

## Icke-medborgarskapets urbana geografi



HELENA HOLGERSSON

**ICKE-MEDBORGARSKAPETS  
URBANA GEOGRAFI**

**Glänta produktion 2011**

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*Icke-medborgarskapets urbana geografi*

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## ENGLISH **SUMMARY**



## THE URBAN GEOGRAPHY OF NON-CITIZENSHIP

*Ramberget is located on Hisingen in the northwest of Gothenburg and is a part of Keiller's Park. Standing at the top of this mountain, looking out, you can see large parts of the city, from Göta Älv Bridge in the centre to Älvsborg's Bridge in the west. This is where one of my informants brought me when I asked him if we could take a walk at a place in Gothenburg – anywhere – that meant something to him. Wherever he found himself he sought out high places, he told me, as we looked out from the viewpoint. He often returned to Ramberget, sometimes with friends to barbecue, sometimes on his own, just to get out of his small apartment. I pointed out my house on the other side of the river and we discussed different areas in Gothenburg. He had lived here for almost five years, mostly on Hisingen. However, now it seemed like he would have to move to Hjällbo, a concrete suburb in the northeast of Gothenburg. Even though he had received a deportation order he had chosen to stay in Sweden and try to appeal the denial of his asylum application, and he spoke of himself as a "hidden refugee". It was late summer and on our way down we picked blackberries on the slopes.*

*Chapter 1: Some kind of Gothenburger*

This is a study of *the Swedish non-citizenship*, that is of the conditions under which people without a residence permit live in Sweden, and

more specifically in Gothenburg. It analyzes how fifteen women and men deal with this situation and negotiate their societal position. The question of how the welfare state ought to deal with the presence of non-citizens is one of the most complicated political issues of our time, and it is brought to a head in cities.

The contracts that in different times and spaces have been called citizenship are very different. They have been tied to different units; in both ancient Greece and medieval Europe, citizenship referred to a person's bond to a city rather than to a state. In many cases people have been excluded; for instance, in ancient Greece only free men were recognized.<sup>1</sup> Finally, as Thomas Marshall writes, focusing on Europe, citizenship came to include civil rights in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, political rights in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and social rights in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup> Gøsta Esping-Andersen's ideal-typical description of different welfare state regimes shows how social rights differ within Europe, depending on how relations between state, market and family/civil society are organized.<sup>3</sup>

In my analysis of how citizenship is being negotiated today I mostly draw on the work of American researchers such as Nicholas De Genova, Saskia Sassen, Monica Varsanyi, Susan Coutin and Linda Bosniak. They all emphasize the historical, cultural and legal structures that create the non-citizen, and with this figure as a lens they analyze how our society is organized.<sup>4</sup> This is also my ambition. I have been especially inspired by De Genova's discussions on the importance of distinguishing studies of illegality from studies of "illegals". However, reading the work of these scholars it is striking how the Swedish context differs from the North American context. Neither these American researchers nor I make national comparisons, but by introducing the concept of a Swedish non-citizenship I want to point out that non-citizenship – just like citizenship – differs between countries. In general discussions I refer to my informants as *non-citizens*, and in more specific parts of the analysis as *asylum seekers* and *deportables* respectively, depending on whether they have received a deportation order yet or not. De Genova argues that illegality is lived through the palpable sense of *deportability*, that is the constant risk of being deported.

Since my way of working has been rather inductive I did not start off with a fixed number of research questions that I then tried to answer. From the outset it was a study of both the situation of non-citizens and of the urban environment, but it was not until later that these themes got more theoretically grounded. I eventually started analyzing how the stories of my informants might be related to the official images of post-industrial Gothenburg, and also, how they navigated through the city. Looking at their everyday lives in Gothenburg I studied how deportables are dealt with within the Swedish welfare system, and in the end I defined my overall purpose as analysing what characterizes the Swedish non-citizenship. Writing my concluding reflections in the winter of 2010 I had come to focus on non-citizenship as a lived experience, the features of the Swedish and Gothenburg contexts respectively, and on how the city appears when deportables are put at the centre.

