



GÖTEBORGS UNIVERSITET

Department of Social Work

International Master Programme in Social Work and Human Rights

LIVING BEHIND A GLASS WALL

Living Conditions of Undocumented Immigrants in Sweden



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Abstract:

This explorative qualitative study is focused on the living conditions of undocumented migrants in Sweden. It reviews the conditions of their flight and the asylum procedures. The material wellbeing and social situation of these people are reviewed as well as the reasons behind their extended stay in Sweden. Their active will is then discussed in terms of human agency and self efficacy.

Undocumented migrants come legally or illegally in Sweden, many through difficult routes. The majority of the undocumented migrants are rejected asylum seekers who have spent many years in asylum procedures. They present a strong will and persistence in their endeavors to survive and achieve their goals.

Being *illegal* is considered a way for classifying people in the society in this thesis. This label not only limits the access to resources and social support systems, but also represents how *respectable* the person can be. Legal status can have profound effects in the social life and family relations of individuals. Undocumented migrants are systematically deprived from access to most services including health care in Sweden. They face economic hardships in lack of any support system and labour rights. Social networks consist a valuable social capital for these people and in many cases is the only way of survival.

Most of undocumented migrants have a fear of return in spite of being rejected for asylum. They prefer their hidden life style in Sweden to return to a place which is associated with fear and unrest for them. These people are present in a society in which they have no share, much like watching the rest of people behind a glass wall.

Keywords: undocumented immigrants, illegal immigrants, hidden refugees, living conditions, social capital, integration, human agency

Cover picture: Photographed by the author on 26 November 2009 during the demonstration of the undocumented migrants in Göteborg.. The sign reads: *We are also people.*

Acknowledgement:

I would like to express my gratitude to my parents who did what they could for me in the huge prison my home country;

To my family, Reza and Koosha who crossed the world with me and accepted odds of migration to show that 'We shall overcome';

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Reyhaneh Shakibaie
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CHAPTER I:

1.1 Introduction

When I started working on my project of ‘illegal immigrants’, an image came to me: a hungry person who cannot afford to go to a restaurant and is looking through a glass window watching people eating happily. ‘Illegal immigrants’ seem to me like the outsiders who watch the affluent modern society of Sweden without really having a part in it. They live in the same society, see other people and learn about the living conditions in Sweden, but they do not have access to it. They have their own life system which is considered ‘a shadow life’ by some. When you cannot afford to go to a restaurant, you might eat at home, get a sandwich, or buy something in a supermarket to eat. What if you don’t have a home, or enough money to buy anything? What if nobody sells you anything? What are the alternatives you have as an ‘illegal’ person to live in Sweden? How would you feel to watch happy people through the glass wall while you cannot enter ‘their zone’?

A friend of mine was in contact with a few ‘illegal migrants’ and told me some gloomy stories about their situation. It was how I started to think about this issue. Later I had some lectures at the university referring to ‘hidden refugees’. I thought about reasons of choosing to live hidden, the number of ‘hidden refugees’, their living conditions, access to services and consequences of this situation on the individuals and the society. On 26 February 2009, hundreds of men, women and children from different nationalities had a demonstration in Göteborg. They were undocumented immigrants who were asking for a right to asylum, and a life as a human being. It seemed that they were mostly current or rejected asylum seekers who protested against the deportation orders issued by the government of Sweden for people living in similar conditions in hiding. It was a situation where ‘hidden refugees’ were no more hidden, but chose to appear in public to say something to the authorities, maybe out of frustration. Uncertainties about the future and fear of deportation seemed the immediate concerns for these people

There is a contradiction in presence of the ‘hidden refugees’ in Sweden. Legally speaking, these people should not exist in the country while actually they constitute a part of the society. The covert mode of their life makes them marginalized in the society. In a country where even basic services like health care are only available with ‘*personnummer*’¹ and ‘*legitimation*’², these people are surviving without any legal documents. It is important to see how they survive, and what their challenges are. It is worthwhile to know why they refuse to leave Sweden in face of all odds, and what their ambitions are. Ignoring a group which is a *de facto* part of the society might have serious consequences for these people and the society where they live.

In my previous research *Crossing the World* (2008), I reviewed the integration status of the Afghan women who entered Sweden as quota refugees. Quota refugees are transferred to Sweden in a close cooperation of the Swedish Migration Board and the UN Refugee Agency. The receipt and integration of this group is arranged by the

¹ Social Security Number which consist of 6 digits of birth date plus 4 digits given by the tax office to each person.

² ID card

migration board and the municipalities. For that group, a strong social support system exists to help with the integration. Undocumented migrants, on the other hand, are usually moving and living on their own, receiving little if any formal social support. This group of people falls out of the support networks of the social system. In fact, their unwanted nature brings about forces for disintegration rather than integration in the society. While the government tries to disintegrate and deport them, the 'hidden' people try to integrate and stay on. Therefore, there is a sharp contrast in the social support system available to these two groups and makes it worthwhile to investigate their living conditions.

1.1.1. Definitions

Undocumented immigrants can be defined as those individuals who are staying in Sweden without a legal permission such as a visa or a residence permit and thus have to live covertly. To my understanding there might be several hypothetical conditions that result in illegal stay in Sweden:

- Some have entered Sweden illegally and never approached authorities;
- Some have overstayed their residence permits and deny leaving the country;
- Some are rejected asylum seekers who went underground to avoid deportation

Khosravi (2010a), summarized the complexities of illegal and legal entries and stays in a table which can demonstrate different ways of entry and status for migrants.

There are many different ways to refer to this group of people in different settings. *Undocumented immigrants* is an inclusive term used for all different categories of people who migrated for different reasons and after different motivations, and for different reasons could not get residence permits in the destination country. It is applied in the same manner in the Swedish language (*papperslösa*) and in French (*sans papier*). This group will be addressed as undocumented immigrants throughout this paper.

There are other ways of referring to undocumented immigrants. Since these people are not registered with the authorities and have a covert life style some call them *hidden people*. I heard this name frequently during the lectures made by social workers. This term is not used in this article since it is not a self-evident term to identify the target population clearly. Also, it seems that these people are not really hidden as was shown in the demonstration as an example. Many of them are active in the restaurants, cafés or are otherwise present in normal settings.

Another name used for this group of people is *illegal migrants*. This title is very popular in the media. It is a self-evident term and sounds familiar for most of people. Therefore, it is an easy way of addressing this group of people. This introduction was started with this title to ease the recognition of the target group, but it will be avoided throughout this paper because of some legal and ethical considerations. I believe that a human being might perform an illegal *act*, e.g. they can stay illegally somewhere, but they cannot *be* illegal. It is degrading to human dignity to consider a being as illegal.

Hidden refugees or *illegal refugees* are other relevant terms used to address this group. The name *hidden refugees* (gömda flyktingar) is frequently used in the Swedish research literature about this issue. Considering that the term ‘refugee’ has a restrictive definition in international law and application of this term has certain legal consequences for the person in question and the host country, the author prefers to avoid the arbitrary usage of this term for all immigrants. Legally speaking most of the undocumented immigrants who are rejected asylum seekers cannot be referred to as refugees since they have not been recognized as such by the Swedish authorities even if they are living in a refugee-like situation. This report is not dealing with the fairness of the decisions made by the migration board, review of the decision making process, or merits of people as refugees. Instead, these people are considered as individual human beings who are residing in this country. Personally and as a former eligibility officer in UN Refugee Agency, I found it difficult not to think about the refugee claims, and the well-foundedness of the fear of persecution for the people I met, but this is not the subject of this study, and such judgments will be avoided throughout this paper.

This study is about normal daily life of people, a day to day struggle to survive, and to keep the hope. This is about things that are taken for granted for many of us in our daily lives, but are challenges for these people. This is also about people’s feelings, and their emotional reactions to the Swedish society. There seems to be deeper consequences both at personal and social level for living ‘illegally’ somewhere. To look through the glass wall into what you have no or little part in it can be very frustrating.

This study is an explorative research about the living situation of undocumented immigrants in Sweden. As a result of the explorative nature of this study, the research questions are open and the theoretical notions are less dominant in the research.

1.1.2. Research Questions and Aim

This research intends to review and analyze the living conditions of the undocumented immigrants in Sweden in terms of current integration status in Sweden. The paper is organized in a temporal outlook and therefore has a quick review on the situation preceding the flight and life in exile, as well as future plans which much depend on past experiences. The research questions are:

- Why and how the undocumented immigrants entered in Sweden?
- Why they choose to continue their stay in Sweden?
- What is the integration status of hidden people in terms of Ager and Strang indicators for integration (2004)? Are there any organizations facilitating this integration?
- What can best describe undocumented migrants: active agents or victims?

1.2. Previous Research

1.2.1. Studies in Sweden

When I thought about conducting a research about undocumented migrants at the end of 2008, I had a hard time finding any researches in this issue performed in Sweden.

During the period when I worked on my project, I could hardly keep pace with the increasing number of researches appearing in Sweden about undocumented migrants.

One of the most active researchers in the area of migrant illegality is Shahram Khosravi, Social Anthropologist in University of Stockholm. He has two recent research projects about migrant illegality: *An Ethnography of Migrant 'Illegality' in Sweden: Included yet Excepted* (2010a) and *'Illegal' Traveler: An Auto-Ethnography of Borders* (2010b). The former article focuses on the process of unauthorized migration (mainly in the form of 'smuggling') and the living conditions of undocumented immigrants in Sweden. Khosravi explores the ways the 'illegal' migrants manage to work, find housing, healthcare, safety and a family life in absence of the access to formal provisions. He also considers the survival strategies for these people.

In *'Illegal' Traveler*, Khosravi explores the issue of borders and border crossing in the era of globalization and transnationalism. He analyzes the ways the nation-states regulates movements of people. Khosravi explores the concept of migrant illegality in the contemporary world and views being be an 'illegal' migrant on personal level. He used his personal experiences as an undocumented migrant and informants' narratives, he investigates the nature of borders, border politics, and the rituals and performances of border crossing.

Helena Holgersson, PhD Student in Department of Sociology in Göteborg University, is also working on a doctoral thesis where she focuses on how the paradoxical presence of undocumented immigrants in the city of Göteborg is to be understood. Her research is focused on the everyday life of the 'Hidden Refugees' in the city of Göteborg, Sweden. Her theoretic focus is on how spatial practices depend on the way individuals relate to people around them. She used personal maps of Göteborg based on walk-alongs to discuss this issue. This research is to be published late in 2010.

The issue of immigrants and health care in Sweden has been also looked from another angle in the study of Hultsjö, and Hjelm from the Department of Psychiatry, Ryhov County Hospital, Jönköping. *Immigrants in emergency care: Swedish health care staff's experience*, is an explorative research done with the hospital staff, and is focused on the problems related to the acceptance of the immigrants to the emergency wards. They viewed the need to care for 'asylum-seeker refugees' as their main problem due to unexpected behaviors, cultural differences, language barriers, and inactive behavior in the psychiatric ward. This report emphasizes differences and problems experienced with the foreign nationals in Sweden, and asks for the development of models for caring for the asylum-seekers.

At the Lower End of the Table: Determinants of Poverty among Immigrants to Denmark and Sweden, by Kræn Blume; Björn Gustafsson; et al, is looking at the economic aspects of immigrants' presence in these countries. The report touches upon the reasons and the factors associated with the relative poverty of the immigrants and identifies the factors which aggregates this poverty: among others, the age of immigrants, their family situation, national origin, age at arrival in the host country, number of years since arrival, and the labor market success (or not) of the immigrant.

Apart from these in-depth studies about migrant illegality in Sweden, there has been some recent attention to this issue in universities. A number of bachelor theses are published in this regard in the past three years in Sweden. These studies are published in Swedish and thus might not be an easy reference internationally.

Karin Wrangsell and Linda Yngvesdotter from Uppsala University published *The Experiences of health care providers to care for hidden refugees* (2009). It is a qualitative descriptive research to study how the personnel in public health care may experience treating hidden refugees and which ethical conflicts that may be connected to this. *Who has the right to health care? Hidden refugees, health and ethical standpoints* (2008) is another paper dealing with medical aspects of the life of the undocumented immigrants written by Klara Halldinin Borås Medical School. This paper reviews the situation of children who live as refugees, and hidden obstacles and opportunities for access to care. It also discusses the importance of medical scientific research in the field with the objective to facilitate clinically active nurses in the meeting with this group of patients.

Stina Israelsson and Emma Larsson from Department of Social Work in Göteborg University focused on professional work with undocumented immigrants. *Borderland Conditions - Working with Hidden Refugees* was published in 2007. It aims to study the options for people who are trying to help refugees and are working in the borderland between the visible and the invisible world, people who constitute the link in-between the refugees and the society. It is mostly focusing on the professional relief staff rather than the undocumented immigrants. Another study by Hanna Nilsson and Eva Carina Kastberg from Göteborg University focuses on the living situation of the undocumented migrants: *Refugees who lived in hiding: a qualitative study of strategies to manage their live* (2008) reviews the factors in refugee's ability to handle a life in hiding, support of the social network and ways in which this support helps in creating a meaningful existence. The study concluded that practical circumstances, a social network as well as the "outlook on life" were essential to enable the creation of meaning in the hidden individual's life. Finally, Cecilia Bylander and Aida Gebru from Department of Social Work in Stockholm University wrote a paper titled *A Dignified Life - Human Rights?: A study on the living conditions of refugees in hiding* (2006). This study stipulates that the living conditions of the hidden refugees characterized by lack of human rights are very critical. It was noted that there is a lack of humanitarian considerations in living conditions of refugees.

The increasing number of Swedish studies about the undocumented immigrants in recent years signifies the growing attention of the society to this issue and the awareness of the researchers on need of more research on this issue in Sweden.

1.2.2. International Studies

Most of the studies performed about the undocumented immigrants in other countries are connected with their access to health care. An early study of the situation of 'illegal immigrants' in the United States and the provision of health and social care to them was performed in 1979 in *Providing Health and Social Services to Illegal Alien, Families* by Christine L. Young et al. This paper examines the implications of illegal immigration for health and social programming, especially in maternal and

child health services area. It identifies the benefits of providing services and calls for the consultation between social services and other professionals and community agencies for planning and delivery of health and social services.

