



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

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Refugee Biopolitics

A discourse analysis of the Swedish government's recent shift in the speech on
refugees

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Abstract

The increased movement of people across nation borders of recent years further complicates the relation between nationality and citizenship, thus challenging the nation state's project of controlling its population. One group that perhaps provide the starkest contrast between birth and nation are refugees, who are forced to flee their homes and whose juridical status in practice is ambiguous. The war in Syria has resulted in a sharp increase in the number of refugees, which had already been growing steadily. 2015 saw a record number of people seeking refuge within the European Union and this increase in asylum seekers has sparked an intensive debate within Europe and the pressure on policy makers to act is growing. Sweden received historically large numbers of asylum seekers in 2015 and along with Germany it granted the most asylums in the EU. But in only a few months the Swedish government went from having the most generous European asylum policy per capita to placing itself at the European minimum level in refugee acceptance numbers. The Swedish government has since the tumultuous autumn of 2015 announced the planned deportation of up to 80 000 failed asylum applicants as well as introduced obligatory ID controls on the border, all while maintaining the rhetoric of a *humanitarian superpower*. This study builds on the field of biopolitics, which is focused around the notion that the main function of modern politics is to ensure the tractability and the productivity of the population, and this is done through techniques of power directed at the biological qualities and behaviour of the population itself. The purpose of this study is to analyse the discursive shifts in the Swedish government's response to the refugee reception. To pursue these aims the study is centred on the following questions: "*How did the Swedish government's reasoning around refugee reception shift from autumn of 2015 to spring of 2016?*" and "*How can these discursive shifts of the government be understood from a biopolitical perspective?*" This study is centred on a discourse analysis of a number of the Swedish government's speech acts on refugees in the months spanning the government's shifts in policy. This study has found indications of an underlying biopolitical logic in the language surrounding the discursive shifts of the Swedish government concerning refugees. This study can be read alongside other studies dealing with the discursive aspects of modern politics.

Keywords: Refugee, Sweden, biopolitics, biopower, bare life.

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1 Introduction

The concept of the refugee is probably familiar to most people today. Across the globe people are in increasingly greater numbers forced to flee their homes. The continuing phenomenon of refugees is something that we as a society have grown accustomed to, and to an extent even accepted as a fact of life. The many and complex processes of globalisation increase through, among other things, the mobility of people, goods, capital and information. These processes also in many ways challenge the status and function of the nation state and in particular the state's control over its population (Steger, 2013, p. 132). Refugees and other large-scale movements of people, who simply by moving across nation borders are complicating the relation between nationality and citizenship, can therefore be understood to challenge the nation state's project of controlling the biological qualities of its population, which is what Michel Foucault calls *biopolitics* (Agamben, 2010, p. 137, 142). Foucault means that modern politics' main concern is to ensure the tractability and the productivity of its population, and this is done through techniques of power directed at the biological qualities and behaviour of the population itself (Foucault, 2002, p. 141).

Across the globe today, people are forced to leave everything behind and embark on the perilous journey that is the life of the refugee. The reasons for them to do so are many, and they vary greatly. Some flee poverty and starvation; others flee natural disasters or the consequences of environmental devastation; but what is probably most closely associated with refugees is armed conflict and persecution (UNHCR, 2015). The war in Syria has resulted in an immense number of people being forced to flee their homes. Most Syrian refugees are still on the run inside the country's borders, or have found refuge in neighbouring countries, but even so Europe has not had an intake of refugees this large in a long time. This has sparked an intensified debate within Europe on refugee policy, where the opinions are many and far apart. For instance one side argue that the acceptance or welcoming of refugees is a moral issue and not a political one, while others focus on the economic burden to individual states connected to welcoming refugees (CNBC, 2015, September 18th). On a different side of the debate it is maintained that refugees are a threat to security (The Daily Mail, 2015, September 10th) while yet another side claims that an increase in refugees threatens a national culture (Svenska Dagbladet, 2015, January 4th). The intensified debate has led to an increased pressure on European leaders to act.

This intensified debate climate is perhaps even more prevalent on a national level. During 2015 Sweden saw a considerable increase in refugees and asylum seekers. Following Germany and France, Sweden actually accepted more refugees than most European countries, which is not insignificant considering the modest size of Sweden's population (UNHCR, 2015). This is far from the first time Sweden welcomes large numbers of refugees; on the contrary, Sweden has long enjoyed a reputation of a strong commitment to humanitarian causes, and is even sometimes called a "humanitarian superpower" (Washington Post, 2015, September 11th). As of late however, the perception of Sweden as one of the more refugee friendly European countries is to some degree being challenged. After the number of new arrivals reached historical figures during the autumn of 2015 and pressure grew on the government to act, it did so by implementing the most restrictive set of refugee policies the country had seen in decades. The Swedish government now faces the daunting task of both removing incentives and possibilities for further arrivals, while simultaneously retaining the reputation and self-image of a humanitarian superpower.

1.1 Purpose

In light of the current refugee crisis this study builds on the perspective of biopolitics with the purpose of analysing the discursive shifts in the Swedish government's response to the refugee reception. To pursue these aims the study is centred on the following questions: "*How did the Swedish government's reasoning around refugee reception shift from autumn of 2015 to spring of 2016?*" and "*How can these discursive shifts of the government be understood from a biopolitical perspective?*"

1.2 Relevance

Judging from both media coverage and the greater public debate, refugee policy could barely be more relevant as a political issue today, but to study how the phenomenon of refugees is dealt with through public discourse, and in particular through the speech of the sovereign, could shed light on more than just the current political situation concerning refugees. Its scientific relevance reaches far beyond the issue itself. Migration in general for instance is growing in scope, complexity, and impact. According to the United Nations Populations Fund, 3.3 % of the world's population lived outside their country of origin in 2015 (UNFPA, 2016). The xenophobia and calls for the tightening of borders that this has led to is in many ways part of the context of this study. The discursive shifts of recent months in response to a

growing number of asylum seekers in Europe should be studied in order to better understand the relations of power inherent in the mosaic of complex and contradictory processes that is often called globalisation, as well as the challenges they pose to modern politics. Following below is a continued discussion on biopolitics and the theoretical framework of this paper.

2 Theoretical framework & earlier research

2.1 Biopolitics

The concept of biopolitics was introduced by Michel Foucault who argues that modern politics are characterised by the sovereign's, i.e. the state's, control of the biological aspects of the lives of its subjects. Foucault means that the old power over death, which is to say the right to *cause* death and *let* live and which is still very much associated with the absolute power of the sovereign, is now carefully hidden behind the administration of bodies and the calculated control of life. Thus, Foucault argues, we now live in the era of *biopower*, which has also been one of the contributing factors to the rise of capitalism since this necessitated the controlled introduction of the bodies into the productive apparatus, as well as the biological adjustment of the masses to the economic processes. The evolution of capitalism, and with it modern politics, demanded methods of power that could maximise the forces and capacity of the economy, the population, and of life in general, but also its tractability. Here the relation between knowledge and power – one of the most influential parts of Foucault's conceptual legacy – becomes apparent: the production of knowledge, or indeed the defining of what is knowable, is an exercise of power. Foucault is very much interested in the institutions in society that produce and reproduce knowledge since he argues it is through these institutions that people are disciplined into being *good* citizens. It is through these mechanisms of power that people gradually *learn* what it means to be biological beings, with bodies, hopes of life and health – both individual and collective. Through this understanding of power Foucault reaches the conclusion that the biological today is mirrored in the political. (Foucault, 2002, p. 140-143)

