. This resonates with another line in the musical talking about how people seeking asylum tried to destroy their fingerprints by means corrosive acid, cutting or burning in order not to be a Dublin case according to the Migration Agency. The sovereign expresses power over the body; in this case, over the fingertips, thus governing the body through the body, making leaving the border impossible as it is carried with you, in the body.

How may one understand these lines illustrating suffering bodies (besides as expressions of the consequences of migration control)? It may be argued

that raising knowledge of how refugees and asylum seekers are treated as mere bodies and not speaking subjects was part of the musical's aim. At the same time, it is also a repetition. It relates to the question introducing this chapter: what if we told our stories but everyone keeps on living as if we remained silent? Does repeating the same message of suffering bodies serve its purpose, or does this actually contradict the aim of showing the images in the first place, as the mere repetition of images might restrain possibilities of seeing and looking for actual people behind images of suffering bodies?

This is indeed a balancing act. I suggest that the musical performance did include scenes where stories of melancholic loss as well as images where bare life were reproduced. However, as discussed above, the performance also included rebellious visibility and questioned the system of migration control.

Not cross-casting certain scenes, thereby making claims regarding a level of realism, the musical in a sense feeds into a narrative of suffering as a way of proving that one is worthy of protection (also see Chapter 5). It can be seen as part of the trend to 'give a voice' to those who had not had their claims heard by the Migration Agency. To be considered worthy of membership in this community, suffering relating to proving deservingness has been discussed as depoliticising the claims of asylum. It is the suffering body and not the political body that may be granted residency and membership in a community (Fassin and D'Halluin 2005; Lundberg 2016). Thus, the way of talking about experiences of pain and loss on stage may certainly be criticised. At the same time, pain is there and to see each other's pain, to make that pain visible and to question the system responsible for causing it, I suggest cannot be reduced only to narratives of deservingness (also see Chapter 5). It is also to say that you did not listen, you wanted to expel me, but I am here and you are wrong: 'I have the same right to walk on this ground', as the character Soma said in the musical.

In relation to testimonies of pain and violence on stage, Salverson raises an important question when she asks why the pain of injury is considered more worthy of telling than the 'complex terrain of laughter, of imagination, or the pleasure of encountering another person in the touching of worlds that is testimony' (Salverson 2001: 124). As I return to in the next section, laughter and imagination were certainly part of the performance of the musical. But, for now, I wish to continue the discussion regarding which characters were played by which actors.

Absent discussions

The issue of representation in terms of how the actors would be read by the audience with regard to nationality and/or race was not something discussed to any greater extent during the working process of the musical. I only recall one time, when we were remaking the scene of the deportation and border control, just one day before a performance in Stockholm at the Young Royal Dramatic Theatre. When working with this scene, a participant with experiences of residing as undocumented said that it might not be clear for the audience what happened on stage, as the actors playing the roles of the border guards had 'black' and not 'yellow' hair. In the end, it was decided not to change the casting to a border guard with 'yellow' hair because the content of the scene was presumed to be sufficiently clear without such a change.

Although not outspoken by the participants, this discussion is closely related to the issue of realism in the performance. In the case of the border guard, a white body was assumed to represent violent border controls in a clearer manner. Further, as discussed above, some actors could in certain characters be read as revealing their personal experience.

Considering which characters were played by whom, it seems as if it was easier for actors with personal experiences of deportability to cross over and play, for example, the head of the Migration Agency, police officers, prosecutor, etc. than for actors without such experiences to cross over and stage experiences of flight and separation. This only happened once, with the characters of Soma and Rasmie, where the focus was more on resistance than on the suffering produced by deportability.

How can this selective casting be understood? One understanding dominant in the interviews is that the actors with personal experiences of bordering practices and deportability wanted to perform these stories themselves. Further, the actors without such experiences did not want to 'steal voices' or appropriate stories. The selective casting could also be due to an ambition of maintaining a realist strand in a performance at the same time aiming to be utopian through the celebration of the abolishment of borders. Furthermore, as mentioned above, cross-casting did take place. In the musical group, however, casting was not discussed in relation to how the audience would read the actors.

The fact that the 'faceness' (Wake 2013) of the actors was left out of the discussion during the working process of the musical could be analysed as a kind of void. In the context of the musical, racism was acknowledged in terms of a structure in society (e.g., as intertwined with controlling migration). During the working process, there was nevertheless silence around what it meant for the performance that some actors were white and some were non-

white and also that some spoke a Swedish that had been newly acquired and that some spoke what is (normatively) coded as 'native' Swedish.

In the interviews I carried out after the musical had staged its last performance, the divisions in the group in regard to experiences of migration control, which related to skin colour and language, were discussed. As I have discussed above (see Chapter 6), these were talked about in terms of 'adults' and 'youngsters', which even though relating to constructions of meanings of age was also used as a metaphor for other divisions, such as citizen/non-citizen and white/non-white. However, the discussion among participants in the interviews mainly centred on what the differences in regard to experiences of deportability meant for the working process, not so much in relation to what the faceness of the actors meant on stage (besides in terms of security and the risk of being read as undocumented). In the group interview, the silence around representation more generally was brought up as something that they had thought of only in retrospect. This was explained as due to the working process in a sense being prioritised over the resulting performance (even though the process in itself was a lot of hard work toward a concrete goal of presenting a performance).

The absence of discussions on matters of how the different actors would be understood by the audience can also be put in relation to the context of the migrant rights movement. As discussed in Chapter 2, a majority of the people active in this movement at the time did not have personal experiences of deportability and/or racism. In contrast to a context of a broader antiracist movement, I suggest that the migrant rights movement stands out in terms of an absence of discussions on meanings of representation in the movement in terms of experiences of deportability and racism (at least previously, see Chapter 2). This could partly be understood in light of deportability, where discussions on representation may have been put in the background or neglected due to thinking that self-representation was too risky in many situations. Ambitions to assess and prevent the risk of participants being detected as undocumented was, as already discussed, a central issue during the musical's working process. However, I suggest that the absence of discussions in the musical around how different actors would be perceived by the audience may be related to the fact that the migrant rights movement, at least previously, has often prioritised problems of racism in relation to state practices of migration control – maybe at the expense of engaging in questions about the risk of reproducing problematic representations through the practices within the movement. Then again, as also mentioned in Chapter 2, for the individuals risking being deported, contesting this expulsion may be articulated as the first

priority, and the focus of the migrant rights movement on repressive state practices (instead of on internal representation) may be understood as a response to this priority as well. As discussed in Chapter 2, the musical was part of a context of different initiatives and groups seeking to challenge the lack of representation. However, although a part of these transformations, there were still no discussions on how different actors would be read by the audience in terms of conceptions of race and language.

To sum up, although the performance in some regards alluded to realism, meanings of race and language on stage were generally not discussed during the working process. At the same time, the consequences of the different living conditions produced by deportability permeated the working process. Not least in relation to the risks involved. Hence, whilst handling and adjusting to the risk of participants being racially profiled and subject to ID controls by the police permeated the working process, how the actors would be perceived by the audience in terms of race and language was not a matter being discussed. I suggest that this could be understood in relation to the composition of the migrant rights movement, as well as in relation to contesting deportability as the main focus of the movement.

The musical's ambition to make visible the pain caused by borders and migration control, although aiming to contribute to change, also risked feeding into existing narratives of deservingness of protection. According to Salverson (2001), engaged theatre needs to move its audience and direct them towards action for a more just society. It is this dimension of the musical performance I now turn to in the following section.

Contestations of migration control – hopeful gestures towards utopia

The performance not only included stories of flight and control of migration but also addressed those in power responsible for the border controls and asylum processes. For example, the character of Tobias Billström, at the time the Swedish Minister for Migration, was a character who often made the audience laugh as he was depicted as obsessed with borders. Privileges of being in power and of benefitting from the system of border controls were repeatedly addressed in the performance. For example, the audience met the migration officers at the Migration Agency who discussed that they (due to their difficult working conditions) really needed to go on holiday. Their

conversation culminated in a scene where all the actors joined in on stage, singing and dancing a rewritten version of the Pet Shop Boys' version of 'Go West' (released in 1993). The actors were dressed up like different types of stereotypical tourists: the adventurer, the sun-bather, the backpacker, etc. and the text made fun of these stereotypes.

> Go east: Find your inner peace
> Go east: To a yoga retreat
> Go east: Where your guru bows
> Go east: To find your here and nows
>
> Go south: We will love the beach
> Go south: Eat papaya and peach
> Go south: Live the pace of calm
> Go south: Under an exotic palm

The song not only made fun of the tourist stereotypes but also addressed the privilege of mobility, of some being able to travel everywhere.

> I know that: I'm worth this
> I know that: I've worked hard
> I believe the world belongs to me.
> With an EU passport, the world is my oyster
>
> To travel is my right
> To travel gives me energy
> To see the world before my time has passed

The song ended on a serious note, where the two actors playing Soma and Rasmie were introduced to the audience, singing the last verse by themselves while the rest of the actors stood at the back of the stage with their backs turned against the audience.