Illegal Immigrants, Health Care and Social Responsibility by James Dwyer, (Dwyer, 2004) renders many interesting arguments in connection with the ethical responsibility of providing health care to the 'illegal immigrants'. He reflects on the pros and cons for this discussion:

"Nationalists" argue that illegal immigrants have no claim to health benefits because people who have no right to be in a country have no right to benefits in that country. "Humanists" say access to care is a basic human right and should be provided to everyone, recognized citizens and illegal immigrants alike. Neither view is adequate (p.34).

He mentions that 'illegal immigrants' are frequently considered as free riders: taking advantage of the public services without contributing to public funding. On the other hand, most undocumented workers do the jobs that citizens often eschew; worst jobs and worst working conditions. They fill the labor shortage for the work that cannot be shifted overseas, like cleaning toilets, washing dishes and taking care of children. He further discusses if the violation of a law (working illegally) would disqualify people from public services, and pinpoints that people suspected to work off the books are not denied the health care. He further discusses the limitations in health budget and the considerations that the legal residents are more deserving than the illegal aliens; the choice between competing goods in a situation of limited resources. On the other hand, restrictive measures may have adverse effects on public health, and finally he discusses the issue as a matter of human rights and considers the 'illegal migrants' as social members. This way, taking care of them is considered as a matter of social responsibility emphasizing that the interests of worst-off citizens need not be opposed to the 'illegal immigrants' and states:

We should not rely on undocumented workers to keep down prices on everything from strawberries to sex (P.41).

He states that a society might decrease illegal immigration by decriminalizing the killing of 'illegal immigrants'. This way by killing an illegal migrant, the citizens would face no penal responsibility, but no one believes that it is reasonable or ethical to take this policy because we believe in justice. He wonders how denial of medical services, which may cause serious harm to the physical integrity of a person, can be justified. Finally, he makes suggestions to decrease the presence of the 'illegal immigrants' by improving the conditions of worst forms of the work, giving workers a voice, and connecting them to the work unions.

Although this paper is much connected with the capitalist working situation in the United States, but many interesting arguments are raised in it which can be connected to the present Swedish situation and the right winged trends of the new Swedish government.

1.2.3. Reports by the International organizations

There are a number of international organizations advocating undocumented migrants. The reports and researches prepared by these organizations constitute an interesting source of study in this area. This issue was also raised in the analytical reports by UN Commissions.

UN Human Rights Council touched the issue of undocumented immigrants' access to health care in a well-known report of Paul Hunt, the Special UN Rapporteur for the human rights council (Human Rights Council, 2007). In a complete section, Professor Hunt describes the situation of asylum seekers and undocumented foreign nationals in Sweden. While commenting on the Swedish tradition of receiving asylum seekers, Hunt criticizes the situation of access of adult asylum-seekers to health care and considers that a discrimination under the international human rights law. The report also deals extensively with the high incident of 'apathetic children' among the asylum-seekers, and connects it with trauma, and uncertain outcome of their asylum applications. Expulsion of the foreign nationals with life-threatening conditions is another point for which the Swedish government is criticized in this report. This report attracted lots of international attention to this issue.

PICUM, the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants, is a non-governmental organization (NGO) sponsored by EU Commission that states its aim as promotion of respect for the human rights of undocumented migrants within Europe (PICUM, accessed July 2010). PICUM seeks dialogue with organizations and networks with similar concerns in other parts of the world. As of 2001, PICUM has organized a number of workshops on different issues related to the undocumented migrants such as ethical arguments for providing help to undocumented migrants, criminalization of assistance to undocumented migrants, drafting an ethical code for social workers assisting undocumented migrants, way to help them, their access to health care, the exploitation of undocumented migrant women in the workplace, policy developments, data and social implications, and undocumented children as invisible victims of immigration restrictions. These workshop reports and related publications give a rich overview of the discussions and exchanges done by different researchers, organizations and activists in this issue.

In a separate report by PICUM titles *Book of Solidarity*, provision of assistance to undocumented migrants in Sweden, Denmark and Austria is reviewed (PICUM, 2003). This paper considers the roots of forced migration including armed conflict, ethnic and racial conflict, globalization and free market economic model, environmental degradation and disasters, development-induced displacement, denial in democracy and abuse in power and corruption. A review on the international standards of treatment, and access to rights/services according to international treaties is following this chapter emphasizing that:

Most general international instruments apply to all human beings within the territory of a state party and initially do not make a difference between legal and illegal foreigners (Houben 1999 in PICUM 2003)

In this connection right to a fair working condition, social assistance and social security, housing, health care, and education is reviewed based on the international human rights regime. A specific report is rendered on the situation of the

undocumented migrants in Sweden and their access to services. Access to health care is discussed with some details in this report while access to housing, work and education is not elaborated much. In another chapter of this report, the reality of provision of assistance to undocumented migrants is reviewed in terms of food, health, housing, work, education, and legal assistance. The hindrances to solidarity are considered in the three countries in focus and it is highlighted that there is no article in Sweden that stipulates that providing assistance to undocumented migrants incurs penalization. Special groups of concern including women, minors, and migrants in detention are considered in focus. This book which is commissioned by the EU Commission, is focusing on provision of assistance to the undocumented migrants, and thus in the final chapter of the book, motivations for providing assistance is considered.

Apart from PICUM, there are other organizations that concentrate on the undocumented migrants in Europe. The Undocumented Worker Transitions (UWT) project was conducted from 2007 to 2009 in seven Member States: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Italy, Spain and the UK, funded by the European Union. The aims of the UWT project was to better understand the reasons why migrants seek work in Europe without proper authorization; their working conditions and experiences; the various ways in which legally working and residing migrants can fall into irregularity; the ways in which undocumented or irregular migrant workers may gain legal status; the continued demand for irregular migrant labor, and its impact on labor markets (UWT, 2009).

Ingen Människa är Illegal (No One Is Illegal), Red Cross, Facklig Center för Paperslösa (Union Center for Undocumented Migrants), Aktion mot Deportation (Action Against Deportation) and many other NGOs are active in Sweden for undocumented migrants, their rights and their access to services. There are a compilation of news, articles, statements and view points on their relative websites which shed light on their stand vis-à-vis this issue.

1.3. Legal basis

Talking about the legal basis of the migratory and asylum affairs in the national, regional and international law requires an extensive study which is beyond the scope of this research. Many international conventions concern migrants, labour migrants, victims of trafficking, refugees, stateless people, etc. European Union like many other regional unions has its regional regulations in this regard. National legislations regulate the presence of the immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees within national borders. In this short overview, the basis of refugee law as well as a regional treaty which was considered important in this study is shortly discussed.

1.3.1. 1951 Refugee Convention and national legislation

The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees is the key legal document in defining who is a refugee, their rights and the legal obligations of states. The 1967 Protocol removed geographical and temporal restrictions from the Convention (UNHCR, accessed August 2010). In the first article of this convention a refugee is defined as:

A person who is outside his or her country of nationality or habitual residence; has a well-founded fear of persecution because of his or her race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution.

Sweden has adopted the exact refugee from 1951 Geneva Convention definition in its Alien Act (Swedish Aliens Act 2005:716, §4.1) further enhancing the definition by spelling out the groups included as ‘particular social groups’ when mentioning the gender and sexual orientation as a ground for refugee status in its definition. It is even taking into account some extended protection definitions going beyond 1951 Convention and included persons fleeing from armed conflicts and natural disasters as persons in need of protection (Ibid, §4.2). Therefore, Sweden goes beyond the minimum obligations of international community in connection to refugee law. Practically, the country has foreseen required systems of asylum application processing and mechanisms of appeal to facilitate access to asylum for applicants.

It is noteworthy to add that the interpretation and application of refugee law, as of any other law, is much dependent on the asylum policy of the country, general trends and economics at the bottom-line. I have the impression that while the law and asylum procedures seem flawless in Sweden, the acceptance rate for the refugees is much dependent on the current political trends in the country and the needs of the labour market. The needs of labor market in 1980s resulted in accepting many refugees on humanitarian grounds in Sweden. In 1989, the increasing flow of refugees prompted the government to adopt a more restrictive approach. The government ruled that political asylum applications filed in December 1989 or later would be treated strictly in accordance with the 1951 Geneva Convention; and humanitarian grounds for asylum would no longer be used (Westin, 2006). This trend is continued to the present day with even more restrictive interpretations.

1.3.2. Dublin Convention

Noticing the high impact of migrant illegality in Sweden, I chose to describe Dublin Convention as a regional treaty. Basics of Dublin Convention was formed in 1990s when European asylum systems started to receive higher numbers of asylum applications and thus European States started implementing non-arrival and non-admission policies. Notions of “protection elsewhere” and ‘safe third country’ appeared as a means of keeping the asylum seekers out of European borders. The Dublin Convention which came into force in 1997 in Sweden and allowed the member states to send an applicant for asylum to a third state which is usually the first border of entry. This Convention was mainly devised to stop the asylum seekers from orbiting in the European countries and submitting applications to multiple countries (ECRE, 2006). This system was practically possible by fingerprinting the applicants in the first country when they apply for asylum.

According to the Dublin Convention, asylum seekers must lodge their application for asylum in the first EU country in which they arrive and may be returned to another EU Member State if it can be shown that they have either passed through the border of another State or made an application for asylum in another Member State (Irish Refugee Council, 2002). Ever since its application, Dublin Convention was criticized

for its practical implications. Practical issues as well as humanitarian concern resulted in introduction of Dublin II Regulations in 2003.

The present paper does not intend to review the full scope of the complications associated with Dublin Convention. Many reports and researches are published in this connection by different European refugee Councils and UNHCR. I found it worthwhile to mention the role of this convention on migration irregularity in Sweden because I encountered quite a few people among the undocumented immigrants who were affected by this convention. These people chose to go into hiding to avoid transfers to other European states especially Greece with its notorious asylum system.

CHAPTER II:

2.1. Methodology:

The goal of this study is to learn about the living conditions, emotions and ambitions of people. Qualitative research methods are employed for this research project. The major source of gathering empirical data is qualitative interviewing and participant observation. The qualitative interview is one of the most important data gathering tools in qualitative research. Interviews yield rich insights into people's biographies, experiences, opinions, values, aspirations, attitudes and feelings (May, 2001). Narratives and conversations are today regarded main way of obtaining knowledge about the social world (Kvale, 1996). Research shows that interviews were the best way to elicit response from the semi-literate, the frail, the aged and the plain suspicious (Gilbert, 2008) which might constitute a part of the target population in the research.

Non-standardized in-depth interviews were used in this research. The interviews were performed one-to-one with two groups of people: the undocumented migrants and the professional staff working with the undocumented migrants. In non-standardized or unstructured interviews, the interviewer follows a list of topics, but she is free to phrase the question as she wishes in the order that seems suitable for the situation. This is a valuable strategy to discover a realm that is new to the researcher and there is a need to be flexible to include different experiences (Gilbert, 2008). It is also particularly a valuable tool to gather information when the subject matter is sensitive or complicated. This method gives the researcher a possibility to fine-tune explanations and reach sufficient depth (Ibid).

Interviews were conducted with the undocumented immigrants. Some interviews were also conducted with professionals. More informal exchanges were also conducted with the staff active in Rosengrenska Clinic during field visits. The professionals met for this research consisted of a lawyers, the Rosengrenska Clinic Coordinator, some medical staff who were assisting the undocumented immigrants, one journalists involved in the issue, and the a person from formal social departments.

Participant observation is a second method for gathering information. Observations were performed in public places where the undocumented immigrants refer to seek assistance: namely the demonstration of the (undocumented) immigrant population, Rosengrenska Clinic, the 'hidden' clinic which renders medical services to the undocumented people, and Red Cross legal services. More ad hoc observations were performed at the working place of an undocumented illegal, a restaurant where he was working as a cleaner, and while accompanying another person in his dental clinic, where I was supposed to help the person as interpreter. Participant observation can reveal what kind of pressure these people are facing in their daily lives.

Combining different methods of data collection like interview and observation is referred to as ethnography. In this method, the researcher becomes a member of the setting and produces field notes to record systematically what happens (Gilbert, 2008). My presence at Rosengrenska clinic turned to be a very engaging experience,

where I became part of the big discussion circles in the community room, helped with interpretation for some patients, and had informal chats with the different people present in the setting.

2.1.1. Sampling Method:

Several methods were used to find a sample of undocumented immigrants:

Method 1- Quota/random sampling: I accompanied a group of demonstrators in Göteborg on 26 February 2009 who were acting for the rights of the illegal immigrants, and approached some people who were near me after the demonstration. I knew little of the background of these people and I made a random approach at different angles of the crowd. Since interviewing the whole crowd was not possible, I tried to choose different nationalities and sexes and make a random/quota sample. Some seven people accepted to participate in interviews after I explained my purpose for them in one of the languages I could speak (Persian, English, and little Swedish), and two more people approached out of curiosity and accepted to participate in the interviews. There was a time gap of six months when I actually approached these people again. I could reach only four people. One reopened his asylum case and was living in a camp in central Sweden so I could not meet him. Another one was in process of an arranged return to his homeland. These changes in the status demonstrated the level of instability and change in the lives of undocumented immigrants. I arranged interviews with three of them.

The advantage of this sample was that they had diverse national and lingual backgrounds: a man from Sudan, a woman from Kosovo, and a man from Kurdistan of Iraq participated in my interviews out of this sample. The time lapse of six months had the disadvantage of losing some sample, but it had some advantages. Building a level of trust is a very important stage in performing in-depth interviews. These people were supposed to share their life stories with me and when I met them again after some months, I was not totally a new face to them. They also learned that I am seriously following this issue since I came back after such a long time. They have been more open in sharing their stories. One disadvantage of this group was their status changes. When I approached them in February 2009, all were undocumented, while six months later two of them -who were also interviewed in this study- were persuading their asylum claims with the migration board again and therefore, technically speaking, they were asylum seekers and not undocumented immigrants. Nevertheless, since both had the experience of residing illegally in Sweden, their experiences were contributing positively to this study.

Method 2- Snowball sampling method: I asked my interviewees to connect me to more undocumented immigrants. Some of the people I interviewed were living illegally in Sweden for some time, but received a residence permit later. I used my personal contacts to connect me to these people. I reached one Iranian woman in this way for an interview.

Method 3- Picking up cases during field visits: My expectation to have difficulties in getting in touch with the undocumented immigrants before starting the research proved wrong after visiting Rosengrenska clinic. In an overcrowded space, I met tens of undocumented immigrants and had the chance to pick up a sample. I asked two

Afghan men to participate in my interviews and they accepted after my first visit to this clinic.