The work of Foucault greatly influenced Giorgio Agamben, whose own work uses some of Foucault's findings as starting points: one concept Agamben builds upon is the shift in the focus of power from a "territorial State" to that of a "State of population"; another is the sophisticated techniques which facilitate a kind of bestialisation of man, separating his mere

biological existence from the political life of the citizen and making it possible both to “protect life and authorize a holocaust”, by which is meant that man’s biological existence itself is the subject of modern politics. (Agamben, 1998, p. 3) According to Giorgio Agamben modern politics have politicised what he calls the *bare life*, which is man’s mere biological existence, a fact since birth. This politicisation means the bare life is included in the mechanisms of the state and becomes the subject of its policies. Because of this Agamben claims that it is only through a biopolitical horizon we can understand and solve the “enigmas” of modern politics. (Agamben, 2010, p. 15-16) If a common biopolitical logic can be found in countries with vastly different rhetoric this could help nuance our understanding of refugee policy in today’s Europe. The refugee is also an excellent subject for analysis in order to better understand the modern sovereignty and the nation state’s biopower since she by “breaking the continuity between man and citizen” reveals the “distance between birth and nation” which in that moment reveals the bare life that is otherwise a presumed secret in modern politics (Agamben, 2010, p. 142-143).

In his book about the bare life (*Homo Sacer*) Agamben pursues three theses statements that are also presented as provisional conclusions. The first says that the original political relation is that of the *state of exception* understood as a zone of non-distinction between inclusion and exclusion. The second statement is that the primary function of power is to produce the bare life as the original political element and as something that should be understood as a threshold between nature and culture. The third thesis statement claims it is not the city (*polis*) but the camp that is the biopolitical paradigm of modern society. (Agamben, 2010, p. 191) As an example Agamben uses the Nazi concentration camps during the Second World War to explain how the camp is produced when the state of exception begins to become the rule (Agamben, 2010, p. 179). It is also in the camp that man can be reduced to his bare existence, the bare life that can be “killed but not sacrificed” (Agamben, 2010, p. 20). Agamben means that in our day the camp (the state of exception as normality) has become the new political paradigm. In a time when birth (the bare life) is increasingly disconnected from the nation state, for instance through processes of globalisation and the increased mobility of people, the camp marks the distance between the two (Agamben, 2010, p. 186).

When citing Foucault’s contributions to the understanding of biopower Agamben notes that the former failed to apply his insights to what Agamben argues to be the “exemplary place of modern biopolitics: the politics of the great totalitarian states of the 20th century” (Agamben,

1998, p. 119). Agamben then argues that Hanna Arendt, who preceded Foucault, managed to discern the link between totalitarian rule and the concentration camp with its particular condition of life. Arendt lacks any biopolitical perspective however and Agamben argues: “only because politics in our age had been entirely transformed into biopolitics was it possible for politics to be constituted as totalitarian politics to a degree hitherto unknown” (Agamben, 1998, p. 120). Thus Agamben combines the work of the two thinkers by making the concentration camp the point of departure for furthering the examination of the biopolitics of modern power.

Agamben also draws on Arendt’s argument about the refugee and human rights, claiming a contradictory process has taken place in which human and civil rights have gone from being closely tied to becoming more and more disconnected in order to protect the bare life. This process has led to the separation now apparent between the humanitarian and the political spheres. This separation is also “the extreme phase of the separation of the rights of man and the rights of the citizen” (Agamben, 1998, p. 133). Despite the efforts of humanitarian organisations to protect the bare life, they cannot but reproduce the isolation of this homo sacer, on which sovereignty is founded. The pure space of exception, which is to say the camp, is the biopolitical paradigm they cannot influence. This, Agamben says, is what explains the failures of the last Century to protect and promote human rights. According to Agamben, Arendt’s claim that rights can only be guaranteed within the nation state system (which is suffering a crisis) has to be taken seriously. The refugee must therefore be understood as the limit concept that separates birth from nation and calls the very foundations of the nation state into question by causing bare life to appear for an instant within that domain. Thus by breaking the continuity between man and citizen the refugee puts “the originary fiction of modern sovereignty” in crisis. (Agamben, 1998, p. 131-134)

Agamben therefore means that these contradictory processes have led to the failure of states and international organisations like the UN in confronting the problem with refugees and the protection of human rights:

“What is essential is that, every time refugees represent not individual cases but – as happens more often today – a mass phenomenon, both these organizations and individual states prove themselves, despite their solemn invocations of the ‘sacred and inalienable’ rights of man, absolutely

incapable of resolving the problem and even of confronting it adequately.”
(Agamben, 1998, p. 133)

2.2 Earlier research

The issue of refugee policy is vast in its spread and research on the issue is extensive, even within the field of biopolitics where many thinkers draw on Agamben’s understanding of the bare life and the camp as the biopolitical paradigm of our time. For instance Zannettino (2012) criticises and builds on Agamben’s conceptual world, discussing the meaning of *race* in the Australian refugee camps. Muller (2004) draws more on a Foucauldian interpretation of biopolitics to discuss the paradox in the emerging pattern of colliding commitments to both globalisation and security.

Another perspective on security in a globalised world using a Foucauldian understanding of biopolitics is that of Nicholas Kiersey (2009 p. 27) who emphasise the importance of the discourses of political economy in understanding the Global War on Terror (GWOT). Kiersey relies on Foucault’s theory of *governmentality*: a distinct governmental rationality, which is to say a way of thinking about government as a superior form of ruling which in turn reproduces the need for government in the minds of both the rulers and the ruled (Kiersley, 2009, p. 30; Li, 2007, p. 12). Kiersey argues that Political Economy was a central pillar in the birth of biopolitics and the capitalist globalisation is an emergent logic of government within this context. By applying the theories of biopolitics and governmentality on a global level Kiersey then argues that the liberal discourse necessitates the securitisation of global life which in turn legitimise the GWOT. Kiersey thus claims economic rule and security do not need to be understood in opposition to one another, as they through the perspective of biopolitics and governmentality can be understood more as two sides of the same. (Kiersey, 2009, p. 27-28, 46-47)

These studies show the scope and potential of biopolitics in helping to understand the challenges of modern society and it also shows its compelling power to illuminate current political issues. With a historically severe global refugee situation it is particularly interesting to focus our gaze right here, to contemplate what it might imply for the nation state as an institution, as well as for the millions of people on the run.

Maggie Ibrahim (2005) too writes about speech acts in the West concerning refugees, but rather than the biopolitical aspect of the refugee's embodiment of bare life, Ibrahim's focus is instead on the securitisation of migration. With securitisation is meant that society *speaks* security by defining what is to be seen as a threat. This understanding of how perceptions of threat and security are produced and articulated derives from a Foucauldian understanding of power. According to Foucault the many and different power relations that constitute the social body of any society cannot exist outside of discourse.

“There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth...We are subject to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth.”

(Foucault, 1980, p. 93)

This is the power-knowledge nexus: the creation of a truth (or knowledge) through a discourse is an exercise in power. Ibrahim uses this understanding of the relation between knowledge and power to examine the securitisation of migration as a discourse through which relations of power are exercised. Ibrahim sees the processes of securitisation of migration in the west as the most modern form of racism, marking a shift from notions of biological superiority to a racism that excludes on the basis of cultural differences. Ibrahim argues that this securitisation reactualises a racist discourse. (Ibrahim, 2005, p. 164)

It is a compelling way of understanding a modern western discourse on refugees and migration policy that highlight the inherent racism in these relations of power. The focus on securitising speech acts enables the production of the discourse to be studied on many levels of society, not just with the sovereign.