> Go west: to a life in peace
> Go west: we have paid our price
> Go west: I want to live free
> Go west: that's how it should be (SONG)

In this re-written version of 'Go West', the control of the movement of some but not of others was addressed and critiqued. The suffering of border controls was thus put side by side with the privileges of mobility. As described, this was done through a sense of humour, and rehearsals of this particular scene

were many times joyful and the ensemble enjoyed trying out costumes, rehearsing and refining their dance moves. At the same time, using humour in this context is a balancing act. What does it mean to joke about privileges on stage, privileges that can mean the difference between life and death? The actors who did not have personal experiences of migration control did have access to the privileges addressed in the song above. They had EU passports, Swedish passports, which are top-ranked in regard to access to mobility in the world (Passport Index 2019). Any smiles or laughter may be muted, or feel uncomfortable, and may even provoke anger – the way these subjects are joked about can be viewed as nothing but a manifestation, a repetition of the privileges of some (including some of the actors).

Still, by highlighting the uneven distribution of mobility in the world, the musical performance made visible that some of the actors, as well as some in the audience, were complicit in the system of migration control through the privileges granted to them through this system. The freedom of movement of some was related to the violent control of movement of others, and the musical made this relationship visible and challenged it. In a sense, then, there can be no innocent listening (Salverson 2001) of the stories and experiences performed by the musical, as the musical questioned the possibility of being innocent in an unjust world.

Further, the musical made visible the possibilities of resisting an exclusionary order. As mentioned above, the audience met the rebellious undocumented youngsters Soma and Rasmie, but they also met an officer at the Migration Agency, who after great anguish refused to reject any more applications for asylum, and an activist who was charged with helping people escape from detention. One of the last scenes highlighted the stories of all the little acts of resistance that led to the abolishment of borders:

> Yes, what really happened? How did we go from the tough border controls in 2012 to today's world with open borders? Well, there were many contributing factors – among them, a musical! We went on tour to speak out about what borders did to people. We continued to speak out until people began to sit up and listen. Clearly, this was not the only thing that led to change. People began protesting in many different locations and in many different ways.
> (…)
> I want to thank all of you who organised rallies, wrote debate articles, lectured and demonstrated.
> (...)
> I want to thank all of you who saw me even if the law forced me to be invisible.
> I want to thank all of you who dared to be seen even when it was dangerous.

> I want to thank all of you who helped with money, food and accommodation. (…)
> I want to thank all of you who shared your life experiences that you would rather not be reminded of.
> I want to thank all of you who listened to my life experiences and who passed them on to others. (…) (Lines)

In this scene, those who were thanked were positioned as undocumented migrants and as citizens without personal experiences of migration control. Their shared resistance against borders was highlighted, at the same time as the differences in regard to position in relation to borders were still visible. The theme of visibility was also addressed in the lines, highlighting that performing visible activism was, and still is, riskier for some (e.g., undocumented individuals) than for others. Furthermore, related to the discussion above on (in)visibility and recognition, the meaning of *being seen* was put forward as important in relation to a legal system forcing one to remain invisible (Sager 2011, 2016, 2018).

The scene, called the 'thank you' scene, encouraged resistance by highlighting the abolishment of borders as something performed by rather mundane actions. As such, the world of No Borders is in a sense made possible to achieve. Siamak, a participant in the musical with experiences of residing as undocumented, in a conversation with me reflected upon the (im)possibility of No Borders.

> I knew beforehand that the musical was about not having any borders, not any detention centres, that they should not remain, but it was difficult for me to comprehend. It was such an impossible goal, not to have borders. I still think it's impossible in some ways, though in other ways, not so much. For example, if you and I help an undocumented person to seek asylum and get documented, then we have at least helped that one person and there will be less borders for him or her. I mean, if we dream of a world without borders – an impossible dream, I think – but in some ways, not so impossible as it now feels like life has no limits. I can travel to other countries. The Asylum Group and the musical dream of a world with no borders. They have now removed or erased all borders for me so, I guess, in one way it is possible not to have borders (Fieldnotes 13.09.2013).

Further, the actions described in the 'thank you' scene were carried out by the participants in the musical – in the context of the working process of the musical, the actors on stage had told their stories, listened to stories, made themselves visible despite the risk of being detected, had organised

demonstrations, held lectures, helped find money, food and housing to undocumented individuals, etc.

According to Wake (2013), alluding to realism in a performance may have potentially liberating effects. She uses the example of characters in the performance *Through the Wire* who through different actions resisted the exclusionary asylum processes. Wake asserts that replicating acts of political action on stage, in the case she analyses, towards a restrictive migration regime encourages the audience to 'respond to images of protest or political action by recreating them in another time and place' (Wake 2013: 118). Wake refers to these actions as 'political mimesis' (Wake 2013: 118). In the case of *Through the Wire* analysed by Wake (2013), in contrast to the musical, all characters performing as 'resisters' were people recognised as citizens. In the musical, the actions that the audience was encouraged to take in were already part of the practices of the musical and a fundamental part of the working process. It may thus be argued that the political mimesis was twofold in this case, as the musical encouraged the audience to not only repeat actions performed on stage, but to actually join the actions already carried out by participants in the musical.

As Siamak said above, No Borders remains out of reach, pointing towards a situation of not here, not yet, at the same time as mundane actions of resisting border controls create an everyday No Border politics (cf. Anderson, Sharma and Wright 2012). By replicating everyday acts, the musical wished to show the audience that contesting the present was possible. The potential of theatre being transformative is a central theme for discussion within the practices and broad field of community theatre (see, for example, Boal 1979; Dolan 2006; Neelands 2007; Nicholson 2010, 2014; Thompson 2011; Wittrock 2011). Theatre scholar Jill Dolan addresses the relationship between theatre and transformation through the concept of 'utopian performatives' referring to:

> small, specific and profound moments in performance that beckon the attention of the audience in a way that lifts everyone slightly above the present, into a hopeful feeling of what the world might be like if every moment of our lives were as emotionally voluminous, generous, aesthetically striking and intersubjectively intense (Dolan 2006: 164–165).

The utopia described by Dolan is always in process, never possible to fully grasp but only to point towards. According to Dolan, the word 'utopia means, literally, "no place"' (Dolan 2006: 165), and she highlights the political potential of the 'not here' and the 'not yet' (Dolan 2006: 170). Although Rancière is sceptical of artistic expressions leading to certain actions, his

thoughts on the aesthetic experience resonate with Dolan's formulation of utopian performatives having the potential of providing a moment 'slightly above the present' (Dolan 2006: 164). For example, the worker quoted by Rancière who, in the midst of working, looks up and has a moment of 'free gaze' of the beautiful surroundings (Rancière 2008).

I suggest that the musical performance may be thought of from the point of aesthetic experience (Rancière 2008), by renaming subjects and places. That is, an undocumented person is on stage as an actor, in the public, visualising a world without borders. In the last scene, the character of the pop icon Robyn performed together with the two undocumented characters Soma and Rasmie, singing 'All passports in the sea. There's a new time ahead of us', while the rest of the ensemble was dancing around them. I suggest that this can be thought of as an aesthetic experience in the sense of performing together, thus temporarily creating as well as showing the audience, a 'we' as such, a rupture in the order categorising us as separated.

Ending the performance with this scene could also be understood as presenting a resolution to power asymmetries. The scene, as well as my analysis of it, might be understood as feeding into liberal, humanist visions of a 'we', where all differences and inequalities are erased (Kondo 2000).

This tension between the ambition of creating representations of experiences of the present system of migration control and of wanting to point to possibilities of a world without borders was furthermore addressed in the panel discussion referred to above. The moderator asked the participants if they had thought of excluding the second part and instead leave the audience with the 'heavy stuff' mainly performed in the first part. One participant answered by saying that this had never been an option, as a large part of the work had been about having fun and laughing together (Panel discussion 09.11.2013). Salam and Sofi continued the discussion:

> Salam: Yes, I just want to say that even if the second act is more fun, which is good for the audience, the first act is more real. It is what happens in reality. I understand that it must be difficult for you and for us too, who acted it all out, especially when I saw that guy [a person in the audience who cried a lot in the first act and eventually left the room]. But the thing is that even if it was hard, even if it made us cry, it is reality and reality is difficult to deal with. So, it's good that the second act is fun and entertaining but at the same time, we must not forget that the first act is reality. The second act shows the reality we dream of. It hasn't happened yet but it's what we dream of.
>
> Sofi: I think it's just as important to show that dream too. It is a dream but it's also a possible reality. It's easy to get stuck in thinking that it's impossible but

> at the same time, reality is something we choose to recreate on a daily basis. So, we can do this. It can be like this in 2032. (Salam and Sofi, panel discussion 09.11.2013)

I suggest that my analysis of the musical performance, in relation to the working process of creating the performance, shows that the ambivalence between 'reality' and another possible future (and present) permeated and conditioned the musical throughout the working process. A theatre critic could probably deconstruct the musical performance in a variety of ways; for example, by critiquing the elements of victimisation in the performance or the problematic vision of a unified 'we' in the end. I suggest that my analysis, including the performance as part of an exploration of an approximately two-year working process, highlights the complexities of these processes that might not be visible at first glance.