In Europe, research on undocumented/irregular immigration started in the 70s, but did not really become a common field until the 90s. The situation in the Nordic countries was practically uninvestigated until a couple of years ago.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, I did not have much previous research to relate to, but parallel to my project a number of other researchers have been also been studying the Swedish context: for instance Shahram Khosravi, Annette Rosengren, Ramin Baghir-Zada, Maja Sager, Heidi Moksnes, Erika Sigvardsdotter and Markus Hansson.

### *Chapter 2: The sociology of everyday urban geography*

Theoretically my perspective aims at analysing, on the one hand, the structures and discourses that lay down conditions for the existence of asylum seekers and deportables in Gothenburg, and, on the other hand, how my informants in practice – all in their own way – make their everyday lives in the city work. In order not to reproduce simplified images of non-citizens it is important to avoid both sentimental descriptions and too theory driven, and therefore predictable, analyses. A sociologist that advocates such a perspective is Les Back. He coined the concept of *sociological listening*, which in short means

that researchers let their own preconceptions get challenged by what people tell them but still analyse what is being said.<sup>6</sup>

Method-wise my aim was to portray place-sensitive ethnographic encounters, and my analysis is based on participant observations, interviews, “mental” maps that the informants drew of “their Gothenburg” (see pp 211–220), notes from walk-alongs, reports from parliamentary committees, records of proceedings in the Chamber and media coverage of immigration, asylum and integration politics.

With reference to Henri Lefebvre’s *spatial triad*, I characterize Gothenburg as a *space for negotiation*.<sup>7</sup> Today, the city is where questions concerning the presence of non-citizens in Sweden are being debated, but also where my informants – literally – are making room for themselves in society. Although my perspective is not Marxist, this study can be placed within the field of critical urban studies, where the phrase “the right to the city” is central. The city is here used as a symbol for society as a whole, and the discussion revolves around issues of social equality with a focus on access to public space.<sup>8</sup> With reference to literature on *urban citizenship* I look at how people like my informants actually make use of this urban space. Engin Isin call acts by which non-citizens challenge the law that discriminates against them *acts of citizenship*, and illustrates his argument with Sans-Papiers in France.<sup>9</sup> Since I believe that less dramatic acts – such as working, making friends and decorating your apartment – can also change the way in which deportables will be talked of and understood in the future, I bring forth the concept of *everyday acts of citizenship*.

In an attempt to “operationalize” Les Back’s idea of sociological listening I combine discourse analysis and symbolic interactionist perspectives drawing on Ian Hacking.<sup>10</sup> I try to identify the dominating discourses in the political debate on undocumented/irregular immigration. But I also zoom in, as Alex-Rhys Taylor puts it,<sup>11</sup> in order to look at how these representations affect my informants’ lives, using the conceptual framework of Erving Goffman.<sup>12</sup> In most parts of my work discourse analysis is an implicit point of departure, but when I discuss how different discourses compete with each other I refer

to the discourse theory of Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau.<sup>13</sup> I show how my informants have to actively work on passing unnoticed when moving through urban space, but in order to emphasize how discourses materialize I also partly rely on Judith Butler's theory of *performativity*. With their conscious spatial tactics I believe that my informants do not just avoid being arrested, but also – often without knowing it – reproduce, and sometimes challenge, dominant representations of non-citizens.<sup>14</sup>

### *Chapter 3: Municipal headache*

Today we see a distinct conflict of interest in Swedish cities. At the same time as many non-citizens come here, the local authorities work hard to reduce this “inflow”. As Ien Ang notes, cities, unlike states, cannot control who moves in and simply have to accommodate the newly arrived as best as they can.<sup>15</sup> Like many other post-industrial cities Gothenburg is today being marketed like a commodity in order to attract capital, and like elsewhere this has meant redeveloping the inner city.<sup>16</sup> As Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore argue, “actually existing neo-liberalism” is always a result of interactions between a utopian placeless ideology and local political frameworks,<sup>17</sup> and in Gothenburg “the Gothenburg spirit”, a local political tradition focused on cooperation between politics and business that goes back hundreds of years, has played well into this contemporary kind of urban governance.<sup>18</sup>