2.3 Theoretical framework

Although securitisation theory successfully makes visible power relations inherent in speech about refugees a biopolitical approach will help nuance this understanding even further. For instance a biopolitical approach can help explain even the speech that is not producing or reproducing the perception of refugees as a threat. Agamben's biopolitics provide a context within which all speech on refugees operates under the same logic, whether it speaks security

or not. Thus an analysis of the biopolitics in the speech of the sovereign can be read alongside other interpretations of western migration policy and the phenomenon of the refugee.

An analysis of the biopolitical discursive practices of the sovereign such as this can contribute to our understanding of the current state of the nation state. It might not necessarily provide us with the whole picture however, which is why this study and the points that it makes should be viewed *along with* other research on the subject, and not be understood as an effort to replace it.

The epistemological standpoint that guides the writing of this thesis is that of critical realism and the world as we perceive it is understood as socially constructed while at the same time there is the acknowledgement of a reality existing beyond language and our understanding (Borgström & Boréus, 2012, p. 19). Theoretically the paper draws heavily upon Giorgio Agamben's work on biopolitics as the analysis uses the theory of exception and exclusion in the search for the production or reproduction of bare life in the speech of the sovereign. Although much of Agamben's work on sovereignty is focused on the physical body of the autocratic ruler, the sovereign is in this study understood as the government of the state. The form of rule is different, yet the same paradox still exists within sovereignty since it is still the government who decides on the state of exception. "The sovereign, having the legal power to suspend the validity of the law, legally places himself outside the law" (Agamben, 1998, p. 15). Another concept borrowed from Agamben is the notion of the refugee as a limit concept marking the moment of exclusion/inclusion as well as exposing the bare life that is of such importance to the politics of the modern state. The study does however also draw on Foucault and the power-knowledge nexus in many ways informs the analysis. The study is also inspired by Foucault's understanding of biopower, in abandoning the models of analysis exclusively based on law and rights and instead focusing on speech and other discursive practices. Foucault's concept of governmentality too is used to understand how the need for government is reproduced through discourse – in this case through the speech of the government itself. Kiersey's scaling of the theories of governmentality and biopolitics, as well as claiming their indistinction from Political Economy, can be used to widen the scope and potential of the findings of this study.

3 Methodology

Methodologically this study relies heavily on hermeneutics, which means the analysis is centred on interpreting meaning out of the studied texts. This calls for transparency from the researcher. Transparency arguably is of value to all scientific work, but perhaps never as important as when dealing with the subjective interpretations of texts. In order to bring some transparency to the methodological conditions of this study, it follows an introductory discussion below on the sample criteria for the material, as well as a presentation of the material itself. This is followed by a further discussion on the methodology of hermeneutics and its benefits and implications.

3.1 Material

The material for this analysis of discursive practices dealing with refugee policy will be gathered from speeches and texts from representatives of the Swedish government. The evaluation criteria for the selection of these texts were based on medial coverage and focuses on three individuals chosen on account of their ranking within the Swedish government, as well as their involvement in refugee policy. The first individual of whose speech acts on refugees are subject for this study is, rather understandably, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven who has been very active during the last 12 months in advocating for reforming European refugee policy. The Prime Minister is also head of government, which makes him highly relevant when studying the discursive practices of the sovereign. The second person whose actions regarding refugee policy are the subject of analysis is Minister for Justice and Migration, Morgan Johansson, whose relevance for this study comes of both the nature of his office and his presence in the media. For the same reasons as listed above the third and last person whose speech acts on refugees are of interest for this study is the Minister for Home Affairs, Anders Ygeman. Apart from the statements and texts from these individuals, the analysis has also focused on the media's interpretation of said speech acts in order to provide better insight into how the words and actions of the sovereign are being received by the general public.

Studying the discursive practices surrounding Swedish refugee policy is difficult without also at times considering the European context, which is as complex as it is decisive for the national climate. To better understand this context within a biopolitical horizon more research

needs to be done. For instance a comparative analysis of the discursive practices of different European governments could prove helpful in examining whether a common underlying biopolitical logic could be found to guide refugee policy, beneath the surface of otherwise different rhetoric and juridical practice. This study however focuses on only one of these governments, in order to contribute to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of the refugee by studying (through the prism of biopolitics) how the sovereign deals with the refugee.

This study is in no way claiming to have found a European archetype in Sweden, nor is it trying to make generalising conclusions about European refugee policy. However, when studying the issue of refugee policy, and especially in relation to biopower, Sweden is an interesting case. Known for relatively generous policies on accepting refugees and an overall strong commitment to social welfare, Sweden has enjoyed a reputation of being a “humanitarian superpower”. Following the large increase in numbers of refugees arriving in Sweden during the autumn of 2015 however, the Swedish government has introduced a far more restrictive set of policies regarding the welcoming of new refugees. (Washington Post, 2015, December 30) Sweden’s self image is therefore in some ways being challenged, and studying the ways in which the sovereign is dealing with this challenge is an excellent lead in to also studying biopower at work in modern politics. From this perspective the last 12 months is an interesting window of time in which to study how the Swedish sovereign is dealing with its refugee situation on a discursive level. For instance a situation has developed where Sweden is on the one hand moving towards a more restrictive set of refugee policies, while at the same time trying to distance itself through speech from countries associated with exactly these restrictive kinds of measures – countries like Hungary and Denmark (Al Jazeera, 2015, October 17; Washington Post, 2015, September 11).

3.1.1 The texts

The texts chosen for this study consists of a speech made by Prime Minister Löfven on the importance of opening the borders to people on the run from armed conflict; another speech by Löfven on May the 1st 2016; a number of TV appearances on the Swedish public broadcasting service SVT by Löfven, Johansson, and Ygeman respectively, both leading up to, and following the government’s change of policy. The texts were chosen partly because of the amount of attention they received in the media following their publication. They were however also chosen on account of the fact that each individual text respectively deals with an

important moment in the evolution of the Swedish refugee policy of recent months. All texts are originally in Swedish and have therefore been translated by me personally. The translation of a text from one language to another opens up for the possibility of some degree of distortion of the message, but the fact that this study uses a hermeneutic methodology means that since it is I, the interpreter, who have translated the texts, this process can be understood simply as part of the interpretation process.

3.2 Method of analysis

Inspired by the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, this study understands the concept of discourse as including all social phenomenon and not just language itself (Bergström & Boréus, 2012, p. 364). Although the analysis is focused on acts of speech, this definition of discourse informs the interpretation of that speech as part of a wider set of discursive practices. Non-lingual practices, such as the deportation of failed asylum applicants, are thus understood as discourse constituting practices and a part of the biopolitical logic.

To examine the discursive practices dealing with refugees, in relation to biopolitics, this paper builds on a form of discourse analysis. Although there are different schools of thought on what constitutes a discourse analysis, this study aims to make visible relations of power (in this case biopower) and operates on the assumption that there is an inherent on-going conflict of values within language (Bergström & Boréus, 2012, p. 391). The analysis of this paper will aim to identify speech acts and other discursive practices within the material that can be understood as biopolitics. Since the purpose of this paper is to analyse the speech of the sovereign the objective of the discourse analysis will also be to identify reoccurring themes that enable this analysis. To meet the purpose of this study it is important to identify the dominant discourses on refugees, i.e. how refugees are depicted in relation to the rest of the population (are refugees perceived as security threat, an economic burden, or an asset to society etc.). Another important part of the analysis is to examine how the discourse of human rights is manifested in relation to refugees. What the examined texts say of what actually is to be done about the current refugee situation is of course highly relevant to the analysis, but so too that which remains implicit but deals with the above issues.