A total of nine persons (six undocumented migrants, and three professionals) were interviewed for this study. The undocumented migrants interviewed consisted of two women and four men aged between 18 and 47. These people were from Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Kosovo, and Sudan. They were currently or at some stage lived as undocumented migrants in Sweden. One of them has been accepted as a refugee after six years during the general amnesty in 2006 for the undocumented migrant families, one have re-applied recently after finishing the legal interval³, and the rest four people have been rejected asylum seekers living without any legal status in Sweden.

In addition to the undocumented migrants, three professional staff were interviewed in depth: one head nurse who is one of the founders and the current responsible for Rosengrenska clinic, Red Cross lawyer in charge of legal advice and representation of the undocumented migrants in migration courts, and a psychologist working as a volunteer in the clinic. They were mainly selected because of their role in extending assistance to the undocumented migrants in Sweden. I could access the head nurse and get an appointment with reference from a friend in Red Cross, and I was then introduced to the second person and received an appointment. Therefore, it was almost a snowballing process in the interview with the professionals also.

More informal interviews were held with volunteer staff in the clinic, the social services at the Göteborg City Emergency Service, City Library, volunteers at the Red Cross legal services, and leaders of the asylum seekers' unions. The information gained through these people was recorded after the meetings and constituted a viable source of insight into the problem at issue. The information was used when applicable in this report with a mention to the source.

2.1.2. The Interview Process

This research applied a life history method of interview in which one-to-one in-depth interviews were used. The interview guide was devised in a temporal order with the questions focusing from the past to present conditions and continued in the future aspirations. I tried to keep the interviews flowing in a natural manner with minimum intervention. In most of the cases, I would open the subject and the interviewee would elaborate about it, changing the subject occasionally and detouring to issues he or she preferred. I tried to encourage a natural flow of narratives by nodding, confirming, rephrasing, expressing surprise and short questions (Kvale, 1996). In many occasions the interviewees would jump from a subject to another and I did not try to stop them or make them return to the main subject. I found that changing the subject was an easy way of avoiding to answer certain questions. I would confirm if they would like to give information about the original subject later. While I had the interview guide in front of me, I avoided a rigid question-and-answer format in the interview. I learnt that spontaneous responses occasionally contained valuable information in the areas that I have no intention to ask before. As an explorative study, this form of interview helped me to explore important subjects in this area.

³ Please see section 4.1.2. Asylum Process

2.1.2.1. Interview Conditions

Making an appointment was not easy with most of the people in this group. Their life seems to be full of uncertainty and instability. It seems that undocumented immigrants can only plan for their 'day', not much further. Except from one educated young woman who used a calendar to make an appointment with me, the rest of my interviewees had a problem to decide if they had time in two days. Many times, we had to make appointment for the same afternoon or the next day. It was not easy to reserve a group room in a short notice.

The interviews were mostly conducted in the group rooms of Göteborg library or social work department which I reserved for this purpose. I would make an appointment with the interviewees in city center and we took the tram together to reach the reserved rooms. This was a good opportunity for me to start the warm-up talks. I would introduce myself and explain my purpose, confidentiality issues, and conditions of participation on the way. Meanwhile, some informal exchange was a good way to establish the rapport required before the interview. In order to emphasize the conditions of participation in the interview I would repeat them before starting to record the interview. If the person confirmed that he or she is willing to proceed with the interview, I would start the first general question. The negative side of this informal exchange was that some valuable information was rendered in this time without being recorded. I tried to avoid this by taking the lead in speaking and also repeating the important parts during the interviews.

Each interview would take about two hour. I invited most of the cases for coffee after the interview to thank them and have an informal chat. In most cases, it seemed to me that the interviewees were willing to share their life experiences. They appreciated someone to listen to them. One interviewee told me later that he went home and slept for several hours after talking to me while he had sleeping problems for a long time.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed word by word later. One of the interviewees did not agree to record his voice. I learnt that he has security concerns and repeated terms of confidentiality in this study for him. He preferred that I took notes instead of recording his voice. I tried to comply with his request but it was not possible to write in the speed he spoke. I had to stop the interview and explain that there is no obligation to participate in this interview and it is better to postpone it to a later time when he can trust the purpose of the interview. He changed his mind and accepted to record his voice. It was stopped somewhere in the middle as he requested, and continues again. There was a need to improve the level of trust before the interview.

The interviews were mainly conducted in Persian (Farsi and Dari) and English language. Some parts were also in Swedish especially with a case that had a problem in speaking Persian. Apart from this case which was originally from Kurdistan of Iraq, there was no language barrier in the communication in the interviews.

The interviews with the professionals were held at their offices in their relevant organizations. I could meet them with prior appointments. The interviews took between one to two hours and I took notes from the interviews. The interviews were mainly in English and one in Persian with an Iranian professional.

2.1.2.2. Themes in the Interview

After introduction, conditions of flight were discussed, touching the ways of transportation, possible asylum process, and the outcome of it. Since, the past events and the conditions of the country of the origin have a direct effect on the future life plans of the immigrants, the researcher found it important to touch the reasons for the flight. This proved to be a sensitive part for most of the interviewees.

The second part of the interview was about the current living conditions. In order to review the living conditions, or integration situation of the undocumented immigrants, the Indicators of Integration by Ager and Strang (2004) as explained in the theory chapter, was employed as a guiding tool. The main concentrations of the questions in this part are:

- Place of living, conditions of accommodation
- Income, labor conditions
- Health, access to health services
- Education
- Language abilities and learning opportunities
- Social connections
- Culture
- Safety and security
- Current challenges
- Organizations rendering assistance

This part was meant to give the material to answer some of the main research questions. I found that some of the interviewees are not very forthcoming about their financial and labor situations. For example one informant mentioned later that he lied about his financial conditions ‘I told you what you wanted to hear’ he said. When I wondered what, he explained extensively that he received money from his family back home to move to Canada and he spent it here, but he did not want to tell me before. This came after the interview when we were taking coffee and cakes in school cafe and had some informal exchange. Again, I learnt the value of informal exchanges in building trust before the interview.

The last part of the interview was about future plans. The interviewees were asked about their future plans, hopes, expectations and aspirations. This was usually an arousing part in the interview. Most of the interviewees showed intense emotional responses and had problems in talking about this issue.

As for the interview with the professionals, I usually talked about my aim and they would elaborate on their work, the regulations, the problem at issue, and the special cases they encountered. I would ask follow up questions to further clarify the issue.

2.1.3. Participant Observation

My intention of engaging in participant observation was to get closer to the people I am writing about. This exercise which was performed during an extended time of several months, put me in contact with many people, both undocumented immigrants and formal or informal entities trying to assist them. I heard many personal stories while talking to different people. I took notes after the weekly visits about the general settings, personal histories, and general information.

My first observation of the undocumented immigrants was during my observation of their demonstration in February 2009 where political activists and refugee groups organized an action to protest against the tightening asylum policy of the new Swedish government. There, hundreds of people from different nationalities and ethnic groups walked in downtown Göteborg with banners and signs in hands shouting for equal rights as human beings and stop of the indiscriminate deportations. I accompanied the group, talked to many of them, took pictures, and got contact information from them for further talks. While police was accompanying this crowd for security purposes (like all other demonstrations), these people did not seem to be intimidated by their presence. Human rights activists were accompanying the undocumented immigrants in this event.

I visited the Swedish Red Cross and interviewed the medical and legal personnel engaged in assistance to the undocumented immigrants. Afterwards, and through the contacts in Red Cross, I started regular weekly visits to Rosengrenska clinic as of 23 October 2009 for some two months. This mobile clinic is hosted in Swedish Church in a migrant populated area of Göteborg, on Wednesday evenings. It was very surprising for me to visit this place for the first time. The church was over crowded, and I could hardly recognize how it is working. A volunteer nurse helped me in learning about the organization of the clinic and the adjacent facilities. I met many people in the cafeteria which was like a community center for the undocumented immigrants. Different groups of people were identifiable sitting at different tables, usually according to their sex and nationality. I mingled with people and listened to their stories, observed social relations and internal organizations among the undocumented migrants. Identification of the internal group organizations, power relations inside the groups, and their interaction was an interesting exercise. I could witness how informal social networks act to enable the newly arrived asylum seekers or immigrants to integrate.

Without being formally appointed as a volunteer, I was engaged in the activities flowing in the clinic as an interpreter. I was invited to many meetings, conferences, and gathering organized by or for the undocumented immigrants and finally I was asked to help some of them with interpretation outside the clinic.

I met some of these people afterwards in their working places, restaurants and cafes, and talked to them about their situation. I took note of my visits and observations and categorized them. More detailed findings of these observations will be presented in the discussion section.

2.1.4. Methods of Analysis

Meaning categorization is applied as the first step to analyze the interviews. Meaning categorization is an old method of analyzing interviews, and is in line with (but not limited to) the positivist quantification of facts (Kvale, 1996). It can be a good method to organize the empirical data and try to find general themes or trends in them. It is also helpful in comparing and contrasting the information gathered from different people.

As mentioned before, I based the themes in my interviews on the Indicators of Integration of Ager and Strang. After meaning categorization of the interviews, new themes appeared in the findings. Since this study is mainly an explorative research,

the emphasize was put of exploring different aspects of a life as an undocumented migrant instead of extending analysis. For the analytical part, I stepped out of the temporal approach of my themes and put the analytical context in a social hierarchy mentioning the different aspects of the live of an undocumented migrant from personal, social, and national levels.

Previous research was also applied in this part to highlight and expand the findings of this research and finally theories were applied to analyze the different themes. Deduction and induction was used at the same time in application of theories to make this research an explorative study employing abduction method (May, 2001).

2.1.5. Validity, reliability, and generalizability

Data are considered valid when they provide accurate measurement of a concept while the reliability of data is dependent on if repeated measurements of the same item give consistent results (Gilbert, 2008). The effects of the interviews on the validity and reliability of the data has been criticised by some considering that active commitment to a particular perspective affects interview data (Ibid). This effect can be minimized in the non-standardised interviews where guidance and direction from the interviewer is at the minimum.

The present study is an explorative study with little pre-assumptions by the researcher. The interview method was non-structured, non-standardize, and the interviewer tried to minimise the intervention during the interview. General themes were introduced and the interviewees were asked to narrate what they want. At the end of the interview, the interviewees were asked to add whatever they felt was important and that they wanted to add. In this way, it was tried to increase the validity and reliability of the research. The problem with this method is that the interview can be very long and go into the directions which are not quite related with the purpose of the interview.

It is always questionable if people say what they do. This concern is mainly raised when talking about validity and reliability of the data collected during the interviews (Gilbert, 2008). During some interviews in this study, I had to rephrase some questions or repeat them in later staged in the interview to increase the reliability of the results. It was obvious that some people were not quite forthcoming in giving information or preferred to keep some information for themselves. This issue and the possible reason for it will be considered separately during the analysis section.

Interviewing the professionals in parallel with the undocumented migrants was a tool to have different perspectives and approaches at the same time. This opportunity gave me to see the problems from different angles and hear about the daily challenges of the people I might never meet. This method deepened my understanding of the issue.

Employment of ethnography, that is using participant observation in addition to the interview as a method for gathering empirical data, was an important factor to increase the validity and reliability of this research. The observation process encompassed meeting many people and talking to them enriching the data collection process.

The sample selected for this study was gathered by three different methods. The sample was quite diverse in their nationality, age, sex, and background. They have been moving in different parts of Sweden and ended up in Göteborg for different reasons. Therefore, their experiences are expected to be more or less similar to the undocumented migrants living in other parts of Sweden.

2.2. Ethical Considerations

General ethical consideration in accordance with the Swedish Research Council was considered in this research (Vetenskapsrådet, accessed September 2009). The principle of informed consent was regarded for the interviewees. The participants were informed that the research project is a part of education in the International Master program at the University of Gothenburg. They were informed about the purpose of the project and freely decided if they wanted to be part of this project even after the conducting the interview. The interviewees had the right to terminate the interview when they wished or deny answering the questions they did not wish.

Considering the sensitive situation of the target population who are living a covert life and fear being discovered and deported, confidentiality and protection of the identity of the interviewees is very important. The collected data was handled confidentially and kept in such a way that no unauthorized person could view or access it. During the analysis some data such as names was changed so that no interviewee will be recognized. All data will be destroyed after finishing the project. The data collected would only be used in this project and for academic purposes.

It was clarified to the interviewees clearly that this interview cannot help to alter their situation directly, change the decision about their status, or in any way help their asylum claims. This is to avoid giving false hopes to them or bribe them into participation in the interviews.

One more ethical consideration is how to portray an already vulnerable group in a research (Kvale, 1996). Undocumented migrants have been subjects of media attacks in many countries. They are frequently associated with negative social events, health problems and epidemics, incriminated, condemned as unfair competitors in labour market, and free-riders in the society. An ethical consideration in this research was to deal with the subjects of this study with care and respect; both at personal level during the data gathering and at the presentation level in the findings and analysis.

CHAPTER III:

3.1. Theoretical Framework

The main theory employed in this study is the Indicators of Integration by Ager and Strang (2004). It is a concrete practical theory and was employed as a benchmark for refugee integration to assess the living standards of the undocumented migrants. It was used as a guide to form the basic questions in the interviews about living conditions of the undocumented migrants and suits my explorative approach well. More fine-tuned social theories used in the paper, to bring on a more analytic quality to the research are: social capital and becoming respectable. These were employed to help with analysis of the social inclusion or exclusion and class as the integration signifier for the group in question. These theories are helping in deepening the analysis for the social aspects of integration. Finally, to illustrate the power of an individual in the process, the theory of agency and self-efficacy was employed into this research.

3.1.1. Integration:

The Indicators of Integration is a theory of refugee integration developed by Ager and Strang (2004) from Queen Margaret University College, Edinburgh. Their work is commissioned by the UK Home office and is based on available literature, qualitative interviews and other sources of data. They try to identify the key factors that appear to contribute to the process of integration for refugees in the UK. The framework is structured around ten key domains that are of central importance to the integration of refugees. They define integration as such:

An individual or group is integrated within a society when they achieve public outcomes within employment, housing, education, health etc. which are equivalent to those achieved within the wider host communities; are socially connected with members of a (national, ethnic, cultural, religious or other) community with which they identify, with members of other communities and with relevant services and functions of the state; and have sufficient linguistic competence and cultural knowledge, and a sufficient sense of security and stability, to confidently engage in that society in a manner consistent with shared notions of nationhood and citizenship (Ager and Strang, 2004, p5).