Today, there are two parallel representations of Gothenburg: one of a city with enormous potential and one of a city without anything to offer. The first one is for the most part found in marketing. Gothenburg is clearly working within the logic that David Harvey refers to as *entrepreneurialism*, and in order to “get on the map” in the last couple of years the city has, for instance, erected a ferris wheel by the river, next to the opera house.<sup>19</sup> Further on, by the river banks, in former harbour and industrial areas, 40 000 work places and apartments for 30 000 people will be built in the coming decades, a project that is a part of the plan to become a European big city region.

The second image of Gothenburg focuses on “immigrants” and

“asylum seekers”. Today asylum seekers in Sweden are allowed to organize their housing themselves, and in practice this means that a lot of people move to cities like Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö. Since there is no organized housing in Gothenburg these people mostly end up staying with relatives or friends, or renting rooms or apartments in the unregulated housing market. Leading politicians in Gothenburg have for the last ten years been trying to convince the parliament to change the legislation, and refer asylum seekers to municipalities with better ability to host them, but so far they have not gained a hearing.

Having juxtaposed these two parallel images of Gothenburg, I argue that they are related to each other. It is clear that not all inhabitants can be included in simplified – and marketable – descriptions of a city. It is also obvious that there is not just one map that Gothenburg can end up on, and that the city already can be found on the map of asylum seekers.

When Ien Ang refers to cities as *concrete realities* it is in order to emphasize that this is where the consequences of the national immigration politics become visible.<sup>20</sup> In Sweden, adults with a deportation order only have access to emergency health care at their own expense, and when it comes to school there are no national guidelines. I argue that one consequence of what Gøsta Esping-Andersen characterizes as the *social democratic welfare regime* is that deportable people are more obviously excluded here than in other European countries. In 2007 Sweden was strongly criticized for not offering non-citizens the same level of health care as its citizens, in a report by Paul Hunt from the Office of the United Nations commissioner for human rights.<sup>21</sup> Creating “parallel systems” where these people are given some welfare goes against the fundamental principle of the Swedish system, which aims to provide a high degree of welfare to everyone. Paradoxically enough, the logical conclusion might be to completely exclude these people and hope that they leave the country. However, such politics is at the same time more likely to be criticized in Sweden than anywhere else, since the contrast becomes so visible here.

However, restrictive national legislation does not, as Monica Var-sanyi shows in her work, mean that non-citizens have no access to welfare at the local level.<sup>22</sup> In Gothenburg, Sahlgrenska University Hospital has decided not to charge people with no capacity to pay, and has also organized seminars where the staff have been taught how to register people without a Swedish personal number. And when it comes to schooling, headmasters that have wanted to welcome deportable children have been allowed to, although not economically compensated.

In this chapter, my conclusion is that we see a constant negotiation regarding non-citizens' right to welfare in Sweden, and that it is brought to a head in cities. Thus the title of this chapter: *Municipal headache*. Further, it seems to me that the restrictive, and ideologically grounded, national legislation on welfare for non-citizens is hard for local authorities to live by. In the light of reports of increasing segregation it is understandable that local politicians in Gothenburg are concerned and call for action,<sup>23</sup> but I find it remarkable that the proposed solutions always suggest that asylum seekers move elsewhere.