Although inherently vague (as it points towards an unknown future), I find that the 'utopian performatives' (Dolan 2006) open up a view on performance as potentially transformative, which is hopeful. In the musical performance, the everyday acts of resistance were made visible, creating political mimesis and a way forward towards a utopia where everyone is free to go or stay wherever they like. Dolan wrote in the context of the right-wing politics of the second Bush administration and highlighted the need for a 'secular' faith that there were other political possibilities than those put forward by the Bush doctrine. According to current estimations, the number of refugees is the highest since after the Second World War. They mainly reside in neighbouring countries and in so-called developing countries (IOM 2018). Nevertheless, the relatively small number of refugees who reach countries in the Global North are met by increasing securitisation, criminalisation and restrictive migration policies. Thus, the same need may be identified to, as Dolan did back in 2006, 'harness the power of [secular] faith'. It is not a faith believing that everything will be fine, but it is a faith in a common struggle, with all inherent tensions and difficulties. Mezzadra and Neilson (2013) put forward that although they sympathise with a political demand for No Borders, they hold that for analytical purposes, 'border struggles' represents a better concept. This is because it captures the 'tensions constitutive of any border and the production of subjectivity' (Mezzadra 2015: 9). I suggest that the perspective of No Borders in terms of 'not yet' is useful for analysing parts of the performance of the musical. It may be thought of as imagining a politics of possibility (Amin and Howell 2016), of a common world. However, the concept of border struggles is more applicable when analysing the process of creating and performing the musical as a whole. Then again, the utopian dimension of the

performance, of pointing towards No Borders as 'not yet', may also be seen as part of border struggles, trying to push our imagination concerning possible futures. At the same time, the point made by Salam above is very important. The musical told of experiences of violence and separation some of the participants were going through while also working as a representation of some dimensions of these experiences on stage.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the risk of the musical performance reproducing images of bare life and victimisation. Simultaneously, I have highlighted how the performance also included contestations and utopian moments. To develop this discussion, I have placed Rancière's thoughts on the politics of aesthetics in a dialogue with literature within the field of participatory theatre and critical migration studies.

The musical provided a space for sharing and making visible painful experiences of flight and loss, where these experiences could be formulated as a basis for claiming accountability (as the last line in the scene 'Lost things') as well as questioning the legitimacy of the system of border control as a whole. Through performing visibilities with a scent of revenge, such as the rebellious undocumented characters, the performance proceeded beyond just repeating stories of pain and loss. Residence permit was encouraged on stage to be used to 'jävlas' (i.e., fuck/mess with) in contrast to images of refugees as supposedly 'grateful' towards the 'host' society.

Furthermore, by performing the everyday No Borders politics that led to the abolishment of borders, the musical produced political mimeses and pointed towards utopia. This No Border politics also formed an important part of the working process of the musical, thus representing political mimeses in a double sense – both by encouraging the audience to act while at the same time already carrying out the actions performed on stage.

The musical performance had a realist strand, created by a sense of faceness of the actors. This was due to that fact that only individuals with personal experiences of migration control in general performed in scenes telling stories about the consequences of migration control. Acting as part of a collective talking about experiences could bring a sense of having one's experiences recognised, which was highlighted by both actors and audience with personal experiences of migration. Consequently, when not presuming a white audience, faceness can have a potentially liberating effect. However, these

representations could also be analysed as feeding into discourses of the traumatised refugee as a precondition for deserving protection.

Handling and adjusting to the risk of participants being racially profiled and subject to ID control by the police permeated the working process, whilst how the actors would be read by an audience in terms of race was not a topic of discussion. This silence points to an awkwardness of naming and talking about the meanings and conceptions of race and language, as some of the actors through their appearance could be understood as revealing 'authentic' experiences. This silence could be understood as partly stemming from the musical being part of the migrant rights movement, which acknowledged racism in terms of a structure in society (e.g., as intertwined with migration control) more than focusing on questions regarding internal representation.

In the final section of the chapter, I discussed an ambivalence in the musical performance: the musical performing a 'we' and a utopian 'not yet' that could be understood as hopeful, but also as performing a liberal humanist 'we' where differences and power asymmetries were ignored. Theatre cannot exceed, but is conditioned by, the power structures in society, such as those based on race and citizenship. But theatre might still be a space where something else can be created and imagined. Theatre thus involves both promises and limitations. In a context of community theatre, as the *No Border Musical*, where the working process and the performance are deeply intertwined, I suggest that both the promises and limitations of theatre are amplified. Working with an ensemble of actors located within the migrant rights movement, where some of the actors experienced the practices of bordering that were performed on stage, presented a number of limitations and challenges to the musical. Both in terms of risks in regard to performing when residing as undocumented and in terms of power relations within the group. At the same time, the composition of the ensemble and the performance, with all its ambivalences in regard to aspects such as victimisation, faceness and power relations, included promises of transformation. Because although situated in a world of borders and deportability, the musical was not completely absorbed by it.

8. Concluding discussion

In a context of bordering practices and deportability, I have in this thesis explored possibilities and limitations of activism through community theatre. Through a participatory ethnographic exploration of the community theatre initiative the *No Border Musical*, I have analysed ambivalences and tensions occurring in the working process of a community theatre aiming to contest borders.

The *No Border Musical* was situated in the local migrant rights movement in Malmö, Sweden. Its participants were either linked to, or active in, this movement and/or resided as undocumented during parts of the working process. The different themes represented in the performance of the musical – bordering practices, experiences of migration control, deportability, asylum processes, resistance and dreams of a world without borders – were concurrently present in the approximately two-year working process of the musical. Rather than exclusively focusing on the aesthetic outcome, the working process focused on participants supporting each other and creating something together independent of legal status. As a participating actor in the ensemble, as well as a researcher with a background in the migrant rights movement, my research process has been driven by an ambition to understand, explore and contest the violent mechanisms of migration control. I hope to contribute to discussions on bordering practices, activism and deportability, which are relevant also beyond the compounds of academia. Below, I summarise the main discussions in the different chapters of this thesis and put them in a dialogue with each other.

Deportability appears as the overarching condition permeating all aspects of the musical group and its activism, although the musical group was also affected by other power relations, such as gender and race. Not only did deportability affect how the musical worked in regard to avoiding the risk of participants being detected by the police. At an interpersonal level, fear of being detected and deported also conditioned the development of new relationships within the group. Furthermore, deportability conditioned the overall living conditions for participants without a residence permit. In terms

of limited economic resources and insecure housing conditions, this continued also when they later entered the asylum process. The Swedish context of reception of refugees at the time (specifically the reception of unaccompanied minors) moreover affected how the conditions of deportability were addressed in the musical group during the working process.

The fear among participants residing as undocumented of being detected and deported had severe consequences, as this anxiety caused illness and psychological problems, while also affecting one's ability to participate in the musical and build relationships. Furthermore, I propose that bodily suffering is an example of how the power of the sovereign is manifested through the governing of bodies. However, the experiences of participants residing as undocumented exceed the conditions of bare life, since they made themselves visible as political subjects making claims for change through telling and performing on stage. One motivation for participating in the musical was the ambition to tell about and make visible the hardships facing undocumented migrants, both when in Sweden and during the dangerous journey to get here.

In the context of deportability, community theatre and activism (i.e., the musical) provided a space where the different positions in regard to experiences of deportability and precarious living conditions were made visible. This space was created through a variety of practices performed during a period of approximately two years. These included rehearsing and playing together, building relationships, performing on stage together, as well as going through difficult times and handling conflicts in the group. I refer to these different practices as *commoning*. Hence, commoning included affective support, relations of care, working together over a longer time period (cf. Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013), as well as the experience of performing together on stage.

Commoning in the musical was marked by *border struggles*. These border struggles were made visible in two senses: 'internal' and 'external'. First, representing experiences of deportability as well as having undocumented actors on stage challenged the undocumented position as being invisible, not being able to perform as a political subject. This could be thought of as an 'outward' or 'external' border struggle. Second, border struggles also took place inside the musical group. I conceptualise these border struggles as a *politics of translation*. The musical provided a space where power inequalities and different experiences could be made visible and processed, thus subject to translation. Activism through community theatre cannot be a solution to these power inequalities, but it can provide a space for working against them. By paying attention to the politics of translation and border struggles, I shed light

on resistance to deportability, whilst also highlighting the ambivalences and tensions of the work of the musical.

When it comes to representing experiences of borders and migration control on stage, the musical provided a complex visibility. On the one hand, there was a tendency to reproduce refugees as victims. On the other hand, the musical also made more rebellious representations visible, such as undocumented characters questioning their deportability and escaping from detention. Furthermore, the performance critiqued the uneven distribution of mobility in the world, as well as the violent practices of migration control.

The musical performance provided a twofold example of an *aesthetic experience* (Rancière 2008): First, by renaming subjects and places; that is, the present order was contested as undocumented individuals act on stage in public and also by visualising a world without borders. Second, performing together may be thought of as an aesthetic experience in the sense of temporarily creating a 'we', a common experience in spite of the fact that the state had categorised us as separated. This could be thought of as the 'affect' of simultaneously doing art and politics (see Thompson 2011).

However, the representation of a 'we' in the performance could be viewed as performing a liberal humanist 'we' where differences and power asymmetries were downplayed. Nonetheless, simultaneously, this representation could be thought of as a utopian 'not yet' that could be understood as hopeful.

In a context of community theatre, where the working process and the performance are deeply intertwined, I suggest that both the promises and limitations of theatre are amplified. The *No Border Musical*, working with an ensemble of actors located within the migrant rights movement, where some of the actors had experienced practices of bordering similar to those that were performed on stage, presented a number of limitations and challenges in relation to the musical. Both in terms of risks in regard to performing when residing as undocumented and in terms of power relations within the group. At the same time, the composition of the ensemble and the performance, with all its ambivalences in regard to aspects such as victimisation and power relations included promises of transformation. This was due to the fact that although situated in a world of borders and deportability, the musical was not completely absorbed by it.