Ager and Strang cluster the indicators in four main categories as shown below. The complex inter-linkages of these factors which should not necessarily occur is a certain hierarchical order constitutes integration.

- “Markers and Means” including Employment, Housing, Education and Health represent major areas of attainment that are widely recognized as critical factors in the integration process.
- “Social connections” including ‘social bridges’ (connections with members of other communities), ‘social bonds’ (connections within a community) and ‘social links’ (connections with institutions, including local and central government services) stress the importance of social relations in integration.

- “facilitators” including ‘language and cultural knowledge’ and ‘safety and stability’ are facilitating factors for the process of integration.
- “Foundation” including ‘rights and citizenship’ which constitute the basis upon which expectations and obligations for the process of integration are established.

Employing a theory of integration to explain the situation of the undocumented immigrants might represent an internal conflict in the subject matter. Undocumented immigrants are not supposed to integrate in the communities they stay in. On the other hand, these individuals strive to achieve a certain level of integration in order to stay on. Talking about integration for the ‘aliens’ who are not supposed to stay in the country is a politically sensitive issue. It is taken as questioning the sovereignty of the government involved and ignoring their decisions about the refugee status of the undocumented immigrants (in case they are rejected asylum seekers). This paper does not intend to involve in this issue. Indicators of integration are employed as a platform to assess the living situation and achievements in social outcomes for the undocumented immigrants. The author believes that regardless of their legal status, the undocumented immigrants have similar needs and concerns like the other immigrants and refugees.

3.1.2. Social Capital

The theory of social capital was first put forward by Pierre Bourdieu, French sociologist, and focuses on the resources embedded in people’s social network. It tries to explain how use of such resources benefits the individual’s actions (Lin, 2001). Social capital theory suggests that people make investments in social relations with expected return in the marketplace. This market might be economic, political, labour, or community. People engage in interactions and networking in order to produce profits. By establishing social relations, the flow of information is facilitated. The social ties may exert influence on the agents who play major roles in decision making, such as employers. The social ties and relationships may be taken as certification of the individual’s social credentials or accessibility of the individual to the resources through social networks: that is his or her ‘social capital’. Also, social relations reinforce identity and recognition (Lin, 2001). The saying: “*It’s not just what you know but who you know*” suggests that social capital provides benefits for individuals to get to their purpose. Interactions are means to attain a goal. Apart from the physical resources which are required to sustain and enhance the human life, other resources have meaning and significance to the human beings. These are referred to as the symbolic goods. Resources are valued goods. In most societies the valued goods are wealth, reputation and power. When resources are being invested for expected returns in the marketplace, they become social capital. Social capital enhances the chances of status attainment, such as getting employed (Ibid). The marketplace in this study has less economic implications. Resources, in shape of social networks, are shaped and functional to help individuals in coping with their daily lives, above all access to work, accommodation and information.

Access to social capital is differential. Social groups have different access to social capital depending on their gender, race, legal status, class and so on. Therefore, inequality of social capital gives fewer opportunities for women and minorities (and immigrants) to mobilize better social resources to attain and promote careers.

Therefore some of them adapt strategic behaviours to access resources beyond their usual social circles, e.g. using male ties for women (Lin, 2001).

Social capital plays a key role in the integration of refugees and immigrants in a new country that is why many people choose to join their clan in exile to facilitate their access to resources. In this research, the theory of social capital will be used to talk about classification, and significance of social capital embedded in networks in the lives of the undocumented migrants.

3.1.3. Becoming Respectable

Respectability signifies class. It is a standard to clarify people's social class very often. We tend to classify people according to how they speak, who they speak to, how they look, where they live, and what they do. Those who are not seen to have it are more concerned about being respectable while the ones who are normalized with it, and do not have to prove it can rarely recognize it as an issue. The working class have long been classified into rough and respectable. Not being respectable means having little social value or legitimacy. Respectability is a way to publicly demonstrate moralities, to show it as an object of knowledge. Those who are respectable embody moral authority and those who are not, lack it. Respectability identifies the individuals in front of the masses who lack it. Thus, the respectability is a belonging of the white middle class individuals against the masses (Skeggs, 1997).

In *Formations of Class and Gender* (1997), Skeggs employs this theory to explain the classification system in England. She is focusing particularly on the feminist aspects of the theory and respectability in the context of the working class women. She shows how class and gender interact to produce the power relations in modern society.

This theory explains how classification of people result in different treatment of people and defining their status in the society. Since migration and legal status is a factor for classification of people, this theory is applied to describe the differential treatments the individuals receive, and their level of respectability in the society.

3.1.4. Human Agency and Self-Efficacy

Human agency is the capacity of human beings to make choices and to impose them on the world. (Wikipedia, accessed July 2010).

To possess agency is to possess internal powers and capabilities which their exercise makes an individual an active entity, constantly intervening the course of event ongoing around her (Barnes, 2000). It is part of the internal powers individual human beings possess and urge them to go certain ways in their lives.

The notion of agency is closely related to the self-efficacy theory which tries to explain the circumstances in which the individuals take action, or do not take action; persist and try to achieve or submit and give up. According to the self-efficacy theory, people are influenced by how they read their performance successes rather than by the successes per se. Thus, perceived self-efficacy is a better predictor of subsequent behaviour than the performance attainment (Bandura, 1982). Self-percepts of efficacy often surpass final performance in prediction of the future

performance. In addition, people rely on the experiences of other people as well as their own experiences to judge that they have the capability to master the comparable activity. Verbal persuasion as well as social persuasion can make people believe they are able. The physiological state of the person further affects the sense of ability (Ibid).

Bandura (1982) believes that among factors that can negatively influence the perception of self-efficacy is inability to influence events and social conditions that significantly affects one's life. This can give rise to feelings of futility, dependency and anxiety. This inability might be created in two ways: people might either seriously doubt that they can do what is required, or they are assured of their capability but give up trying because they expect their efforts produce no results due to unresponsiveness, punitiveness or negative bias in the environment. In this way, this theory shares some views with the theory of learnt helplessness; people become inactive and depressed if their actions cannot affect what happens to them.

On the other hand, human beings are social creatures. They do not live in isolation, and many of the challenges and difficulties they face reflect group problems and require sustained collective effort to produce any significant change. Sense of collectiveness gives people strength. Therefore, sense of belonging to a group with similar problems can give a person the sense of collective efficacy; that this challenge is shared and shall be fought together with the other members of the group. There are some factors that undermine the collective efficacy: modern life is extensively regulated by complexities that people neither comprehend nor they can do much to influence. Lack of understanding of the situation, and power to change it can undermine the sense of collective efficacy (Bandura, 1982).

This theory is applied in this research trying to analyze the reasons behind the will to move, to stay, and to hope for the people who want to change their life situation by taking the route of migration and persist on their will in face of all odds.

CHAPTER IV:

4. Findings and Analysis

This section is mainly based on the empirical data gathered during the observation sessions and interviews. Direct quotation of informants, as self-subsisting source of information, are frequently used in this section. Quotations are usually views of a single person and when other people share the same idea it is mentioned in the text. General analysis will come later in Chapter five.

The headings and sub-headings in this section follow the temporal order of the lives of undocumented migrants. It starts from the past touching reasons and means of flight, asylum procedures and continues in the present time which is mainly concentrated on the living conditions of these people. Future plans, hopes and aspirations are the final section in this chapter.

4.1. Past: Why did they come to Sweden?

The time-line of the flight, migration and clandestine life starts with the problems at the country of origin leading into flight. The means of flight, its routes and experiences is an important part of the migration story. The past story continues with asylum process, which is not generally successful for the undocumented migrants and results in a negative decision and consequently going into hiding.

4.1.1. Arrival

4.1.1.1. Reasons of Flight

Talking about the situation in the home country and the reasons of flight was a sensitive and undesirable subject for most of the interviewees. Only one out of six persons interviewed in this study mentioned the reasons for the flights completely, one outlined it briefly, and two others only mentioned that they had political problems back home. Others avoided touching this issue and asked me to skip this part.

This was in 2003. I decided to come to Sweden because I have problems and I don't want to explain my problems but I have problems and when I came here, I came to find a good life in Sweden, but I am suffering too much through six years.

Tina, 19-year-old, a Bosnian girl from Kosovo explained a full background on the ethnical conflicts in Kosovo and added:

My father was kidnapped four times and should be killed. My Mom was raped in Kosovo. We have a house in Kosovo, but it was destroyed by Albanians because my father was working with the police with the Serbs. My Mom had an apartment because when she was studying... when she was young and she was studying to become a professor of biology, her father bought her the apartment and this apartment now, for more than ten years - because we are for more than ten years in Europe- there is an Albanian family there. They don't pay any rent and we cannot sell the apartment.

Ali, aged 27, is an Afghan man living for more than five years in Sweden. When asked about reasons for coming to Sweden, he explains:

Vallah [swear to God] you know that in our city in Afghanistan there is the old rule, the one which was there for 30 years, that the person who is armed, has the power, has the money, has the connection, is ruling. Unfortunately, we had no one to help, and we have been persecuted all the time. I was in prison in my own city. I was finally set free and ...not free...like [escaped]

General insecurity, lack of rule of law, threats to life and personal freedom, intolerance for political activity, and sexual assault were the main reasons I could hear in the interviews and observations for the flight of these people. The reluctance to talk about this issue, as far as I understand, was because the reasons for flight were too sensitive for them. Moreover, they did not have enough trust to share this information with me. Another possible reason might be that they have already been obliged to tell their stories many times to migration authorities, lawyers, and other possible consultants. After a negative decision, they might feel uneasy or burdened about the nature of their claims or tired of repeating the stories which are usually emotionally arousing for them. The only person who narrated the reasons of flight for me thoroughly elaborated it repeatedly and insisted to prove that the decision taken for them was wrong. She had strong feelings about the decision and the staff involved.

In choosing Sweden as a destination, my informants generally relied on what they have heard about Sweden. Ali, a man from Afghanistan, chose Sweden because in 2004 reportedly Afghans were not deported from Sweden. Others felt they could have a better life in this country and some just ended up in Sweden:

What happened that you come to Sweden?

Well, no one likes to leave his country. I did not decide to come to Sweden. I decided to be alive and to live. I think this is my right to live. That is it. Sweden or elsewhere is not important. Yes it is different if I am in my own country. If I cannot be there, all is the same.

These people most often flee from difficult and insecure living conditions and hope to find a safe haven in Sweden.

4.1.1.2. Means of Flight

There are different ways of arriving in Sweden, legally or illegally. One of the six persons interviewed in this study came to Sweden with a passport and visa and then asked for asylum; the rest took illegal ways to enter Sweden. For some of these people it took months to reach the destination. They paid lots of money to smugglers, faced threats to their lives, and experienced harsh situations on the way via sea and land. Many faced repeated arrests and deportations by border guards on the countries along the way until they could finally make their ways up to Sweden.

We were in a place [in sea] that we could not see any land or mountain... it was only water in four directions. One of us was drowned there. It was a terrible situation. Three days and nights we were on a plastic boat on the sea. No one came; we had no cell phones... We had some water, a little food, and some

tablets, vitamin tablets. Then fortunately a fisherman saw us. He called the Turkish police and they came and took us to Istanbul. They returned us [to Afghanistan]. I came to Turkey four times and it was only in the fifth time that I succeeded to proceed to Greece. Then I stayed ten months in Greece.... In Germany they did not sell a train ticket to me. I wanted a ticket to Denmark. I told the police about my situation and that I wanted to go to Denmark. He said 'Yes it is better that you go. It is no use remaining here!' ...He said if I had money, he would buy a ticket for me. He was a good person! I came to Denmark by train stayed for two hours and from Denmark I came to Malmö.

I met an Iranian family in Rosengrenska who recently entered Sweden. They flew from Cambodia to Sweden with fake passports. The older son of the family spent many months in detention in Cambodia in the hands of smugglers who asked for money before releasing him. Another interviewee witnessed the torture of the deportees at the border of Iran-Turkey by local population. They wanted to force the deportees to call their families and ask for money:

- *It is a big catastrophe for the migrants deported from Turkey. I saw with my own eyes the ones... It is horrible. They make a hot iron and burn them on feet, on hands, cut the ear lobes, cut the fingers. But no one knows about this.*
- *Did it happen to you?*
- *No I went [was deported] by air. I saw people on the way that had marks of these tortures by Turks. They told them to call their families and ask for 3000-4000 or 5000 USD. As much as they can, even 1000 if you remain there for a long time, they may agree. It is a big catastrophe for the migrants deported from Turkey. Turkey does not accept any requests from them. But it is a big danger for them to be deported to Iran.*

Some people have to undergo a chain of migrations. They have to move from country to country looking for asylum and trying to find a safe haven. During my visits to Rosengrenska, I met many people who had to move again and again and ended up in Sweden after a chain of migrations. Hossein, a 45-year-old Iranian man was a political activist in Iran. He was affiliated with the communist party and feared for his life in Iran. He had to leave the country in 1998 only to spend eleven years in different countries in Europe. He ended up in Sweden where he fell under Dublin Convention terms (please see 4.1.2.2.). His case was under consideration in Sweden one more time after passing the *waiting time*⁴. Another person I interviewed had to move to Sweden after living six years in Germany.

First of all we came from Germany because we lived in Germany for six almost seven years... we came to Germany illegally and we paid a lot of money, and it was really hard... So in 2006 they wanted to send us back [to Kosovo], and it was a huge problem for us. We really cannot go back to Kosovo because we would have been killed because my father was a policeman and so we decided to move to another country. So we did, and we came to Sweden in August 2006.

⁴ Please see 4.1.2.

Unfortunately, taking the hardships of the migration route is only the beginning of the story. After months of suffering on the way, more sufferings are waiting in Sweden for these *uninvited guests*.

4.1.2. Asylum Process

All of the undocumented migrants I met in my interviews and field visits were rejected asylum seekers. As also confirmed in my interviews with the professionals, this group is the main group of undocumented migrants in Sweden. Relatively generous social facilities including temporary accommodation, right to education, right to work, financial assistance, free healthcare, and the temporary residence permit are granted to the asylum seekers in Sweden⁵. This might be a good incentive for the migrants to try their chances with the migration board in the asylum process.