#### *Chapter 4: A hard-to-capture figure*

When I started working on this research project, the campaign “Refugee Amnesty 2005” was running, and the most common way of naming deportable people was “hidden refugees”, a typically Swedish term – in both its parts. Because Swedish politics have been focused on asylum immigration and not labour immigration for recent decades, “immigrant” and “refugee” are partly used as synonyms here. And because Swedish authorities have carried out deportations to a larger extent than many other European countries, rejected asylum seekers have had more reason to *hide* from the police here.<sup>24</sup>

At this time there was also talk of “illegal immigrants” and “without papers”, which to a larger extent corresponds to how this group is categorized in other parts of Europe. Since these three expressions create different notions of who the people in question are, why they have come to Sweden and how they live their lives here, I came

to consider them as connected to competing discourses. Focusing on them, in this chapter I look closer at the specific features of the Swedish debate on immigration. Just like in other national settings the Swedish negotiation revolves around how “the pitiables” could be separated from “the villains”, to use Ingrid Sahlin’s concepts. Depending on which discourse that is given preference, different political measures can be motivated.<sup>25</sup>

A discourse analysis can be described as a “snapshot”, and here I focus on the dominating discourse in Sweden at the time of my fieldwork, which revolved around the expression “hidden refugees”. As a way of identifying this figure I looked at press photographs. In articles about deportable people in the years before and after 2005 a “standard picture” recurred. It always depicts families or children from behind, inside dark apartments, in front of windows with venetian blinds or curtains (see pp 101–106). I argue that it is what Howard Becker would call the most instantly readable picture of “hidden refugees”, and that it consequently gives us clues about how these people are understood within the dominating discourse.<sup>26</sup> I found that it creates, firstly, an illusion of spatial demarcation, that these people live “outside of society” and “underground”. And secondly, a notion of passivity, that there is someone who is “hiding” them.

Then there are two competing discourses that revolve around the expressions “illegal immigrants” and “without papers” respectively. While “hidden refugees” obviously fall into the category of pitiables, “illegal immigrants” are classical villains. In the past decades immigration has increasingly been related to organized crime, terrorism, narcotics smuggling and trafficking in Europe.<sup>27</sup> In Sweden the expression “illegal immigrants” is too negative to be used by established political parties, but I argue that they do make frequent references to this broader discourse, for example when these people’s need of protection is put in question.

“Without papers” is a translation of the French expression *Sans-Papiers*, which is also the name of a social movement that organizes non-citizens against accusations of being “illegal”. Instead they present themselves as *de facto* citizens. In the last two or three years



this discourse has challenged the discourse of “hidden refugees” in Sweden. Within this figure of thought people like my informants are not considered passive victims living isolated from other inhabitants of the city.

Looking at how the three discourses above are related to each other gives an idea of what is at stake in the Swedish debate on undocumented/irregular migration. While “hidden refugees” and “illegal immigrants” are different kinds of “them” – “them” that “we” ought to take care of and “them” that threaten “our” welfare – “without papers” appear as part of “us”. The discourse of “without papers” challenges Sahlin’s dichotomy of “the pitiables” and “the villains”, which I find interesting. However, my main argument in this chapter is that all these three discourses are rough simplifications, and that we have to work on not reducing this heterogeneous group of people to one figure. And that it matters how we talk about these people, since different ways of describing them call for different political actions.

#### *Chapter 5: The city as a minefield*

After zooming out and discussing the Swedish context in the first two empirical chapters, in the last two I zoom in and focus on the stories of my informants in Gothenburg. When Nicholas De Genova discusses deportability it is to put emphasis on the role of legislation, to challenge the notion that borders separate citizens and non-citizens and to show how American authorities provide employers with cheap labour by threatening people with deportation without actually deporting them.<sup>28</sup> But since I am interested in how people deal with deportability in their everyday life I chose to focus on where, when and how my informants thought they would put themselves at risk of being arrested or reported in Gothenburg. Looking at how they *navigated* through this urban geography is yet another way to study Swedish non-citizenship.

In Erving Goffman’s work *passing* means trying to get the people around you to perceive you as “normal”, which for non-citizens translates into not having their legal status disclosed.<sup>29</sup> Goffman’s reasoning mostly focused on how people try to make a certain impression,

but in my informants' stories impression management is about not making an impression at all. However, I learned that this was very hard work. Described as a *stigma*, non-citizenship has to be characterized as an unnoticeable one, which explains that the informants had been able to move relatively freely in Gothenburg. When I asked them if they thought one could tell by looking at someone if she or he was a "hidden refugee", most of them said no, but some thought that a person's nervous behaviour might betray her or him.