In order to identify the border concepts of biopolitics within the speech of the sovereign the analysis borrows from Agamben's own conceptual world: the analysis aims to show how for instance the *state of exception* is laid bare in the sovereign's dealings with refugees, or how these practices expose the *bare life* of the refugee. For this purpose the analysis will examine the *logics of equivalence* within the discursive practices, which is to say, how *signs* or *elements* (e.g. 'refugee', 'human rights', or 'welfare') are given meaning through a system of distinctions. A discourse then can only be understood in opposition to certain signs and elements: the welfare state is thus set against elements like 'poverty' or 'privatisation' but there are also elements to which the welfare state discourse have a positive relation, such as 'citizen', 'nation', and 'tax payer'. An element that plays a particularly important role within a discourse is called a *node* and can be linked to the other signs within the discourse. (Borgström & Boréus, 2012, p. 367) A particularly relevant node for this analysis is 'refugee' since it is through the refugee that this study hopes to expose the biopolitics of the sovereign.

The constructivist approach of this study towards language and the subjective nature of the production of meaning may earn some criticism from a more empiricist camp on the basis of intersubjectivity. But these requirements on reliability can still be met through this approach by transparency regarding the conceptual basis of the analysis, as well as its application. (Borgström & Boreus, 2012, p. 406)

3.2.1 *Hermeneutics*

Furthermore the analysis derives from a methodologically collectivistic approach rather than an individualistic one, and therefore builds on the assumption that social phenomenon and institutions form the actions, attitudes, and values of the individual. Thus the actions of the individual can only be understood within its social context (Gilje & Grimen, 2007, p. 27-29). Consequently, from the biopolitical perspective that this study builds upon, it is the structures of biopower surrounding individuals that form their behaviour. Knowing this it might seem contradictory to put so much stock into a number of individual acts of speech, but it is in fact through these individual speech acts of the sovereign that I hope to shed light on the power structures that the speech is reproducing.

The hermeneutical basis of this study means most of the work is about interpretation and finding meaning in the studied material. In practice this method commands a great deal of transparency from the interpreter, and it is essential to remain critical of ones own prejudice

and preunderstanding which undeniably will effect the study and its results (Grimen & Gilje, 2007, p. 179). In this study the analysed texts even include their own interpretations of the world, which means it is a question of what Anthony Giddens calls *double hermeneutics* where an already existing interpretations is itself interpreted. As such these interpretations themselves cannot be disregarded but must be included in the analysis (Grimen & Gilje, 2007, p. 177).

3.2.1.1 The role of the researcher

Using hermeneutic methods of analysis means I, the researcher, need to be as transparent in my interpretation work as possible. What this means in practice is that any bias or preunderstanding of mine that can affect the interpretations of the analysed texts need to be confronted. Some biases are easy to identify, although not necessarily any easier to escape: I am for instance a student of Global Studies; I am also a white young man, living in Sweden, one of the wealthiest countries in the world. The list of what constitutes a bias can be made very long indeed, and some are not as easily defined, partly because they do not belong to the predefined categories we are used to (gender, age, occupation, sexuality, ethnicity etc.). In the case of this study, the bias of both researcher and reader is best dealt with by firmly grounding the analysis, and subsequent conclusions, within the theoretical framework.

3.2.2 Alternative methods

An alternative method could be a quantitative comparison of the welcoming of refugees in Europe based on national data on the asylum process to discern how it differs within Europe in practice. A study of that kind would contribute to a comprehensive comparison of how the reception of refugees differs procedurally within Europe, but it does little to expose the underlying structures and discourses. Another potential method would be an interview study to map and compare attitudes concerning refugee policy and from this study draw conclusions about discursive practices in other levels of society than the top levels of the state apparatus. This would surely deepen our understanding of European discourses on refugees but it is less applicable for studying the biopolitical techniques and practices of the sovereign. As mentioned before a comparative study between different European governments could also prove helpful – in examining the possibility of common trends, or maybe even an underlying common (biopolitical) logic. But before making this kind of comparisons we must first understand the sovereign's speech itself, from the perspective of biopolitics, which is why this study is focused on one European government and not several.

4 Results

The texts chosen for this study will now be presented in the following order: first up is Prime Minister Löfven's speech in early September of 2015 which calling for European solidarity in welcoming refugees and thus aiding the humanitarian crisis originating from the war in Syria; the second text is an interview with Löfven from March the following year where the language has changed focus to concepts like order, security, and welfare; next are two TV appearances by Morgan Johansson that among other things illustrate the government's shift on the issue of discouraging new asylum seekers (one appearance is from August 2015 and the other is from November the same year); next are two TV appearances by Anders Ygeman from January 2016 and February 2016 respectively, where he explains new refugee policy measures, namely the deportation of failed asylum seekers and the strengthening of territorial borders, as well as the rationale behind them; the last text is the section of Löfven's speech on May the 1st 2015 dealing with refugee policy, which read in contrast to his speech in September the previous year can further illustrate the government's shift in rhetoric.

4.1 "My Europe does not build walls"

On the 6th of September 2015, at a manifestation in Stockholm for welcoming asylum seekers, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven made a speech (Socialdemokraterna, 2015) that received significant coverage in Swedish media. The speech was made in the aftermath of the publishing of the photograph of a young Syrian boy, who had been washed up dead on a beach in Turkey. This photo was widely circulated in western media, along with calls upon European leaders to act. The context of Löfven's speech on the 6th of September 2015 is therefore, as we shall see, lightly different from the other texts. It was given at a moment in time when public opinion in the west was arguably turning in favour of a more generous set of refugee policies. (The Guardian, 2016, December 31st) The demonstration itself, which was inspired by similar initiatives in Germany and Austria, and later replicated in other cities across Sweden, was organised by the youth wings of all the parliamentary parties, except for the Sweden Democrats – the right-wing anti-immigration party (Sveriges Radio, 2015 September 6th).

The time following the publication of the photo of the dead boy marked a short moment of empathy and compassion in the west, with calls for solidarity with fellow human beings

fleeing a terrible war. Considering the public mood at the time, the Prime Minister's speech calling for stronger action on the part of Europe as a whole could hardly be seen as controversial. It is however interesting to note the change in tone and message of the speech of the Swedish government in the following months, as well as observing what remains constant in this speech.

Löfven starts his speech by observing that millions of people are on the run from war and terror, adding that these are "people like you and me with dreams and hopes, but who are forced to run from bombs with their children in their arms" [author's translation]. Löfven then reflects on the perilous journey these people have to make in order to reach safety, stating his own grief for the young boy who was washed ashore, his grief for other children like him, and for the boy's relatives, even his grief for mankind "when this happens in front of our eyes" [author's translation].

This sorrow should however be turned into a force of action according to the Prime Minister. Sweden is to continue to do its part but it is up to Europe as a whole to do more for the refugees. Löfven mentions how he will meet with German chancellor Angela Merkel the following week to discuss a plan for how Europe should meet the international refugee crisis. Löfven then calls for a mandatory and permanent redistributive system in order to share the welcoming of refugees evenly within Europe. The EU, Löfven says, "must drastically increase its acceptance of resettlement refugees (quota refugees, authors note) and Sweden, we shall do our part of that undertaking" [author's translation].