The positive reviews in the asylum cases are not that generous in the recent years. In the first half of 2010, Swedish Migration Board examined 13,948 asylum applications of which only 31% received positive responses (Migration Board, 2010). While asylum was not the main issue in this study, talking about asylum procedures, complaints about the process, and the frustration accompanied with the outcomes constituted a big part in all the interviews conducted for this study. The interviewees were quite willing to elaborate on their asylum process in Sweden. This subject, on the other hand, was quite emotionally arousing for many of them:

How I got a negative? I was interviewed; the man did not let me speak. He would tell me not to speak. 'We understand'... when I am telling this, I am...I got stressed...When one reflects on the past it is very difficult. He would say that do not talk we know that you are right. He said that go and be at peace. He did not say directly that I am accepted, but said: 'Be comfortable. Do not think much'. He thought I would get a positive decision. This way... Then the person who interviewed me moved to another office, and my file was transferred to another woman. The first was a man. The other read my file. When we called him he said the file is not with me anymore and I am moved to another office. Then I got a negative and I waited for nothing... so we came here and we were looking for a job in a restaurant.

All the interviewees were very concerned about the legal assistance they received during the asylum procedures. The attitudes and inferred activeness of the lawyers was the subject of many comments and discussions during the interviews. At times the lawyers were considered the only reason for success or failure in the case.

I had a lawyer, a very good and active one. He was in Lund. For meeting him I had to go to Lund. He was Swedish and he would give me lots of positive energy. He read my file and would say I don't understand why you got a negative decision. Because the things I said they were true and I had the proof for them.

⁵ Asylum seekers have the right to stay in the camps if they don't have an accommodation. They can receive between 61 to 71 Kr daily for food and clothing (depending to if a person is living alone or in a household). They can attend language courses, and their children can go to school. They have normally the right to work also. Asylum seekers have the right to free medical check-up, emergency dental care, and a lowered price for the prescriptions (only 50 Kr for each prescription). Ref: migrationsverket.se

Another informant stated:

Then we went to the migration board again after one year was passed and we have been talking to a lawyer and it was very hard to get to this lawyer because he is very famous, Ken Kayward⁶ is his name. We went to this lawyer. We were looking for him for some half a year looking to get an appointment and after half year we got an appointment and we were so happy because he had like of hope, that he can help us. He told us now that the Schengen or the Dublin is gone like the time you can go and apply again.

A third informant believed:

The lawyer who was in Kållared detention for one other Afghans, when I was there, the lawyer was very active. All of them got released and got cards and everything and started working. Some of them got the positive answer. Unfortunately the lawyer that I had was a racist. He was telling me every day to sign and go back to Afghanistan.

In my interview with Maria, a lawyer cooperating with Red Cross in the case of the un-documented migrants, she stated:

There are many mechanisms to help people, but the lawyers cooperating with the Migration Board cannot usually spend much time with the people to learn about their claims. Lawyers do not get enough payment. They bill the Migration Board according to the service they render. In many cases the Migration Board does not accept their bills.

Maria stated the main reasons for the rejection of even well-founded cases as the following:

People do not trust the authorities. They have learnt in their countries not to trust the police and the authorities. So they are not willing to tell them their stories. Also, people suppose that the whole world knows about the situation of their country and there is no need to elaborate on it. Many think that war is an enough reason to get accepted.

The regular cycle of unsuccessful application for asylum is first instance application, getting rejections, making appeals, going to the migration court and receiving a second negative decision, in some cases making an appeal to the Supreme Court and getting a final rejection. The asylum procedures do not end here. The majority of the undocumented migrants enter in a cycle of re-application, waiting for a second review, and getting rejected again and again. Maria, the Legal Advisor in Red Cross elaborates on the tightening asylum regulations:

In the past, you could apply for asylum again immediately after your second rejection and they could not deport you. It would stop deportations. From March 2006, Alien Law §12.18, and §12.19 were passed. Then the application for asylum cannot stop you from being deported [after the second rejection]. So you might apply and get deported at the same time.

⁶ The spelling is not confirmed

According to the same person, after four years all the decisions made by the Swedish authorities in any case would *die* (cease to apply). Therefore, the deportation order has no effect after four years and the person becomes *illegal*. The person can apply for asylum again as a *ground case* which is treated as a new arrival case.

I met many people in the clinic who have been waiting to finish this four-year period in order to apply for asylum once more. Mohammad, an Iranian man with a political claim, could get a positive reply after eleven years during the time I met him in Rosengrenska. His family joined him shortly before his acceptance and now they applied for family re-unification. He did not meet his family for some ten years during which he was working day and night in a bakery and sending money back home to support his family. Mohammad looked extremely old, frail and thin while he was only 45 years old. He could speak Swedish fluently and was acting as a community leader for the asylum seekers, helping them with their claims and the translations.

The rate of acceptance in the second row is quite low. Ali my Afghan interviewee believes otherwise when asked if he thinks he can get a positive reply next time:

Vallah [swear to God], I don't know. The ones who applied got a negative, the very low numbers of the Arab or Kurd people who got a positive had changed their religion and got an answer this way. They could not get it with the four-year law. It is a very strict law.

Therefore, the hope to regularize their stay in the future is so slim among the undocumented immigrants.

4.1.3. Dublin Convention

As explained, in 1997 Dublin Convention came into force and a number of European states started to cooperate in considering asylum application with the aim of preventing asylum seekers from 'shopping around' for asylum in Europe. During the current research project, I learnt that Dublin convention had contributed to the increase of migrant illegality in Europe.

Two out of six persons interviewed for this study and many others met during data collection fell under the terms of Dublin Convention. Practically it means that they should have been transferred to another European country where they were first fingerprinted for asylum to be able to lodge an application. Swedish migration board would not take their cases and the asylum seekers did not have a chance to present their claims to them.

And we came here finally to live like normal people without fear like in Kosovo and it was quite hard here and we did not know about this Dublin or this Schengen agreement. Nobody told us so. So we just came here because we were scared that they send us back from Germany to Kosovo and they told us that you have to live black...in fact they didn't tell us to live black. We have to send you to Germany...We had to hide for one year, we lived illegally and this time it was like... the hardest time...

Another informant stated:

They said that you should return to Greece. I told them that I do not want to go to Greece because they deported me to Turkey once without any question and answers. They asked me to show documents that they deported me. I told them that I might bring the air ticket that I have from Turkey to Afghanistan ... But unfortunately the documents came here when they have issued the decision. That I should go. I asked my assistant to give me some time, but he said there is no time. I told him that I cannot go to Greece because there is no guarantee there that they do not deport me to Turkey and Afghanistan again. You did not ask anything from me either. He said that Greece should review your request. This is the first border and you should return there. I told them I cannot return. I am frightened. There is no guarantee. They said it is law...It is Law. In Greece... everybody knows, the world knows, what happens to the migrants. The ones in camps or out of camps might starve to death. In camps they might die after beatings or cold. I saw it myself. If one asks me, I do not know Greece as a country. They are far from humanity... They say it is law... I told them that you are working under a law which is not correct, which is wrong...

Instead of accepting the transfer and going to the first country of asylum (which was Greece for most of the people I met), these people chose to go in hiding and spend the legal interval before being able to apply for asylum as a ground case mainly because they believed that returning to Greece is equivalent to deportation to their home countries. The asylum system of Greece which is the target of much international criticism was described so by an informant:

I did not ask for asylum [in Greece]. It was too crowded. We went to police. It is not like here at all. They beat people. Police said 'Come the other day!' We went there for several days in a queue to surrender ourselves to police, but they did not let us. We had no place (to stay over) there, it was very difficult.

He proceeded to Northern Europe before being fingerprinted in Greece. Zahra was another Afghan woman I met in the clinic. She looked thin, pale and terrified. Her three young children aged eight, four, and one were accompany her while her husband was lost on the way. She ended up with no support in a refugee camp in North of Sweden only to learn that she should be transferred back to Greece. She did not even notice that she has been fingerprinted there. Terrified of a forced return, she fled from the camp and came to Göteborg with the assistance of Iranian Asylum Seekers Council. Due to their precarious situation, Zahra and her kids are receiving special attention and assistance from the Rosengrenska clinic and the community; the assistance which was denied to this vulnerable family by the formal migration authorities in Sweden on basis on Dublin Convention.

4.1.4. Going into hiding

After receiving the second rejection and a deportation order, many rejected asylum seekers go into hiding. This usually happens when people leave refugee camps and move into big cities. Most of the cases I interviewed have been up in the North as asylum seekers and then moved southward after being rejected.

Just for a pair of years I had peace in my life then they gave me a negative. They said no! You have no chance to stay here. Then they gave me another negative and from that time in 2004, I find myself escaping from place to place and suffering too much. I was escaping from A to B from B To C And from C To D [name of different cities in Sweden], and I can't find a chance to stay, so I went from D to F [name of two more cities] and then to Stockholm and from Stockholm I came to Göteborg in 2005.

Maria, the lawyer in Red Cross believes that going into hiding is the worst thing an asylum seeker can do. She explained:

If you hide, after two calls [from migration authorities to the rejected asylum seeker], they send your case to police as 'Wanted'. This cannot be removed from your file even if you go by yourself to the police. They can detain you at any time, not in a jail but in a detention center. They say they suspect you hide again and keep you in the jail. This is the worst thing...hiding takes all chances. I always advise people not to hide.

Taking this advice might not be very easy for the people who fear deportations. My interviewees confirmed that they faced a series of arrests and detentions after going into hiding. Ali, one Afghan interviewee narrated:

[I was visiting my friend in Borås]...Police came. I did not open the door. They broke the door and came in... They said: 'You have an order to leave the soil and you should go'. They handcuffed me and took me with them to Kållared in Göteborg. I was imprisoned for 57 days... Only three days were remaining that they got an air ticket for me to send me back. That was why I fled from there one night... I fled from the prison [jumped out of the window], and then there was problem because the building was high. It was night and I fell down and broke my leg. It was twelve at night. Then I remained for 24 hours in the forest because I could not move. ... I remained there in the forest until the next night the same hour, and then I came little by little to the road. There came a taxi, and I hired it and went to city. I remained the night at Central Station in Göteborg, and then I got a ticket to Stockholm the following day and then in Stockholm I went to the MSF [to treat the leg which was broken in four spots]... When I get out of there, I left all my cards, bank card, legitimation, the one given by migration, and the library card and the rest remained there.

Ali went into hiding after this event. He was arrested once more a year later when he was in Central Station in Göteborg late at night. He was taken to detention center again, and since he was sure that he would be deported shortly he decided to escape again. This time he made a hole in the wall to flee since his cell had no windows!

Another interviewee, jumped from the top of airplane staircase when he was being put in a flight for a forced return to his country.

Me, migration and police are like Tom and Jerry. They are chasing me all the time and I am escaping. Once they arrested and wanted to put me in an airplane to go back. I did not say anything while the guards were taking me up the stairs in the plane. I jumped off the stairs when we reached the door and started running on

the airport band. A police car was chasing me and they hit me down. Later they tried to say that I hit myself to the car. They got me again and took me back to the airplane. I had much pain. The captain refused to fly and told them he cannot take me in the plane in this situation. They had to return me to detention. I was set free after some time because they cannot keep you in detention for long.

Going into hiding is the beginning of a miserable life period for undocumented migrants.

4.2. Present: How do they live in Sweden?

The lives of undocumented migrants seem to be a continuous challenge to survive on daily basis. Meeting the ends, for the people with no formal support system is the main business. In this section, material wellbeing of the undocumented migrants, their social and emotional status will be discussed. The support system helping them with the integration is also reviewed at the end.

4.2.1. Material wellbeing

By material wellbeing, in this paper I mean access to food and shelter, work, health and education.

4.2.1.1. Food and shelter

Meeting the basic needs including food is not an easy endeavour for the people who live in this precarious condition. There is no charity organization that helps people with food in Sweden, as far as my investigations show. There is some occasional assistance by the churches or charitable people, but it is not something that one can rely on as a support. In Rosengrenska, each Wednesday afternoon, coffee and buns are served for all the visitors. Bags of bread are also available for the people, a limited supply which finishes immediately. In general, undocumented migrants should rely on their occasional incomes to cover their nutritional and accommodation needs. This proves to be a challenge for many.

We know our limits like in Kosovo we had a good life, my father had a good income and my mother was a professor... and we are used to a normal life. But during these years specially this year of illegal living we were like... really looking at the cheapest price when buying the food and eat smaller portions.

Another informant stated:

I'm suffering.... I'm suffering too much. Sometimes, I could not find any place to stay and I slept in the train station. Sometimes I had no money to buy food and remain hungry... I could not pay a rent... This is my life.

Finding a place to live is another challenge for the undocumented migrants in Sweden. There are few private landlords in Sweden and renting apartments is possible through big public companies. People should wait in queues for a long time before receiving an offer for an apartment, as I witnessed personally. There is a constant demand for housing and finding accommodation is a challenge for all new comers. Having a formal rental contract is impossible without an ID card and social

security number. Therefore, most of the undocumented immigrants stay with their friends or relatives, or have a second hand contract.

I live with my friend ...I don't pay rent as such ...my friends tell me you don't need to. If I can I pay. But I am living there and I am consuming. It is not right. Is it?

Tina explained that the five members of her family had to live in one room for a year for which they would pay 4000 Kr, and then they could find a second hand contract for a bigger place:

...and again with this apartment we are paying a lot of money because it is again second hand. And it costs more than normal because we can't find normal apartment, they need to have like personnummer.

Apart from difficulties to find an accommodation, crowded rooms for the families, lack of privacy when one shares a room, higher than normal rents, and a constant need to move is the biggest problem with the accommodation of the undocumented migrants. Temporary nature of most second hand contracts, as well as the feeling of insecurity are the factors that make the undocumented migrants move from place to place very often:

We moved a lot. We stayed for one-two month in each place and then moved to the next... [because] the renting time was over.

All of informants in this study live in refugee populated; segregated areas in Göteborg such as Kortedala, Bergsjön, Biskopsgården, and Angered and one lived in Borås. Normal problems in accommodation of undocumented migrants are: difficulty to find a place, second hand and often higher rental contracts, and sharing a small space with many family members or friends.

4.2.1.2. Work

Working is the only way of survival if one has no saving or support, but without legal residency and work permit, finding a job is very difficult endeavour. Many of the people I met were jobless, or could only find temporary jobs to support themselves from time to time. Due to the precarious situation of the undocumented immigrants, they are frequently subject of abuse in labour market.