Deportability can be described not just as a legal condition, but also as a bodily one. The informants talk about pounding hearts and sweaty palms, but also about struggling not to let the fear show. It was easier for those who come from Eastern Europe to pass unnoticed. In order to be identified as a "hidden refugee" you have to be identified as an "immigrant" first. Moreover, the discourse of "hidden refugees" seems to provide some protection since it describes deportable people as hiding inside apartments, not moving through the city.

Navigating means both avoiding dangers and dealing with them. Many of the situations that my informants describe were quite mundane. They managed not to be detected. On some occasions they almost got arrested though. For instance, one man told me how he witnessed a fight and was asked by the police to come with them to the station, but how he had managed to avoid this. Generally, the situation that almost everyone pointed out as most risky was during ticket checks on public transport, especially the big ones where 15-20 inspectors get on a tram. If a passenger does not have a valid ticket, and cannot identify herself or himself, police are called. When Västtrafik, which runs the public transport in Gothenburg, was asked how they felt about performing internal border control, the chair of their board said that finding "hidden refugees" was not their purpose, but a "spin-off effect".<sup>30</sup>

My informants also describe hospitals as dangerous environments since they would have to identify themselves and trust the staff. Some of them also told me how they avoided living with "criminal" friends, since the police might come after them. People with deportation orders cannot take any risks, which paradoxically means that even

though they are referred to as “illegals”, they are more legal than most other inhabitants. One man did not even dare to go by car with friends who drove too fast. Living under the threat of deportation, non-citizens are also potential victims of crime. Obviously they cannot report crimes that they are subjected to, and people around them might know about this. One woman told me how she avoided male employers and working late hours for this reason.

There is no key to where the police look for deportable people or to who is most likely to be an informer, and the people I met made very different estimations of where they would be at risk. In order to illustrate this I compared the maps D, A and G. Map D was drawn by a man who was literally “hidden”, that is lodged and provided for by an organization. He sees no logic regarding where the police might search for him, is always scared when he’s out in public, and avoids leaving his house if he can. Map A covers most parts of Gothenburg, and the man who drew it moved through the city every week, collecting empty tins along the tramlines. But he always went straight back to the apartment, and the central node of his map is “home”. In map G you see no signs of fear. Even though he was at risk of being deported the man behind it was not afraid of being arrested, and he includes stadiums, parks and nightclubs. He felt that he knew what places and situations to avoid, and how not to arouse suspicion in people’s minds.

What Les Back refers to as the *local geography of racism* is a landscape where places are coded as dangerous or exotic based on their inhabitants’ ethnicities.<sup>31</sup> The informants also refer to such patterns. In their stories of dangerous and safe places, the categories of “immigrants” and “Swedes” are central. “Immigrants” is a very ambivalent category since they were the people that both had helped them in finding apartments and jobs, and the ones that had charged too much rent and paid very low salaries. The people I interviewed had for the most part been staying in the northeast high-rise suburbs. This is the part of Gothenburg with the highest proportion of the population born outside Sweden, but also where the incomes are the lowest. By the sea in the southwest the statistics are reversed in both these respects. To my informants “the suburb” seems to confirm

their exclusion, but also offer anonymity since they blend in there appearance-wise.

Even though most of the people in this study have been working in the unregulated labour market, I find it highly unlikely that the Swedish government considers these employers' need for cheap labour as part of its immigration policies in the same way that De Genova describes in the USA.<sup>32</sup> Deportability cannot be discussed without reference to global structures, but that does not mean that it can be characterized as a general phenomenon. In this chapter I show that in order to pass unnoticed my informants need knowledge of, firstly, national and local legislation and policies, and, secondly, the specific urban space through which they have to navigate.