Löfven criticises the European project for shutting people out who are on the run, without legal paths to asylum. The speech then continues the call for a stronger European commitment to accepting refugees, stating that the EU members have a shared responsibility, originating in the shared experiences of World War II. After the Cold War ended, Löfven claims that the collaboration of the European Union is what united Europe: "We said 'never again walls to discriminate one human being from another'" [author's translation]. Following this line of thought Löfven then says:

"My Europe accepts people who run from war, in solidarity and collectively. My Europe does not build walls, we help each other when the need is great." [Author's translation]

Claiming that Sweden and Germany cannot take on the large number of refugees themselves, but all EU members must come together, the Prime Minister then goes on to say:

“Now it is time for Europe to stand up for the inviolable worth and rights of man, which in our declarations we have vowed to protect.” [Author’s translation]

Löfven then focuses back on Sweden, using a young girl and her father who are helping out at a local refugee centre as an example, and praises the role of civil society in welcoming refugees and helping them settle into the Swedish society. Löfven then goes on however, to claim that the taking on of refugees could never be a task for lone individuals or organisations, but that it is a “national task” that must be taken on “as a nation”:

“Sweden’s welcoming of refugees is all of Sweden’s responsibility.”
[Author’s translation]

Following this Löfven presents the measures taken by the government: all municipalities must welcome refugees and no one shall be able to evade this responsibility; additional funding will be provided to the municipalities that welcome refugees. This was followed the statement echoing a common notion in mainstream Swedish migration policy:

“Thus that which is now a strain, will ultimately be an asset to Sweden.”
[Author’s translation]

Löfven ended the speech by welcoming the fact that almost all parliamentary parties were represented, and that now was a time to reach across the aisle to find solutions.

4.2 Order, security, and welfare

In the months following the Prime Minister’s speech a lot of things happened in Sweden and the world that prompted the Swedish government to alter their tone and focus when addressing the issue of refugee policy. In four short months Sweden received record numbers of refugees, putting a strain on the welfare state. There were also a number of arson attacks

directed at buildings that were earmarked for housing the growing number of refugees. During this time the Swedish government introduced a number of measures distancing practice from the speech Löfven held in early September that year when he claimed that his “Europe does not build walls”. Among other policy changes Sweden implemented mandatory ID-controls at the border. Sweden also lowered its ambitions concerning asylum numbers to match the European minimum. (Sveriges Television, 2016)

4.2.1 *Refugees and the welfare state*

In an interview on Swedish public service television (SVT) that aired the 13th of March (Sveriges Television, 2016), Prime Minister Löfven defended the actions taken by the government in the autumn of 2015 to curb the number of new asylum seekers. The Prime Minister’s disappointment with other member states of the EU is a recurring theme in this text as well. A new argument however, that reoccurs also in the texts below, focuses on the sheer numbers of arriving refugees in 2015, arguing that those numbers (163 000 in 2015) cannot be sustained if the government’s commitment to a strong welfare state is also to be upheld. A few months ago the government and the Social Democrats would issue harsh criticism against anyone referring to refugees in terms of *volume*, meaning that was using a “dehumanising” language. When asked by the interviewer why that was when now the government too was talking numbers, Löfven answers by claiming that the earlier discussion was completely different and hailed from a completely different situation. Löfven’s justification for talking numbers in relation to refugee policy is that although the asylum right must be defended, the reception of asylum seekers must be managed in a “sustainable way” such that the social-welfare can still be guaranteed:

“I stand up for those who come [to Sweden], but also for those already living here. There must be working welfare for all and the rest of the EU must take their responsibility.” [Author’s translation]

Behind this notion (apart from that of a shared European responsibility) is the idea that the government should be capable of providing the same basic assistance and support to all new arrivals. Another idea that is sometimes found within the discourse of Swedish social democracy is the idea that immigration is inherently (in the long run) a good thing for the country. This is evident when Löfven addresses the worries and fears felt by parts of the population in relation to the accepting of refugees, the three main concerns of which are

housing shortages, unemployment, and segregation. Löfven says he knows their worry, which he also believes is partly due to some of the consequences of a globalised economy, but rejects the notion that the simple fact that people come to Sweden should be a problem in and of itself:

“Our population is growing older and we need able-bodied immigration to uphold the welfare system. This is partly what we build our theory upon, apart from the purely humanitarian aspect...Over time we need more people.” [Author’s translation]

This should be understood as an implied criticism of the anti-immigration Sweden Democrats, whose rhetoric the government have now been criticised for adopting when they talk of not being capable of taking on any more arrivals.

Lastly, the interviewer points to supposable disagreements within the government, citing Minister of Justice and Migration, Morgan Johansson, as well as Minister of Education, Gustav Fridolin. They both state a limit for how many refugees Sweden can receive in 2016 but they have given different numbers. While Johansson claims 70 000 is the limit for what Sweden can take, Fridolin argues it is closer to 150 000. Löfven says there are no such figures and that the prognosis of the migration agency is in no way reliable.

“My message is that we will not go back to the situation we had last autumn. We must have a sustainable reception [of refugees] that will guarantee a working welfare system for everyone. Now we have implemented ID-checks. We have introduced inner border controls. We are in the process of rewriting Sweden’s Aliens Act to put us level with the EU-minimum...It has to do with the capacity [to receive refugees]. Those who are granted asylum should have a path into society. Vi will not go back to a situation where we cannot stand for order. It is order, it is security, and it is a functioning welfare system.” [Author’s translation]

4.3 Morgan Johansson

Minister for Justice and Migration, Morgan Johansson, is in the capacity of his office understandably often involved with explaining the government's policy on issues concerning refugees and migration. The first text of his to be analysed is from late summer 2015, before the number of refugees had reached what the government perceived as a critical level. The focus back then was not so much on Sweden's reception capacity in terms of numbers and volume, but more on juggling on the one hand a commitment to aiding in a humanitarian crisis, and on the other a rising anti-immigrant sentiment within Swedish society. The second text is from late autumn 2015 when the government was in the middle of transforming their policy on asylums and migration, making it more restrictive.

4.3.1 *Expanding the government's "suit"*

Johansson appeared on SVT for an interview on the 30th of August (Sveriges Television, 2015), a week prior to the Prime Minister's speech of his Europe not building walls, to discuss what measures the Swedish government was taking when it was facing the on-going refugee crisis. The context of the interview was, apart from the growing refugee crisis and the pressure it put on the government, an uncertain parliamentary situation since the Sweden Democrats had gained ground on the mainstream parties on both sides of the aisle, by running on a platform of anti immigration policies. In the summer of 2015 however, the Sweden Democrats were not the only party calling for less immigration: close to all opposition parties to the right of the sitting government were at this time calling for a more restrictive refugee policy.

When asked what the government is doing about the situation, a new measure Johansson names is that the government is "expanding our own refugee centres in order to make the state's 'suit' larger, so to speak" [author's translation]. The government is also, according to Johansson, putting more money into the education of the new arrivals who Johansson says often have a fairly good education:

"Around one third of those coming from Syria have a higher education. They are doctors, teachers, nurses, and engineers. Our main strategy right now is for those who come here to learn Swedish, so that they then can take

part in the Swedish labour market. Because that is a natural part of Sweden – that people are taking part in building our country.” [Author’s translation]

Besides the importance of quickly getting the large number of new arrivals into the workforce, Johansson also stresses the importance of all municipalities taking their responsibility regarding the welcoming of refugees. Johansson means that this cannot be the responsibility of a few cities but that all municipalities need to do their share. This needs to be enforced by law says Johansson, but this is made difficult by the parliamentary situation necessitating an agreement across party lines. Making all municipalities take their responsibility Johansson says is the government’s highest priority.