In Chapter 6, I quote one of the initiators of the musical as she describes how the musical, as an idea and project with the aim of political transformation, got a bit out of hand and that 'we suddenly had to, like, keep up with it and try to manage it'. I think this quote elucidates the contingency

of activism. Even when a purpose is clearly formulated, there is no way of predicting how the acts will play out or what they will lead to – the musical was in this sense very non-instrumental.

So, setting out from the unpredictability of activism, what does the notion and experience of deportability add to an understanding of commoning? The deportation of Abdullah, which I described in Chapter 2, may be used as an example of how the conditions of deportability expatiate the unpredictability of activism. A close exploration of commoning in the context of the musical shows that the ways of addressing deportability are contradictory, ambivalent and, similar to activism, also unpredictable. The outcome of acts aiming to contest categorisations of citizens and non-citizens, including contestations of borders, is often unforeseeable. I suggest that the processes of commoning, combined with the notion of border struggles, help capture the ambivalent character of contestations of borders and migration control. The processes of commoning shed light on the mundane ways of working as well as the spectacular event of performing together in the *No Border Musical*.

Furthermore, my focus on *resistance through acting* highlights the temporary dimension of activism – it is based on what people do at certain times and in certain places. Inspired by Rancière, I suggest that the performance of the musical presents a rupture in the order. This rupture challenges invisibility as a condition inherent to deportability and, as such, creates a new subjectivity. Mezzadra and Neilson (2013) question the focus on the 'event' and ask what is left after the rupture. Scholars focusing on exploring events as possibilities of creating new subjectivities have been criticised for searching for a 'pure structural historical action at the expense of the dirty practices of social and material actors that make politics through their very bodies' (Papadopoulos 2012: 13). My analysis of the musical shows how an analysis that includes both possible creations of new subjectivities *and* the 'dirty practices' I conceptualise as ambivalent commoning can be illuminating. This is due to that fact that it blurs the theoretically constructed boundary between practices in everyday life and the event as a rupture. The everyday practices of creating the musical, however ambivalent, including the practices not explicitly related to the creation of the performance, such as supporting each other, building relationships, etc., were necessary to in the end being able to stand on stage and perform contestations of borders and new subjectivities. At the same time, performing together provided energy and affected the everyday practices; as Siamak explained, being part of the musical made him more confident to present in front of and socialise with people he had earlier feared. Thus, experiences of 'the event', of performing in a context of

deportability, could be thought of as also spilling over into very mundane practices. I suggest that performing together (including 'smaller' performances before the whole performance was finalised) was an aesthetic experience not limited to the moment of performing, but which, as an affective moment, also provided energy and a sense of the possibility of politics to the participants in the musical. It helped us go on and struggle together in processes of ambivalent commoning.

Related to this discussion, I further suggest that including the context in the analysis is key. In Chapter 2, I provided a description of the kind of context of migrant rights activism the musical was situated in, and I suggest that the musical, both in terms of constituting new subjectivities performing on stage and in terms of ambivalent commoning, may be thought of as leaving traces in this context. Obviously, it did not change the overall system of migration control, but it did provide energy and a sense of the possibility of politics, not only to the musical participants but also to this context of activism.

Finally, in the introduction to this thesis I put forward the concept of ambivalences as a framework for capturing how the musical was a space where the ambivalences of theatre, deportability and activism in support of migrants intersected. This framework has had its limitations as well as its benefits. In my analysis, ambivalences helped me capture processes that cannot easily be encapsulated, as they are not straightforward and include sometimes contradictory, however coexistent, elements. However, placing these processes within one framework of ambivalences might have risked downplaying their differences. I suggested that the context of activism within which the musical was situated was characterised by ambivalences. As such, and ultimately due to deportability, this context was marked by inequality, while at the same time including practices based on ideals of justice and equality. In my analysis of the relationships between the participants, discussed in Chapter 6 as *ambivalent commoning*, the notion of ambivalences is suitable for capturing both the joy, value and difficulties of these relationships, the activism and the musical, and the feelings of frustration and anger in relation to the musical. Furthermore, I also discussed how activism in support of migrants had an ambivalent relationship to the state, as the state is both the producer of deportability and the 'solution' (through granting a residence permit) to the individual in search of refuge. Using the notion of ambivalence here might risk bringing about overly close associations to the domain of psychology and the inner feelings of people, when it rather concerns a tension between wanting to contest the exclusionary practices of the state, but at the same time having difficulties 'breaking free' from being dependent

on its inclusionary mechanisms (e.g., its provisions of residence permits). The dynamics between the state and activism in support of migrants might be better captured by the term tension or as contested. I have nevertheless adhered to ambivalences as it served well as a framework covering different aspects, processes and tensions. I also, with the help of Bauman (1990), made it clear that I do not limit ambivalences only to encapsulate a person's inner feelings.

Another word that could have brought more of an edge to this framework of mine is the word *contested.* The relationships between the participants could be described as contested, as well as the relationship between the state and activism in this context. The musical could also be described as having a contested relationship to the institutional theatre scene, and theatre in general might be described as a space opening up for contestations in different forms and of various kinds. The word contested, or contestation, however, is associated with opposition towards something and perhaps involves a more specific orientation, or direction, towards or against something compared to ambivalences. Although having limitations, I believe that ambivalences capture more of the messiness and tensions of the different practices and relationships within the musical, as well as the musical's relationships to the surrounding world.

To sum up, in this thesis I analysed how deportability conditioned processes of commoning, how border struggles were part of the processes of commoning constituting the musical, as well as how experiences of migration control, deportability and activism were represented in the musical performance.

Contribution to research fields

This thesis is located at the intersection of three different research fields: critical migration studies, border studies and applied theatre. My analysis has furthermore been inspired by scholars situated within philosophy, political theory and arts. I have moved back and forth between, on the one hand, abstract formulations and theories and, on the other hand, empirical material stemming from everyday engagements with the struggles and experiences of people trying to make change (in their own lives as well as in the world). With this movement between diverse levels and disciplines, I hope to contribute to discussions within the fields that have inspired me.

With regard to the field of critical migration and border studies, I contribute with empirically grounded and theoretically developed understandings of the complexities of resistance towards deportability and bordering practices.

Furthermore, linked to the migrant rights movement's struggles for both representation and changing everyday precarious living conditions, I deepen the discussion regarding how struggles for representation and improving living conditions may be interlinked.

To the field of applied theatre, I contribute with an in-depth and ground-up empirical exploration of the processes of creating a community theatre from beginning to end. I show the importance of continuity in the working process and of engaging in the overall everyday life conditions of the participants, in contrast to exclusively focusing on the 'effects' of the performance (for the participants as well as the audience). I furthermore situate the practices of community theatre in a dialogue with critical understandings of the world that the theatre seeks to engage. This contributes to critical and nuanced discussions of the practices of community theatre instead of solely understanding it as, for example, 'empowering'.

9. Epilogue

> Siamak: I got a bit sad when the musical ended.
> Emma: I think many felt that.
> Siamak: And after that my personal life too, ehh, I have my personal life, I have to study and work. But I want to be in a group like the musical as well. In such a group, we can change an issue or a problem. If you are in a group, or in a community, you feel stronger. That's okay, 'I'm not alone, we are a large group, a community, we can struggle and we can make change'.
> Emma: Uhmmm
> Siamak: Uhmm. I hope that we are many who want the musical to continue, and continue working with the musical, I really hope (Siamak, interview 13.05.2014)

In this quote, Siamak expresses that he is a bit sad that the work with the musical has ended, but he also has his personal life to think of and he has to study and work. He emphasises the amount of time and engagement needed for the musical which at times, is incompatible with full-time employment or studies. The musical did end, and even though the experience of working together, and the friendships created through that process, in some ways remain, the show is over. When the musical ended, its participants were tired, several needed to move on with different things in life, but there were also regrets in relation to the loss of a sense of community. A community that, as Siamak said, could struggle and make change. The processes of commoning were dependent on continuity, on meeting each other and working together every week. It points to the temporality inherent in processes of commoning. However, I also suggest that these processes leave traces (cf. Tyler and Marciniak 2014). For example, in the aftermath of the *No Border Musical*, the Malmö Community Theatre was founded in 2014. They have continued to address the theme of how to stage experiences of migration, working with actors who also have these experiences themselves (Miikman, Petterson and Larsdotter 2018). Furthermore, the musical was part of the on-going transformation of the migrant rights movement in Sweden. From being constituted in general by people without personal experiences of migration,

there are now elements of self-organising as well as people with personal experiences of migration represented in the 'old' groups.

In December 2018, when I invited the musical participants to discuss parts of my analysis of the musical over a Christmas 'fika', we talked about how the development in regard to regulations controlling migration was the direct opposite of the visions we had created and struggled for in the musical. Someone said that we ought to start the musical again, it might contribute to changing the current developments! Looking at the political landscape, the vision of the musical, of a world without borders where each and every one would be able to choose their place of residence, indeed seems lost. Defeat is a word that comes to my mind.

History is seldom written by those who lost the battle. Their experiences are seldom put at the centre for understanding the past and shed light on the present. However, I suggest that we ought to look for the traces left by the battles lost and build on them.