#### *Chapter 6: Everyday acts of citizenship*

Legally speaking, citizenship is something you either have or do not have, but discussing it in terms of presence and practice shows how difficult it is to single out non-citizens. This is one of the main arguments in the recent theoretical discussions on *urban citizenship*, where researchers from different disciplines elaborate on future options and/or complements to national citizenship.<sup>33</sup> In this chapter I look at how the conditions under which my informants live their lives in Gothenburg differ from the living conditions of Swedish citizens, and more specifically where and when they have been at risk of being *othered* and how they have resisted the subordination of lacking a residence permit.

Non-citizens have to negotiate their position in many situations, and one of them is in relation to Swedish authorities. Having one's asylum application denied can be seen as being dismissed and placed under suspicion. Since my informants have chosen to stay in Sweden and try to appeal there are many situations where they have to explain and defend themselves. They talked about themselves as "hidden refugees", but unless their applications are approved they are at constant risk of being called – and seen as – "bogus asylum seekers", "economic immigrants" and "illegals". Their resistance against this can be understood as a struggle for *respectability*.<sup>34</sup> They did not always identify with other people in the same situation. One man did

not even want a refugee amnesty, since this would mean that a lot of people that he did not think deserved a residence permit would be given one. Many informants idealized “the Swedish people” and blamed the Migration Board and its staff for incompetence.

One specific occasion when people are made into non-citizens is when they are “dacted”, that is when their fingerprints are registered in the EU database EURODAC. According to the Dublin Regulation a person can only apply for asylum in one member state, and if it is revealed that a person has already been registered elsewhere she or he is sent back to that country. When I visited “the dact” (the room where this control takes place) at the Migration Board in Sagåsen outside Gothenburg, the staff who took the asylum seekers’ fingerprints wore plastic gloves. When I asked them why, they told me it was to protect them from diseases like HIV, hepatitis and scabies, but to me this mostly resembled a kind of ritual.

Henry Lefebvre’s *spatial triad* illustrates that the city is produced in a play between spatial practices, representational space, and representations of space.<sup>35</sup> Non-citizens do not have much influence in the negotiation of how urban space is planned, but are both among its users and part of the processes through which notions of different places are formed. My informants describe Gothenburg as a place they chose to live in, but the suburbs where many of them had found apartments and rooms as somewhere to which they had been deported. When I asked one woman where she had been staying, she answered: “Not in Bergsjön.” Using Loïc Wacquant’s conception this suburb in the northeast of Gothenburg can be characterized by a *territorial stigmatization*.<sup>36</sup> Places are seldom described without reference to their inhabitants, and Bergsjön is one of the most “immigrant dense” and poor areas of the city.

Navigating through a geography of exclusion does not just mean trying to avoid places that reinforce one’s subordination, but, as Les Back emphasizes, also trying to create spaces where one can just be.<sup>37</sup> Ramberget was such a place for the man I initially described. For another woman it was a shopping centre in the centre. This makes up the most part of her map (map C), and this was also where she took

me for our walk-along. In the crowd she forgot about her troubles for a while, she told me. Generally, the part of Gothenburg that is missing in the informants' maps is the garden suburbs by the sea. Even though the beaches are public, as a whole these areas are not somewhere people go without an invitation, and most of my interviewees did not know anyone who lived there.

I have identified four environments and contexts where my interviewees clearly negotiated their position in society. Firstly, in (unregulated) working sites they were, on the one hand, forced to accept conditions that citizens would refuse. On the other hand, for some of them this was a sphere where their life was partly normalized. One man and one woman were running different kinds of shops, and the customers did not seem to suspect that they were threatened by deportation. Secondly, at support organizations the power relation between the one who needs help and the one providing it is always unequal, and in this context people like my informants often have to act grateful. At the same time though, these premises were mostly described as free zones where they could relax, be together with others and get emotional support.

Thirdly, yet another space for negotiation is the home/the apartment. To one woman that I interviewed, not having an Advent candlestick symbolized non-citizenship, and in her very symbolic map the Swedish neighbours are celebrating Christmas (map F). However, another woman told me how she refused to live in a temporary state, and had decorated her apartment even though her asylum application had been denied. A home is not just located in space, but also extended in time; it is where you picture your future.