While some parties in the opposition want to introduce temporary asylums for a transitional period of time Johansson argues that this would hurt the integration process and that the current order is strengthening integration since a permanent asylum lends a sense of security to people:

“As I said I do not believe it would be of much significance as to how many people come to Sweden. People are fleeing war, and they do so [regardless of asylum regulations].” [Author’s translation]

Johansson goes on to discredit the effort by politicians, both in other European countries and in other parties in Sweden, through different means discourage refugees to seek asylum in Sweden, claiming it is an “illusion to think we can ‘ease the pressure’ by pushing the responsibility onto one another” [author’s translation]. Johansson means this is what is happening in Europe, claiming that the EU lacks a strong leadership on the issue enabling European countries to shift responsibility between each other. Johansson points to the parallel between the municipalities sharing responsibility on one hand, and the member states of the EU sharing asylum seekers evenly on the other, stating that what is needed in both cases is an enforced mechanism of redistribution. A commonly held belief in Sweden in the summer of 2015 was that the burden of the refugee crisis in Europe was mainly shared between Sweden and Germany, a situation Johansson calls unsustainable while calling for Europe to come together in solidarity.

“We have to see that what we have here is a humanitarian crisis of proportions we have not seen in a long, long time. Millions of people are on the run. To then talk about easing the pressure by making sure other countries take on the responsibility instead and by scaring off [the asylum seekers] from our own countries is the wrong way to go. The right way to go is instead to try to get more European countries in total to take their responsibility. Because this we will have to live with as long as there is war in Syria.” [Author’s translation]

The interview is ended with Johansson trying to rationalise the anti-immigrant tendencies within Sweden. He makes another comparison with Germany, a country that took on an even greater number of refugees in 2015 but does not have an anti-immigrant party in parliament. Johansson claims this is partly to do with Germany’s history, which makes the electorate sensitive to fascistic rhetoric and ideas. But the main reason according to Johansson is unemployment figures. He cites Germany’s long sustained numbers of 4-5 % and arguing that it is harder for racist populist parties to pit different groups of society against each other when there is a sound development of the labour market. In order to turn public opinion on immigration, Johansson says Sweden first needs to “take care of the jobs, that is our most important task” [author’s translation].

4.3.2 There is not enough space

In a few short months, Johansson, along with the rest of the government, had changed his rhetoric on refugee policy significantly. On the 5th of November 2015 when interviewed for SVT, Johansson made a number of remarks with the aim of discouraging refugees who were planning on coming to Sweden claiming that there is not enough space (Sveriges Television, 2015).

“Sweden is in a situation where we can no longer guarantee housing for new arrivals...Sweden has in a very short period of time taken on a very large number of refugees, more per capita than any other country has been able to manage, but we too have our limits” [Author’s translation]

It is here worth remembering Johansson's remarks in the previous text, from earlier the same year. Especially those comments regarding the merits of trying to discourage refugees from seeking refuge in Sweden.

Johansson says asylum seekers in Germany for instance, with access to housing but who are considering going to Sweden, should be aware they could be met upon arrival with the notice that there is no room for them. When asked if Sweden has reached the "limit for how many refugees it can handle" Johansson says Sweden is capable of accepting large numbers of refugees and is doing so, but simultaneously implies that there is a limit to how many Sweden can take on in this short a time frame:

"We cannot guarantee housing. Either you [find housing] yourself, or you will have to leave on the returning boat – to Germany, or Denmark, or wherever you came from." [Author's translation]

4.4 Anders Ygeman

The Minister for Home Affairs, Anders Ygeman, has appeared in Swedish media many times since summer and autumn of 2015, addressing the issue of refugee policy, as well as other issues relating to immigration and integration. The texts chosen for this analysis consists of two TV news appearances, both on the public broadcasting service SVT and both from the months following the large increase of asylum seekers in the autumn of 2015.

4.4.1 80 000 asylum seekers to be deported

On the 27th of January 2016 the government announced a number of new measures to be taken in order to enforce the deportation of those asylum seekers whose applications have been denied. Anders Ygeman was interviewed for SVT, explaining the new measures (Sveriges Television, 2016).

Ygeman begins by citing the high numbers of asylum seekers in recent months, meaning it was Sweden's largest reception of refugees in modern times. By the Swedish migration agency's own estimates approximately half of all applicants were granted asylum, meaning the other half "will have to return". Ygeman estimates this will affect between 60 000 and 80 000 asylum seekers in the next few years. According to Ygeman the new measures are

focused primarily on motivating and helping people return voluntarily, but adds that it is ultimately up to “the police and the correctional system to guarantee that people return” [author’s translation] if they do not leave Sweden voluntarily. Ygeman mentions chartered airplanes as a cost effective way of getting more people to the same place and that this could be done in cooperation with other EU member states, or with the help of Frontex (the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union).

Discussing the logistics of the challenge of deporting up to 80 000 people in only a few years time, Ygeman stresses the governments focus on motivating a voluntary return. One way in which asylum seekers are to be incentivised to leave Sweden Ygeman says is by simply paying them. He is aware however that this might not be enough to make all 80 000 failed applicants return voluntarily:

“There is a considerable risk [of failed applicants staying in Sweden] and therefore we must make it as difficult as possible; both logistically, when people receive notice that they are not allowed to stay; but we must also strike against the employers who abuse the illegal workforce and the vulnerable position people are in, in order to make it as unprofitable as possible for people to remain in Sweden illegally.” [Author’s translation]

4.4.2 European border forces

A few weeks later, on the 11th of February, Ygeman appeared in a short news segment on SVT to explain the Swedish government’s stance on borders within the EU, as well as the EU’s external border (Sveriges Television, 2016). In the wake of the dramatic last four months of 2015, as well as what the government perceived as a lack of solidarity with the EU and a failure of most member states to share the responsibility, Sweden now believes it should be possible to “use forceful measures in order to restore the EU’s external border, including measures that go against the will of a member state” [author’s translation]. Ygeman explains that the Swedish government is prepared to contribute experts and border control personnel for this enterprise. Sweden, according to Ygeman, is also willing to fight hard for the implementation of the redistribution of refugees within the EU that has already been decided upon but is not yet in place. Ygeman ends his remarks by claiming that, “redistribution is part of creating a functioning external border” [author’s translation].

4.5 International Workers' Day 2016

On May 1st 2016, in connection with the Labour Day parade in Gothenburg, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven gave another speech (Socialdemokraterna, 2016), customary of the leader of the social democratic party. The speech touched on many subjects and policy areas, but it is the parts concerning refugee policy that are of particular interest to this analysis. As we have seen the tone and the focus of the government's speech on refugees has shifted somewhat since September 2015. Löfven's remarks on May 1st 2016 follow this trend.