Khosravi (2010a) ironically mentions undocumented migrants as the *ideal* workers since they work longer and earn lower wages. Astonishing low salaries, as low as 100 SEK for one week of full time work, no breaks or lunch time, extraordinary long working hours without proper payment, hard physical work in unhealthy conditions, lack of any compensation or medical treatment for work related injuries, and no insurance system are the major problems related the black labour market as reported by my informants. Some consider these working conditions as slavery.

Then I got a negative [decision] and I saw I was waiting for nothing... so we came here [in Göteborg] and we were looking for a job in a restaurant. We worked for a week. My husband and I would go and work up to two o'clock at night. Then the owner, the Iranian man, who was our country fellow, told my husband that now I have no time and I will pay you later. After a week of work he paid us two only

200 SEK...we worked day and night. It had a very negative effect on my spirits that I ran day and night [worked very hard] and I got this little money... I told the man that you... engage in slavery! I did not go there anymore, neither did my husband. It is better to die of hunger than to work for such people!

...There was no job. My husband would search for job and could not find any. He worked in one or two places for 10-20 SEK per hour. In an Iranian restaurant... he told me there is no job here. I told him that it is a big city and we can find jobs finally... I told my husband I will find a job. He said there is no work here. Then I asked people and finally I could work in the Iranian Pensioners Association. Through that channel, I could see that people need help with 'städ' (cleaning). Then I started my life by working. I worked from six in the morning till two-three at night in two-three places. I would go from one house to the other. My work was so that I did not go home. I would go home for three hours and hardly could even get a rest. This continued until... continued this way!

She had all means of being proud since she could manage a family of four for some three years with her black cleaning job. She would spend some 17 hours each day, seven days a weeks to clean people's houses and support her family. When she had more clients, she had the luxury to choose between them and get rid of the ones who were mean with the payments.

Ali also started his carrier cleaning in a restaurant where he would receive 10 SEK per hour. He would work 12-13 hours per day without any breaks, eating his lunch while working.

When I did not know the work it was like this. Then I learnt the job and earned 700-800 SEK per day. .. I am -as it is called- the chef. I make pizza. I worked as carpenter also. They paid well. I am happy with the work.

These two people were the only ones among my interviewees who could become professional in one field and have a good income. The rest of the informants had only temporary low payment jobs with long interval of joblessness. Frustration, hard economic situation, and dissatisfaction with the working conditions are the common among this group of people.

The position of the trade unions to the work of undocumented migrants, as explained by PICUM (2003), is not entirely supportive. Reports of their cooperation with the police for arrest of undocumented migrants (Khosravi, 2010a) are appalling. Undocumented migrants represent a threat to the common agreements by accepting hard working conditions and low wages, and thus by creating competition. While the capitalist economy welcomes some competition in labour market to keep the wages low and appease the demands, the socialist values are upholding the rights of the workers. Sweden faces a dilemma by ignoring the rights of the undocumented labour migrants to maintain the migration regulations.

4.2.1.3. Health

Three years after Paul Hunt's report (2007) on the situation of health care for undocumented migrants, the system has no major improvements. The same deficiencies and shortcomings are still prevalent in provision of health care to this

group as confirmed in my interview with Anne, a nurse working with Red Cross, and one of the founders of Rosengrenska Clinic. As explained by Anne:

Children, regardless of their legal status, have access to health care. They can go to doctors for free, but the problem is that the medicine costs... as for adults Article 2008:344 of Health Care applies which gives the right of health care to certain groups [asylum seekers] and not the undocumented people. There are local divisions in this regard. In Salgrenska hospital e.g. acute care [emergency] and immediate necessary care should be provided to all and it is recommended to read this article generously. It is also recommended to read this article generously. There have been some local decisions in Västra Götaland and Skåne about this issue. In Skåne, where a pilot project have been running successfully, the cost estimation was about 300,000 SEK which was a very reasonable price compared to the results....provision of health care to undocumented migrants could be viewed from different angles; medical ethical view, humanitarian, Human Rights, and public health [summary of the interview].

Due to these shortcomings, a group of medical staff, a social worker, and a teacher decided to start Rosengrenska Clinic in 1993, the underground clinic which renders medical services to undocumented immigrants. 'Our first goal was to get rid of ourselves' as explained by Anne, but unfortunately the goal was not achieved. Rosengrenska started with a small number of volunteer medical staff and now 1600 doctors and nurses, interpreters, dentists, psychologists, physiotherapist, etc are in the network. Anne, one of the founders of Rosengrenska stated:

We had no clinic at the beginning. There were only calls through cell phones... We survived day by day and made the decisions for the day. It is only five years that the physical mobile clinic exists where Red Cross, the Swedish Church, and No-One-Is-Illegal is cooperating in it... Some 25-30 persons are working there including five doctors and ten nurses, all volunteers. Only I get a salary from Red Cross to organize it.

I have been visiting the clinic on weekly basis during a period of two months. The mobile clinic is active every Wednesday between six and ten to eleven in a church located in a refugee populated area in Göteborg. In the first visit, I followed the queue of people getting down from the tram to find the place. I was surprised by the crowd gathered at the church. There were people from all nationalities and ethnic backgrounds. Kids were playing at the door with the toys they could get from donations while their parents could choose among the second hand clothing in a queue. I could not understand much of the organization of the clinic on my own before meeting Anne and getting an introductory tour by Behnaz, a volunteer Iranian nurse, who was distributing medicine. She explained that each patient has a file and receives appointments in advance to come and visit a doctor or a nurse. Doctors were sitting upstairs in the rooms the church staff work during the days. If required they can get further reference to a real clinic or dentist for further treatment, otherwise they receive free visits and medicine at the place.

All of my informants had received medical assistance from Rosengrenska clinic in absence of any other option. Some received medicine, some medical referral, and

some had consultations. Referral to the specialist centres is a way to treat cases that need more sophisticated procedures.

They gave me medicine and then sent me to doctors for an x-ray to see how it is. I got X-ray and they said that the bone is crooked and should be operated. Then they said that since you have no papers, no documents, we cannot operate it for you. You can only take pain killers.

I accompanied another undocumented migrant to dental clinic during a weekend to help him with the translation. Göran Lindblad, a parliament member who is also a dentist was working in his private clinic over weekends, receiving undocumented migrants referred from Rosengrenska free of charge. Paradoxically he is a member of the right-winged moderate party.

Mental health is one of the issues that need special attention for this group. One interviewee explained that they have been under treatment for some time for post traumatic problems. One other informant explained that her husband has been suffering from psychological problems after being tortured and imprisoned:

There was much pressure on my husband. He had been under pressure a lot when we were in Frölunda, he had psychological problems. He had finished the medicine we brought from Iran, we couldn't [get any more medicine]... We had no access to a doctor since we had got a negative [decision] then. It was five-six months that no one helped us. We could not go to doctors, we had no access. One night he had... I mean he had psychological problems, and he was not himself. We were worried that he does some harm to himself. Then we asked and they said that Lilla Hagen is there... He was always saying that there is someone behind me, there is a police. That is because he was imprisoned and tortured. He had bad memories. He was hallucinating, like the psychological patients. When he was going out, I would think that something will happen to him. Then ... [he visited a psychologist in Rosengrenska and] he started to use medicine and was calm, but it is unfortunately very difficult.

Some informants were not happy with the quality of medical care at Rosengrenska saying that they have received tablet two years after their expiration date and that there are not enough doctors there, but mostly nurses. Behnaz, the volunteer nurse, explained that the medicine they distribute is from private donations and it is possible that some old stuff is in it, but it is all they can afford. In lack of a formal health care for the undocumented immigrants, Rosengrenska is a big help and the only hope for many people who has no other choice.

Exclusion from medical care is a controversial undertaking by the government. Authorities justify excluding undocumented migrants from medical services by arguing that inclusion would 'send the wrong signal' (Dagens Nuheter 11 May 2008 in Khosravi 2010a). It is a way to control push and pull factors in migration. Also, it is considered as a strategy by the authorities to control the number of undocumented migrants and diminish the reproduction among them (Inda 2007 in Khosravi 2010a). On the other hand, ethical considerations in denying health care to a population in need has grave negative consequences for Sweden as a country with claims of human rights goals. Medical and public health considerations as highlighted by Dwyer

(2004) is the other aspect of this issue showing that while the government is closing the eyes on this population, the factual existence of them cannot be denied. We are at the same boat eventually.

4.2.1.4. Education

During my data gathering investigation, all the undocumented children I encountered have been attending public schools in Sweden. As reported by Anne:

Schools have a responsibility to report the undocumented children to the authorities, but it is much dependent on the local school. Most of the hidden kids get to school. After all, kids have their own lives... after some five years of living in hiding they get permanent impairments socially and in their development... I met an illegal boy who told me a very beautiful girl in his class asked him to go out together, but he did not accept since he was afraid of being known as a hidden refugee.

An informant reported that they had to send their children to school in Bergsjön while they were living in Frölunda. It takes more than an hour to travel between these two far ends of the city in Göteborg. She explained that they had to do so because they needed to provide an address and a friend in Bergsjön accepted that they use his address. The other family registered their children while they had asylum seekers cards and the school never asked them for a document again after their rejection.

Adult education on the other hand is not available for the asylum seekers. All of the informants in this study had to leave language courses when they got a negative decision. As for higher education the situation is more complicated. One of the interviewees explained that she has no student support and has a hard time financially to meet the needs.

I went to student consultant and they informed me about everything and told me that what I can study is just English...

My findings are not consistent with the PICUM report (2003) in the education part. This might be due to seven years of time difference and changing of the situation. While this report states that the undocumented migrant children do not have access to education, all the children I met (or met their families) in my study had been accepted in public schools. Even children of a new arrival Afghan family I met in Rosengrenska clinic who were hiding before being removed from the country were attending school. The acceptance of the undocumented migrants children at school are either done by turning a blind eye on the documental situation or in continuation of a legal status: registered as asylum seekers and continue even after being undocumented.

4.2.2. Social Situation

4.2.2.1. Family

The majority of the undocumented migrants I met during my data gathering exercise were single men, but there are also some single women and undocumented family migrants living without a permit in Sweden. Managing a family life under physical

and psychological pressures, lack of economic means, limited access to services, and an uncertain future is a real challenge. As mentioned earlier, extraordinary efforts is needed to support a family under the circumstances of an undocumented migrant. My informant who was working about 17 hours a day could not actually spend any time with her young kids. 'They were home' she answered when asked about her kids while both parents were working hard. This period of uncertainty and unclear future results in conflicts among the stressed family members:

I am living with my mom and dad and my two brothers who are 19 and 16 years old and we live in a quite small apartment... everyone [in the family] were so deprimated [depressed], like... we are stressed, and people, like... my family... we were getting aggressive towards each other, and we can't stand each other.

These conflicts might concern the decisions for the future of the family, as reported by one informant she was in conflict with her husband who wanted to return after getting a negative decision. In 2006, the Swedish government announced an amnesty and granted permanent residency for the undocumented families with children. Thus, Kobra, my interviewee from Iran and her children could get a permanent residence permit after four-five years.

For the single undocumented immigrants, the problem is more concentrated on the relations with their families back home and the aspirations to have a family:

I have not met my family for many years. I cannot tell them about my situation because they will be sad. So I try not to contact them much. I wished I had a permit so that I could go to the border area and ask them to come there so that we could meet.

Another informant stated:

If I had permission I knew what I will do. I could bring a woman here, then make a house, then have a job, but these are dependent on the residence permit.

All of the single male interviewees in this study wished to marry and have a family in future. One interviewee whom I contacted after nine months in July stated that he has got another negative decision, but he has married a woman in Sweden. Having a family as an illegal migrant is an emotional support and a burden at the same time. To cope with the economic upheavals while keeping the hope alive in the family is not an easy task, but it apparently worth it. These people need to think they can live a *normal* life. Emotional support of the family and feeling *normal* might be reasons behind the strive for it among undocumented migrants.

4.2.2.2. Social Network

I would dare to say none of the undocumented migrants would survive in Sweden without a social network to support them at some stage during their stay. All of the people I interviewed would rely on their social networks presently or in the past to support them with their accommodation, finding a job, borrowing money, getting information and advice, translation and interpretation services, receiving medical support, receiving support during their recovery from an illness or injury, or even having their voices heard by media or the authorities. There seems to be a hierarchy of support starting from family members, relatives, country fellows, persons from

same religious or ethnical group, people from neighbouring countries, and finally Swedes which are many times human rights activists or journalists. These are the statements by some interviewees:

I was staying in Lund with my brother... [a few years later when she lived in Göteborg] I mean my brothers were there also and they helped me but I liked to stand on my own feet [not be dependent]. They were worried about me. I was in contact with my lawyer and they would pay for my lawyer.

...we like,... borrow money from our family members, relatives. My dad sometimes works, but it is not always.

[After breaking his leg during his escape from detention center]... I stayed with my Afghan friends. I got medicine and the like assistance [from the clinic]. I went to Norway for some time [and stayed with my friends] to get better and then I came back to Borås.

I live with my friend ...I don't pay rent as such ...my friends tells me you don't need to. If I can I pay. But I am living there and I am consuming. It is not right. Is it?

These people in turn are source of assistance to the other new arrival persons in need of help.

I was trying to help the others...the people in my situation. Even I helped a political [active] woman... I tried to give help to others as much as possible when one needed help. When there was work in two places I thought that there are asylum seekers that are hidden and need. I was in contact with Mr. Asadi and I would go to the demonstrations against the Islamic republic and there I would meet other people. I got their numbers and contacted them. I would find jobs for my husband also. I tried to help the people like myself.

Apart from personal networking systems where the individuals help each other in the precarious situations, more formalized asylum seekers groups are formed within the migrant community. I encountered such communities while visiting Rosengrenska clinic. Most of the participants in these groups are current or former undocumented immigrants. The dynamic in the group was an interesting subject of my observation.

The mobile clinic provided an excellent opportunity for the people living in similar conditions to have a community center. The cafeteria of the church, where free tea and buns are served during the working time of the clinic, turned into a community center for the undocumented immigrants. Numerous round tables are placed in a relatively big hall and people are assembled at the tables according to their backgrounds. I could recognize groups from Balkans, people from Africa, Iraqis and other Arab speaking persons, and Persian/Dari speaking people from Iran and Afghanistan. I would normally sit at this table where I had an easier communication.