Fourthly, one more ambivalent context is among friends and family. On the one hand, it seems like non-citizens are sometimes seen as not worth investing in when it comes to relationships. One man asks "Who would marry me?" On the other hand, after years in Gothenburg my informants had established different kinds of social networks. On the living room table of a single man in his thirties I found a photo album with pictures from parties and family gatherings. At least two of his siblings had been Swedish citizens for decades. Le-

gally, a relative is either under the age of eighteen or a spouse, but these pictures challenge that definition.

The danger of discussing citizenship in terms of practices is that it might appear as an achievement, and thus as something some deserve and others do not. The fact that people have very different resources will always have to be considered by the lawmakers. However, I think it is unreasonable not to take into account that someone has created a life for herself or himself in Sweden – and maybe in Gothenburg – when hearing her or his case.

### *Chapter 7: Zooming in on Gothenburg*

How immigration ought to be regulated is a political question that needs to be settled in democratically appointed bodies, and what studies like this one might contribute is new perspectives in the debate that precede the decisions. When Les Back discusses the relation between sociology and political activism he emphasizes the importance of not reducing social reality by using simple models. Compared to many other writers sociologists often have more time at hand, and therefore the chance to reach behind recurrent stereotypes. What he refers to as sociological listening aims at producing analyses with various meanings, not political manifestos.<sup>38</sup> Throughout this study my ambition has been to both simplify and complicate the political and theoretical discussions on the presence of non-citizens in Sweden.

In the first part of my final reflections I return to how my informants can be described as navigating through a very rough terrain. By talking about them as negotiating their position in society I want to emphasize that they are part of the process in which issues such as regulation of immigration and criteria for granting residence permits are debated. Naturally, not being Swedish citizens, they do not attend the political deliberations on these issues, but through everyday acts of citizenship, they still have some, if ever so limited, influence in this process. Everyday acts of citizenship are not characterized by being performed in order to criticize Swedish asylum politics, but by the informants – consciously or unconsciously – acting as if they had a future in Sweden.

In everyday language “hidden refugees”, “without papers” and “illegal immigrants” are the three most common ways to talk about deportables. Social constructivist researchers are sometimes accused of “just” paying attention to discourses, but the stories of my informants clearly illustrate how discourses materialise. It was according to these three simplified figures of thought that they were often categorized by others, but also in relation to which they were able to understand themselves.

The second part of my final reflections deals with the notions of national and urban non-citizenships. In Gothenburg the situation that my informants find themselves in is structured by legislation, policy and discourses on multiple scales, for instance international agreements such as the Geneva Convention and the Human Rights Declaration and EU legislation such as the Dublin Regulation and the Schengen Agreement. At the local level it is structured by Sweden’s social democratic welfare regime and the dominating discourse of “hidden refugees”, and in Gothenburg by local policies such as Sahlgrenska University Hospital’s system for registering people without the personal number and the Public Transport’s ticket checks.

In the autumn of 2010 the *Göteborgs-Posten* reported that they had dismissed a hundred newspaper delivery workers after it had been revealed that they had hired non-citizens to do their work, only paying them part of the salary. In a column next to the article a journalist called this “a cruel exploitation of vulnerable people”.<sup>39</sup> It is, of course, on the one hand. But on the other hand people like my informants depend on finding this kind of jobs. This is a local example of how non-citizens complicate issues that usually are seen as quite uncomplicated, and why this is brought to a head in Sweden. Compared to South European Countries, the unregulated labour market in Sweden is very limited.