This thesis is an attempt to provide an in-depth exploration of struggles that contested the present order. Although not leading to an overall transformation of the system, it did contribute to transformations on the level of the individual (as Siamak said in Chapter 7, the borders in a way ceased to exist for him), while at the same time being embedded in an ongoing transformation of the migrant rights movement in Sweden. As a book seeking to explore these processes, this thesis is also a trace of the struggles of the musical and, as such, a document of resistance, lost battles as well as continuous struggle.

What now?

> Every day we ask ourselves whether to get dual citizenship in order to have an escape route.
> Or will that provoke our deportation. (Athena Farrokhzad *Brev till Europa [Letter to Europe]* 2018, *my translation*).

This quote is a short extract from Athena Farrokhzad's poem *Letter to Europe* published just before the Swedish national election in September 2018. It is a poem transmitting a sense of anger, fear, resignation, disappointment and rebellion. I think that Farrokhzad captures the times we are living in very well. Fear, as I write in Chapter 5, is not limited to the condition of deportability. As

Farrokhzad writes, fear of expulsion to a larger extent than before also includes those with formal citizenship.[73]

Sweden follows the trend in Europe of harsher legislation concerning residence permits and the instalment of border controls. The norm has been changed from permanent residency to temporary permits for 13 months up to three years (see Lag (2016: 752)). Further, the implementation of these restrictive migration laws also comes at a time where there have been increased racist activities in Sweden. This concerns arson at refugee camps, protests against planned refugee camps in various smaller cities, many of the protests specifically targeting planned and/or existing sheltered homes for unaccompanied minors (Lööw 2017). Furthermore, in the 2018 election, the Sweden Democrats received 17% of the votes. Sweden thus follows the European trend of increasing influence of parties based on ideas of fascism and/or racism, a restrictive and violent control of migration and increasing numbers of people who are not given any possibility to settle and find a safe haven. The extension of an insecure legal status, in combination with a racialised labour market and an increased internal control of foreigners, lead Sager and Öberg to argue for the need to understand deportability as a racialised continuum (Sager and Öberg 2017). Simultaneously, resistance is organised against these developments. Activists who organise together with and in support of migrants in precarious and/or life-threatening situations.[74] These acts of support – of offering people migrating a lift, of giving food and shelter to migrants, of saving people from drowning – are, similar to migration in general, increasingly criminalised (Bulman 2019; Open Democracy 2019). In Sweden, the Asylum Commission consisting of researchers, people engaged in refugee rights organisations and people with direct experiences of seeking asylum was recently launched with the purpose of systematically investigating the consequences of the changes in the Swedish regulations of migration, as well as seeking to raise the level of knowledge in society and improve the situation for those affected by these changes (Lundberg and Vestin 2019).

In light of the developments I have described, it is crucial to think about how forms of commoning may be practiced outside the framework of an increasingly nationalist and repressive state. This thesis shows that acting may be contesting the present order, as well as reproducing it, at the same time.

[73] See Khosravi (2018) on practices of deportations of citizens.

[74] See, for example, https://mediterranearescue.org/en/ and http://watchthemed.net for practices of saving migrants and monitoring human right violations in the Mediterranean Sea. The site https://w2eu.info/index.en.html offers information about different groups in different countries supporting migrants along their journeys to and through Europe.

There are no clear instructions on how to act, how to resist or how to endure in this world of injustices. I suggest continuous acting and creating forms and spaces of commoning, with all its ambivalences and contradictions, as a way to endure in these times.

To me, the role of research in this context appears ambivalent. One the one hand, I think it is important to make visible and contribute to the emergence and development of spaces of commoning through collaborative research. On the other hand, the developments I have described call for caution. Maybe these practices and spaces should not be made visible as this also makes them visible to control and repression? This dilemma is not new, as researchers are obliged to adhere to anonymisation practices to protect research participants and their communities. Still, I think that recent developments make the question of which kinds of practices might be harmed by being brought into light more urgent.

In many ways, this thesis is a result of a tortuous journey – collective in terms of the musical and individual in terms of thesis-writing – trying to contest and challenge borders in different forms and at different levels. I hope that the work and performance of the musical this thesis sets out to understand and analyse inspire further involvement, analysis and resistance, despite all the ambivalences and incompleteness of acting in this unjust world.

10. Swedish summary

Motstånd genom teater – Ambivalenta praktiker i *No Border Musical*

I ett Europa där gränskontroll intensifieras och deportationer ökar ställer jag i denna avhandling frågor om möjligheter till motstånd och aktivism genom teater. Jag har under en period av ungefär två år gjort en deltagande etnografisk studie tillsammans med en oberoende teatergrupp som satte upp *No Border Musical* (2011–2013) i Malmö. Initiativet att genom en musikal iscensätta konsekvenserna av den rådande migrationskontrollregimen, samt visioner om en värld utan gränser, kom från personer aktiva i *Asylgruppen*, en lokal flyktingrättsgrupp i Malmö. Tillsammans med den oberoende teatergruppen *Teater Interakt* skapade Asylgruppen *No Border Musical*. Ensemblen bestod av icke-professionella skådespelare med koppling till den lokala flyktingrättsrörelsen. Ungefär hälften av skådespelarna hade blivit kategoriserade som ensamkommande flyktingbarn när det sökt skydd i Sverige. Deras fingeravtryck hade identifierats i EU:s gemensamma databas EURODAC och de hade fått beslut om att de skulle deporteras till ett annat EU-land i enlighet med Dublinförordningen. För att undkomma detta hade de avvikit från sina transitboenden och levde periodvis som papperslösa under den tid då musikalgruppen arbetade tillsammans.

Community teater är ett samlingsbegrepp för teatergrupper som med teatern som verktyg försöker åstadkomma social och politisk förändring. Ofta är arbetet förankrat i det lokala sammanhanget. *No Border Musical* kan med sitt syfte att protestera mot orättvisor, sin starka förankring i Asylgruppen i Malmö (det lokala sammanhanget) samt med en ensemble bestående av icke-professionella skådespelare beskrivas som en *community teater.*

Eftersom delar av ensemblen i *No Border Musical* levde under hot om utvisning (*deportability*), villkorades musikalens arbete av det ständigt närvarande hotet att när som helst, var som helst, avslöjas som papperslös och därmed med stor sannolikhet gripas och deporteras. Utvisningsbarhetens villkor ställdes dessutom på sin spets i musikalen då det här handlade om att

ta plats på scen i offentlighetens ljus. Det praktiska arbetet med att skapa en föreställning, samt själva framträdandet, karaktäriserades vidare av ett antal ambivalenser. Det vill säga ett antal spänningar och motstridigheter som utspelade sig i relationerna mellan deltagarna, mellan musikalens arbetsprocess och vision och statens migrationskontroll, samt fanns inneboende i själva arbetet med att gestalta migrationsrelaterade erfarenheter på scen.

I avhandlingen analyserar jag både de vardagliga praktikerna att repetera, organisera, mötas, och erfarenheterna av att uppträda tillsammans, som *commoning*. Verbet commoning kommer från substantivet *commons* som på svenska brukar översättas till *allmänningar*. ”Commoning” fokuserar på själva görandet av sådana allmänningar, ett görande som inkluderar både relationsskapande mellan människor, deras handlingar och vad för typ av utrymme som skapas. ”Commoning” äger rum utanför etablerade offentliga institutioner (staten) och marknadens logiker (exempelvis jakten på vinstmaximering).

Med sin förankring i den lokala flyktingrättsrörelsen samt då flera av ensemblens deltagare levde som papperslösa eller gick igenom en asylprocess under arbetet med musikalen, utgjorde musikalen ett fruktbart sammanhang för att undersöka frågor om aktivism, teater och motstånd mot gränspraktiker, migrationskontroll och deportationer. Mer specifikt så utgår jag i avhandlingen utifrån följande frågeställningar: *Hur villkorar hot om utvisning vardagsliv och aktivism? Hur representeras erfarenheter av utvisningsbarhet, migrationskontroll och aktivism i No Border Musical, och hur kan dessa representationer tolkas? Vilka begränsningar respektive möjligheter finns det för ”commoning” genom community teater i ett sammanhang av utvisningsbarhet?*

Jag har sedan 2005 varit engagerad på olika sätt i den lokala flyktingrättsrörelsen i Malmö, mestadels i Asylgruppen. Genom mitt engagemang har jag mycket erfarenhet av att möta människor som utsatts för nationalstatens gränsdragningar, samt av att arbeta med olika former av opinionsbildning. Denna avhandling befinner sig i gränslandet mellan akademin och aktivism, då den både strävar efter att generera värdefull kunskap och vill bidra till utmanande och ifrågasättande av gränser och nationalstatens utestängande mekanismer.

No Border Musical – en bakgrund

Under det första året som musikalen arbetade, år 2012, hände det som inte fick hända. En deltagare, Abdullah, greps utanför sitt hem av civilklädda poliser. Han frihetsberövades, och trots många protester samt överklaganden från juridiskt ombud deporterades han till Italien. Det fattades tre dagar för att han skulle ha kunnat söka asyl i Sverige.

Bakgrundskapitlet inleds med att beskriva denna händelse i detalj, dels eftersom den visar på det inneboende våldet i svensk migrationskontroll, dels för att händelsen påverkade både Abdullah, och musikalgruppens deltagare och arbete. I musikalen diskuterades om det var för farligt att fortsätta träffas, repetera med målet att uppträda tillsammans, och om vi kanske borde avsluta vårt arbete. Vi beslutade oss för att fortsätta, delvis på grund av att musikalen upplevdes som ännu viktigare i ljuset av deportationen.