It was clear that many people would attend this Wednesday gathering only to socialize with the other people without any medical need. There, community members would sit at the table and discuss the recent developments, new arrivals or

acceptances, or laws. There was apparently a formal Asylum Seekers Committee whose members discussed the issues out of the formal sessions at those tables. These communities are sources for advice for asylum applicants as well as material assistance for vulnerable cases. Zahra the woman I mention earlier was living mainly on assistance of this group and Red Cross.

Social networks can have their negative abusive implications at the same time. Many of the complaints about working situation mentioned earlier come from the jobs offered in the social network and usually by the country fellows. The abusive relations are nurtured in the absence of the legal labor right or access to legal remedies, extreme needs and limited options for the undocumented migrants, and the greed of the business managers who are very frequently immigrants themselves.

4.2.2.3. Language and connections to the host country

The asylum seekers have an opportunity to attend language course during the time they wait for a decision for their asylum application. Most of my interviewees had the chance to attend Swedish language courses during this interval, but they are unable to continue with the language course as soon as they receive their rejection. On the other hand, the applicants which fall under Dublin Convention and should be transferred to another EU country, do not have this chance. Two of my interviewees are among this group.

After getting a rejection where the financial assistance from the Migration Board is discontinued, the undocumented migrants usually have no time or possibility to attend language courses since they should fend for themselves, as witnessed by all my interviewees. Therefore, they cannot benefit from some informal language courses which are available for this group such as Caritas, the Catholic Church NGO where I spent my field placement period in 2009.

When I came here, I remained home for a short time and then I went to [language] course. For three-four months. Then I had never time to go. There are courses that man can go, but who earns the living?

The participants of this study had different levels of Swedish language abilities. Most of them can manage their daily affairs in Swedish, but for some it was not possible. The persons who entered the labor market were generally more advanced with their language abilities. The children who attend Swedish school often learn the language very fast. As witnessed in the clinic many of them act as interpreters for their parents. The level of contact with the Swedish community is dependent on the language abilities and the opportunities. The interviewees engaged in labor market or were studying had more contact with the Swedes compared to the rest.

I could not enter the society up to now. It is difficult for me, but they [the Swedes] are good people. From the time I came here I saw nothing bad [from Swedes].

Some cases started a contact after a special occasion. E.g. one person who had been on hunger strike for 19 days in a main circle in Göteborg get into a long term relation with a Swedish journalist reporting the occasion. Otherwise, most of the interviewees had limited contact with the Swedish people and most of their friends were from other immigrants.

4.2.3. Emotional Situation

Frustration, depression, hopelessness, anger, despair, and resentment were the emotions readily visible in my interviewees. The pressures of the life as an undocumented migrant have deep impact of the psyche of the individuals. One informant reported that he is suffering from depression and sleeping disorders. Another informant tried to give hope to her children, but:

...when I was alone... always... a lot... sometimes I would cry loudly when I was alone; saying that I am tired now. What can I do? But I was thinking about the spirits of my children, and did not let them know.

On the other hand, apathy, lose of interest, indifference to what happens around, uncertainty and lack of purpose was also observable among people with longer waiting periods whose cases had undergone several negative reviews. Kobra who got a residence permit after spending four horrible years living illegally states:

It was difficult. You have nothing. You have no future. You have no rights. You don't have a right to work white. My work was not official it was all black. I was so tired; I had been under so much pressure, that when they give me the residence through amnesty, I did not feel happy. I mean not happy that much that I was supposed to become. My brothers called me and were crying, but I was... [Senseless].

People suffer silently in a life in such a situation. They feel their voices are not heard; that they are an ignored part of the society. Several of my informants told me they intend to write a book about their experiences during the time they lived illegally in Sweden:

So somehow I am just started hating this country. Because I have no reasons or good reasons which prove me that I should like it because there are just problems, and when I get a permit to residence I want to write a book and talk about everything that happened to me... and when it comes to Sweden it has really have to change. The system...the system... because people just suffer here. Like foreigner people... people are complaining and protesting... so this is really like... racist... I just... if you live in Sweden in this situation, it is like to hate a nation.

Tina, the 19-year-old girl from Kosovo who expressed these strong feelings about Sweden, left her country ten years ago; lived in Germany for six years; got a rejection there and moved to Sweden. She finished an international school while none of her classmates suspected that she lived illegally in Sweden. She had always lied about her real identity pretending she is a German citizen. She could not accompany her classmates in many occasions fearing that she is asked for an ID card. She was very concerned not to disclose her real identity to her friends.

...and when it comes to my two faces...because none of my friends knows about my situation, so it's really hard because I am lying to them.

While she had remarkable achievements at school, Tina is deprived from choosing her university subject. Coming from an educated family, Tina has education as a

family goal on her profile. She feels very bitter about the discriminations against her and her family.

Feeling of social exclusion and isolation is also demonstrated in the statements of one other informant who felt humiliated living illegally:

Man is humiliated when he lives black. Your rights are always neglected. You cannot live like a human. I am a human and want to live....

Feeling of security was another issue of concern during my interviews. While two informants were subjects of arrest by police repeatedly, others reported that they feel safe in Sweden. One informant reported reminding her kids constantly not to forget their bus cards. Anne, Rosengrenska Coordinator stated that getting on buses without a card is frequently a reason for arrest of these people. The informants working in restaurants expressed their constant worries about the visit of the controllers to their working place in that case they should hide themselves.

4.2.4. Support System

As explained access to all formal services in Sweden is only possible by rendering social security numbers and ID cards. While physical controls like border check ups, street patrols and police controls are minimized in Sweden, social controls and limited access to services makes it extremely difficult to live illegally in the country. Undocumented migrants are actually deprived from major services such as health care, social security, banking system, and libraries. I experienced increasingly tightening conditions personally in banks and public libraries. In September 2008, public libraries required only an address to issue library cards, but in October 2009, when I accompanied an undocumented migrant to help him in gaining library membership, I was informed that the new regulations require a valid ID card for membership. The tightening circle of the social control makes life increasingly more difficult for the undocumented migrants in Sweden.

There are many organizations engaged in affairs related to the undocumented migrants in Sweden. Different human rights organizations named earlier in the introductory part of this report (Part 1.2.3.), try to support undocumented migrants in achieving their human rights as claimed in their websites and publications. They are active in arranging demonstrations and conferences as I witnessed during my research. Asylum Seekers Unions (as explained in 4.2.2.2) engage in informal *legal advice*, and occasional material assistance. Rosengrenska Clinic, as explained throughout the report, as a medical NGO, wants to partly compensate the shortcomings of medical attention to this group of people. There are some work unions who try to assist the undocumented migrant in defending their labor rights. I saw their brochures and announcements in different languages disseminated at the mobile clinic.

Practically, most of my interviewees had received assistance only from Rosengrenska mobile clinic. They were not aware of any other active NGO and did not believe that they can achieve their rights through them.

What about asking for your labour rights in the unions? No, it is not possible since I lived here illegally. There was only that Kyrkan [church] who was helping the asylum seekers, and we asked only for my husband for his doctor.

One informant reported writing to Amnesty International and some other international human rights organizations and asking for help before coming to Sweden. They achieved no tangible results from this act.

4.3. Future: Why do they stay on in Sweden?

Future is an emotionally burdened term for the undocumented migrants. For the people with such an unstable clandestine life, future is something out of current attention. In this section, repatriation prospects, hopes and aspirations and future plans of the undocumented migrants are viewed briefly.

4.3.1. Return as an option

None of the participants in this study considered return to their home country as an option in current circumstances. Only one informant stated that he would consider returning to his home country (Iraq) if he could receive the repatriation grant (30,000 SEK). One other informant stated that he is ready to pay more than this amount to the Swedish government to ‘cooperate with him’. He further explained:

Now the problem is not Taliban in Afghanistan. In Afghanistan everybody is a Talib right now! Anyone who can get arms, rob people... the problem of Taliban is the general problem in security. I am not talking about all Afghanistan; I am talking about my problem. I know what it is like. If the situation was good, my family, my brother and my mother would not go to Pakistan. If the situation was good they did not like to leave Afghanistan. This is like this...

The same person states his future plans as a return to his country as soon as the situation gets better. When asked about if he can return to his country from another informant he answered:

If I could, there was no need to live here with so much torture and misery; so that I cannot even go to doctors...it is clear.

General insecurity, personal problems, threats to their freedom and lives, political problems, lack of respect for women’s rights, ethnical clashes, and unauthorized occupation of the property are some of reasons stated by my informants for their reluctance to return to their countries. Strong demonstrations of this reluctance to return was manifested in two reported hunger strikes, and three escapes from detention before deportation as reported by my informants, one resulting in a serious injury.

4.3.2. Hope and aspirations

The notion of hope was very blurred in the interviews I had. Except from a woman who already had a permission to stay and talked about being hopeful all the time, none of my informants clearly stated they have any hope to get a positive response or a permission to stay in Sweden. It seemed to me that their stay is not based on any particular hope in the future, but on the absence of any other option in their lives.

Desperation aggravates powerlessness. Nevertheless, there is an inner drive in them like an instinct for living that makes them to continue even in the worst situations.

We hoped that we would get it... I mean during this time we were not really human, we lost everything. I mean we lost hope; we lost human dignity, because you are not treated as human. You are treated as...I don't know... like animals... even animals are treated better today. Because if you see a dog on the street they have a passport and they can travel, but we don't.

The undocumented migrants seem to keep a unsteady balance, like a person walking of a rope, living in the borderline between a slim hope and absolute hopelessness and still finding a drive to continue the life. No wonder this unsteady balance can easily be disturbed by a further rejection and end in suicide attempts as witnessed in many cases.

4.3.2. Future plans:

It was cruel to talk about future plans to the people who are uncertain about their tomorrows. Talking about future plans made many of my informants depressed. Some wept, others remained silent or deeply thinking.

I don't know...if one lives like me...I mean I have difficulty to have thoughts for the future. My main thoughts are for tomorrow. I mean if it is Friday, for Saturday. How to find work, how to handle my life? I don't mean that there is nothing about future in my thoughts. Believe this, one can never concentrate on it or think about it.

Vallah [Swear to God], I have no plans, I cannot have any decisions, I am only hoping that it gets better any day and I return. I do not like here. I am fed up here.

If I had permission...the residences permit...if there is a power... I knew what to do.

Well I don't know [weeps] I just hope that we just get the permit for residence. We just think that we might have it. [I offer her tissues], otherwise I don't know. [Silence]

Apparently, an uncertain future, economic insecurity, chronic health problems, constant moves from place to place, and continues engagements with the migration authorities and the police makes these people concentrate on coping with today's life. They can hardly think about future.

CHAPTER V:

5.1 Analysis

In this section the experience of living an *illegal* life is considered at three stages; a personal experience, as the individual, the social aspects of illegality and the social implications of living an illegal life and finally at a larger national level.

5.1.1. Individual aspects of living a life of an undocumented migrant

Individuals living without papers in Sweden are demonstrations of human agency as put forth by Barnes (2000). Hearing the stories of people who decided to change their situations, and did it in face of all extraordinary obstacles shows how people can impose their choices on the world. As explained, many of undocumented migrants experience undue hardships on their ways from the country of origin to Sweden, a route that might take months to complete. They face further obstacles in an unwelcoming society when they arrive in Sweden. Nevertheless, none of these problems stop them from their strive to reach their goal.

These individual had a will to achieve what they chose. Their lives cannot be viewed as a life of a victim: passive and inactive. They rather demonstrate the extraordinary characteristics of human beings: human agency. They work hard to survive; take undue hardships and resist; experience ignorance, inequality and rejection and persist. They have the will and stand to get the impossible. In the case of my Afghan informant who was deported four times on the way from Afghanistan to Turkey, started once more and only succeeded on the fifth time, I can see nothing but a strong human agency. Originated from desperation or danger in the home country, or hope for a better future, this human agency had been miraculously motivating this person to pursue a goal regardless of the hardships. It was hard for me to believe that Kobra, the tiny Iranian woman, was able to work 17 hours a day, seven days a week for an extended time to manage her family financially. She had the will to support her family, and she was proud of her achievement.

The repeated trials in face of obvious failures can be explained with the self-efficacy theory (Bandera, 1982). The expectation of success is partly dependent on the experience of the other people. Most of these individual have heard about the positive experience of other people, of the achievements they made when they reached the destination. Self-Efficacy theory stipulates that the reading of the people of their performance success is better predictor of the action than the performance itself. The lives of these people might look unbearable to an outsider, but the feeling of achievement, that they could reach the destination and survive might be the drive behind their persistence on their way. A female informant stated:

I feel very strong here. I don't think I could do the same things in Iran. I felt weak. This makes me believe that I can stand on my own feet [support myself]. Sometimes my children would say what is this life? There are many problems here, there are economical problems. What shall be done? Nothing is achieved easily.

Physiological state, as persuaded by self-efficacy theory can positively contribute to the feeling of capability. The woman whose interview was quoted above feels strong, and able. Therefore, she was able to support her family to get through their difficult days. From a gender perspective, this quotation is a sign of general empowerment for women in Sweden. While she has been living illegally, she could still benefit from the general freedom of women in Sweden and this was also a source of her perception of being strong. She later confirmed that she is not willing to return because of the patriarchal view on women in her country.

On the other hand, the social networks and the sense of belonging to a community are strengthened by participating in Asylum Seeker's Unions' activities, demonstrations, conferences, and gatherings. This is a way for the people facing the same hardships, to reflect on group problems, and to start collective efforts. Being part of these communities and the sense of collectiveness contributes to feeling strong and willing to continue. This is a challenge that is fought together in the group. I could witness this strive to collectiveness in the formal and informal gathering formed in the church hosting the mobile clinic. People would attend the place not only to receive medical assistance, but also to meet the others. Many people would come on weekly basis only to meet the others in their situation.

The agency to stay in the battle of living such a difficult life can come from feeling of self-efficacy encouraged by presumed self achievements and social reinforcements. In this sense, the undocumented migrants are far from victims. They are active agents with strong persistent wills.

5.1.2. Social aspects of illegality

Dividing people into legal and illegal is a way of classifying society. The *legals* have documents, rights, and a *respectable* social status in comparison with the *illegals* who have none of them. What made my informants feel they are treated as inferior, less human, or humiliated is not a small card bearing their social security numbers, but rather being classified as *illegals*, a term which implies not being a respectable member of the society. This classification is reminded on daily basis to these people when they are barred from access to services, discriminated, and marginalised.