After noting that the world is seeing the largest refugee crisis since the World War II, Löfven goes on to pursue a line of arguments that were not being heard on the 6th of September 2015 when the focus was on the welcoming of vast numbers of refugees in Sweden. Instead the Prime Minister describes what is to be done about the situation in the countries and regions that people were fleeing from, namely the war in Syria and Iraq. Löfven cites what Sweden is currently doing: 1,7 million Swedish Kronor over five years in aid to Syria and neighbouring countries; aiding in the frail peace process; and lastly, Sweden's commitment to the coalition forces fighting ISIS (IS, Daesh), as well as combatting terrorism in Europe and Sweden. Thus the focus has shifted from aiding refugees upon arrival and welcoming new members into the Swedish society, to battling the causes of their flight, thus decreasing the incentives for people to come to Sweden and Europe in the first place:

“[The refugee crisis] calls for a refugee policy that reaches outside the borders of Sweden, with a brave foreign policy, with a progressive development cooperation, and with comprehensive humanitarian aid – so that people are not forced to flee for their lives.” [Author's translation]

Löfven then brings the issue back to Europe and Sweden however, claiming it is also a “European crisis of responsibility” and that when Sweden abandoned its relatively generous refugee policy in autumn the previous year it was because the EU forced their hand by failing to act in solidarity, creating an “unsustainable situation” in Sweden. Löfven then claims the government's actions to decrease the number of asylum seekers in Sweden and distribute the numbers more evenly within the EU has led to results. The recurring theme throughout the

refugee section of the speech is that it is an international task that Sweden cannot handle on its own.

In Sweden, the Prime Minister says the large number of new arrivals presents a number of challenges, alluding to the heated debate on culture and tradition, unemployment, and housing shortages. Löfven calls on Sweden to come together and deal with these challenges, partly by talking about “the values and the century long struggle that made Sweden into an open country, with a strong democracy, and one of the world’s most equal societies” [author’s translation]. At the same time Löfven says we have to “fight the growing racism and discrimination” that Sweden and Europe has seen. To take on these challenges Löfven claims will take hard work and difficult prioritisations.

Not unlike the speech at the demonstration for welcoming refugees on the 6th of September 2015 the Prime Minister ends the section of the speech by calling for solidarity, and for cooperation across party lines.

5 Analysis

As we have seen the Swedish government’s rhetoric and policy on the subject of refugees has changed somewhat since late August - early September 2015. But although these shifts and the rationale that surrounds them are very interesting and highly relevant to the analysis, that which has not changed is just as interesting, and might as we shall see do more to reveal an underlying biopolitical logic within the speech of the sovereign. Here it may be prudent with a reminder of the questions that make out the basis of this analysis: *“How did the Swedish government’s reasoning around refugee reception shift from autumn of 2015 to spring of 2016?”* and *“How can these discursive shifts of the government be understood from a biopolitical perspective?”*

5.1 The speech of the sovereign

The government’s speech from those last weeks of summer in 2015 focus on solidarity and the duty we all share as human beings to help those in need. Löfven talks about the welcoming of refugees being a “national” task for all of Sweden to handle “as a nation”, while Johansson cites measures to expand the government’s “suit” in order to facilitate the

growing number of new arrivals. They both stress the urgency with which Europe must come together behind this cause: much in the same way that the burden of accepting new arrivals was to be shared evenly between all Swedish municipalities, the Swedish government proposed an enforceable redistribution policy among the EU member states. The two speeches also argued for the long-term benefits of taking on refugees: Johansson for instance implied that capitalising on the refugee situation by quickly introducing new arrivals to the workforce is an essential part of Swedish refugee policy, as contributing to building society, i.e. growing the economy, is a “natural part of Sweden”. Löfven echoed this notion by claiming that the welcoming of refugees, although a strain at first, “will ultimately be an asset to Sweden” and a generous refugee policy can thus be understood as an investment in the future economy of the country.

Let us examine the relations of biopower inherent in these early statements, for they will keep appearing throughout the evolution of the government’s speech that is here analysed, albeit in different guise. Firstly, the talk of the “national task” of accepting refugees, or that of a shared European responsibility, suggests a language of solidarity, with the aim of promoting a more even distribution of the reception and integration of refugees. With the help of the theories of Foucault this use of language speaking of a national or European task, facilitated by a sense of solidarity, can be read as code for the disciplining techniques with which new arrivals (after being granted asylum) can learn the desirable qualities of a *good* citizen and thus become part of the biological body that is the population (Foucault, 2002, p. 141). This can also, with a reading of Agamben, be understood to be the mechanisms through which bare life is controlled, cared for and protected, and sometimes killed (Agamben, 1998, p. 8).

Johansson’s remarks about teaching asylum seekers Swedish as a fast track in to the workforce alludes to the ambition of literally *schooling* refugees into productive members of the societal body that can contribute to the growth of the national economy. Indeed the whole integration process can be view in this light: as the project of creating entirely new biopolitical subjects that can be controlled through the mechanisms and institutions of biopower. (Foucault, 2002, p. 141-143)

Foucault’s observation that we have shifted from a “territorial State” to a “State of population” seems applicable, and especially so in Johansson’s reference to the government’s “suit” being expanded upon in order to make room for new potential members of society

(Agamben, 1998, p. 3). Under the logic of the territorial state this would not make much sense but within the logic of biopolitics and a state of population, the new arrivals can learn to become useful biopolitical subjects and are not necessarily violating the state's territorial integrity upon arrival, this being the very *raison d'être* of the territorial state. With this is not necessarily meant that accepting refugees is a defining quality of biopolitics, but rather that the mechanisms of biopower that seeks to discipline docile bodies fit for the productive apparatus can be discerned from the government's speech on refugees who are referred to as *assets* who will help build Sweden. (Foucault, 2002, p. 143; Agamben, 1998, p. 3)

5.1.1 Change of heart or the true colours revealed?

In a few short months the government's policies changed and the rhetorical focus can be understood to have shifted from that of solidarity and human rights, to efforts of blaming neighbouring countries and discouraging new asylum seekers. The government is however still defending the notion that immigration of "able-bodied" people (emphasis added) is inherently good for Sweden since the population is aging which means the part of the population still fit for work is proportionately shrinking and thus putting a strain on the welfare system. This is another example of how we by applying Agamben's understanding of biopolitics can discern the sovereign's interest in the bodies of its subjects, the control of which is essential for guaranteeing further growth. It is also through the control of this bare life, although it remains hidden for the most part, that the relations of biopower can be reproduced. (Agamben, 1998, p. 8)

In the end of summer 2015 the Swedish government were claiming that the scare tactics and the efforts to discourage new asylum seekers that could be observed in other European countries, like Hungary or Denmark, were "the wrong way to go" and that it was an "illusion" to think that these measures would bear any significant results as the people who were fleeing war and terror would do so regardless of asylum policy in the west. Later the same year the government was employing just those tactics in order to decrease the number of asylum seekers. The government was now saying that there was not enough room and that refugees could expect to be sent back on the returning boat. By 2016 the government had started to shift the focus of the conversation as well as its resources to aid in the conflict from which most of these refugees were fleeing (both with financial and military support), arguing that this would mean people would not flee in the first place, thus reducing the number of asylum seekers in Europe.