Many researchers on Swedish immigration policies are pointing at the ambivalence between the ideals about a sustainable welfare system and multiculturalism and a growing structural class and ethnicity based inequality. Sweden is now a part of EU, and during the



last decades the welfare regime has changed in the direction of what Esping-Andersen calls the liberal welfare regime. In Sweden you find a collective narrative that nostalgically looks back at better days when the country supposedly “had it all”.<sup>40</sup> Interestingly enough my informants also refer to this narrative. For instance, one man told me of how refugees were met with flowers on arrival to Sweden in the sixties, seventies and eighties. With that background, it is understandable that the critique by Paul Hunt attracted so much attention in 2007. Sweden is used to criticizing other countries for not conforming to UN agreements, not being criticized by the UN. And especially not on issues regarding immigration.

That the expression “without papers” has come to challenge the expression “hidden refugees” during the last few years indicates that Swedish politicians and activists have come to consider the issue of non-citizens’ living conditions as more of an international one than before. While “hidden refugees” is a product of Swedish immigration policies that have been very focused on asylum, “without papers” is rather connected to the French expression “sans-papiers” and the English expression “undocumented immigrants”. Talked of as “without papers” my informants appear as more active than if they are talked of as “hidden refugees”. However, within this discourse they might not necessarily be seen as in need of protection, and the most common route into Sweden is still through the asylum system (including family reunions). As I already stated, within all the three discourses that I have identified, people like my informants are reduced to stereotypes – but in different ways.

Finally, in the third part of the conclusions I return to the city. One of the things that makes non-citizens such an interesting empirical illustration in urban studies is that they are never among the intended users of the city. This study confirms that asylum seekers are often referred to poor housing on an unregulated market. But also that they often find normality, anonymity and social networks here, even though the city is not planned for them. Consequently, we need to problematize the authorities’ description of their choice to live in Gothenburg as irrational.

In his writing Henri Lefebvre emphasizes that the city is always a work in progress and that it can never be completely planned from above.<sup>41</sup> In its marketing campaigns the municipality of Gothenburg presents itself as a potent actor, but when it comes to increasing segregation it instead presents itself as perplexed. But since there is research that shows that entrepreneurial urban governance might give rise to socio-economic polarization within cities it is important to raise the question of how “the city of events” and the segregated city are related to each other.<sup>42</sup>

Yet another reason why the stories of non-citizens about the city are theoretically interesting is that they live here on different terms from most other inhabitants. Ticket inspections on the tram are of course risky for everyone without a valid ticket, but for deportable people more than a fine is at stake. For people who have to hide in the city it becomes a minefield where different places and situations must be avoided. When the urban environment is described from the point of view of deportables, the writers often talk about “unknown stories”, but then one needs to ask oneself: *for whom?* Other people who have lived under the threat of deportation will probably find them familiar, which is why I prefer to talk about my informants as describing Gothenburg from an unusual perspective. The city is most often portrayed by its more privileged inhabitants.

This study began at Ramberget, where I stood, looking out over the city from the “wrong” side of the river with one of my informants, and I want to end it in a café in the middle of Gothenburg, where I was taken by a man in his early twenties.

*And there we were, on bar stools in the display window of his favourite café inside the shopping centre Nordstan. In the interview that I had made with him a few months earlier, in a small room at a local voluntary organization, he had told me that he would rather not leave this area, both because of fear and because he did not feel like it. A few weeks before our meeting in the café I had received a joyful text message from him simply saying “Hi! We’ve got our residence permit!” Consequently, when I contacted him about the walk I was*

*prepared to meet him somewhere in the district where he had been “hiding”. I was curious of how he would relate to it now that he did not have to stay away from the police anymore. However, he immediately suggested that we would meet up at Drottningtorget, a square right next to the central station, and then go somewhere for a coffee. When I arrived he was already there, waiting at the newsstand. I spotted him from a long distance. As I came closer I noticed that he was wearing new glasses. Chatting we started to walk towards what he described as his favourite café, which turned out to be located well into Nordstan. He preferred the seats in the display window he told me, “so that you can watch the people passing by”, and we sat down there, doing just that. Soon we found ourselves just laughing though. How could we not? The symbolism of it all was overwhelming. From having to constantly look over his shoulder, he was now sitting here, looking at the crowd.*

## NOTES

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