The only problem is that you cannot live like a human... they told me I do not have the right to live...one get humiliated when one lives black. Your rights are always neglected. You cannot live like a human. I am a human and I want to live....

Skeggs (1997) interpreted lack of respectability as having little social value or legitimacy. Lack of legal rights in numerous aspects decreases the feeling of legitimacy among undocumented migrants. Since they cannot have a formal place in the society, they feel they lack social value. One loses the feeling of being respectable when one is abused in slavery like working relation, has to sleep in the train station, escapes frequently from controllers and police, and experiences other material, social and emotional deprivations. Skeggs believes that people who do not seem to have respectability are more concerned about lacking it. That is why some hide their status and live a two-faced life: to look respectable and to be classified as a normal citizen. Tina, an informant in this study, tried to look like a normal *respectable* citizen at school while at real life she had to hide herself from authorities and live in a cramped room with four other family members.

Society frequently classifies people into subgroups which alleviate ascribing different labels to them and giving them appropriate treatments. Migrants usually receive lower social status compared to the nationals. Migrants themselves are divided into subgroups according to their countries of origin, and their looks before even their education and background. This classification brings different levels of respectability for them. Migrants from EU enjoy the same (or sometimes more) respectability as the Swedish citizens as I witnessed. Migrants from other countries come in a hierarchy. Within each racial group, in turn, people are further classified. Legal status is one way of classification of the people in subgroups. Being *illegal* means frequently that you are considered less respectable. This classification brings different implication for being respectable. Unfortunately, undocumented migrants come at the bottom of these hierarchies and face a double discrimination (Khosravi, 2010a) coming from their ethnic community as well as the host society.

Khosravi (2010a) mentions that *illegality* can even be physically embedded in a person. He quotes from an informant who had no romantic relations and felt like being ugly and unwanted. The social relations of the people are affected by the way they view themselves, and the society depict them. The negative self-image and feeling less respectable and illegitimate bars individuals from establishing *normal* relations with the other people. On a broader sense, romance, family life, sexuality and reproduction is affected by people's legal status. This way *papers* are controlling social and family lives of individuals. Khosravi (2010a) mentions that one of the not-so-hidden agendas of the migration board is discouraging the reproduction among undocumented migrants and asylum seekers. This aim is well in line with barring the undocumented migrants from health care system.

In absence of the formal support system for the undocumented migrants, other informal mechanisms are at work to make the life possible for this group. Social capital is what they benefit from. Bourdieu talks about the resources in people's social networks (Lin, 2001). He states that people make investments in their social networks with an expected return. I have already discussed the importance of the social networks in the survival of the undocumented migrants. Social networks are a source for economic, social, and emotional support for this group. The valued goods, as Bourdieu proposed, in this aspect are the resources needed to support these people with their daily lives and the information that might lead to a positive decision in their asylum applications. All of my informants could get an accommodation via their social networks. Many of them had received a shelter in a part of their stay by their friends or relatives. Some stayed in critical periods of their lives when they were sick and escaping police with their friends. Most of them could find a job via their social networks. Some received financial support and all seemed to be much dependent on the social networks for getting information and advice.

The social capital is in many cases the only capital these people have. They are displaced, have no clear social status, in many cases no money, and even no physical power. Nevertheless, they can rely on the social capital to survive. The social network is very often the community of the people who are in the same situation or have been so during a period in their lives. These communities are working in a recycling mechanism. People receive help at some stage and later they are a source to provide help. Access to this social capital is not the same for all the groups. The

access is dependent on one's race, nationality, gender, class, etc. Some ethnical backgrounds are more numerous and have more powerful positions in Sweden. Association with this kind of network means access to more resources. An example is the community of the Iranian immigrants in Sweden. One of my informants could get a job, and receive many other benefits including free medical check-ups after association with this group which was economically better off and had a position of power in the society. This way, social capital is a means of survival for most of the undocumented immigrants.

As stipulated by Dwyer (2004), societies have often used the most powerless and marginalised people to do the most disagreeable and difficult work. He sees the use of 'illegal migrants' as the contemporary form of the old patterns of slavery. Exploitation of undocumented immigrants in forms of unjust labour conditions is not uncommon in the Swedish society. One would not expect to witness such working conditions in Sweden with its historical ideas of equity and equality while this might be more understandable in the liberal capitalist background of the United States.

Finally, Marginalisation and exclusion is the main characteristic of the social status of the undocumented migrants in Sweden. As reflected by Khosravi (2010a), undocumented migrants suffer a double burden since they are not only exposed to racism from the host society but also they are marginalised even in their own ethnic communities. Their contact to the host society is limited by many borders. Geographically, they live in segregated areas which are mainly populated by immigrants; occupationally, they are usually working along with their same ethnic group. The general communication problem which is the result of poor linguistic abilities further marginalizes this group. These problems are all further aggravated with their illegal nature of stay accompanied by frequent movements, security problems, and a general atmosphere of mistrust which further isolates this group and prevents from formation of social bonds.

Viewing undocumented immigrants as social members as proposed by Dwyer (2004) is a key for taking responsibility for this group. Taking social responsibility encompasses understanding the patterns at work and planning for improvement of the wellbeing of the whole society. Dividing the society in different sections, be it race, religion, gender, or legal status and depriving a part of it from their basic rights do not contribute to the establishment of a healthy social system in any country.

5.1.3. Undocumented migrants on a national level

As explained in the theoretical framework section, formulating the questionnaires in this study was based on the indicators of integration by Ager and Strang (2004). Initially these indicators were taken as a means of measuring material, social, and personal achievements of the undocumented migrants in their strive to integrate in the Swedish society. Later during data collection, I realized that integration is a heavy term to be used in this occasion. The indicators of integration as put forth by Ager and Strang are frequently not met for many locals not talking about refugees or other groups of *legal* immigrants.

The patterns of lives of the undocumented migrants are better described by coping mechanisms, and survival methods rather than integration. Survival is the main quest for this group. Worries of undocumented migrants are how to cope with today and

find for tomorrow. Higher levels of *makers and means* (Ager and Strang, 2004) including employment, housing, and health issues are daily challenges. Education is a far reaching dream. Undocumented immigrants have very limited opportunities in terms of labour in absence of work permit, language abilities, and expertise. Informal work, as put forth by Khosravi (2010a), means that undocumented migrants are generally isolated from the mainstream labour market and society. They mainly work with their co-ethnics and have little Swedish language abilities. This increases their vulnerability and exposes them to abuse in labour market. They generally are caught in the informal work section further since the employers deny giving them reference even if they regularize their stay.

Housing is a continuous worry. Frequent movements deprive undocumented migrants from establishing their lives in a place, making connections to a neighbourhood and have a peaceful life. Frequent movements affect children (Khosravi, 2010a) and prevent social connections. Shelter is a basis for feeling safe and secure and a platform to proceed in the further levels of integration. This basis is shaky for this group.

Social connections are limited to a defined network which mainly consists of people in the same situation (formerly or presently). Little connection is made with the host country people. Poor language abilities and little opportunity of social contact make it difficult for this group to have Swedish friends. Institutions and services in local and central government are prohibited areas for these people since access to all services is dependent on legal status and having an ID card. These people are actually living in a discriminated and marginalised situation with limited access to services and social contacts.

Undocumented migrants have limited access to the *facilitators* such as language and cultural knowledge which is a result of their limited contact with the Swedish society and lack of possibility to attend education opportunities. Feeling of safety and security is generally lacking including physical safety (fears from police arrests, controllers, etc.), material safety (access to food, shelter and health care) and psychological safety (unclear future, long waiting time, no definite hope and no possibility to plan). *Foundations* as described by Ager and Strang (2004) including the right to citizenship is totally irrelevant for this group despite they live in this society.

In Sweden, a general control system implemented by application of social security numbers and administrative control of people's lives. While physical barriers, border check-ups or street patrols are rare to stop the undocumented migrants' circulation, the administrative controls limit their access to all aspects of life and keeps them effectively as outsiders.

5.2. Summary and Conclusions

This qualitative research reviewed the living situation of the undocumented migrants in Sweden. Empirical data was collected by qualitative in-depth interviews with undocumented migrants and professionals as well as participant observation.

Undocumented immigrants come either legally with a passport and visa or illegally with the help of smugglers or alone to Sweden. Those who come illegally can face

many hazardous situations risking their lives on the way. Some experienced frequent deportations on the way and started their routes over and over. The persistence in face of hard situations is a sign of human agency. These people made a choice and imposed their choice on the world. They stood in face of difficulties and proceeded as active agents to take the lead in their lives.

All the undocumented immigrants I met in this study were in the rejected asylum seekers category. The asylum procedures of these individuals, including their frequent appeals and re-opening of their cases, can take many years. The prolonged procedures with negative results is a source of frustration for this group. The situation of many asylum seekers are further complicated with the Dublin Agreement according to which they should be transferred to another state within the agreement for asylum procedures. Harsh living conditions and disbelief in the fairness of the asylum procedures result in reluctance of accepting this transfer. Unwillingness to be sent to another country frequently results in hiding for an extended time to pass the legal timeframes and apply anew in Sweden.

People come for different reasons to Sweden. The reasons behind the flight seemed to be sensitive for my informants who were not quite forthcoming in elaborating them. The main reasons for flight can be summarized as general insecurity, lack of rule of law, threats to life and personal freedoms, intolerance for political activity or political opinions, sexual assault, and illegal seizure of the property. In choosing Sweden as a destination several factors were distinguishable; family ties in Sweden, expectation for a safe haven and a good living situation, and alleged non-refoulement policy of the Swedish government.

The living situation of the undocumented immigrants in Sweden can hardly be described by integration indicators. Coping mechanism and survival strategies can be a better label for the living conditions of this group. Material wellbeing of this group is gravely affected by their limited access to the services including medical care, lack of labor rights, precarious economic conditions. Access to all services are dependent on the legal status in Sweden and the Swedish Government has a systematic control on the citizens by implementation of centralized systems and social security numbers.

While undocumented migrants depend primarily on their earning through labor to survive, they lack a permission to work. They are frequently subjected to abuse in the labor market having to accept low wages, no rest times, long working hours, hard physical work in unhealthy conditions, no job security, and lack of compensation for work related injuries. They have long periods of joblessness and frequent changes. In spite of all these hardships, undocumented migrants demonstrate a strong will, work hard and support themselves and their families.

The majority of the undocumented migrants are single men, but there are also many families living illegally in Sweden. Family life of an undocumented migrant is accompanied with many physical and psychological pressures, lack of economic means, limited access to services, and an uncertain future. Family relations are negatively influenced in this situation. Pressures make family members intolerant for each other, and uncertain future produces disagreements on the future course of action. Children suffer under economic and psychological pressures, and might have

little chance to see their parents who work extraordinary long hours to fend for the family. In any case, the single males aspire to start a family as a future goal.

Social capital is the main resource of the undocumented migrants. Social networks are the primary, or in many occasions the only, means of assistance for the undocumented migrants. Social network is the source of support with accommodation, occupation, financial assistance, information and advice, translation and interpretation services, and support in emergency or difficult situations. Family members, relatives, country fellows, persons from same religious or ethnical group, people from neighbouring countries, and finally Swedes can form this social network in a hierarchical way where the relatives come first. The undocumented migrants can become in time, when they have enough resources, the source of assistance for the new arrivals.

Undocumented migrants do not receive many services from the formal sector in Sweden. Access to medical care is not anticipated in law for this group. Different medical facilities have their own internal regulations. Emergency services and in immediate necessary care is foreseen in Salgrenska hospital in Göteborg for all inhabitants. All the undocumented migrant children I met in this study had access to free schooling system. It seems that there is a tolerance in acceptance of the undocumented children in local arrangement of the schools. Some of these children had to go long distances to get to the schools they were accepted in, and some did not study the full scope of the subjects due to their language problems.

While many NGOs are present to help the undocumented migrants, it seems that they are not benefiting their services much. Human rights organizations are mainly engaged in informative and advocacy activities such as arranging demonstrations and conferences. Labour unions try to inform people of their potential labour rights. No one in this study benefited from their services or believed that it is possible to have any achievements in this regard. The only organization that has tangible effects in the lives of this people is Rosengrenska Clinic. Rosengrenska which has been active more than 17 years is a medical network and a mobile clinic based on the voluntary work of the medical and support staff. The clinic tries to compensate partly for the lack of medical care for the undocumented immigrants by establishing a referral system and a weekly mobile clinic.

Emotionally, frustration, depression, hopelessness, anger, despair, and resentfulness are frequently visible among undocumented immigrants. Long waiting periods, uncertainties, unclear future and pressures of the daily life result in apathy, lose of interest, indifference to what happens around, uncertainty and lack of purpose. Many undocumented immigrants who have gone into hiding have security problems and face frequent arrests and detention by police. Others fear controllers at busses or at their work. Otherwise, most of the undocumented migrants have physical security in Sweden and move around freely.

The question of why undocumented migrants chose to remain in Sweden in face of all the problems they face cannot easily be answered. The fact that the asylum applications of this group are formally rejected cannot undermine the existence of a subjective fear for return for these people. They continue to worry about general insecurity, personal problems, threats to their freedom and lives, political problems,

lack of respect for women's rights, ethnical clashes, unauthorized occupation of the property, etc. The fact that the official reports are not supporting their claims, as assessed by the Migration Board, has no effect on their perceived apprehension for return. Some might have problems that do not make them eligible for refugee status under 1951 Geneva Convention, but this does not make their problems less important in their eyes. They have private channels of getting information from their country of origin and rely on that much more than the official reports made by the western journalists or commissions deployed to their country of origin.

On the other hand, undocumented migrants are generally not very hopeful to get any positive decision from the Swedish authorities in connection to their asylum application, and in the reviews of the cases. Their stay in Sweden might not be the result of an active choice to settle down, but a forced solution in absence of any other durable solution.

For the undocumented migrants, legal status is being used as a classification method. The classification does not only influence access to services, but respectability as a person. It is a means to identify the social status. Living an illegal life style has profound effects on the psyche of an individual, her self-image, and her relations with the people in the society. This classification tends to isolate and marginalize the people who are labeled as *illegal*. These people are sharing the society in a physical sense with the rest of people, but they are separated by a glass wall from the rest. They observe what is going on behind the glass, but they have little share in it. In their shadow life style, the undocumented immigrants strive to survive in an affluent society in which they have no share. They aim to break through the glass wall one day and live a life they deserve as a human being.

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