Nästa del av kapitlet beskriver hur musikalen initierades i ett sammanhang av vänsteraktivism i allmänhet, och asylrättsaktivism i synnerhet. Asylrättaktivismen i Sverige karakteriseras av en dubbelhet i förhållande till staten. Å ena sidan finns en medvetenhet om att staten aldrig kan vara lösningen på de problem som migranter ställs inför, å andra sidan har ett uppehållstillstånd, utfärdat av staten, som regel högsta prioritet hos den enskilde. Vid tidpunkten då musikalen initierades (2011–2012) började frågan om representation inom asylrättsrörelsen lyftas alltmer, inte minst på grund av olika självorganiserade initiativ (tex Asylstafetten, Ensamkommandes Förbund). Asylgruppen i Malmö hade, precis som asylrättsrörelsen nationellt, främst bestått av personer utan egna erfarenheter av flykt och att söka asyl. Vidare var majoriteten i rörelsen kvinnor. Som jag nämnde var musikalen initierad i ett vänstersammanhang, vilket för deltagarna även innebar att vissa sätt att leva var vanliga. Exempelvis var majoriteten av musikalens deltagare veganer eller vegetarianer, många bodde i kollektiv, studerade eller arbetade deltid, samt hade en stor del av sitt sociala liv baserat i denna politiska miljö.

Musikalen initierades i en tid då Asylgruppen i Malmö i ökad grad kommit i kontakt med personer som blivit kategoriserade som ensamkommande flyktingbarn, men som på grund av Dublinförordningen[75] hotades av deportation till annat EU-land. Då musikalen startades av personer inom Asylgruppen, kom musikalensemblens sammansättning att spegla

[75] Dublinförordning är en del av EU:s regelverk. Förordningen gör gällande att en ansökan om asyl ska behandlas i det första EU-land personen i fråga anländer till. Om personen sedan tar sig vidare till ett annat EU-land får personen normalt beslut om överföring till det så kallade första asyllandet.

Asylgruppens dåvarande sammansättning. Av musikaldeltagarna utan egen erfarenhet av att leva som papperslösa var majoriteten kvinnor, och av deltagarna med egna erfarenheter av att leva som papperslösa var majoriteten unga män som vid ankomst till Sverige kategoriserats som ensamkommande flyktingbarn.

Flera av deltagarna levde som papperslösa under hela eller delar av de två år som musikalen arbetade tillsammans. Förutom en ständig rädsla för att gripas av polis medförde detta också svårigheter att försörja sig, att hitta bostad, att kunna gå i skolan, och få tillgång vård vid behov. Musikalen var ett sammanhang där resurser kunde delas, där fanns stöd att få, och flera deltagare bodde tillsammans under kortare eller längre perioder. Det var dock också ett sammanhang där ojämlikheter ställdes på sin spets. Även om det fanns visioner om inkludering, så reproducerades flera av de ojämlika maktrelationerna kring exempelvis icke-medborgare/medborgare.

I bakgrundskapitlet beskriver jag också Malmö, som stad och som plats för *No Border Musical*. Det är i Malmö jag varit engagerad i asylrättsrörelsen och fått lära mig om vad det kan innebära att leva utan uppehållstillstånd, och det är här jag genom mitt engagemang också har fått vänner för livet. Malmö beskrivs ibland som Sveriges Berlin, mycket på grund av sitt rika kulturliv och som en stad där många olika politiska rörelser uppstått. Men Malmö innehåller också, likt andra svenska storstäder, mycket ojämlikhet. Malmös befolkning är uppdelad mellan olika områden som särskiljs från varandra i termer av ekonomisk situation, bakgrund, och förväntad levnadslängd.

För papperslösa invånare hade Malmö under musikalåren både för- och nackdelar. Å ena sidan föregick staden nationell lagstiftning genom att ge papperslösa barn tillgång till skola och vård på lika villkor som andra barn i staden, och även vuxna papperslösa personer gavs tillgång till sjukvård (om än villkorad). Å andra sidan inledde polisen i Skåne ett pilotprojekt i Malmö, tillsammans med Kriminalvården och Migrationsverket, som syftade till att öka och effektivisera antalet deportationer (projektet förkortades REVA). Denna satsning sammanföll med att Malmöpolisen hade fått utökade resurser på grund av några uppmärksammande mord. Det innebar en ökad synlighet av poliser i Malmö och ett ökat antal ID-kontroller, exempelvis i samband med trafikkontroller och cykelkontroller. Det var i samband med en sådan kontroll utförd av civila poliser som musikaldeltagaren Abdullah greps.

Avslutningsvis initierades musikalen i nära anslutning till ett specifikt område i Malmö; Möllevången. Många deltagare i musikalen vistades mycket eller bodde där. Möllevången är ett område som byggdes för arbetare i början av 1900-talet, och har varit och fortsätter att vara hemvist för många olika

politiska grupper och föreningar. Området är, trots en pågående gentrifiering, fortfarande relativt fattigt, och många är inflyttade, från andra länder, eller från andra städer i Sverige.

Platsen är viktig, och Malmö och Möllevången satte sin prägel på musikalens arbete.

Teoretiska och metodologiska utgångspunkter

En metodologisk och teoretisk utmaning i min avhandling är att ta avstånd från nationalstaten som en given enhet, samtidigt som dess regleringar och konstruktion har långtgående konsekvenser för människors liv och villkor. Teoretiskt ser jag utvisningsbarhet (deportability), det vill säga ett ständigt hot om att utvisas, som något som villkorar ens tillvaro på många plan; i arbetslivet, på bostadsmarknaden, tillgången till sociala rättigheter (skola och vård), familjelivet, samt hur man kan röra sig i staden. I fallet som jag studerar här, en musikal, villkorade det ständigt närvarande hotet om utvisning både deltagarnas position, hur gruppen arbetade (strategier för att undkomma deportationer exempelvis) och hur relationer inom gruppen utvecklades.

Hur hot om utvisning erfars är tätt sammanlänkat med olika former av gränspraktiker. Hur och när görs gränser? Inom teoribildningen om gränser talas det om ”externalisering”, det vill säga att nationalstatens gräns förflyttas bortom dess territoriella gräns. I ett svenskt sammanhang kan vi se att Sveriges gräns numera till viss del är flyttad till EU:s yttre gräns, och svensk personal medverkar i bevakning av gränser långt bortom svenskt territorium. Musikalens arbete påverkades vidare av en ”internalisering” av gränser, det vill säga att gränskontrollen i ökande grad utförs inom ett lands territorium, så kallad inre utlänningskontroll. Abdullah, som jag skrev om tidigare, kontrollerades exempelvis av civilklädda poliser utanför sitt hem. När han inte kunde uppvisa uppehållstillstånd, greps han och frihetsberövades för att sedan deporteras. I min avhandling utgår jag från en förståelse av gränser som snarare än att försöka definiera exakt vad en gräns är, utforskar vad gränser gör samt hur och när de görs.

I ett sammanhang av utvisningsbarhet och gränspraktiker försökte musikalen, med teater som verktyg, att skapa rum för kamp, kritik och vision. Teater brukar beskrivas som ett rum där gränser kan överskridas, ett föränderligt rum som också kan förändra såväl skådespelare som publik. Skådespelarna uppfattas av publiken både utifrån deras yttre attribut och uttryckssätt, och utifrån den karaktär de gestaltar. Således är skådespelaren

både sig själv och samtidigt inte sig själv på scen. I musikalen blev frågan om vad skådespelaren representerar (sig själv och/eller sin karaktär) extra synlig eftersom vissa skådespelare kunde läsas som bärare av de erfarenheter de gestaltade på scen (erfarenheter av flykt, utvisningsbarhet, migrationskontroll).

Denna avhandling handlar om en specifik form av teater, community teater. Utgångspunkten är att teaterpraktiker även omfattar praktiker som inte är direkt kopplade till skapandet av en föreställning. Det kan exempelvis röra sig om sociala aktiviteter som pågår utanför själva teaterövningarna. Vidare lyfter jag fram att arbete för förändring också har en estetisk dimension samt en dimension av glädje. Detta synsätt fångas av uttrycket, ”om jag inte kan dansa till det är det inte min revolution”, som har tillskrivits Emma Goldman, anarkistisk agitator verksam i början av 1900-talet. Konstnärliga uttryckssätt kan både ses som energigivande för det politiska förändringsarbetet, samt som politiska i sig. Detta blir extra synligt i en community teater som *No Border Musical* där såväl teaterns gränsdragningar (specifika platser och yrkesgrupper för teater), som nationalstatens gränspraktiker, utmanas.

Slutligen förstår jag musikalens alla delar – arbetet med att skapa en föreställning, utvecklandet av relationer inom gruppen, de olika framträdandena – som olika delar i ”processes of commoning”. Dessa processer var inte fria från konflikter eller spänningar.

Metodologisk befinner jag mig som nämnts i gränslandet mellan akademi och aktivism. Min deltagande etnografiska metod var en del av de processer som jag också utforskade. Vidare kände flera av musikalens deltagare till mig genom mitt engagemang i flyktingrättsrörelsen. Detta engagemang gav mig också legitimitet för mitt arbete som forskare.