Another significant change in the speech acts of the government is the introduction of numbers and volume into its vocabulary on refugees. This change in language is especially significant since the government would previously issue fierce criticism for the use of language that would refer to refugees in terms of numbers and volume, and it is in fact a form of language that many on the Swedish left still feels uncomfortable with. When ministers within the government disagree on the country's capacity to accept refugees it is in the language of numbers, whether the limit for that capacity is 70 000 refugees as Johansson suggested, or as Fridolin argued closer to 150 000. While Löfven claims that none of these estimates are reliable he still implies that there is a limit that cannot be breached if the welfare system is to remain intact. This notion that the ambitions of on the one hand guaranteeing a functioning welfare system to the citizens, and on the other welcoming new members to society stand in opposition to one another might be relatively new to the government's rhetoric within the context of the recent refugee crisis, but arguably it has played a historically important role in the discourse surrounding the Swedish welfare state and what is sometimes called the "Swedish model" – be it the forced sterilisation of people with undesirable qualities, as was suggested by Zaremba in the 1997 debate (Zaremba, 1997, 20 August), or indeed the deportation of asylum seekers because the "limit" is reached. These measures are necessitated by what Foucault called the state of population, an analytical concept that is fully embodied in the welfare state since the welfare system is the means by which not only the biological qualities of population are controlled, but by which the population learns to need said control apparatus, in turn legitimising the techniques and institutions of biopower (Agamben, 1998, p. 3). It is also an example of how governmentality works to create a need for government, in this case through the biopolitics of the welfare state (Kiersley, 2009, p. 30; Li, 2007, p. 12).

The focus on volume and Sweden's capacity to receive and integrate refugees is consistent from this point onward. Ygeman estimates approximately 80 000 people will have to leave Sweden in the next few years and although the government attempts to incentivise these failed asylum applicants to leave by paying them to do so, Ygeman expects there is a significant number of people who shall have to be removed from Swedish territory by force. He suggests the "risk" of these people choosing to stay in Sweden shall be dealt with by making it as "difficult" and as "unprofitable" as possible to "remain in Sweden illegally". The state of

exception is here apparent, reducing the failed asylum applicants to their bare life as they are literally banned from Sweden and cannot remain legally. (Agamben, 1998, p. 109)

The use of language is far removed from Löfven's claim that it was time to "stand up for the inviolable worth and rights of man, which in our declarations we have vowed to protect" and the shift reveals the impotency with which modern politics tries to protect the supposedly universal *human* rights within a system of nation states governed through the structures of biopower. When these structures implicate that the most profound exercises of power are facilitated by the societal body – the physical bodies of the citizens – we can understand the refugee as the limit concept which Agamben describes, who is included through his or her own exclusion. For the refugee separates birth, which is to say bare life, from nation, making bare life appear for an instant within the domain that is the nation state. However, through the Swedish government's speech acts on refugees we learn little new of the refugee as bare life exposed, but by understanding the concept of the refugee as just that, we can examine the language of the sovereign to discern the mechanisms of biopower behind it. (Agamben, 1998, p. 27-130)

Something interesting is revealed in the government's shift in politics and rhetoric. The rhetoric of politicians can change for many reasons, and often do, whether it is to follow the changes in the public mood or adjusting to other circumstances. The government however went from a clearly stated commitment to protecting the "inviolable rights" of refugees to announcing the deportation of tens of thousands of "illegal" residents and providing border forces to protect Europe's external borders. This evolution is perhaps best understood in the light of Agamben's argument that it is when refugees are increasingly understood to represent not individual cases, but a mass phenomenon – a perception that became increasingly more difficult for the Swedish government to ignore in the summer months of 2015 – that the nation states and the international humanitarian organisations prove themselves "absolutely incapable of resolving the problem" (Agamben, 1998, p. 133).

The government's talk of protecting the national borders and enforcing Europe's external borders, along with the heightened sensitivity to the national debate on the challenges of different cultures, values, and traditions within the same nation, suggest there is a sense of threat. This sense of threat and the increased implication of refugees in issues of security in turn suggest there is also at play that which Ibrahim calls "securitisation of migration" which

is to say that by defining refugees as a threat to security, society is *speaking* security and thus legitimising extraordinary measures dealing with said threat (Ibrahim, 2005, p. 164). However, if Kiersey's scaled and global application of governmentality and biopolitics (leading him to the conclusion that liberal discourses necessitate the securitisation of global life) is re-applied to the context of this study it suggests the "securitisation of migration" can also be understood to stem from the governmentality of capitalist society, by which interpretation the securitising speech acts of the government can also be read as yet another set of techniques of biopower. This securitising language could then be understood as further discursive practices disciplining the biological mass of the population, but also as techniques demarcating the point of inclusion and exclusion from the societal body. (Kiersey, 2009, p. 30, 46-47; Foucault, 2002, p. 141-144)

Just as interesting in the evolution of the government's speech on refugees however is that which does *not* change. The sovereign's interest in the bare life of its subjects, and its commitment to protecting it, remains constant even when confronted with the biopolitical enigma of the refugee. In fact the care for the bare life of the own population through the protection of the welfare system makes out a significant part of the rationale behind the new restrictive refugee policy measures. (Agamben 1998, p. 8)

6 Conclusions

By applying the biopolitical perspectives of both Foucault and Agamben, different aspects of the biopower inherent in the discursive practices of the sovereign are revealed. The government's interest in the biological qualities of its population is apparent in every text analysed for this study; the desirable qualities are nurtured while the undesirable qualities are gradually stripped away, in order to ensure further growth within a capitalist system. The government's insistence on schooling new arrivals into good and productive members of Swedish society and quickly introducing them to the workforce so they can contribute to "building Sweden" is evidence of this.

This study has by employing these perspectives of biopower to the analysis of the speech of the Swedish government shown that the politics of the body is a deciding factor behind the language, policy, and other discursive practices of the sovereign. Combined with other

perspectives, such as Ibrahim's analysis of the securitisation of migration, these insights can help us confront the enigmas of modern politics.

The study has also confirmed Agamben's claim that states have difficulty honouring their commitment to the protection of universal human rights once refugees are perceived as a mass phenomenon rather than as individual cases. It is here suggested that this may be because the state of population's first duty as it were is towards nurturing the health and the desirable qualities of the body that is its population in order to secure its survival and growth.

The concept of governmentality explains how the relations of biopower within a society are sustained, but it also provides a discursive link through the prism of biopolitics between economic rule and security as the securitisation of bare life is necessitated by the further advancement of a capitalist governmentality.

The position that the refugee should be seen as life laid bare by a state of exception, making it a limit concept marking its own exclusion and inclusion simultaneously has informed the interpretation of the relation between the refugee and the nation state in the analysis of the discursive practices of the sovereign. It should however be noted that this analytical tool of Agamben's has perhaps the most potential when used as intended, with a stronger focus and law and rights, examining the judicial status and circumstances of the global refugee in a system of nation states.

6.1 Further research

Although the underlying logic of biopolitics can be discerned in the speech of the Swedish government, the actual *change* in rhetoric and policy cannot through this study be explained exclusively with the help of the perspective of biopolitics. Other perspectives could potentially nuance the understanding of these processes further, such as the analysis of the ways in which refugees are portrayed as a threat, or an analysis of how the global political economy may impact patterns of migration and the reluctance or willingness to accept large numbers of refugees.

But if Foucault's claim that we have moved from a "territorial State" to a "State of population" or Agamben's argument that the primary function of power is to produce bare life

and that the pure and constant state of exception (i.e. the camp) is the biopolitical paradigm of modern society are to be taken seriously, this is where we must focus our gaze.

In order to empower humanitarian international organisations, nation states, and other actors to address the issue of refugees in the 21st century it is not enough to simply acknowledge the fact that the refugee as a limit concept separating birth from nation calls the foundations of the nation state into question. Nor is it enough to study the discursive practices of sovereign states. The application of a biopolitical conceptual framework is needed in a wider set of scientific studies, examining the relations of biopower within society, for instance by further studying the plight of refugees within the context of biopolitics. The field of human rights needs to be closely examined through the prism of biopolitics. In the meantime novel ways of inciting, or imploring, states to welcome and care for the world's growing number of refugees is much needed.

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