Jag tar utgångspunkt i en förståelse av kunskap som något som skapas kollektivt, och där sociala rörelser, som exempelvis flyktingrättsrörelsen, har mycket att bidra med. I dessa kollektiva sammanhang är det viktigt att göra sin egen position som forskare synlig och till föremål för kritisk granskning. Jag har strävat efter att skapa ”situerad kunskap”. Det betyder konkret att jag har brottats mycket med att få grepp om hur musikalen som sammanhang kan förstås, vilken kunskap som kan skapas med utgångspunkt i den, och vilken min roll är i denna produktion av kunskap. Vilken roll har jag haft i musikalen som grupp och hur har det påverkat mina perspektiv och hur jag förstår musikalen? Detta är svåra frågor, och det finns inga enkla recept på tillvägagångssätt och metoder. I min avhandling försöker jag genomgående göra min position, och min roll i de skeenden och situationer jag analyserar,

synlig, utan att för den skull sätta mig själv och mina erfarenheter av att delta i musikalen i centrum.

I nästa del av sammanfattningen går jag in på avhandlingens analytiska del; de tre kapitel där min empiri om musikalen, dess deltagare, och dess framträdanden, analyseras.

Utvisningsbarhet, teater och aktivism

> Erfan berättar att han gick på gatan, på kvällen, han skulle till en kompis och sova. Då kom en polisbil, jättesnabbt, men när polisen såg honom saktade de in och körde långsamt. ”jag blev jättenervös, mitt hjärta slog snabbt”. Men istället för att visa det berättar Erfan att han sträckt på sig, tagit av sig luvan, och börjat småsjunga på en sång. Polisbilen åkte långsamt vid honom men åkte sedan vidare (Fältanteckningar 2012-10-06).

Rädslan för att bli upptäckt som papperslös, och som följd av det deporterad, var ständigt närvarande hos de deltagare i musikalen som levde som papperslösa. Rädslan fick dem tidvis att inte våga gå ut, och när de rörde sig i staden var det alltid med en medvetenhet om risken, och faran, med att bli ID-kontrollerad av polis. Flera beskrev hur de gjorde allt för att inte sticka ut, allt för att uppträda som en som passade in, som hörde till. I citatet ovan beskriver Erfan hur han trots oerhörd rädsla hade sinnesnärvaro nog att ta av sig luvan på sin hoodie, sträcka på sig, och börja småsjunga. Allt för att se avslappnad ut, i motsats till rädd och ”skyldig”. Rädsla, oro, separation från nära och kära, vad de utsatts för innan och längs med flykten, tog sig alltså, som händelsen illustrerar, uttryck i deltagarnas kroppar. Många hade sömnproblem, viktminskning, gastrit och värk i olika delar av kroppen. Även deltagare som inte levde med direkt hot om utvisning eller genomgick en asylprocess, fick sömnproblem och brottades med oro. Konsekvenserna av gränspraktiker och statens migrationskontroll var mycket påtagliga i gruppen. Samtidigt deltog de i ett arbete där de skulle ställa sig tillsammans på scen, och med sitt uppträdande rikta kritik mot den ordning som satt dem i de svåra situationer de befann sig. Varför tog musikalen den risk det innebar att ha skådespelare hotade av utvisning på scen?

Jag utforskar denna fråga genom att diskutera vikten av att bli lyssnad på och viljan av att berätta. Deltagare som själva levde som papperslösa kände igen sina erfarenheter i de berättelser som musikalen visade på scen, och beskrev hur själva berättandet om erfarenheter av migrationskontroll var en

viktig drivkraft för deras medverkan i musikalen. Även för de deltagare som hade en bakgrund i den lokala flyktingrättsrörelsen var berättande en viktig drivkraft. De hade lyssnat på och mött så många människor som drabbats av migrationskontroll, och teater sågs som ett medel genom vilket de kunde nå ut till fler och till andra än vad vanligt kampanjarbete ansågs göra.

Berättandet som något ensidigt positivt bör dock problematiseras, särskilt i sammanhang med ett asylsystem där berättelsen är en bärande del för huruvida den sökande bedöms vara i behov av skydd – där ett fullständig blottande av privatlivets alla detaljer fordras av berättaren. Att iscensätta berättelser av flykt kan ses som en handling för att få upprättelse, att säga, ”ni lyssnade inte, och ni ansåg inte mig förtjäna ert skydd, men se och hör på mig nu”. Samtidigt inryms i denna form av upprättelse också en risk för att berättandet bidrar till upplevelsen av att uppehållstillstånd är något den sökande ska göra sig förtjänt av, bland annat genom att avslöja allt om sitt förflutna, i kontrast till uppehållstillstånd som en rättighet eller ett perspektiv enligt vilket ingen som bor i Sverige ”förtjänar” att bo på den platsen mer än någon annan. Ingen av dessa mer kritiska tolkningar av berättandet lägger dock vikt vid själva upplevelsen av att berätta, hur det kan upplevas som ett erkännande, och hur detta kan få betydande konsekvenser. Detta särskilt i relation till upplevelsen att som papperslös göras osynlig och befinna sig långt från övriga samhället. I musikalens sammanhang, villkorat av hot om utvisning, framstod viljan att berätta och synliggöra konsekvenser av migrationskontroll som mycket stark.

Ambivalent ”commoning”

> Det var storslaget. Fantastiskt! Nervöst. Fullsatt (2012-12-20).

Meningarna i citatet ovan är från mina fältanteckningar från premiären och beskriver bland annat vilken glädje och eufori många i musikalen gav uttryck för då. Hur tragglandet under repetitioner och med repliker äntligen gav utdelning. I avhandlingen beskrivs de olika aktiviteter musikalen gjorde tillsammans som viktiga delar i ”commoning” processer. Jag lyfter till exempel fram en resa till Stockholm, där vi uppträdde i samband med ett No Border läger som anordnades sommaren 2012, som flera deltagare menade var viktig för hur relationerna i gruppen utvecklades. De deltagare som levde som papperslösa betonade vikten av lek och tillit för deras känsla av samhörighet med gruppen. Jag beskriver också hur vi tillsammans firade när någon i gruppen klarat av ett steg i asylprocessen eller fått uppehållstillstånd.

Gränspraktiker var ständigt närvarande, till den grad att gränsen kunde sägas vara var den plats där deltagare utan uppehållstillstånd vistades – de bar gränsen med sig i sina kroppar, ständigt medvetna om risken att bli kontrollerad. Men även här, på denna plats, *på* gränsen, fanns utrymme att bygga omsorgsfulla relationer, att repetera med en teater, att skapa ett sammanhang. Jag exemplifierar detta med ett firande när vi åt en tårta på vilken det stod FUCK BORDERS: på gränsen kan man också fira och äta en kaka där det står FUCK BORDERS.

Jag uppmärksammar också de konflikter som fanns inom gruppen, och som jag beskriver som ”översättningspolitik” (politics of translation). Jag menar då översättning inte enbart i bemärkelsen översättningen mellan två eller flera språk, utan översättning av erfarenheter, av ojämlikheter, och översättningen som en fundamental del av politisk organisering. När innehavare av makt velat hålla förtryckta nere, har de ofta försökt placera människor som inte kan varandras språk eller har kännedom om varandras sociala sammanhang tillsammans, som ett sätt att försvåra organisering av motstånd. De översättningar som skedde inom ramen för musikalen var i detta sammanhang politiska. Detta då de bidrog till skapandet av motstånd mot de skiljelinjer staten dragit genom musikalen, i termer av kategoriseringen av vissa deltagare som papperslösa och vissa deltagare som medborgare. Jag lyfter fram flera aspekter av denna översättningspolitik som jag menar på många sätt var ofullständig. Det går, med andra ord, inte att överkomma den typ av fundamentala ojämlikheter som fanns inom gruppen, vilka ofta härrörde ur utvisningsbarhetens villkor. Men det går att göra otaliga ofullständiga försök, och på det sättet ändå organisera sig, göra en teater och bidra till motstånd mot gränspraktiker.

Jag utforskar också pratet om ”ungdomar” och ”vuxna” inom musikalgruppen, vilket var vanligt förekommande. Paradoxalt nog skiljde det sig dock inte mycket i ålder mellan den äldsta ”ungdomen” och den yngsta ”vuxna”. Kategorierna ”ungdom” och ”vuxen” sammanföll vidare med andra kategoriseringar inom musikalgruppen, såsom icke-medborgare/medborgare, icke-vit/vit, man/kvinna.

Ansvarsfördelning och inflytande i gruppen upplevdes ofta som sprunget ur dessa kategorier, och flera deltagare var uttalat kritiska till detta. Samtidigt lyfte deltagare utan erfarenhet av att leva som papperslösa fram att en del av dessa problematiska aspekter kom från deras ambition om att skapa ett rum där ”ungdomarna” kunde slippa ta ”vuxenansvar”. Det framkom också att det för någon ”ungdom” upplevts just som avslappnande att slippa ha ansvar för helheten. Andra var dock kritiska och upplevde att deras åsikter inte togs

hänsyn till, och att de behandlades som ”små barn”. Detta kopplades även till en upplevelse av att det var svårt att göra sin röst hörd på svenska. Att nyss ha lärt sig svenska, samt att betraktas som ”ungdom”, upplevdes bidra till mindre inflytande i gruppen.

Iscensätta motstånd: synlighet och erkännande

> Vilka ord ska vi använda? Vilka argument, vilka handlingar, vilka berättelser skulle kunna leda till förändring? (…) Om vi redan berättat och alla ändå fortsätter leva som om vi varit tysta? (Manus, första scenen, *No Border Musical*)

Frågorna ovan inledde musikalens föreställning. Medan scenen var mörklagd lästes dessa rader ut ur högtalarna, och ställde frågor om hur berättande bör göras, och vilket berättande som skulle kunna förändra status quo. I avhandlingens sista empiriska kapitel analyserar jag musikalens framträdanden och sätter den analysen i dialog med analyser av musikalens arbetsprocess och sammanhang.

Genom att framträda med skådespelare som levde under hot om utvisning bröt musikalen mot en ordning där papperslösa personer är osynliggjorda. Vidare visade man även upp bilder av utvisningsbarhet som inte endast handlade om utsatthet utan också om rebelliskt motstånd och solidaritet. Detta samtidigt som delar av föreställningen kan förstås som upprepningar av bilden av människor på flykt som en homogen grupp av offer, eller, som nämnts tidigare, att vissa scener appellerade till en tanke om upprättelse i förhållande till asylsystemet.

Jag undersöker i detta kapitel även vilka skådespelare som gestaltade vilka roller på scen, och här framträder att det förekom att skådespelare med erfarenhet av att leva som papperslösa spelade roller som åklagare, polis, journalist, medan det sällan var så att en skådespelare utan erfarenhet av att leva som papperslös, spelade en roll som flykting eller papperslös. Jag lyfter fram att detta kan förstås på olika sätt. Deltagarna utan egen erfarenhet av att leva med hot om utvisning trodde att rollfördelningar berodde på att de inte ville riskera att ”stjäla röster” eller appropriera erfarenheter. Vidare ville deltagare med erfarenhet av att leva som papperslösa gärna gestalta vad som påminde om deras egna erfarenheter av flykt och av att leva med hot om utvisning. Då skådespelarnas yttre signalerade till publiken att de också kunde vara bärare av de erfarenheter av flykt som de gestaltade på scen bidrog detta

till att ge musikalens uppträdande ett inslag av realism. På samma gång var representationen på scen begränsad; de skådespelare som kunde läsas av publik som asylsökande eller papperslösa var alla unga män från Afghanistan eller Somalia som hade erfarenhet av att bli kategoriserade som ensamkommande flyktingbarn. En kvinna med erfarenhet av papperslöshet, som först såg musikalen som publik, och därefter deltog själv i uppträdanden, uppgav att hon å ena sidan känt sig stärkt av att få sina erfarenheter av utvisningsbarhet representerade på scen. Å andra sidan var hon kritiskt mot att musikalen osynliggjorde papperslösa kvinnors erfarenheter, genom att endast ha asylsökande eller papperslösa män på scen.

I kapitlet diskuterar jag också musikalföreställningens mer utopiska element, där visioner om hur en annan och mer rättvis värld kan bli möjlig iscensattes. I en av de sista scenerna gestaltas hur en gränslös värld hade blivit möjlig med hjälp av många olika människors handlingar. Det handlade om att ha modet att berätta om sina erfarenheter, men också om att någon lyssnade till alla berättelser och därefter agerade: organiserade demonstrationer, skrev tal och debattartiklar, hjälpte till med mat och bostad till personer utan uppehållstillstånd, och, beskriver scenen, det fanns också en musikal som turnerade runt och fortsatte turnera tills människor lyssnade och agerade. I den sista scenen uppträder de två papperslösa karaktärerna, Soma och Rasmie, tillsammans med deras idol, karaktären Robyn, och hela ensemblen dansar på scen, i vad som gestaltas som en gränslös värld. Jag diskuterar hur detta å ena sidan kan förstås som förmedlandet av ett oproblematiskt ”vi”, ett slut på maktrelationer på grund av medborgarskap och gränser, och där musikalen ger publiken en bra känsla att lämna föreställningen med. Å andra sidan kan det förstås som ett gestaltande av en utopi, ett ”inte än”, men i framtiden kanske, om vi kämpar tillsammans, så kan det bli möjligt.

Slutdiskussion

I det avslutande kapitlet diskuterar jag avhandlingens huvudsakliga fynd.

Utvisningsbarhet genomsyrade och villkorade musikalens arbetsprocess, även om den också påverkades av andra maktrelationer såsom de baserade på föreställningar om kön och ras. Det ständigt närvarande hotet om att deltagare skulle avslöjas som papperslösa och deporteras påverkade hur musikalen arbetade och olika strategier för att minska riskerna för att bli upptäckt som papperslös utarbetades. Dessa strategier formades i relation till mottagande av flyktingar i Sverige, specifikt mottagande av ensamkommande flyktingbarn.

Vidare så villkorade hotet om utvisning även formandet av relationer inom musikalgruppen, samt skapade prekära levnadsvillkor för deltagare utan uppehållstillstånd.

Sammanhanget som musikalgruppen utgjorde möjliggjorde synliggörande av erfarenheter av att leva med hot om utvisning, både på scen och under själva arbetsprocessen. I avhandlingen kallar jag dessa olika praktiker; att repetera, träffas regelbundet, uppträda tillsammans, för ”commoning”. Dessa processer påverkades dock av olika gränspraktiker och motstånd mot dessa, och jag diskuterar två former: den ena handlar om en slags ”extern” utmaning av gränser, och den andra rör ”intern” utmaning av gränser. Att synliggöra erfarenheter av utvisningsbarhet samt att ha skådespelare på scen som är hotade av utvisning, kan sägas ha utmanat osynlighet som ett villkor förknippat med utvisningsbarhet, vilket kan ses som en utåtriktad utmaning av gränser. I analysen av utmaningar relaterade till gränspraktiker inom musikalgruppen använder jag mig av begreppet *översättningspolitik*. Musikalen var ett sammanhang där ojämlikheter och olika erfarenheter kopplade till utvisningsbarhet och gränspraktiker kunde synliggöras och hanteras, det vill säga, göras till föremål för översättning. Ojämlikheter kan inte ”lösas” genom community teater eller aktivism, men musikalen skapade ett utrymme där dessa ojämlikheter kunde synliggöras och utmanas. I min analys visar jag komplexiteten och spänningarna i detta arbete.

Gällande representation på scen av erfarenheter av gränser och migrationskontroll, tenderade musikalföreställningen å ena sidan att reproducera bilder av flyktingar som passiva offer. Å den andra sidan fanns även andra berättelser representerade i föreställningen, såsom dem om motstånd mot förvar och rebelliska papperslösa karaktärer. Vidare kritiserades den ojämlika fördelningar av möjligheter att resa i världen, och den våldsamma migrationskontrollen synliggjordes och kritiserades.

I detta kapitel frågar jag mig vad begreppet och erfarenheter av utvisningsbarhet bidrar med till förståelser av ”commoning”. Jag menar att en fördjupad förståelse av ”commoning” i ett sammanhang av utvisningsbarhet visar på hur dessa praktiker ofta är motsägelsefulla, ambivalenta, samt har oförutsägbara konsekvenser. Vidare visar mitt fokus på *motstånd genom teater* på dess tillfälliga karaktär, och jag betonar hur ”commoning” är kopplade till människors handlande, och därför inte beständiga. Dock lämnar dessa handlingar, och skapande av sammanhang såsom musikalen, spår. Här tar jag upp hur musikalen påverkade samt påverkades av flyktingrättsrörelsen i Malmö och Sverige. Musikalens arbete och föreställning kan sägas ha lämnat

spår i dessa sammanhang, där musikalen gav energi och inspiration till fortsatt politisk organisering.

Avhandlingen avslutas med en epilog där jag beskriver hur jag över en fika i december 2018 tillsammans med deltagare i musikalen, reflekterar över den tid som gått sedan musikalens sista föreställning hösten 2013. Utan överdrift kan det sägas att utvecklingen har gått tvärt emot musikalens vision och arbete. Kamperna för en gränslös värld, och för en politik där alla och envar skulle få rätt att bestämma vilka platser på jorden att kalla hem, framstår som förlorade. Historien skrivs sällan av förlorarna. Deras erfarenheter och perspektiv sätts sällan i centrum. Jag menar att ett fruktbart sätt att ta sig an den dystopiska tid vi lever i är att ta utgångspunkt i förlorade kamper, lära av dem och bygga vidare utifrån dem.

Idag pågår motstånd och politisk organisering mot restriktiv migrationskontroll, våldsamma gränspraktiker, kriminalisering av både migranter samt solidaritet med migranter, på många platser. I Sverige lanserades nyligen en Asylkommission som systematiskt vill granska och undersöka konsekvenserna av de ändringar i Utlänningslagen som genomfördes 2015-17. Givet sammanhanget av utökad övervakning och kriminalisering av migranter och solidaritet, är det svårt att säga vilka strategier som är mest framgångsrika för att skapa utrymme bortom och i motstånd mot repression. Ändå menar jag att kontinuerliga processer av ”commoning” i olika former och på olika platser, med alla dess inneboende ambivalenser och spänningar, kan vara ett sätt att uthärda i dessa tider.

Denna avhandling är ett resultat av en oförutsägbar slingrig resa – kollektiv i termer av musikalen, och individuell i termer av avhandlingsskrivande – som försökt utmana gränser i olika former och på olika nivåer. Min förhoppning är att de arbetsprocesser och den föreställning som denna avhandling analyserar, ska inspirera till vidare engagemang, analys och motstånd, trots inneboende motsättningar och ambivalenser, och de stora utmaningar som kommer med att agera i denna orättvisa värld.

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